

PRIMARY ENGLISH PRACTICE PROGRAMME FOR AGES 6/7: THE NEED FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE PRIMARY ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

M. Cruz¹, D. Mascarenhas¹, P. Medeiros², A. Pinheiro²

¹*Polytechnic of Porto / inED (PORTUGAL)*

²*School of Education of Paula Frassinetti / inED (PORTUGAL)*

Abstract

In the ever-evolving landscape of primary education, the significance of English instruction in shaping cognitive and linguistic development is irrefutable. As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, a paradigm shift towards transformative and sustainable educational practices becomes imperative. This communication delves into the trajectory of a primary English teaching and learning process that aligns with transformative principles while embedding sustainability, by focusing on the main results of the implementation of the Primary English Practice Programme for Ages 6/7 (PEPPA) in the school year 2022-2023.

The PEPPA project, a pilot project, aims to promote the implementation of the English disciplinary area in the curriculum of the 1st and 2nd years of schooling, in a Portuguese municipality. Its main objectives include raising awareness among pupils about the importance of learning foreign languages and providing teacher training for effective instruction in the 1st and 2nd years of schooling.

Grounded in 21st-century educational paradigms, the theoretical foundation of this study underscores the importance of transformative learning experiences for primary English learners. Departing from traditional rote methods, the emphasis is on pedagogies that stimulate critical thinking, creativity, and cultural understanding. Project-Based Learning (PBL) emerges as a transformative approach, providing an immersive language acquisition experience by connecting English instruction with real-world projects. Sustainability in English education is conceptualized through the integration of eco-friendly materials, environmental themes, and responsible language use, fostering a sense of global interconnectedness among pupils.

To unravel the efficacy of the proposed transformative and sustainable primary English teaching and learning process, a mixed-methods research design was employed. Qualitative data were gathered through classroom observations, questionnaires, and content analysis of educational materials. The research tools included observation grids to analyse teacher's and pupils' practices during lessons, rubrics for assessing project-based outcomes, and questionnaires applied to teachers.

The analysis of gathered data reveals a substantial shift in primary English education towards transformative and sustainable practices. Project-Based Learning, when implemented, demonstrates enhanced language acquisition experiences, promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Sustainability integration correlates with heightened environmental awareness and responsible language use among pupils. Multimodal resources, including digital platforms and interactive content, are shown to cater effectively to diverse learning styles. Continuous professional development initiatives empower educators to implement transformative practices successfully.

In conclusion, the results underscore the effectiveness of embracing transformative and sustainable approaches in primary English education. The shift towards project-based, eco-conscious pedagogies positively impacts language acquisition, critical thinking, and global awareness among students. These findings advocate for a collective commitment from educators, administrators, and policymakers to foster a future generation that is not only proficient in English communication but also equipped to navigate the complexities of the 21st century.

Keywords: primary English, sustainable development, soft skills, foreign language learning.

1 INTRODUCTION

After its first three years of implementation, the PEPPA 6/7 - Primary English Practice Programme continued to be promoted in school clusters of one of the Greater Oporto Municipalities. This project arose from a need created by the time gap between Pre-school stage and the 3rd year of schooling,

from which English becomes curricular and universal (within the context of Decree-Law No. 176/2014). The project was implemented in all classes of the 1st and 2nd years of schooling based on weekly 60-minute sessions taught by teachers of the recruitment group 120 - English 1st Cycle of Basic Education (CBE) in conjunction with the class's main teachers.

Drawing on the theoretical insights of educational pioneers and contemporary scholars, the first chapter of this article outlines a vision for Primary English education that is transformative, inclusive, and sustainable. As we look towards the future, the principles of experiential learning, critical pedagogy, and global citizenship will continue to guide the development of English teaching practices that inspire, engage, and prepare students for the complex and dynamic world they inhabit. The following chapters focus on the practical component of our study, in which we delve into the transformative paths of both teachers and students, including the analysis of some teaching and learning practices and resources.

2 TOWARDS A TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS IN PRIMARY ENGLISH

The 21st-century educational landscape calls for a paradigm shift towards engaging and meaningful learning processes. Influenced by the works of scholars like John Dewey [1], who advocated for experiential learning, and Paulo Freire, known for his emphasis on critical pedagogy, the theoretical foundation of this study underscores the need for education to be transformative [2]. In primary English education, this entails a shift from traditional methods to dynamic and engaging pedagogies that foster critical thinking, creativity, and cultural understanding.

Transformative pedagogies are rooted in the belief that education should empower students to be active participants in their own learning. Jack Mezirow's [3] concept of transformative learning involves experiences that lead to a significant change in perspective. In primary English education, these pedagogies are not just about learning a language; they are about shaping the individual's worldview, encouraging personal growth, and preparing them for lifelong learning and global citizenship.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is highlighted as a key approach in transforming language education. Thomas [4] describes PBL as an instructional method where students engage in prolonged, complex tasks, leading to a product or presentation. In English language teaching, PBL allows for an immersive acquisition experience by connecting instruction with real-world projects and challenges. It aligns with the work of scholars like George Kuh [5], who emphasize experiential learning for deeper understanding. In fact, PBL is a powerful and transformative pedagogy that, when well executed, can help all students learn and develop skills. According to the Model [6], the development of an effective approach based on project methodology includes seven key components: 1) Authenticity concerning resources and contexts; 2) Empowerment of students and their choice; 3) Individual and collaborative reflection; 4) Critical thinking and revision; 5) Creation of products that are made public; 6) Problem-solving practices and challenges; 7) Grounded questioning.

In language classrooms, project methodology should not be confused with task-based methodology, as project methodology offers opportunities for the natural integration of all four basic linguistic skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—while also focusing on the development of other types of skills [7]. On the other hand, the main goal of the task-based approach is to develop communication skills primarily, focusing attention on more linguistic issues.

The PBL approach is not just a pedagogical choice but a transformative force that, when implemented effectively, helps students become more engaged and autonomous learners. This engagement is particularly evident in the classroom, where students are not just passive recipients of knowledge but active constructors of their own learning experiences.

It is also worth remembering that the project methodology promotes teaching centred on the enhancement of linguistic learning and transversal competencies by the student, as signalled by Yasar & Cruz [8]: learners take part in authentic activities in which they get meaningful communication opportunities. Also, a variety of language skills are integrated naturally, such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, and these skills are improved during the project work. Thus, we can refer that the project methodology helps students improve their "creactical skills", mainly fostering creativity and critical thinking while participating in the learning process, that is, solving a problem [9]. The project methodology also supports the development of research and digital competencies, which are considered essential in today's world since students of this generation are "growing up digital" [10]. In this context, the pupil's relationship with the data is done through various digital tools, including Web 2.0 and 3.0, and they can create podcasts, videos, digital posters, and even participate in webquests, etc. [11].

Integrating sustainability into education draws from the work of scholars like David Orr [12], who argues for the importance of ecological literacy in education. In the context of English education, sustainability encompasses using eco-friendly materials, incorporating environmental themes, and promoting responsible language use. This approach fosters a sense of global interconnectedness and responsibility among pupils, preparing them to be active participants in a sustainable future. This is related to the global role of English as a lingua franca, as pupils exposed to linguistic and cultural diversity foster their critical cultural awareness, empathy and understand the need to protect this very diversity. The work of intercultural education scholars like James A. Banks [13] informs this approach, emphasizing the need for educational content that reflects diverse cultural perspectives. By incorporating stories, traditions, and perspectives from different cultures, English education can foster a richer understanding of global diversity.

The storytelling approach and the use of picture books are indeed powerful and motivating resources in classroom practices [14]. Listening to stories is indeed a natural, fun, and engaging activity for children, allowing at the same time to develop their linguistic competencies during a social and dialogic experience par excellence once it fosters their linguistic awareness and knowledge about items such as vocabulary and sound patterns [15]. In other words, by learning, considering an approach based on the use of picture books, students can collaboratively reflect on the moral of a given story, reaching a shared response of different feelings towards it. On the other hand, the storytelling approach, based on the project methodology, also promotes a connection with other disciplinary areas and a reflective look at diversity and (inter)cultural understanding, as it gives students the opportunity to analyse real-world problems in the classroom [16]. Thus, many picture books that offer examples of real-life situations can be used to build a project and provide an understanding of these issues [17], helping students to think critically and develop empathy for those who are facing certain social problems.

Engaging children in transformative learning experiences during their primary years is not just beneficial; it's critical. At this stage, children are developing foundational cognitive, social, and emotional skills that will shape their future learning and life experiences. The primary years are a window of opportunity where education can instil a love for learning, cultivate critical thinking, and foster a sense of global awareness and responsibility. In fact, in the primary years, children's brains are highly receptive to new information and languages. Cummins [18] emphasized the potential for bilingual education to enhance cognitive abilities. Learning English alongside their native language can boost children's cognitive flexibility, problem-solving skills, and overall intellectual growth.

At the same time, language is a fundamental aspect of social interaction and personal expression. By engaging in transformative learning experiences in English, children develop not only language skills but also empathy, self-esteem, and the ability to communicate and collaborate with others. This is particularly important in an increasingly interconnected world where understanding and respect for diverse cultures are vital. Indeed, in our globalized world, English often serves as a medium of communication across cultures and countries. By gaining proficiency in English, children are better prepared to engage with the wider world, access global resources, and participate in international dialogues. As stated by Nussbaum [19], education should prepare students not just for local and national life but as citizens of the world. Teachers can incorporate themes of global significance into English lessons, such as environmental sustainability, cultural diversity, and social justice. Discussing these topics helps children understand their role and responsibility in a global context and the impact of their actions on the world. Language learning is inherently cultural learning. By exposing students to different accents, dialects, and cultural expressions in English, teachers can foster an appreciation for cultural diversity and equip students with the skills to navigate a multicultural world.

In this context, the integration of technology in primary English education may act as a springboard for fostering all these skills. Scholars like Marc Prensky, who coined the term "digital natives," highlight the need for educational practices that resonate with the technologically fluent generation [20]. Digital tools and resources in English education not only make learning more engaging but also help develop crucial 21st-century skills. Moreover, technology provides opportunities for children to connect with peers worldwide, participate in global projects, and access diverse perspectives. These experiences enrich their understanding of the world and their place in it.

Primary English education, when approached with a focus on critical thinking, creativity, sustainability, and cultural understanding, has the potential to shape not only students' language abilities but also their global outlook and citizenship. As educators, the responsibility lies in harnessing these pedagogies to nurture informed, empathetic, and empowered learners ready to contribute to a global society. The PEPPA 6/7 project is an example of the sort of transformative educational approaches in primary English

education, in which teachers are not just teaching a language, but also shaping the future global citizens of our world. Let us now present it and analyse the practical component of the study.

3 PEPPA 6/7: PATHS TOWARDS TRANSFORMATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN PRIMARY ENGLISH - THE CONTEXT

In the last academic year, during February and May 2023, the Didactics of English course was once again held for the 1st and 2nd years of schooling, lasting 10 teaching hours and in an online format via Zoom and Moodle platforms. In each one-hour weekly session, one of the following topics was discussed: 1) Language policies and teaching English to children; 2) The age debate: a critical analysis; 3) Experiential Communicative Focus: plural approaches in the teaching of English in the early years of schooling; 4) Curriculum design: planning teaching and learning tasks; 5) Resources and pedagogical-didactic activities for an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to contents; 6) Assessment in foreign language teaching: approaches and strategies; 7) Development of communicative, intercultural, and plurilingual competence in the English classroom in the 1st and 2nd years of schooling; 8) The role of Storytelling: exploring picture books in the 1st and 2nd years of schooling; 9) Didactics of gamification for the early years of schooling; and 10) Development of practices based on critical pedagogy and project methodology.

Teachers in training had the opportunity to: a) mobilize linguistic, scientific, and pedagogical knowledge necessary for pedagogical practice in the 1st and 2nd years of schooling; b) critically analyse European and national assumptions, discourses, and practices related to the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the early years of schooling; c) reflect on the dynamics of linguistic, socio-interactive, cultural, and ethical communication interactions in today's plural societies; d) dimension the formative reach of learning native and foreign languages and cultures in the global formation of the student seen as a social actor; e) develop conceptual frameworks on educational policies that promote plurilingualism and the dialogue of cultures; f) consider the learning of English, the language of international communication, as a bridge between languages and cultures in the framework of promoting plurilingualism; g) mobilize current concepts and perspectives underlying foreign language education for children in the context of the 1st and 2nd years of schooling; h) know and mobilize learning and assessment strategies in the teaching and learning process of English in the early years of schooling; i) plan teaching units and lessons taking into account the principles defined in European and national reference documents; j) use physical and digital resources in the context of children's literature conducive to learning regarding the development of linguistic competencies in English but also transversal and interdisciplinary competencies typical of the 1st CBE curriculum.

When comparing the different editions, it is noted that some adaptations made to the first training course (given in the academic year 2019/2020) in the immediately following academic years have remained in the current year: on one hand, there was a substantial reduction in the number of face-to-face training hours that was sought to be compensated for with asynchronously developed work, which we consider did not compromise the quality of the training; on the other hand, this reduction prevented the course from being considered as higher education with ECTS credits. At the same time, this course provided for the supervision of a class of each of the trainees in 1st and 2nd CBE contexts. In this report, we will focus on the data collected in these monitored sessions that illustrate didactic-pedagogical paths that reflect the nature of PEPPA 6/7.

Through the teaching of the training course, it was sought to advocate a language teaching that aims to provide learners with multiple views of reality and critical thinking capable of problematizing and transforming it in an era of super-complexity and super-diversity in which we live [21]. In this context, the learner is seen as a co-constructor of their learnings and a flexible subject who wants to learn throughout life and take advantage of each challenge to reconfigure themselves. In this perspective, the pedagogical training and supervision were based on a creative dialogue between theoretical knowledge and teaching practice, a permanent reflection and questioning of didactic problems, considering effective and mutable learning activities, appropriate assessment methods, and open educational resources.

Like previous years [22, 23], we consider that this reconfiguration was triggered with the training course given, as the teachers involved had the opportunity to reflect, discuss and critically (re)think strategies and activities to be carried out in their contexts, developing a true culture of community practice. The pedagogical innovation of this project lies in the fact of seeking to implement practices based on a pedagogy for autonomy that seeks the constant transformation of the conditions, in which learning takes place and addresses the development of the social responsibility of critical consciousness of society and the proactive role of students throughout the process in the sense of dialogic experimentation and

reflection. The course was attended by 7 teachers from different school clusters and different 1st CBE schools of a municipality in the Greater Oporto Area. Relevant in the success of this training, besides the synchronous sessions, was the Moodle platform, which fostered reflection among peers and the sharing of experiences.

Just like in previous academic years, we opted to continue focusing on a self and hetero-supervisory approach [22, 23]. This time again, we had the opportunity to directly supervise the teaching practices of the teachers, which allowed us to see the implementation of the PEPPA 6/7 project in action. This chapter focuses on this observation. Therefore, we had the opportunity to develop monitoring activities in different schools of a municipality in the Greater Oporto Area. The objective of this monitoring process was to collect data that would allow us to understand the operationalization of teaching activities of PEPPA 6/7 by the English teachers in the 1st and 2nd years of schooling regarding the approaches, strategies, and resources mobilized during the project's implementation, including aspects such as content, learning climate, children's reactions, and evaluative practices. In this monitoring process, we used the observation grid available at <https://app.box.com/s/y5j12117xr7hf37twvqmqmjd7deiuuwz>. We remind you that, as in previous academic years, supervisory dynamics centered on observing practices in the school context were anticipated, using these self-observation and peer observation grids after them. Like other documents, this grid was created and discussed in a training situation with the involved teachers.

4 RESULTS

Now, let us move to an analysis of both the data collected through the application of the questionnaires and the observed practices, including their positive and negative aspects, considering the classes observed in the schools of each of the School Clusters.

4.1 Analysis of questionnaires data

Like the previous academic years, these trainees were invited to respond to a questionnaire available here: <https://forms.gle/WKD2HBrdPGoeJfhYA>. Regarding the first question, "Self-assess the extent to which you met the objectives of the Training Course for the Teaching of English in the 1st and 2nd years of schooling," it is worth noting that the trainees highlight the following objectives as those they developed the most: 1) mobilizing current concepts and perspectives underlying foreign language education for children in the context of the 1st and 2nd years of schooling; 2) knowing and mobilizing learning and evaluative strategies in the teaching and learning process of English in the early years of schooling; 3) using physical and digital resources in the context of children's literature conducive to learning concerning the development of linguistic competencies in English but also transversal and interdisciplinary competencies typical of the 1st CBE curriculum.

In turn, considering a global assessment of the training developed, some teachers indicate the following as examples: a) "(...) Of course, I have participated in various training actions in the field of English Teaching in the 1st cycle. However, teaching children aged 6 and 7 is quite different and requires differentiated pedagogical strategies. In this sense, this training was a real asset and a true refresh for me, as it allowed me to acquire new knowledge and also made me reflect on my practice, having changed certain strategies and included new resources." (P3); b) "Despite my twenty years of experience in teaching English to children, no training is bad training. It is always key to be updated on the newest pedagogic trends or just go back to and review the basics. I often found myself thinking, 'Oh, I remember that! I haven't done it for so long now!'. But I still think the most important is to share experiences and resources with the trainer and among trainees." (P5); c) "Throughout the training, debates addressing different themes of teaching English to young children and in their early years of Primary Education provided the opportunity to critically analyse educational policies, dynamics, strategies, educational practices, and more. The sharing of knowledge, experiences, and various educational practices used by other teachers, and even in documents provided by the trainer/teacher, was enriching as we constantly need to evaluate and reflect on our practices, the goals achieved, and those we still want to reach or improve. Thus, the training was also a form of awareness/reflection on the teaching-learning process of English to very young children. Besides, sharing some technological 'tools' that I was not familiar with was an added value as they can be used in the classroom, sometimes to consolidate knowledge, to diversify strategies, motivating students for more dynamic learning." (P6)

Therefore, we can consider that teachers highlight: a) on the one hand, the relevance of training as a collaborative reflection platform on approaches, strategies, and pedagogical-didactic resources; b) on the other hand, the importance of the training course and the supervision experience in reconfiguring their teaching professionalism.

Regarding the learning achieved in terms of approaches, strategies, and resources for teaching English in the 1st and 2nd years of schooling, some teachers refer to the storytelling approach and its use in this age group: a) "The handling of approaches, strategies, and resources for learning can be a key to the academic success of students if they essentially promote in the student the desire to learn. Regarding the approaches, I got to know storytelling better and was very motivated, so I started using it in my classes and will continue to use it more frequently." (P7); b) "With the training and task performed, I gained a greater awareness of the use of the strategy/resource of the picture book, as with the exploration of reading and the images of the book, we can work on various themes, vocabulary, and cross-curricular topics, and the students develop their imagination, visual literacy and create a scenario around everything that concerns the picture book." (P6).

In the discourse of the teachers, learning related to the development of communicative competencies of a plurilingual and intercultural nature in the English classroom of the 1st CEB also prevails: a) "(...) What I take most from this training action is the importance of the role that foreign languages play in valuing the linguistic diversity of students as a vehicle to express an individual and collective identity and the valuation of an interdisciplinary and articulated curriculum planning through the development of significant projects (storybooks) for students of this age group." (P4); b) "One of the things I took with me from these training sessions was the possibility to include a third language in the process of teaching. In my plan, I took a risk with teaching the water cycle in Spanish in a Year 2 CLIL class. I do confess I wasn't so sure about the result. But it was amazing!" (P3)

In turn, regarding learnings related to project methodology, some teachers mention strategies they learned for the first time and seem to be incorporating into their practices: "I better understood the importance of students leading their own learning, with the teacher as a moderator guiding students to discover for themselves. Children should be able to question and find solutions for discovery, with the KWL chart being a great strategy for developing this capacity. The teacher should encourage collaboration and autonomy among students, proposing the development of group projects." (P3)

Regarding aspects to improve and enhance in their practice, the teachers share the following: a) "Including other languages in the process. Do more role-playing and drama. Implementing more outdoor activities." (P5); b) "Use more physical and digital resources concerning Children's Literature that promote English learning and further develop the linguistic competencies of students in cultural, socio-cultural, and interdisciplinary term." (P6)

Finally, regarding the practical applicability/implementation in the field of the learnings and knowledge developed in the training, it is clear that some of the teachers have already had the opportunity to reconfigure their practice, as is the case with these teachers: a) "from the strategies and resources transmitted, some I already used, I resorted more frequently to pair or group work, used the KWL chart for the first time, employed various picture books, encouraged cooperative and discovery learning, resorted very frequently to pickers (<https://get.pickers.com>), guessing games through touch and taste, utilized memory games several times, a mirror to improve diction, invisible ink pens, and bingo. I developed a small project based on the book 'I love the Earth' by Todd Parr, starting from Earth Day. Different types of pollution and the 3 R's: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle were addressed (P3); b) I also noticed that the use of storytelling, nursery rhymes, and traditional children's songs promotes the social and emotional development of students. Similarly, this approach also favours a mutually cooperative environment between the English Teacher and the Homeroom Teacher, and as a result, the classroom becomes a more dynamic space. (P4)

Meanwhile, the works developed by the teachers illustrate these representations. The teachers were invited to create a plan for an interdisciplinary project from a picture book, aiming to carry out an approach centred on project methodology. This task highlights the multiplicity of approaches and diversity of resources/products created, consistent with the philosophy of project methodology. Additional examples of these approaches and resources can be found in the following links provided: <https://app.box.com/s/abbht4zc7799j8vjwf4vi92b857aih5t>;
<https://app.box.com/s/zdov24muizvstmzuy7d6fafzbaxobeqe>;
<https://app.box.com/s/jc8fhw6akhwk0o0af5pfm4uf8tt2hvj1>.

The PEPPA 6/7 project precisely aims to leverage holistic, transdisciplinary, and emancipatory approaches [24], utilizing authentic resources that promote the development of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, communication, and creativity. With PEPPA 6/7, the project seeks to promote the use of strategies and resources beyond the textbook, moving away from paradigms of mechanical learning and repetition-based education. As previously indicated, PEPPA 6/7 values a model that organizes learning around projects, which are described as complex tasks "based on decision making,

or investigative activities; give students the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended periods of time; and culminate in realistic products or presentations" [4]

4.2 Analysis of in-class practices

The second part of our analysis will be carried out considering the following categorization: a) start-of-class routines; b) non-digital authentic resources; c) active approaches with hypersensory resources; d) end-of-class routines.

Regarding the beginning of class routines, most teachers choose a song as a resource to mark the beginning of the English class and to motivate the students for the activities that follow. Although there is some diversity, the most popular song is the "Hello Song" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tVlcKp3bWH8&feature=youtu.be>). This song also touches upon moods, allowing students to indicate how they are feeling: "I'm good!", "I'm great!", "I'm wonderful!", or "I'm not so good". It is noteworthy that several teachers ensure that all students indicate how they feel, selecting the phrase that best suits their mood. This practice allows students to develop their oral expression from the beginning of the class. Not all teachers use gestures or any dance-based routine when exploring the song. Such an active approach would be recommended, especially when combined with gestures from Portuguese Sign Language (PSL). In the "Didactics of English for the 1st and 2nd years of schooling" course, trainees learned how to learn and incorporate LGP gestures into such activities using the dynamic dictionary available at <https://www.spreadthesign.com/pt.pt/search/>.

Another routine to note at the beginning of the class is analysing the weather. All teachers opted for this type of routine. In most cases, students, in a rotating regime, indicate the weather condition. After a collaborative observation of the weather and the allocation of flashcards (using Velcro), students verbalize: "It's sunny," "It's cloudy," etc.

Regarding the use of authentic and non-authentic resources, only one teacher uses a course book. The remaining teachers create or reuse materials. Notably, several teachers use items such as mystery boxes or surprise backpacks, which students must analyse and explore to motivate the theme of the class. For example, in one lesson, the teacher explores the box by showing and reading the information on the box, shaking the box so that the students understand that there is something inside it, and inviting some students to feel and take out items it contains. The box contains stuffed animals. Each student shows the animal to the class, and the name of the animal in English is introduced (e.g., pig). The teacher asks the student to repeat the word, inquiring about the animal's colour and size. Students are also invited to imitate the animal through gestures and sounds.

Another resource that occupies a prominent place in the teaching and learning process of 1st and 2nd-year classes is the picture book. In one observed lesson, the teacher uses the picture book "Where's Spot?". In another observed lesson, a teacher uses the picture book "Lara, the Yellow Ladybird," using it to work on values based on diversity, where everyone is "special," "rare," and "unique". In Figure 1, another teacher works with the picture book "From head to toe," exploring body parts, movements, and animal characteristics. As indicated by the teacher in her planning, "Welcome to the engaging and interactive English language learning project 'Animals All Around.' This project is designed for students in the 1st and 2nd grades, aiming to foster their English language skills while exploring the fascinating world of animals. Through the exploration of body parts and animal movements, students will embark on a captivating journey filled with creativity, research, collaboration, and self-expression. Over the course of four engaging lessons, students will delve into the pages of the book 'From Head to Toe' and extend their learning by selecting, drawing, and painting additional animals. With the guidance of the English teacher and collaboration with the homeroom teachers, students will work together to compile their artwork into a captivating flipbook. Get ready to unleash your imagination, dive into the animal kingdom, and embark on a memorable language learning adventure!" (P4).

As illustrated in the plan created by the teacher, the project methodology, grounded in storytelling practices, enables the development of 21st-century skills. We can point out that these practices develop skills in students like those developed in the context of natural sciences as indicated by Mantzicopoulos & Patrick [25]: "during reading, children learn the functions and structure of the language of science as they ask questions, describe their observations and experiences, explain, justify, and summarize". Indeed, these linguistic skills not only make students comfortable when discussing their understanding of certain concepts but also provide a foundation for studying other topics in other disciplinary areas [26].



Figure 1. Teacher working with the picture book "From head to toe"

Additionally, it's worth highlighting a lesson based on the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach where students were invited to work on content from the Environmental Studies area, specifically the water cycle. Using the story "The Little Raindrop" and following a storytelling approach, the teacher worked on the water cycle theme, allowing students to also explore other resources in English (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncORPosDrjl>) and Spanish (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBp9PZGsH6E>).

Active approaches are fundamental in PEPPA 6/7 classrooms. They require a higher focus of attention from the teacher, and co-teaching becomes evident in the implementation of English teaching and learning practices of this nature in the 1st CEB. It is worth noting that in this last edition of PEPPA 6/7, a true collaborative effort between homeroom teachers and specialists was observed, both in the preparation of activities and their implementation. Regarding active approaches, students can use their bodies in learning through routines related to songs. These songs allow students to practice vocabulary in action, where students can say expressions like "Run like a dog!", "Jump like a rabbit", "Roll like a cat", among others. In a lesson dedicated to the water cycle theme, a teacher ventured a little further and used a more demanding song (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KM-59ljA4Bs>) in terms of comprehension, titled "Water Recycle", but worked it adequately with her students, exploring the concepts used, including routines, gestures, and rhythms used throughout the rap.

Regarding the routines at the end of a class, it is suggested that teachers should incorporate more diverse strategies to assess the understanding of the topics worked on during the lesson, such as "thumbs up/thumbs down strategy" and learning self-monitoring sheets. The Plickers tool (<https://get.plickers.com>) is employed by the teacher to test understanding from the reading of the picture book. Each student can share their answers to each question through an individualized QR code. Individual responses are not shared; instead, a chart is displayed at the end with the group's most common responses and the correct answer. The same occurred in the session dedicated to "The Water Cycle" theme, where students had the opportunity to participate in a gamified activity conducted through the Kahoot platform.

The Interactive Multimedia Board (IMB) is also used for the consolidation of learnings. Here, a student is associating the animal with a type of action it can perform: "giraffe" and "bend my neck," for example. IMBs "are quite important in the modern foreign languages classroom, and they offer a new learning experience: we call it the 2.0 learning experience (...) the use of websites, CD-ROMs, games, Word documents or even PowerPoint slideshows in conjunction with highlighting, annotation and dragging-and-dropping activities, foster pupils' competences of (re)reading or (re)thinking knowledge" [27].

Additionally, it's worth mentioning the multiple mini-projects developed by students in the observed sessions. These mini-projects allow students to take home a result from the class and discuss their learnings with their caregivers. Concluding this section is a product that deserves special attention, demonstrating that students benefiting from PEPPA 6/7 develop their plurilingual competence. An example is a project related to the water cycle, where it's observed that a student used both English and Spanish to label the elements that are part of her poster (Figure 2).

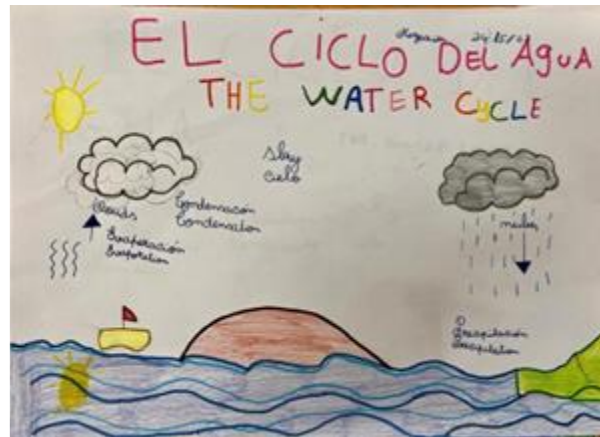


Figure 2. Multilingual Poster about the Water Cycle created by a pupil.

Regarding end-of-class routines, it is desirable for these to be more diversified, as most teachers either finish with a song (usually the "Goodbye song") or with one of the mini-projects we have discussed. In this context, a notable choice by one of the teachers is the use of a song linked to tidying up materials, specifically "Clean Up" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFE0mMWbA-Y>).

5 CONCLUSIONS

Aiming at the global and eco-sustainable development of the child, PEPPA 6/7 allows learners to understand and experiment with the English language in an emancipatory pedagogical context centred on hypermedial practices and resources [24].

Regarding the positive aspects this academic year, we would like to highlight the following in relation to the collected data and observed practices: a) The use of authentic resources, both physical and digital, based on gamification that fosters linguistic learning at the foreign language level; b) The importance given to the development of phonological awareness from an early age through the use of songs and videos typical of target cultures; c) The relevance of the project approach that allows the development of formative practices for evaluating learning; d) The use of storytelling and picture books fostered by the successful execution of scaffolding practices; e) The proactive participation of students in practices fostered through hypersensory resources; f) The effective co-teaching between the homeroom teacher and the specialist teacher in pre-class activities and during the execution of activities.

In this fourth year, we had the opportunity to continue implementing the project that promotes a project methodology to form empowered and proactive citizens in their global community (Council of Europe, 2016). Through training practices and self-supervision and hetero-supervision reflected in this report, teachers were able to reconfigure their teaching professionalism, verifying the realization and consolidation of the following assumptions already developed in the first years of implementing this project, namely: a) the effective mobilization of linguistic, scientific, and pedagogical knowledge necessary for pedagogical practice in the 1st and 2nd years of schooling; b) the scientific and pedagogical updating of teachers.

Documents co-created in the cycle of previous training and monitoring were considered, namely the assessment framework for pre-A1 level, and plans and materials were created for the development of English teaching and learning practices in the 1st and 2nd years whose quality accounts for an effective curricularisation of English in the 1st and 2nd years of schooling in the geographical area of Maia. However, it is recommended to invest more in practices such as the following: a) reflection on the reading/writing approach in the 1st and 2nd years of schooling; b) a diversification of class finalization practices; c) the promotion of self-evaluation practices of learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is financed by national funds through FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P., within the scope of the project UIDB/ 05198/2020 (Centre for Research and Innovation in Education, inED). <https://doi.org/10.54499/UIDB/05198/2020>

REFERENCES

- [1] J. Dewey. *Experience and Education*. USA: Kappa Delta Pi, 1938.
- [2] P. Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1970.
- [3] J. Mezirow. *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. USA: Jossey-Bass, 1991.
- [4] J. W. Thomas. *A Review of Research on Project-Based Learning*. USA: Autodesk Foundation, 2000.
- [5] G. Kuh. *Excellence in Higher Education*, USA: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
- [6] J. Larmer. *Gold Standard PBL: Essential Project Design Elements*, USA: Buck Institute for Education, 2020.
- [7] K. Buyukkarci. "A critical analysis of task-based learning". *Kastamonu Journal of Education*, 17, 313-20, 2009.
- [8] B. Yasar, M. Cruz. "The effects of project-based learning using storytelling on enhancing EFL young learners 21st Century Skills" in *issuEs'22 – Issues in Education* (M. Cruz, A. Couto A, F. Lambert, eds), Porto: P.PORTO/ESE, 2022.
- [9] M. Cruz. "Escaping from the traditional classroom: the 'Escape Room Methodology' in the foreign languages classroom". *Babylonia*, 3, 26-29, 2019.
- [10] M. Group. enGauge 21st Century Skills: Digital Literacies for a Digital Age 2002. 1-32.
- [11] J. Chen. "Designing Online Project-based Learning Instruction for EFL Learners: A WebQuest Approach". *MEXTESOL Journal*, 9, 43, 1-7, 2019.
- [12] D. W. Orr. *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World*. USA: State University of New York Press, 1992.
- [13] J. A. Banks. *Diversity and Citizenship Education: Global Perspectives*, USA: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- [14] G. Ellis, J. Brewster, D. Girard. *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. London: Penguin Books, 1992.
- [15] I. K. Ghosn. "Four good reasons to use literature in primary school ELT". *ELT Journal*, 56, 2, 172–179, 2002.
- [16] N. Harmer, A. Stokes. *The benefits and challenges of project-based learning: A review of the literature*. Pedagogical Research Institute and Observatory, 2014.
- [17] P. Crawford, D. Hade. "Inside the Picture, Outside the Frame: Semiotics and the Reading of Wordless Picture Books". *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 15, 1, 2020.
- [18] J. Cummins. *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2000.
- [19] M. C. Nussbaum. *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, USA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- [20] M. Prensky. "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants". *On the Horizon*, 9, 5, 2001.
- [21] R. Barnett. *Realizing the university in an age of supercomplexity*. UK: Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press, 2000.
- [22] M. Cruz. *PEPPA 6/7 - Primary English Teaching Practice Programme for Ages 6/7 - Relatório do Projeto 2020-2021*, Porto: P.PORTO/ESE, 2021.
- [23] M. Cruz, C. Pinto, J. Costa. *PEPPA 6/7 - Primary English Teaching Practice Programme for Ages 6/7 - Relatório do Projeto 2019-2020*. Porto: P.PORTO/ESE, 2021.
- [24] M. Jiménez Raya, T. Lamb, F. Vieira. *Pedagogy for Autonomy in Language Education in Europe – Towards a framework for learner and teacher development*. Dublin: Authentik, 2007.
- [25] P. Mantzicopoulos, H. Patrick. "Reading picture books and learning science: Engaging young children with informational text". *Theory Into Practice*, 50, 4, 269-76, 2011.
- [26] R. Price, C. Lennon. Using children's literature to teach mathematics. *Quantile*, 2009.
- [27] A. Durán, M. Cruz. "The Interactive Whiteboard And Language Learning: A Case Study". *Porta Linguarum*, 15, 2011.