Desenvolvimento Curricular e Didática

The Project English Plus: a CLIL approach in a Portuguese school

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Abstract

The CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach is still sparse in Portugal, being implemented only in a few schools. Despite this panorama, a Portuguese school developed the project English Plus based on the CLIL approach, which was implemented with a class of 7th grade students, and combined the non-linguistic subject of History with English as a Foreign Language. In order to sustain the project, the school established partnerships, namely with a Higher Education Institution. One of this institution's tasks was the monitoring of the project, particularly regarding the opinions of students, tutors/parents, teachers and school managers about it.

This article presents a description of such opinions collected by means of

questionnaires and interviews. The main findings indicate that the several educational actors seem to have a confluent opinion of the potentialities of the project and the CLIL approach, particularly in terms of: students' development of linguistic and communicative competences, attitudes towards languages and Otherness, and increasing knowledge of History; teachers' professional development; the overall community's (particularly, the tutors/parents) interest and participation in the school activities; the creation of interdisciplinary synergies within school and implementation of networks and partnerships with society.

Key words: CLIL approach; English Foreign Language; History; perceptions; plurilingual and intercultural education.

Resumo

A abordagem CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning/Aprendizagem Integrada de Conteúdos e Língua) é escassa em Portugal, existindo apenas em algumas escolas. Apesar deste panorama, uma escola em Portugal desenvolveu o projeto English Plus, baseado na abordagem CLIL, que foi implementado junto de uma turma do 7.º ano do ensino básico. Este projeto combinou a disciplina não linguística de História com a de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira. De modo a sustentar o projeto, a escola estabeleceu parcerias, nomeadamente com uma instituição de ensino superior. Uma das tarefas dessa instituição consistiu na monitorização do projeto, nomeadamente no que diz respeito às opiniões/perceções de alunos, encarregados de educação, professores e diretores da escola sobre o projeto.

Este artigo apresenta a descrição dessas opiniões, recolhidas através de questionários e entrevistas. Os principais resultados indicam que os vários atores educativos têm uma opinião confluente acerca das potencialidades do projeto e da abordagem CLIL, nomeadamente em termos de: desenvolvimento de competências linguístico-comunicativas, atitudes relativamente às línguas e ao Outro e aumento do conhecimento sobre História por parte dos alunos; desenvolvimento profissional por parte dos professores; interesse e participação nas atividades da escola pela comunidade em geral (particularmente, os encarregados de educação); criação de sinergias interdisciplinares dentro da escola e implementação de redes e parcerias com a sociedade.

Palavras-chave: abordagem CLIL; educação plurilingue e intercultural; História; inglês Língua Estrangeira; perceções.

Résumée

L'approche EMILE (Enseignement d'une Matière par l'Intégration d'une Langue Etrangère) est rare au Portugal, existant seulement dans quelques écoles. Malgré ce panorama, une école au Portugal a développé le projet English Plus, qui est basée sur cette approche et a été mise en œuvre dans une classe de 7ème année. Ce projet articule la discipline non linguistique d'Histoire avec celle d'Anglais comme Langue Étrangère. Pour soutenir ce projet, l'école a établi des partenariats, notamment avec une institution d'enseignement supérieur, dont une des tâches a été la supervision du projet, particulièrement en ce qui concerne les opinions des élèves, des parents/tuteurs et des enseignants à propos du projet.

Cet article présente précisément la description de ces opinions, qui ont été collectées à travers des questionnaires et des entretiens. Les principaux résultats indiquent que les différents acteurs éducatifs ont une opinion confluente sur les potentialités du projet et de l'approche EMILE, en ce qui concerne : le développement de compétences linguistiques et communicatives, les attitudes envers les langues et l'autre, et l'augmentation des savoirs sur l'Histoire par les élèves ; le développement professionnel des enseignants ; l'intérêt et la participation de la communauté en général (surtout des tuteurs / parents) dans les activités de l'école; la création de synergies interdisciplinaires au sein de l'école et l'établissement de réseaux et de partenariats avec la société.

Mots clés: anglais langue étrangère; éducation plurilingue et interculturelle; EMILE; histoire ; perceptions.

Introduction

The educational approach known as *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL) is still sparse in Portugal, being implemented only in a few schools. This reality is ultimately due to teachers' inadequate overall preparation for CLIL teaching, as it happens in many European countries (Coonan, 2003), or to the lack of teacher education profiles that would allow professionals of non-linguistic subjects to be and feel competent enough in a foreign language (Afonso, 2008).

Despite this panorama, a Portuguese school developed the Project English Plus based on the CLIL approach, which was implemented with a class of 7th grade students, and combined the non-linguistic subject of History with English as a Foreign Language. In order to sustain the project, the school established some partnerships,

namely with a Higher Education Institution. Consequently, a partnership by means of a protocol was established between the school Bento Carqueja and a group of researchers from CIDTFF/LALE[1], whose main task was to monitor the project's development.

This article presents the main results of the monitoring process, particularly the several stakeholders' opinions about the project and CLIL. After the theoretical framework of the study, the Project English Plus is described, with a particular focus on its genesis and implementation dynamics. This is followed by the description of the study's methodological design, namely the research aims and instruments and data analysis procedures. The findings display the opinions of the stakeholders (students, tutors/parents, teachers and School Managers) involved in the project and foster the final reflection upon the most significant aspects to consider when tracing the future developments of the project and of its research plan.

Setting the scene

The CLIL approach

Plurilingual and intercultural education has been set as a benchmark in the context of language teaching and learning nowadays (Beacco & Byram, 2007; Council of Europe, 2008). Broadly, it intends to build and expand the individuals' repertoire of plural linguistic and cultural resources, having such repertoire as a basis for developing the communicative competence, particularly in its plurilingual and intercultural dimensions. According to Beacco et al. (2010), many are the ways of bringing plurilingual and intercultural education into the curriculum, and several scenarios and approaches can be designed or implemented.

In the present setting, CLIL is seen as an important approach in the development of individuals' plurilingualism and communicative competence in languages other than the first language (Beacco et al., 2010; Pérez-Cañado, 2011). As Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010) define it, CLIL is

> "*a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language. That is, in the teaching and learning process, there is a focus not only on content, and not only on language. Each is interwoven,*

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1 CIDTFF – Centro de Investigação "Didática e Tecnologia na Formação de *Formadores*" / Research Centre "Didactics and Technology in Education of Trainers"; LALE – Laboratório Aberto para a Aprendizagem de Línguas Estrangeiras / Open Laboratory for Foreign Language Learning, University of Aveiro, Portugal.

even if the emphasis is greater on one or the other at a given time." (p.1, original emphasis).

In the words of Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010), there are two major reasons or driving forces why CLIL has become so appealing in the field of language education over the last years. On the one hand, there are *reactive reasons* as a response to particular situations, in which there is the need to overcome linguistic weaknesses and to foster language pragmatism along with language policy measures regarding official national, heritage, minority or threatened languages. On the other hand, there are *proactive reasons*, such as the creation of scenarios that enhance language learning, and thus strengthen bilingualism or obtain greater levels of plurilingualism, and prepare individuals and countries to globalization. In this setting, CLIL has been considered a priority in the European space and an alternative path in language education (Eurydice, 2006).

Following Do Coyle (2002), CLIL is considered central in addressing the complexities of linguistic and cultural diversity, and in supporting and developing plurilingual and pluricultural competence. As such, the CLIL approach advocates that: (i) students should have the opportunity to learn subject/content matter by means of a language which is not the usual instruction language in their curriculum; (ii) students should have the chance to use language/s in diverse contexts and in plural activities; and (iii) students should be helped in the development of their plurilingual and intercultural competence, in order to be able to operate successfully in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Several methodologies are used to develop a dual-focused approach to language and content and there are many curricular variations across Europe that give equal attention to content and language (Pérez-Cañado, 2011). Dalton-Puffer (2011) pinpoints some of the most common features of CLIL, stating that:

- the language of instruction used is usually a foreign language already known by students;
- CLIL teachers are usually non-native speakers of the target language and not language experts; instead, they are content experts;
- CLIL lessons are usually content lessons (e.g. history, biology, geography…), while as the target language lesson normally continues as a regular subject;
- typically, less of 50% of the curriculum is taught in the target language;
- CLIL programmes are commonly carried out when learners have already acquired literacy skills in their first language.

Several authors point out the benefits of such approach not only for learners, but

also for teachers and schools. Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010), Dale and Tanner (2012) and Pérez-Cañado (2011) indicate the possible advantages of CLIL. Thus, CLIL-based initiatives may concur to learners':

• *Motivation*: they feel challenged to learn both subject and language in a more integrated way. This may lead to a stronger sense of achievement, language skills development and progress, because they "*are able to put into practice the already acquired knowledge on language*" (Marsh, 2002, p. 11).

• *Cognitive development*: since they have to work harder to complete the tasks, their brains need to make more brain connections (similarly to bilinguals), their memory, thinking skills and creativity are pushed harder (Dale and Tanner, 2012, p. 10). This is a path to cognitive flexibility stimulation and the understanding of conceptual complexity (Coyle, Hood and Marsh, 2010, p.10).

• *Communicative skills*: CLIL learners are likely to improve their ability to communicate more effectively, to understand and use a wider range of spoken and written language "*in a variety of situations, formal and informal, specialised and general.*" (Dale and Tanner, 2012, p. 11);

• *Personal meaning-making in another language*. Learners have the opportunity to make personal meaning of new material, combine it with their previous knowledge in terms of language and content. Transfer of both conceptual knowledge and language occur in new learning situations;

• *Language progress*, in terms of fluency and accuracy, and thus achieving higher levels of proficiency, as a result of the participation in meaningful interactions, which help them develop a more context-based and situated perspective of language use;

• *Language input*, which should be "*meaningful, relevant and realistic*", as well as multimodal (Dale and Tanner, 2012, p. 12);

• *Meaningful interaction*, which provides the setting for language acquisition. Learners are likely to evolve both linguistically and conceptually without having to concentrate only on grammatical accuracy;

• *Production skills*, i.e. speaking and writing, since they have the context for language experimentation and production;

• *Intercultural awareness*, as "*they learn about ideas and communicate with people from other cultures*", and get acquainted with "*international perspectives on the subjects they are learning*" (Dale and Tanner 2012, p. 13);

• *Learning about the 'culture' of a subject*, namely because "*CLIL teachers are not only teaching information about a subject, but also teaching learners to think, write and speak like subjects specialists.*" (Dale and Tanner, 2012, p. 13);

• *Preparedness to study in another language*. As learners feel more confident

and fluent in the foreign language, their ability to communicate more effectively becomes a plus to study or work abroad;
• *Learning styles*. CLIL classes are believed to give learners' the opportunity to process, produce, review information and language in a variety of ways and in different situations, and in tune with each student's learning profile.

Some studies also mark out stakeholders' positive perspectives about CLIL. Mehisto and Asser (2007), for instance, focus on parental, CLIL teachers' and school manager's perspectives on a CLIL programme. Overall, the primary parental motivators were their children's language skills improvement and general academic achievement, indicating high levels of satisfaction with the CLIL programme, which lead the way to more home-school communication and cooperation. The same feeling of satisfaction is felt by teachers, though some improvement in terms of teaching strategies and communication with parents needed to be considered in the future. School managers also display a very positive discourse regarding the CLIL programme pointing out reasons such as the CLIL programme being a route to school reform, and better relationships between teachers from different subjects.

According to Dale and Tanner (2012), there are gains of CLIL for teachers and schools. These can be foreseen in terms of whole school development and innovation, school language policy, curriculum development and interdisciplinary practices amongst teachers. Moreover, non-native speaker teachers can improve their language skills and be exposed to new pedagogical methodologies and ideas, namely about their subject, and language teachers and subject teachers tend to become more collaborative, not only in preparing CLIL classes, but also in developing cross-curricular projects.

However the CLIL approach also demands new roles and responsibilities of both language teachers and subject teachers. Dale and Tanner (2012) consider that subject teachers are required to develop their own language skills, particularly when they are non-native speakers, and overcome possible linguistic insecurity. This may have implications in the way they interact with their pupils and emphasize or not a more active pedagogy (Coyle, Hood and Marsh, 2010).

CLIL language teachers in turn are expected to collaborate with subject teachers, namely by giving support in lesson planning, language matters, development of resources, class observation or team teaching. They are also expected to work on subject language in their lessons, as a way to complement and support subject matter lessons (Dale and Tanner, 2012).

Nowadays CLIL is offered in many European countries, even though at different levels and with different importance (Do Coyle, 2007; Pérez-Cañado, 2011). The Eurydice Report (2006) considers that CLIL is a "fast developing phenomenon across Europe", but the CLIL provision varies geographically. Pérez-Cañado (2011) maps many of the European CLIL initiatives and research. When it comes to Southern European countries, the study refers to Italy and Spain, no reference being made to Portugal. A possible reason may be the fact that particularly in Portugal, there are only a few CLIL-based initiatives and many of them are still pilot studies both in terms of development and research (EACEA, 2012). Some of them are more top-down like initiatives, involving language institutes and schools; others are bottom-up initiatives, rooted in the willingness of teachers to provide their students with richer opportunities to improve their communicative skills.

In the following section we refer to one of such initiatives, which was carried out in a Portuguese school.

The project "English Plus": genesis and implementation

After a positive experience adopting the CLIL approach in the Francophone European Section, the Basic Education School Bento Carqueja, with 2nd and 3rd cycles of Education[2], decided to expand the CLIL approach to a 7th grade class (12 and 13-year-olds). The initiative was based on the collaborative work between an English and a History teacher, which was a native speaker of English. These teachers tried to carry out a CLIL approach by developing a project entitled "English Plus" (PEP).

The project was initiated in the school year 2010/2011. The overall aims were: to promote the linguistic and cultural diversity; to promote the European citizenship; to intensify European educational exchange experiences; to promote school mobility; and to promote interdisciplinarity / transdisciplinarity. The specific aims for students were:

• to promote the intercultural knowledge, understanding, open-mindedness and awareness;
• to promote a more rapid and effective foreign language learning, by means of an approach centred in the development / acquisition of contents and competences;

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2 Formal compulsory schooling in Portugal comprises: (i) Basic Education: 1st Cycle (primary education) (6 to 9/10 year-olds), 2nd Cycle (10/11 to 12 year-olds), 3rd Cycle (13 to 15 year-olds); and (ii) Secondary Education (16 to 18 year-olds).

- to develop intercultural communicative competences;
- to develop the awareness of the linguistic and cultural reality of the English language speaking countries;
- to develop the macro-skills of oral comprehension and speaking;
- to motivate for foreign language learning and for the non-linguistic subject-matter involved in the project;
- to increase the autonomy and the spirit of initiative taking and enterprise;
- to develop ICT competences;
- to promote educational success.

After the institutional agreement to the project, as well as the tutors'/parents' acknowledgement, the project was implemented between 2010 and 2012 and involved three subjects: English, History and Project Area[3]. The English subject followed the official syllabus. The CLIL approach was undertaken in the History subject, being 45 minutes per week taught in English and the remaining 45 minutes in the Portuguese language. The Project Area, which was taught by the English teacher, worked as a support to the History CLIL classes. The teacher worked on the English vocabulary considered fundamental for the comprehension of the contents in the History classes. As students became more confident in their language competences and more comfortable with the History classes taught in English, some other activities were undertaken in the Project Area, namely drama activities (namely writing plays in English with a historical background and performing them). Following the characteristics of a CLIL approach, the English language was used in part (around 20-30%) of the evaluation instruments adopted in History classes.

The work developed in these three subjects was undertaken collaboratively by the English and History teachers. This collaboration involved class planning, the search for and creation of resources for the History and Project Area classes, and team-teaching, since the English teacher attended the History CLIL classes with the purpose of supporting the History teacher and particularly the students. She intervened only when the focus on language would be significant for the acquisition of content and / or the expansion of the students' linguistic competence. The Executive Board supported these dynamics and managed the English teacher's timetable so that she could have the time to attend the History CLIL class.

Partnerships and protocols with diverse entities were established, namely with

- 3 In the Portuguese system, Project Area was a curricular non disciplinary area, in which students were expected to develop a collaborative project. This area was officially cancelled by the Ministry of Education in 2011 (Decree-Law n. 50/2011, April the 8th).

the United States Embassy and with a group of four researchers from LALE/CIDTFF, Department of Education of the University of Aveiro. LALE's role was based on research and consultancy, and consisted in the monitoring of the projects' development. Since the protocol was established when the project was already in course, the consultancy team agreed on primarily describing the stakeholders' (students, teachers and tutor/parents) opinions about the project's development and achievements, so that the school and the consultancy team could later on report on the project's progress and trace future developments based on evidence. Such monitoring was based on scheduled class observation, as well as by means of questionnaires to students and tutor/parents, and interviews with the two teachers. In addition, the LALE team did periodical meetings with the teachers and the representative from the school Executive Board.

The consultancy is still on going, but due to the placement of the History teacher in another school during the school year 2012/2013, the project suffered a setback, and is being rethought in terms of development.

Methodology

This article accounts for the stakeholders' (25 students, 2 experienced teachers, and 25 tutors/parents) opinions about the project's development and achievements. Accordingly, at the end of the school year, students and tutors/parents were inquired by means of questionnaires about topics listed in the following Table 1.

Table 1: Questionnaire to students and tutors/parents – topics

Students	Tutors/Parents
- Overall characterisation and language profile; - Representations about their competence in English and History; - Representations about their degree of involvement in the project; - Expectations regarding the project.	- Overall characterisation and language profile; - Representations about their children's competences in English and History; - Representations about their children's degree of involvement in the project; - Information about the project and source of such information.

•Project's contribute to the improvement of competences in English and History;

•Strong and weak aspects of the project;

•Intention to continue in the project in the next year.

By means of a semi-structured interview, the teachers were also asked about their overall characterisation and language biography; the genesis of the project and its following dynamics; the contribute of the project to students; their perception about the students' involvement in the project; the contribute of the project to their professional development, and to the school community; their perception about the parental opinion about the project; the project's strong aspects and the constraints to its development.

A descriptive statistical analysis was carried out to the data of the two questionnaires (using the Excel programme) and content analysis of the open questions of the questionnaires and of the transcribed interviews.

Data analysis

General characterisation of the participants

Students

Of the 26 students, 25 answered the questionnaire. For the general characterisation of the students, 16 were female and 9 male, with the average age of 12.4 years old.

Regarding the linguistic profile, all students learned English as Foreign Language 1 and French as Foreign Language 2. As for the contact with languages outside school (see Table 2), the greater contact is with English, followed by French, Spanish, German and Chinese. It is important to notice the small number of languages provided as well as the small number of occurrences in the case of some of them. The means by which students have contacted with these languages differ depending on the languages. English is the first language to be mentioned in all items listed.

Table 2: Students' contacts with language(s) outside school

Contexts of contact	French	English	German	Chinese	Spanish	Portuguese	Total
a) family members/ friends	6	10	1	1	-	17	35
b) language schools	3	8	-	-	-	1	12
c) travelling	3	5	-	-	6	11	25
d) books/ magazines/ newspapers	4	15	-	-	1	15	35
e) television / cinema / Internet	6	24	-	-	3	15	48
f) instructions / products labels	4	14	1	-	1	15	35
g) living abroad for .... months / years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
h) other situations: e.g. computer games	-	1	-	-	1	-	2
Total	26	77	2	1	12	74	

Tutors/Parents

In relation to the general characterisation of the tutors/parents, 19 are female and six are male, with the average age of 43.04 years old. As for qualifications, most tutors/parents have completed secondary education (n = 10), followed by 9 with a degree. Three parents have finished the 6th grade, 2 parents have accomplished the 9th grade, 1 with secondary education incomplete and another with a Master's degree.

They have learned mainly French in a formal setting (n = 23), English (22), German (n = 5) and Spanish (n = 2). As for non-school contact with languages, they report more languages than their children. However, just like their children did, special emphasis is given to English (n = 59), followed by French (n = 29) and Spanish (n = 20), in addition to German (n = 2), Chinese and Italian.

Table 3: Students' contacts with languages in a non-school setting

Contexts of contact	French	English	German	Chinese	Spanish	Portuguese	Total
a) family / friends	7	7	-	1	-	2	17
b) language school	1	1	-	-	-	-	2
c) trip	7	9	2		1	6	25
d) books / magazines / newspapers	2	12	-	-	-	3	17
e) TV / cinema / Internet	7	17	-	-	-	4	28
f) instructions / product labels	4	12	-	-	-	5	21
g) living abroad for .... months/ years	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
Total	29	59	2	1	1	20	

Teachers

The class teacher of English and of Project Area has been a teacher of the school board for ten years, having 16 years of experience. She has a degree in Teaching English and German and a Masters in German Literature. She has experience in supervising professional traineeships.

The History teacher has been a hired teacher for 13 years, having ten years of teaching experience. She has a degree in Historical Sciences - scientific branch, and Historical Sciences - educational branch. She has a post-graduation in the context of the Masters in Medieval and Renascence Studies and she integrated the National Commission of the Portuguese Discoveries for five years. She was born in South Africa and she is a native speaker of English, which allows her to develop the CLIL approach in the History class.

The project English Plus: an evaluation

Students' expectations

Initially, many students considered that taking part in PEP would be difficult, confusing or complicated (n = 24). However, there were also insights that showed that students foresaw the project as an interesting experience (n = 3), which would allow them to develop skills in English (n = 3) and would give them the opportunity to have more contact with this language (n = 2).

When asked if such expectations were confirmed or altered, most students state that their expectations have changed and seven confirmed their initial expectations, pointing out different reasons, as we can see in the table below. Only one student makes reference to a negative aspect, in this case regarding the difficulty anticipated in the beginning of the project.

Table 4: Confirmation/alteration of initial expectations

Altered expectations	18	Confirmed expectations	7
Funnier (History class)	4	Interesting project	3
More motivating (History class)	1	Diversity of experiences	1
Groundless fear	6	Good level of English	1
Good implementation of PEP	1	Learning lexicon	1
Easier	4	Teachers commitment	1
Successful group integration	2	Difficult	1
Interesting classes	3	More contact with English	2
Development of English skills	2		
Success	2		

Contribution of PEP to the students

Students and tutors/parents' evaluation

In general, it is possible to state that all students and most of their parents recognise

that the participation in PEP has contributed to the development of the students' learning experiences both in English and in History. Indeed, only two parents have not recognised any particular improvement in their children's learning associated with PEP because, in one case, the student kept the previous school level (n=1) and, in the other case, the student did not acquire more knowledge in History due to the fact those classes were being held in English (n=1).

When asked about the specific contributions resulting from the participation in PEP, students and parents point out different aspects which are organised in the following table according to the categories *communicative skills*, *production skills*, *content knowledge*, *learning styles*, *language progress*, *motivation*, *cognitive development* and *intercultural awareness*, which emerged from this study's theoretical framework (cf. Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Dale & Tanner, 2012; Marsh, 2009).

Table 5: Contributions of PEP to students – students' and parents' opinions

Categories	Contributions	Students	Parents
Communicative skills	Acquisition of lexicon	13	6
	Development of the linguistic competence	7	12
Production skills	Reading (expressiveness)	1	0
	Writing	1	3
	Oral communication skills	0	6
	Accent	1	2
Content knowledge	Development of knowledge in History	7	7
Learning styles (innovative activities developed in the context of the CLIL approach)	Study tours (USS Enterprise, University of Aveiro…)	21	7
	Role-plays	12	4
	Writing activities in History lessons	2	0
	Contact with entities (in English)	0	4
Language progress	Better results	1	0
Motivation	More interesting and productive lessons	5	0
	Developing motivation towards languages	1	1
	Motivation	0	7
Cognitive development	Cognitive challenges that students overcome	0	2
Intercultural awareness	Intercultural awareness and competence	0	1
Provision of language lessons	Increasing the number of classes	2	2
Did not answer		0	1

Both students and parents consider that the CLIL project has been important to the improvement of students' language development, particularly in terms of communicative skills (s= 20 and p=18). Interestingly, although some parents refer to students' oral communication skills (n=6), the more pragmatic dimension (production skills) seems to be less visible in their discourse as well as in students'. Bearing in mind that this pragmatic stance is one of CLIL's aims, further inquiry should be carried out in order to disclose whether this is in fact a reality, a lack of (self-) perception or the parents' allusion to "development of the linguistic competence" also comprises the production skills.

Students also mark out the diversity of activities either in class or extra class in which they were involved (n=35) as a consequence of their participation in the project. According to the theoretical background of this study, these can be relevant steps to the existence of richer opportunities to use language and to the engagement of different learning profiles.

In a lesser degree, references are made to the improvement of students' content knowledge, with equivalent results for students and parents (n=7). In terms of motivation, while as students refer to more interesting and productive lessons (n=5), parents tend to refer to motivation in a more general perspective (n=7).

Cognitive development, intercultural awareness and provision of language classes didn't obtain significant results. This finding is relevant and can be indicative of students' unawareness of own cognitive and intercultural improvements, of parents' lack of data to have a more informed opinion, and/or of less attention given to such spheres in the project. These are aspects to follow in future studies.

Regarding both students' and parents' perceptions about the involvement of students in PEP, results seem to be satisfactory. Students consider that their involvement was *Very Good* (n = 14) or *Good* (n = 10). Regarding parents assessment of their children commitment to the Project, 13 were rated with *Very Good* and 12 with *Good*.

As far as the possibility of continuing to participate in PEP, only one student out of 25 mentioned that he/she would not like to keep on being part of the project. On the contrary, all parents want their children to continue participating in PEP in the following school year.

Teachers' evaluation

The teachers consider that the main contributions of PEP to students are related to the development of competences (skills, knowledge and attitudes) in several domains and dimensions. They highlight an increasing evolution in students':

- *linguistic and communicative skills in English*, signalling the enlargement of the lexical repertoire and the evolution in the domains of reception (oral and written) and of production (oral and written) in English, as well as pragmatic competences in this language;
- *content knowledge of History*, considering that the students have expanded their declarative knowledge of historical facts and events, alongside a greater interest towards this subject, which was seen in the curiosity manifested throughout the school year;
- *learning competence*, particularly in terms of skills to participate in new linguistic and communicative experiences in English – namely study and research skills, cooperation in group work/class projects;
- *autonomy*, evident in the capacity of group work management and in the sense of responsibility and accountability;
- *cognitive development*, in the domain of memorisation and attention, and competences related to *dramatic expression* (verbal and nonverbal language), namely, the development of creativity and imagination (role-playing, retelling), skills of improvisation and coordination;
- *interpersonal competences* associated with (i) an *intercultural sphere*, which is expressed in the willingness to communicate/interact with the Other regardless of the linguistic correctness. In general, teachers think students feel more confident in communicative situations; and (ii) a *relational sphere*, translated in the expression of attitudes of solidarity, respect for and listening the Other, as well as in the greater proximity among students and between students and the two teachers, associated with competences of cooperation and negotiation.

The teachers consider that the students' involvement in PEP progressively increased. From an initial moment of doubts and fear about possible difficulties in learning History through a foreign language, to a moment of ease and comfort towards the language, even in informal situations when the its use emerges spontaneously.

The teachers recognise that the students' great involvement and participation in the different tasks result not only from the motivation in learning English and History through a foreign language, but also from the parallel activities of PEP (the visit to the USS Enterprise, the participation in a linguistic workshop at the University of Aveiro...).

The teachers also claim they have received a very positive feedback from the tutor/ parents. This feedback is visible in the expression of pride and contentment for the work developed by their children, the recognition of the competences developed by the students, the pleasure of participating in the activities.

Contribution of PEP to the teachers

Both teachers evaluate PEP in a very positive way in what their personal and professional development is concerned. They stress the development of skills of curriculum management in a more flexible and cross-disciplinary way (management of the syllabus of History and of Project Area, which emerges, particularly, as a space of preparation for the History class), as well as of management of their own work methodologies.

They also point out some contributions related to the deepening of their knowledge of the content and the linguistic competence in English (acquisition of new vocabulary), and the expansion of didactic knowledge and repertoire, particularly regarding the research and construction of teaching resources in English to explore History contents. Furthermore, both teachers highlight the dynamics of collaborative work (in dyad), based on flexibility and sharing (collective discussion, planning of content and strategies for the History class, identification of linguistic issues to focus on) as a source of personal and professional enrichment, as well as the collaborative work with the students themselves. They consider that it has contributed to a reinforcement and narrowing of their relationship, and has assigned a more central role to students in the teaching/learning process.

Contribution of PEP to the school

As far as PEP's echoes in the school are concerned, the two teachers point out: (i) the effect of "contagion" that PEP seems to be having in other students/classes, who have shown curiosity and/or interest to become involved in this project; (ii) the creation of dynamics of openness to the school community (namely through the invitations addressed to other classes, as well as to parents, to attend the role-playings performed by the PEP's class); (iii) the satisfaction of tutors/parents in relation to PEP and the proximity with the activities developed by the students and the school. They also mention the cooperation of some of their teacher colleagues, for example, in the support given to the classes of students within the project.

The teachers also consider that the partnerships established with other entities

were an advantage to the inter-institutional dynamics of the school and to PEP in particular.

Constraints in the development of PEP: the teachers' point of view

The teachers indicate some constraints to the development of PEP, which are related to:

• The lack of training and information about CLIL in terms of theoretical and practical frameworks;
• The difficulty in the access to specific resources (authentic materials, History textbooks in English adapted to the Portuguese syllabus);
• The difficulty in the attempt to link PEP with *ePals*, so as to promote students' experiences of communication with native speakers, and which did not take place as expected;
• The anxiety that there would be a high level of demand in what concerns students' linguistic knowledge considering the school stage they were at that moment. This led to an initial intense linguistic reinforcement, which has been progressively softened as a result of students' easiness with language and CLIL classes;
• The apprehension associated with the students' transition of school cycle (secondary education) due to the great linguistic and communicative development they have experienced in the project, and which can be refrained as they progress to another class without CLIL classes;
• The management of the teachers' schedule so as to find periods of time when both of them were available to work together;
• The lack of external support from English language policy institutions and English-speaking governmental entities in the national context;
• The feasibility of extending PEP to other school classes and other content areas, namely due to the lack of teachers with the necessary linguistic competences for the development of the CLIL approach.

Conclusions and recommendations

This article aimed to collect the opinions of the main educational actors involved in PEP – teachers, students and tutors/parents – about the development of the project. In sum, there is a confluent discourse regarding the linguistic, communicative, cognitive, social and interpersonal development of the students in the context of PEP. Overall, it also seems to have contributed to:

• the professional development of the teachers involved in the project, particularly

in what collaborative and interdisciplinary work is concerned, which is essential to a more integrated learning;

- the creation of greater synergies among curricular areas;
- the promotion of a greater participation and interaction within the extended community (school, tutor/parents and local community);
- the development of partnerships and inter-institutional protocols, which are relevant for an educational network project;
- the recognition of the importance of PEP's continuity by all the educational actors involved in this project.

In view of the results, some final considerations are needed. Regarding the development of PEP, now that a narrower partnership between the school team and the research and consultancy team has been established, it is important to pay particular attention to the constraints that have been pointed out in order to identify ways of overcoming them and improve the development of PEP. Therefore, a new strategic action plan needs to be designed in terms of teaching and evaluation dimensions. New monitoring and restructuring measures should be contemplated, namely as a result of the History teacher's replacement and the need to involve other school teachers in the project.

Concerning the team of LALE/CIDTFF, the research plan needs contribute to solid empirical studies in order to provide more comprehensive empirical results and unequivocal support for CLIL based-initiatives (Perez-Cañado 2011). Although the present study was is part of an initial step, the truth is that it is based on the participants' perspectives. Although these are extremely important for the continuity of the project and to a certain feeling of wellbeing associated to it (see the study of Mehisto and Asser, 2007), they also need to be crossed and complemented with other data.

Accordingly, this research plan should envisage the development of more intensive studies about students' development as regards their language development and the other dimensions designated in the theoretical part of this article. Namely, in the context of a plurilingual and intercultural education, it would be interesting to focus on the intercultural dimension of CLIL, since it was one of the variables with less significant results in this study; the learning profiles variable could also be crossed with the pedagogical methodologies of teachers. Consequently, a more longitudinal and multivariable study needs to be designed, in which thorough class observation has a strong role. Besides the preferential focus on students' language development, teachers' professional development and learning needs also seems

a prolific field of study within the project.

Also the study of the dynamics emerging from the project needs to be increased, particularly those within the school community, and between the school and parents and other partners. Consequently, the project's management also needs to be considered in future monitoring and research.

Finally, teacher education opportunities and awareness activities seem to be imperative to the expansion of the CLIL approach to other subject matters and teachers, and the incorporation of more multidisciplinary approaches as a fruitful condition to students' learning.

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