
FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Teacher Training and Teaching Practice: A Case Study

Orlando Strecht-Ribeiro
Escola Superior de Educação de Lisboa

Introduction

Of vital importance to the successful implementation of the teaching of FLs in the 1st Cycle¹ is the training of the teachers themselves. Both in initial training and in continuous and/or specialised training the FLs and their methodologies should be regarded as urgent priorities, especially if we consider the role played by Portugal in the European Union. In this context, back-up therefore needs to be given to programmes aiming at the introduction of FLs in the 1st Cycle, with particular reference to the training and development of teachers; at present there are very few teachers with the training necessary, i.e. up-to-date language-teaching methodology, to implement innovation. The teacher inevitably assumes a key role in this whole process since it is he/she who will direct the entire operation inside the classroom. As stated in the Council of Europe (1989) publication entitled «Language Learning in Europe: the Challenge of Diversity»:

“The key figure, it was felt, in this innovation is the teacher. There was general agreement that many teachers feel anxious and threatened by the demands made on them by the move to a communicative approach to language teaching. These anxieties derive in part from:

- A feeling of inadequate language competence in a communicative sense. This is more marked among primary teachers who are not narrowly specialised teachers of language only.
- New knowledge in areas which teachers themselves did not study during initial or ongoing professional development - areas such as pragmatics, sociolinguistics, etc.
- The need to accept educational views and values that are felt to be contrary to cherished traditions or to which the teacher does not subscribe. In particular, the change of teacher-role to that of facilitator of pupil-centred learning poses problems for teachers in a culture or school environment which works predominantly on an authoritarian, ‘top-down’ model. (p. 73).”

¹ 1st Cycle = Primary School, 6- 10 years; 2nd Cycle, 10- 12 years; 3rd Cycle, 13-15 years.

A fresh approach is needed to teacher training or ongoing teacher development at this level. This should be based on realistic goals which, while allowing training to take place within a reasonable period of time, also makes for the development or acquisition of the specific competencies necessary for a classroom performance that satisfies the requisite quality criteria in terms of the methodological principles outlined above.

The teacher is expected to have at his command a whole range of skills and attitudes that make for successful performance in this innovative field. Among these, the following should be stressed:

- linguistic and communicative competence for the classroom;
- metalinguistic competence;
- methodological competence;
- psycho-pedagogic competence;
- in-depth knowledge of the needs, interests and learning strategies of the pupils;
- ability to understand and exploit the contextual and situational variables of the school and the classroom;
- ability to work together with school colleagues and with the community;
- ability to reflect systematically on his/her own practice;
- ability to open up the world to the children.

We are clearly dealing with an area in which there is much to discover and research. Only through the reflection of practising 1st-Cycle teachers and their involvement in projects concerned with training research and innovation, especially those linked to training institutes, can we hope to shed light on the many questions currently of concern to us all and which hold the key to a definition of the future.

This pressing need for training led to the creation of a Specialised Higher Studies Course (CESE) in FLs for the 1st Cycle (French and English) at the Higher School of Education in Lisbon. The school was a pioneer in the field, not only because it was the first to design and operate such a course but also because it was an inspiration to others, albeit, as far as we know, not many have managed, unfortunately, to get a CESE off the ground.

1 Description of the CESE

The curricular structure of this course, like the syllabus development of each of its components, was based both on the theoretical assumptions outlined above and on the conclusions drawn from the results of a questionnaire designed according to the same rationale and applied to a large number of 1st Cycle teachers from schools in the Lisbon area. This was included in an institutional research project financed by the JNICT (PCED/DTC/32/91) in which we were privileged to participate. This research project functioned as

the groundwork for all subsequent investigation and was designed according to a needs analysis focused on the specific skills to be developed in each trainee, bearing in mind his potential and base skills, as well as the objectives to be achieved.

A course lasting two academic years (1020 hours) was therefore designed with the aim of preparing teachers of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education, with a 'Bacharelato' qualification or equivalent, to teach foreign languages at this level. The following goals were established for the trainees:

- a) to gain adequate command of the F.L. (French or English);
- b) to acquire techniques suitable for the implementation of the teaching learning process (French or English) in the 6-10 age bracket;
- c) to make the necessary syllabus adjustments in order to maximise the educational responses required by each group of children individually;
- d) to help, encourage and implement the integration of FLs into the 1st Cycle curriculum, in both inter- and cross-curricular terms;
- e) to carry out, support and assess specific programmes for the teaching of Portuguese to the non-Portuguese speaking minorities inside the educational system.

The course was held outside working hours (after 16.30) and included the following:

- a) Theory, including General Linguistics, FL Learning/Acquisition, Multicultural Education, Social Interaction and Development of Pupils, Syllabus Theory and Design, Interactive Processes between Educational Teams, Research Methodologies;
- b) Theory/Practice, including French & English Language and Culture I and II, Foreign Language Methodology I and II, New Technologies in Foreign Language Teaching, Research Project/Pedagogic Innovation;
- c) Practice - Class Observation and Teaching.

The study plan was worked out so that in the first year emphasis would be given to Teaching Theory, thus equipping participants for the Practice Stage, which would take place in the teachers' own school and be adapted to the particular curriculum he or she would be following in the 2nd year. Thus the study plan for the course was designed as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

The course outlined above was offered as a potentially effective means to achieve the desired training and included a series of well-balanced components which, if correctly implemented, would lead to the development of a range of teaching skills considered relevant to the fulfilment of the aims previously defined. We shall therefore proceed with an analysis of aspects of the course in operation.

Table 1

1st Year			
Subject	Duration	Theory/ practice	Timetable h.p.w.
General Linguistics	1 year/45 hrs	T	1,5
Learning/Acquisition Models	1 year/60 hrs	T	2
Social Interaction & Development of Pupils	1 Semester/30 hrs	T	2
Multicultural Education	1 Semester/30 hrs	T	2
Research Methodologies	1 Semester/30 hrs	T	2
Fr. or Eng. Language and Culture I	1 year/120 hrs	T/P	4
FL Methodology I	1 year/120 hrs	T/P	4
Craft Workshops	1 Semester/30 hrs	P	2
TOTAL	465 hrs		15,5

Table 2

2nd YEAR			
Subject	Duration	Theory/ Practice	Timetable hpw
Fr. or Eng. Language and Culture II	1 year/120 hrs	T/P	4
FL Methodology II	1 year/150 hrs	T/P	5
New Technologies in FL Teaching	1 year/75 hrs	T/P	2
Syllabus Theory and Design	1 Semester/30 hrs	T	2
Interactive Processes betw. Educational Teams	1 Semester/30 hrs	T	2
Research project/Pedagogic Innovation	1 Semester/30 hrs	T	2
Observation/Teaching Practice	1 Year/90 hrs	P	3
TOTAL	655 hrs		20

2 Aims of the Study

With regard to its contribution to a change in attitude towards the teaching and learning of a FL in the 1st Cycle, as well as to its influence on the ability of teachers to put this change into positive, effective practice, the aims of the study centre on two pivotal issues:

- a) to find out how far it is possible, on a course of moderate duration, to change the attitudes of 1st Cycle teachers in terms of both the role of the FL in the syllabus of this Cycle and of the methods and principles guiding their pedagogic practice;
- b) to determine how far these attitudes are reflected in their actual classroom practice, in terms of both planning and execution.

If training is important for the recycling and updating of teachers' knowledge, it is no less important to evaluate its effects on their pedagogic practice with a view to obtaining information that will be of use in future reformulation or empirically-based modifications. Our intention is therefore, on the one hand, to identify areas of weakness in the design of the course and/or in the theoretical and practical application of its components, with a

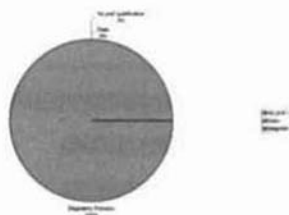
view to making subsequent courses more effective; and on the other to identify difficulties encountered by the teachers and strategies they devised to overcome them. We therefore worked on the principle that one can always learn from the experience of other teachers and thus avoid the pitfalls into which they may have unwittingly fallen. The most stringent requirement, in terms of the quality and impact of the training, is that teachers be aware of all the changes occurring and that they engage in serious reflection about their own teaching, so that they can develop a new professionalism capable of rising to the challenges presented.

3 The Case-study Group

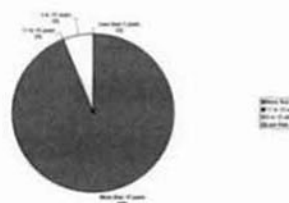
The number of students who enrolled at the beginning of the course was obviously limited by the *numerus clausus* (25) and also larger than the number of students who stayed on until the end (16). All those who dropped out did so before the end of the second semester. Applicants were selected by means of analysis of their CVs, together with the result of a written and oral French or English test at intermediate level, which they did prior to enrolment. All the teachers applied on their own initiative and had to pay fees throughout the two years of the course, which in itself speaks for their motivation and positive attitude towards the goals set. The number of participants makes it extremely difficult to generalise on the results of the study which, being of a descriptive nature and involving interpretation and evaluation of particular pedagogic events, demands reliability above all else.

The following graphics illustrate some of the academic and professional qualifications of the teachers involved in the CESE.

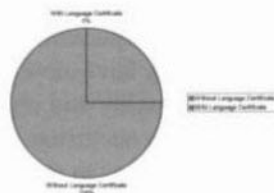
1 - Educational Background



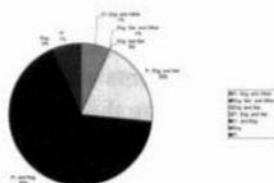
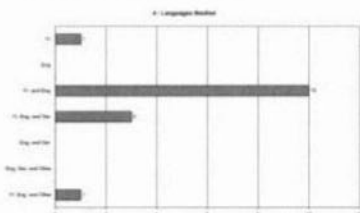
2 - Length of Service



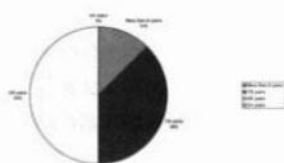
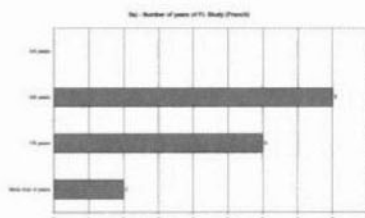
3 - Language Certificates



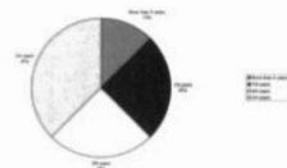
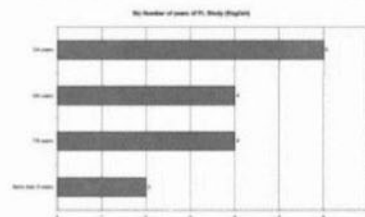
4 - Languages Studied



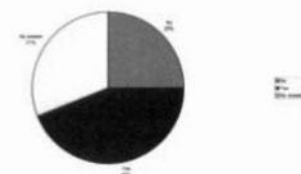
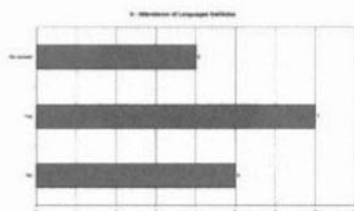
5a) - Number of years of FL Study (French)



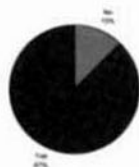
5b) - Number of years of FL Study (English)



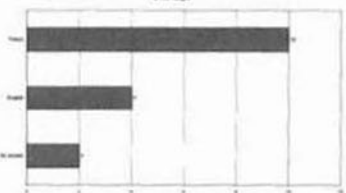
6 - Attendance of Language Institutes



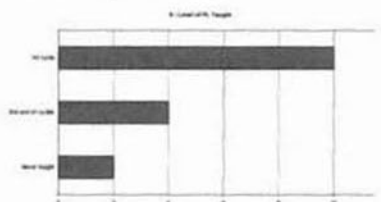
7 - Experience of FL Teaching



8 - FL Taught



9 - Level of FL Taught



4 Methodology/Questionnaire

The conclusions drawn from the results of the questionnaire applied in the research project described earlier were used as the basis for this analysis, not only because we were involved in its design and prior application and were aware of its strengths and occasional weaknesses, but because we are convinced that the key questions it contains are still of the utmost relevance to the topic under discussion.

The questionnaire had been designed to facilitate the collection of data in the following areas:

- 1) personal information: identification of the institution (1.1), personal identification (1.2), general educational background (1.3.1, 1.3.2), specific academic training in FL (2.1), professional training (1.3, 1.4), experience of teaching FL (2.4) and length of service (1.4);
- 2) representations of the applicants' desired level of knowledge in the

language(s) (2.2, 2.3) and respective teaching experience;
 3) representations of the objectives underlying FL teaching in the 1st Cycle (2.5, 2.6);
 4) representations concerning the type of methodologies to develop (2.7);
 5) availability to collaborate on projects to implement FLs in the 1st Cycle (3.1, 3.2).
 6) The questionnaire, following a pilot run to test the clarity of its items, completed by a group of teachers selected at random from those to whom we had immediate access, was mailed to the 120 1st Cycle schools in the Lisbon area. A second batch was later sent to the schools, which had failed to respond the first time, thus producing a total of 98 completed questionnaires. (These came from 74 schools, so there was not a one-to-one correspondence between the schools and the number of questionnaires returned). This number was in itself significant, and the collating replies. Two types of graphics showed the data obtained for each of the items.

Everything suggests that the CESE students' initial answers to the questionnaire confirmed the trends shown by the conclusions drawn from the subsequent application of the questionnaire: the CV analysis for admission to the course revealed that we were dealing with a group of teachers who were clearly interested in the issues to be addressed and who in training, age, experience and motivation were in all ways similar to those who actually completed the questionnaire. The strategy adopted was the later application of the same questionnaire to these teachers, immediately upon completion of the course, in an attempt to assess to what extent, if any, the tenor of their replies had changed.

The areas focused on in 2, 3, and 4 were those in which we were most interested because, since they were the ones that had been the subject of particular attention, they would probably provide the clearest indicators of changes brought about as a result of involvement in the course. The categories analysed, the question-types and the respective numbers are presented in the following chart:

Table III - Classification of Questionnaire Items for a Comparative Study of the Responses for the Two Groups.

Category	Question-Type	Question No.
FL/Mother Tongue Connection	Categoric: Yes/No/No opinion	2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.5.5
FL and Pupil Development	Categoric: Yes/No/No opinion	2.5.3, 2.5.4, 2.5.7, 2.5.8
FL and General and Specific Educational Objectives	Categoric: Yes/No/No opinion	2.5.6, 2.5.9, 2.5.10, 2.5.11, 2.5.12
FL/Curriculum Connection	Checklist Open Categoric: Yes/No/No opinion	2.6.1, 2.6.2, 2.6.3, 2.7.1*
FL/Other Areas Connection (Methodology)	Categoric: Yes/No/No opinion Open	2.7.2*, 2.7.3*, 2.7.4, 2.7.5, 2.7.6
Language Competence	Scale	2.2

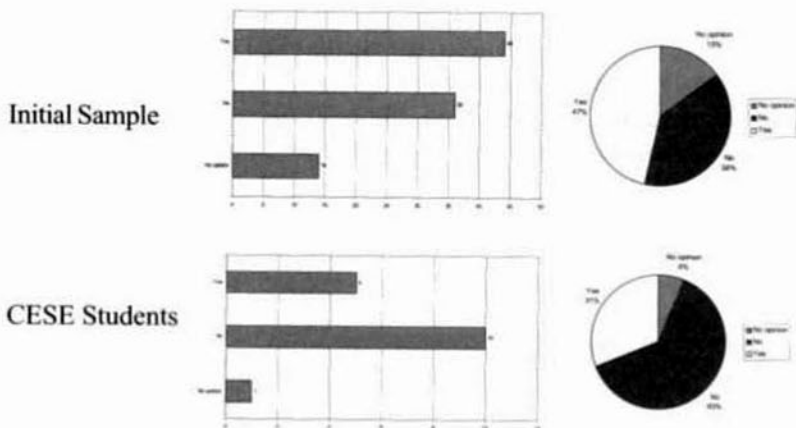
The first question posed in the study was formulated as follows:

Have there been any changes in the representations of the teachers involved in the CESE in respect of their level of language knowledge, type of objectives to pursue for teaching a FL in the 1st Cycle and type of methodologies to develop?

5 Results

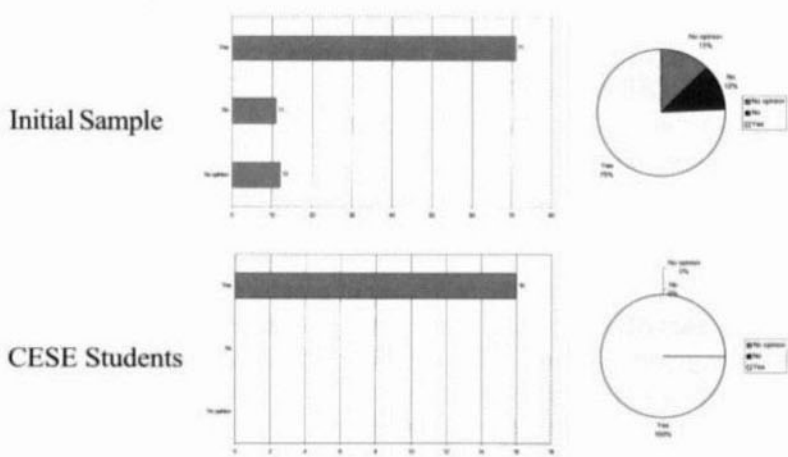
For ease of reference the two types of graphics illustrating the data obtained for each of the items at the time the questionnaire was applied to the reference group and the CESE group are presented on the same page. The bar graphs show the distribution of replies by the various categories selected; the pie-charts show the corresponding percentages.

Item 2.5.1. *The grammatical content taught in the FL should already be mastered by the child in the Mother Tongue.*



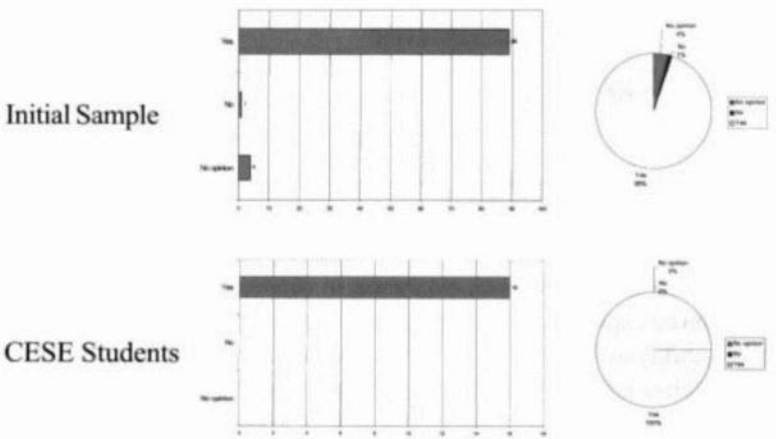
The sharp increase in negative responses to this question (from 38,3% to 62,5%) can certainly not be interpreted as a way of denying the close relationship between the FL and the Mother Tongue (Auerbach, 1995). Rather it should be taken as reflecting an evolution in representations of how that relationship can be exploited; by selecting tasks appropriate to the development of the child's ability to 'learn to learn' languages, its knowledge of the Mother Tongue, which has hitherto been merely intuitive, can be made explicit. We can therefore take as current the idea that this knowledge can be made explicit through the prior observation and analysis of the linguistic phenomena of the FL.

Item 2.5.2. *Exposure to a foreign language and culture brings with it an increased awareness of the Mother Tongue and culture*



The percentage of affirmative responses to this item (100%) confirms the assimilation of one of the most important assumptions of the training process: the idea that early contact with a FL can lead to a child's increased ability to understand the workings of the language system of its mother tongue. This underlines the "mirror effect", whereby the child is enabled, through a process of reflection, to find cultural and linguistic similarities and differences between the two languages (Merchant, 1991); it thus embarks on the road to linguistic knowledge and the recognition of the sociocultural idiosyncrasies of its own 'world'.

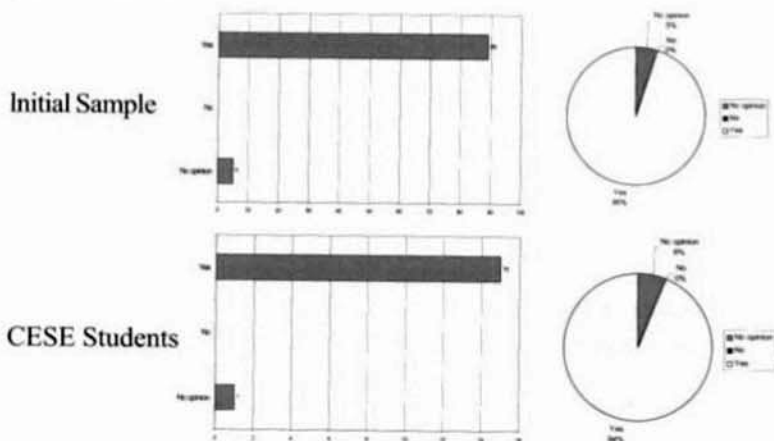
Item 2.5.3. Learning a FL promotes cognitive development.



The unanimously affirmative answers to this item (100%) confirm acquisition of the principle that the experience of analysing (contrastively or otherwise) the workings of two different language systems can give the

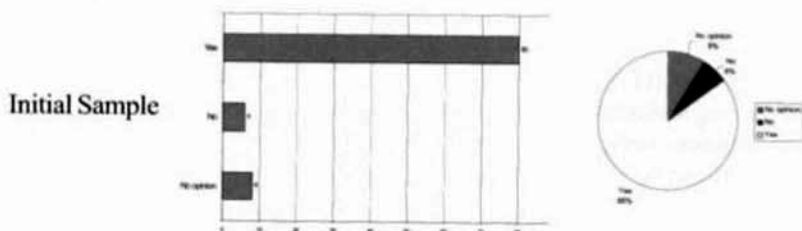
child greater mental flexibility, enhanced concept-formation and a broader range of cognitive capacities (Kecskés, 1995). Furthermore, it should also mean the development of meta-linguistic and meta-communicative capacities, in direct relation to the view of FL learning put forward throughout the course.

Item 2.5.4. *Learning a FL can lead to changes in the establishing of interpersonal relationships.*



The percentual similarity between the responses of the two groups to this item may conceal qualitative differences in the assumptions held by the respondents. The first group may be working on the premise that FL is synonymous with communication, relationship and interaction - a view commonly held towards the teaching of FL in our educational system. The second group, on the other hand, while also aware of this kind of approach to the FL teaching/learning process may be supporting the view, heavily emphasised in training, that the socio-cultural dimension in FL teaching will lead to removal of the ethnocentric view and a progressive opening up to others (Delmine and Vermeulen, 1992), both through an attenuation of cultural diseases like racism and intolerance, and the development of the capacity to act communicatively beyond the limits hitherto imposed.

Item 2.5.5. *FL exposure highlights the workings of the grammatical system of the Mother Tongue.*



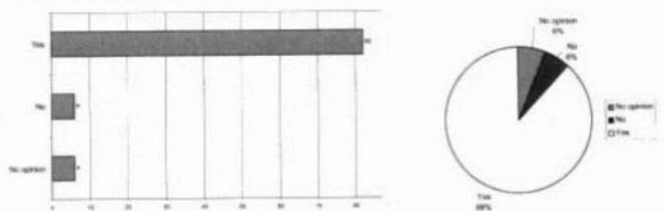
CESE Students



The percentage of affirmative responses to this item (100%), when compared to the result obtained for the initial sample (85,1 %), leaves no doubt as to the positive evolution in respondent representation with regard to the relationship between the FL and the mother tongue. The Initial Sample, while recognising the strength of this relationship, were somewhat insecure as to how to approach the FL: 8,5% had no opinion on the subject and 6,4% thought that the FL and the mother tongue did not necessarily have to come into contact. The notion of the existence of a reciprocal influence between the two languages as highlighted by, among others, Vygotsky (1987), seems to have been accepted without reservation by the trainee teachers.

Item 2.5.6. *The FL makes a significant contribution to the achievement of overall educational aims.*

Initial Sample



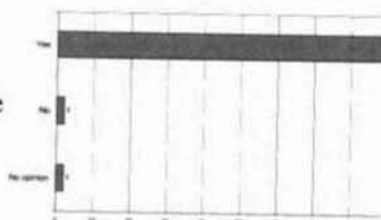
CESE Students



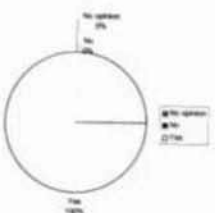
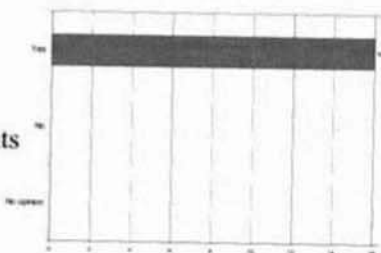
The increase in the number of affirmative responses, from 87,5% to 93,8%, together with the absence of negative responses, compared with 6,4% for the Initial Sample, shows awareness of the important role to be played by the FL in the 1st Cycle, and thus justifies the need to extend opportunities for this kind of contact to an ever larger number of pupils. The implementation of FL learning at this level is directly related to demands on schools to intervene, in a systematic way, in the social and moral sphere and in the overall development of the child, restoring it to the centre of a process of action and reflection which will open up the way to that integrated overall development to which we so earnestly aspire.

Item 2.5.7. *Learning a FL is a step towards student autonomy.*

Initial Sample



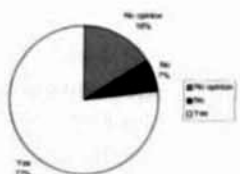
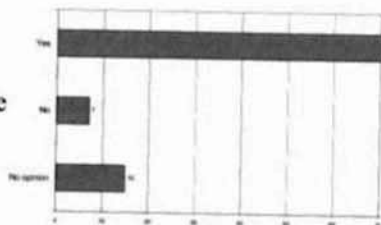
CESE Students



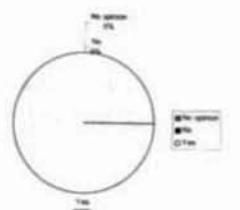
Responses to this item would seem to confirm acquisition of the principle that learning a FL can be a powerful instrument in the development of meta-cognitive capacities (Holec, 1981). In the responses of the first group one can only infer assumptions of the type commonly expressed as “the more languages you can speak the better”, in the utilitarian sense that a language is a tool for living. The second group, in accordance with the training perspective, is perhaps more convinced that a mastery of various language codes, when put into service as a means to decipher reality, will necessarily enhance and stimulate mental flexibility and creative and imaginative agility. This escape from centrism can only occur when one discovers what is human in men and grasps the universal in the particular.

Item 2.5.8. *Learning a FL contributes to the development of critical reflection.*

Initial Sample

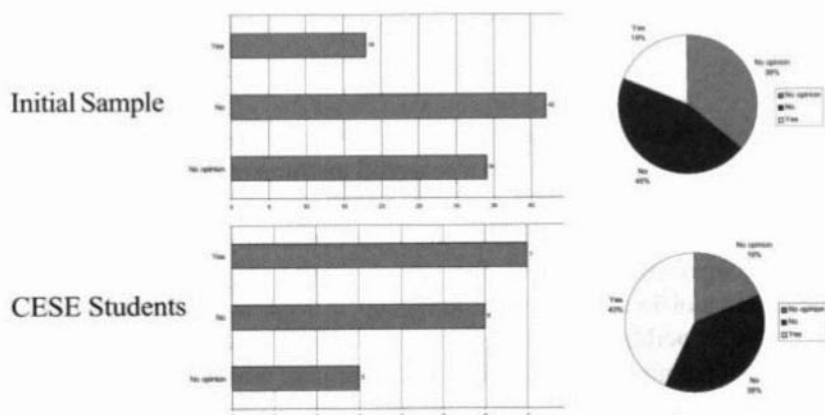


CESE Students



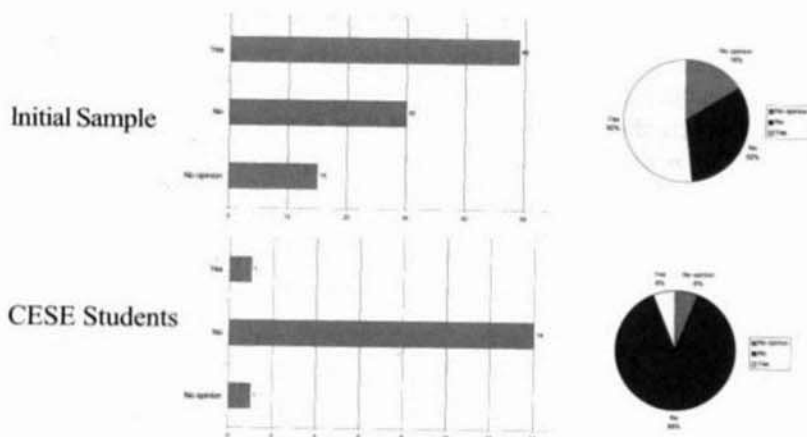
The unanimously affirmative responses to this question as compared with the 76,6% from the Initial Sample, are indicative of a significant evolution in the representations related to the item. It would seem to be clearly understood that the communication with others facilitated by the FL is a natural spur to critical reflection not only in order, through observation and analysis of behaviours, to explore other cultures and mentalities, but also, through increased intellectual agility, to analyse the ways, linguistic and otherwise, in which these differences can manifest themselves. Reflection on linguistic 'facts' will foster reflection on sociocultural facts, and vice versa, in a harmony which always implies reflection and never judgement.

Item 2.5.9. The specific objectives of the FL should be of paramount importance.



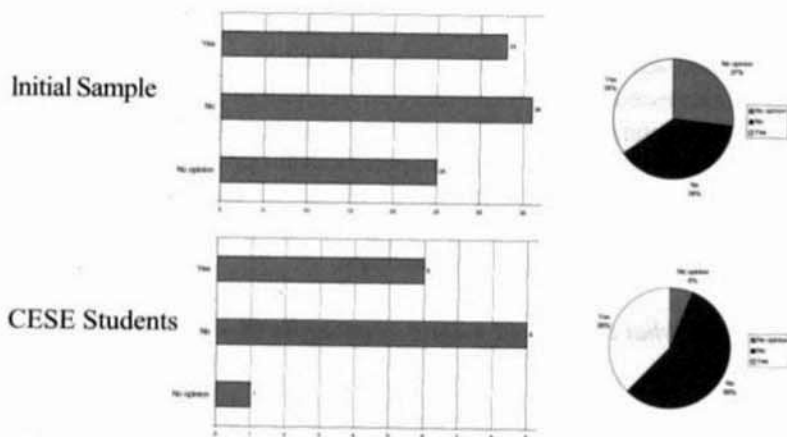
The responses to this item would seem at first glance to suggest some regression. Indeed, while the percentage of “no opinions” fell from 36,2% to 18,8%, indicating a less unequivocal stance on the part of the respondents, the radical swing in the affirmative responses - from 19,1 % in the Initial Sample to 43,8% in the CESE group - would seem to run counter to the philosophy of the course, in which it was always vigorously maintained that it is the wealth of activities at the FL teacher’s command, combined with their consequent contribution to the overall aims of education, that justifies the inclusion of the FL in the 1st Cycle curriculum. However, this stance adopted by the teachers cannot be divorced from the fact that we are dealing with a training course for the teaching of FL, which necessarily makes it the object of re-evaluation and enhancement as an educational process. This may have contributed to some deviation in its favour in the responses obtained.

Item 2.5.10. In the 1st Cycle it is sufficient for children to understand and speak the FL.



There is no doubt that what underlies the altered response to this item by the second group is the acquisition of the principle that learning to read and write a FL is associated with the cognitive capacities of logical reasoning and solving abstract problems. The exclusively oral approach to the FL is firmly rejected (87,5%), showing that contact with the written language is understood to be an important factor in the development of a more distanced and critical attitude in relation to experience and is responsible for an improved level of cognitive capacity which in turn will contribute greatly to the child's overall development.

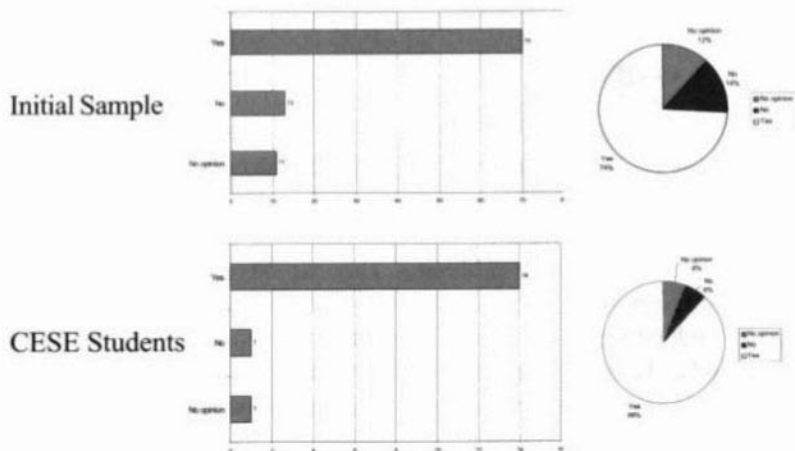
Item 2.5.11. *In the 1st Cycle children should learn to understand, speak, read and write, in that order.*



The number of "no opinion" responses fall sharply (from 26,6% to 6,3%), while the negative responses increased from 38,3% to 56,3%. This seems to illustrate an improved understanding of the flexibility, which should be brought to bear on the learning process and, as a result, on the

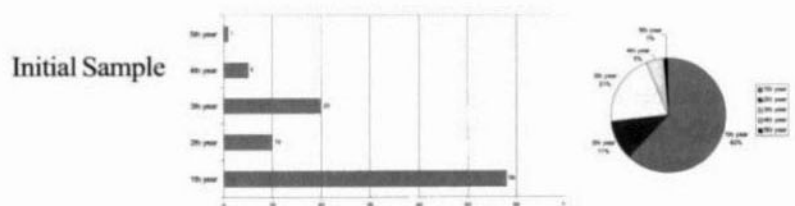
methodologies applied. The order cannot be defined according to the classical hierarchy of the language skills to be developed in FL. The rigid sequencing referred to in this item would inevitably impose artificiality on FL teaching at this level, where there is greater concern than at any other that the specific objectives fit in with the general educational objectives and are in constant harmony with other areas, of the curriculum.

Item 2.5.12. *In the 1st Cycle, children should learn to understand, speak, read and write, but not in any rigid order.*

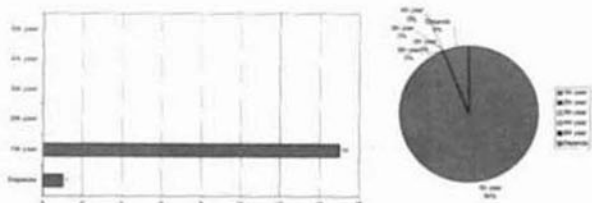


The number of affirmative responses (87,5%) shows a positive evolution in the representations of teachers with regard to one of the key principles behind FL teaching at this age-level: flexibility. Language exercises must be made into language exchanges, and so must exploit the recognition and production skills, always bearing in mind that the language being learned should be harnessed so that it can function as a tool to perform other tasks (practical or mental) and learn other things. That is, it should be a resource for the structuring and organizing of experiences as opposed to the model in which language is seen essentially as an instrument for communication. Thus FL learning syllabuses cannot be drawn up as a rigid, step-by-step structure in which first one skill is taught, then another.

Item 2.6.1 *At what age should a child begin to learn a foreign language?*



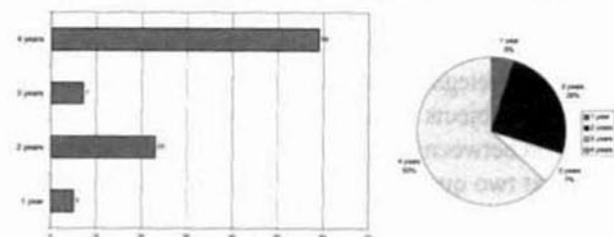
CESE Students



The methodological procedures for a particular subject must obviously be defined according to an analysis of the intellectual receptivity of the child at each stage of its overall development – psychic, affective, social and physical. The vast majority of responses in favour of beginning in the first year (98,8%), as opposed to some dispersal over the four years of the 1st Cycle in the responses of the Initial Sample, confirms a healthy evolution in attitude towards two basic principles: first, that exposure to the FL should take place as early as possible, since this can only be beneficial to the children's development (Nicholas, 1991); second, the awareness that it is possible, with training and the proper tools, to conduct FL activities right from the earliest years of schooling and so embark on a process of sensitization to language learning.

Item 2.6.2 *How many years should a foreign language be taught?*

Initial Sample

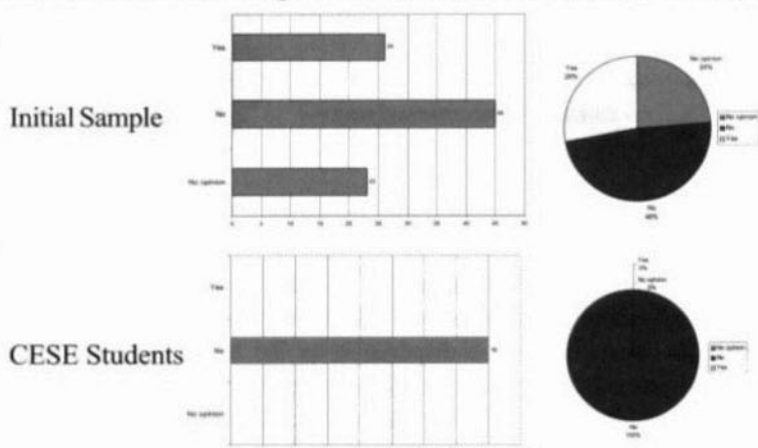


CESE Students



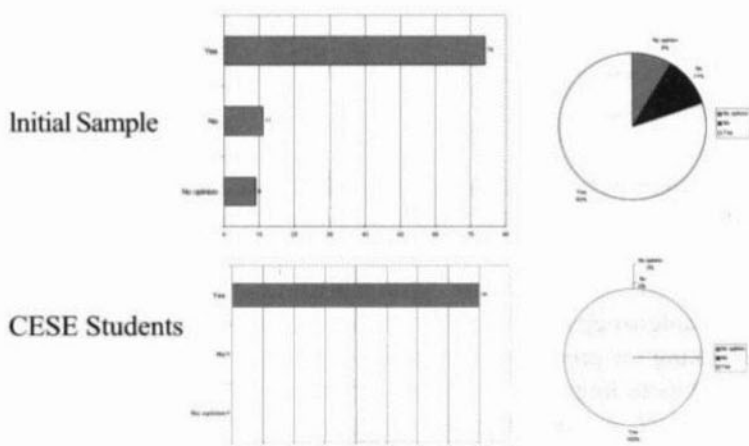
The responses to this item are closely linked to the previous one. It seems to be clearly understood (93,8%) that exposure to the FL should continue throughout the entire learning cycle (the first four years) in order to provide a broader, more thorough grounding. With more time at his disposal, the FL teacher will be able to begin with activities aimed at sensitization to FL learning before embarking on progressively deeper processes of raising language awareness and meta-linguistic analysis, at the same time giving priority to the development of learning-to-learn strategies and seeking to establish as many links as possible with all other areas of the curriculum.

Item 2.7.1. *FL learning should be an extra-curricular activity.*



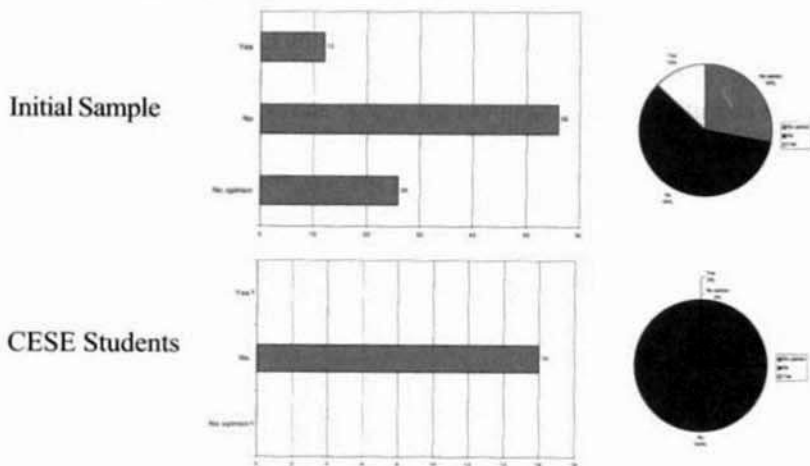
While the Initial Sample were still somewhat hesitant in their negative responses (47,9%), the CESE students were unanimous (100%) in their rejection of this premise. This indicates an extremely positive evolution in respondent representation in regard to the idea that FL should be taught in the 1st Cycle. This response is certainly due to an awareness that FL has a positive contribution to make to the child's overall development, through the many ways it dovetails with other knowledge and facilitates the achievement of more general educational aims. There was firm rejection of the idea that FL should be relegated to a subsidiary role in which channels of communication with other subjects would remain closed, and the desirable and necessary interaction between areas of knowledge would be impossible. The responses to the next two questions are expected to reinforce this position.

Item 2.7.2. *The FL should be taught inside normal class time and be interconnected with other subjects.*



The unanimously affirmative responses of the CESE group, compared with 78,7% for the Initial Sample (the remainder being 11,7% negative and 9,6% with no opinion) seem to confirm the revival of the idea that activities in this cycle should be of a markedly inter-curricular nature. FL learning should never be treated as an exception (Brewster, 1992), isolated from other subjects, but should be included in a harmonious context, which, enlarged and enhanced by its own contribution, will benefit the child's holistic understanding of the subjects taught and its discovery of relationships and interactions between what is new and what is already known. At the same time opportunities are created to broaden considerably the multifaceted context of the act of learning.

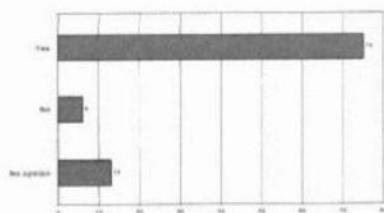
Item 2.7.3. *The FL should be taught to a pre-established timetable, always the same and unrelated to other subjects.*



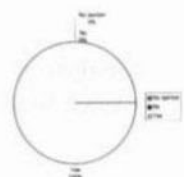
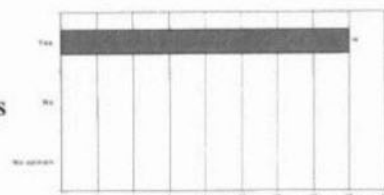
The responses to this item would seem to confirm once and for all representations regarding the ways in which FL teaching can operate. While activity-length does not appear in itself to be a potential source of controversy - all the 1st Cycle teachers agree that 1,5 hours is too long and that less than 30 minutes is insubstantial and fragmentary - the actual length of time may raise questions for anyone who is not 'au fait' with the recommended methodologies. The idea of a pre-established timetable would be sufficient in itself to hamper a harmonious and 'purposeful' connection with other subjects, and consequently not conducive to an integrated inter- and cross-curricular teaching approach. Generally speaking, we can say that rigid timetabling imposes in itself various constraints on integration, at this and any other level of the educational system.

Item 2.7.4. *Activities used as resources in other areas can also be used in FL.*

Initial Sample



CESE Students



The doubts underlying the responses of the Initial Sample disappear completely in those of the trainee teachers. This would seem to show a positive evolution in the concept of the word “activities”. We move from a more ‘classified’ idea to a more ‘relational’ perception, that is, there is a heightened potential for links between the FL and other areas, without corresponding loss of specificity of content (Halliwell, 1992). Integration is thus achieved not only in its more outward aspects, those which are more readily visible, but above all in the learning process developed by the child. In this way, learning other things through English helps the learning of English, and vice versa.

Item 2.7.5. *Indicate areas which you consider can be integrated with FL work.*

Initial Sample

A. Portuguese Language	25	3 rd
B. Environmental Studies	37	1 st
C. Musical Education	22	4 th
D. Plastic Arts	27	2 nd
E. Mathematics	8	7 th
F. Drama	21	5 th
G. Physical Education	9	6 th

CESE Students

A. Portuguese Language	9	7 th
B. Environmental Studies	13	3 rd
C. Musical Education	15	1 st
D. Plastic Arts	13	3 rd
E. Mathematics	10	6 th
F. Drama	14	2nd
G. Physical Education	13	3 rd

A comparative analysis of the results obtained for the two groups allows us to highlight something we consider of crucial importance: although the same areas are mentioned by the two groups, there is far greater respondent variation in the number of times each is mentioned by the first group (between 8 and 37 times) than by the second (between 9 and 15), irrespective of its place on the scale. It can be seen that the second group is more uniform in finding valid potential links between FL and any other curriculum subject. The minor differences revealed in regard to the position of each area on the scale are due to the importance attributed to links with the "Arts", followed naturally by "Environmental Studies".

Item 2.7.6. *Indicate activities and resources you use in other subjects which you think would be useful in FL teaching.*

Initial Sample

A. Reading Magazines	7	6 th
B. Commentary on illustrations (dictionary work)	4	8 th
C. Use of Audio-visuals	5	7 th
D. Games	18	4 th
E. Drama (theatre, puppets, dance)	29	2 nd
F. Music	30	1 st
G. Posters, Collages (cutting out, drawing, etc)	20	2 nd
H. Exchanging Letters	4	8 th
I. Group Work	1	12 th
J. Computers	3	1 1 th
K. Stories, Puzzles, Poetry, etc.	13	5 th
L. Interest Centres	1	13 th
M. Mathematics	4	8 th

CESE Students

A. Reading Magazines	1	8 th
B. Commenting on illustrations (dictionary work)	1	8 th
C. Use of Audio-visuals	0	-
D. Games	7	5 th
E. Drama (theatre, puppets, dance)	12	1 st
F. Music	12	1 st
G. Posters, Collages (cutting out, drawing, etc)	11	3 rd
H. Exchanging Letters	1	8 th
I. Group Work	1	8 th
J. Computers	0	- th
K. Stories, Puzzles, Poetry, etc.	9	4 th
L. Interest Centres	1	8
M. Mathematics	3	7 th

N. Research*	1	8 th
O. Physical Education*	5	6 th
P. Personal and Social Development*	1	8 th

*Activities mentioned for the first time.

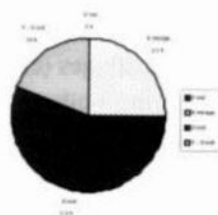
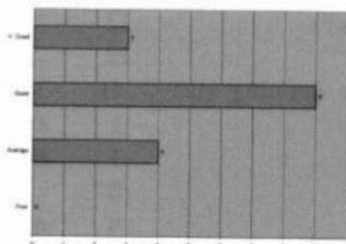
In this analysis we should stress the similarity in the ranking of the activities most frequently mentioned:

Students	Initial Sample	CESE
(F) Music	1 st	1 st
(E) Drama	2 nd	2 nd
(G) Posters/Collages	3 rd	3 rd
(D) Games	4 th	5 th

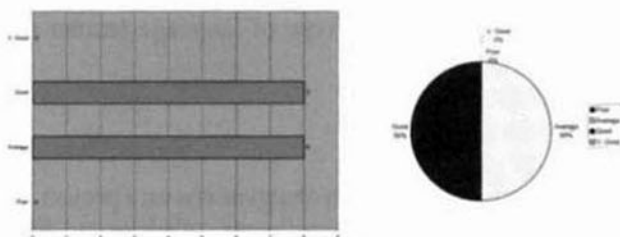
The teachers in the first group showed that they attributed importance to the same areas as those in the second, which may seem contradictory in the light of earlier responses. It should be noted, however, that in this case the question refers to concrete activities, whereas in the previous question the teachers were asked to express opinions with reference to "areas". It may be concluded that the second group is more consistent in its replies, since it directly equates the "areas" with the corresponding "activities", thus showing that it is better equipped to implement classroom practices more concurrent with the training principles. It is further interesting to note that the second group adds three new items to the list of activities suggested by the first. This may show, on the one hand, an awareness of the greater variety of methodological approaches offered by the introduction of the FL and, on the other, of its contribution to the development of student autonomy (research) and of attitudes and values concerning self-respect and respect for others (personal and social development).

CESE Students

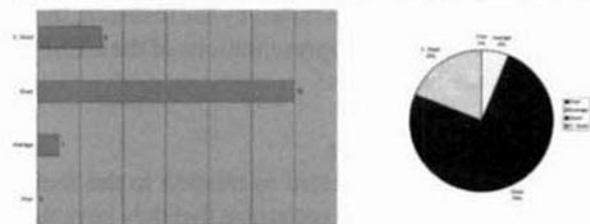
Item 2.2.1. *How do you rate your knowledge in terms of Oral Comprehension?*



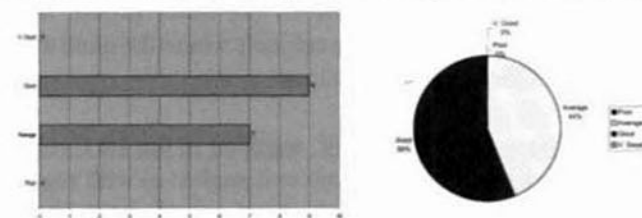
Item 2.2.2. *How do you rate your level of Oral Production?*



Item 2.2.3. *How do you rate your level of Written Comprehension?*



Item 2.2.4. *How do you rate your level of Written Production?*



With regard to items designed to elicit respondents' representations of their language competence in the oral and written skills, no comparison was made with the results of the Initial Sample because we considered that to do so was irrelevant. In this group we investigated the levels of competence in a variety of languages, not only those which the respondents intended to teach. In the CESE group, as we know, the FL to be taught had been established at the beginning, so our intention was simply to find out to what extent the aim of "gaining an adequate command of the FL", as defined by the teachers, had been achieved. Although level-assessment, when carried out by the student him/herself, is heavily subjective and depends on their own level of expectation and knowledge, the general levels agree when compared, for example, with the results obtained from students of French or English Language and Culture, where the overall distribution among the categories Average, Good and Very Good showed a similar pattern. Of particular interest is the awareness on the part of the students that levels of oral and written comprehension are higher than production in both skills, which reinforces the principle that in any language, the level of recognition is always higher. It is also interesting to compare an identical number of responses and see that the oral skill, both in recognition and production, is always rated lower than the writing skill. The fact that we are dealing with adults with an average age of around 40, who

find themselves in a formal language-learning situation, may help to explain this “discrepancy”, if we bear in mind the various specific features which help to make the adult a very special type of language learner (Strecht-Ribeiro, 1990).

Conclusion

We may now put together certain observations on a project in which our overriding concern was with finding significant similarities and differences that would enable us to formulate a conclusion.

In response to the first two issues raised by the research, there seems to have been a marked alteration in the representations of the CESE students with regard to the areas described below:

1) Level of language knowledge

The level most frequently indicated in relation to the four skills is “Good”, which implies that teachers now recognize that they have the desired language competence to teach the FL. Although these results cannot be compared, as we have said, with those of the other group, they were confirmed by the final results obtained in subjects where the main aim was to promote acquisition of the same competence.

2) Types of aims to pursue for FL teaching in the 1st Cycle

Analysis may be approached from two angles: a) with regard to the relationship between specific objectives and general educational goals, the trainee teachers seem to be firmly convinced that the former can be of service to the latter, because there is the scope and breadth of approach to make a valuable contribution to the child’s overall development; b) concerning ways of exploiting the FL, there is a manifest consensus that this can contribute to the child’s overall cognitive development by promoting exploration of linguistic aspects in all their richness, both oral and written.

3) Type of methodology to develop

Finally, regarding the type of methodology to develop, there is little doubt among the trainee teachers that one should harness to the full the potential for integrating and interlinking the different areas with FL and vice versa, in a harmony of both process and product which will foster in the child a better understanding of the whole and its component parts, through the achievement of autonomy and strategies related to “learning to learn”.

In this way, and at this level, it seems that we can claim without exaggeration that the training provided by the CESE was successful in the way in which it led to the attainment of the goals it had set itself, with a motivated group of students who soon discarded any pedagogic and methodological preconceptions that could have been an obstacle to the

enthusiasm and commitment actually displayed. It only remains to add that, limited though this research may be, it serves as a proven basis on which to inform, explain and draw up educational policy in the institution involved.

The second question was worded as follows: To what extent were the trainee teachers able successfully to incorporate into their practice the theoretical and methodological principles acquired, both in syllabus design and classroom practice?

The familiarity we had with the work carried out by the team of teachers in charge of the theoretical and practical training led us to believe that most of the trainees had found this very helpful in enabling them to incorporate the training and its innovative features into their classroom practice. We believe that methodological innovation should be firmly based on a new (or deeper) theoretical understanding of the learning process as provided by the training course itself, without which innovation will be unlikely to produce lasting results.

In order to analyse the answers to the question set, we turned to two different kinds of document: a) a collection of lesson-plans, naturally involving FL teaching and b) the field notes referring to the execution of the same plans, made in situ by the teachers in charge of the practice supervision of the teaching component of the CESE. The two sets of documents were chosen by the supervisors, who applied no explicit selection criteria other than the desire to obtain as representative a sample as possible of the work carried out in the field. These documents were available for consultation, under fictitious names to protect the identity of those responsible for them.

The information to be collated from these documents was organized on the basis of a purpose-designed checklist which sought to locate evidence of the key issues raised throughout the training. The list was as follows:

- Suitable definition of the specific objectives of the FL;
- Provision of explicit links with other areas;
- Development of "learning-to-learn" strategies;
- Exploitation of the socio-cultural dimension;
- Variety of social interaction activities (pair-work, group-work, etc);
- Regular use of game-type activities.

The presence of these six items was analysed on two levels: the overall term syllabus submitted and the lesson-by-lesson class-plans, which were done in far more detail. An attempt was made to determine whether the teachers were able to progress from one stage to the other, that is, from the level of declared intentions to that of actual practice, which as we know is invariably the most difficult transition to make.

It was gratifying to note that, for each of the items selected, there was a general concern with giving coherence to the process: the teachers, besides considering in their work-plans all the areas under observation, were also able to do this with the required degree of competence, reflecting in

each lesson-plan the main goals set with them from the outset. At the same time, the lesson-plans also revealed a number of limitations which would lead to the placing of certain constraints on the execution of the classes. Among these were a deficiency in the application of the categories and the terminology used in the lesson-plans, and the somewhat vague, often sketchy nature of some of the tasks devised.

Based on an analysis of the field notes collected by the teachers supervising the teaching practice, it is possible to recreate the pedagogic climate in which the T.P. took place. The FL served as a support to the other activities, which were mostly interlinked by successful transitions, often by means of problem solving. This climate was almost invariably described by the supervisors and teachers as "interesting", "appropriate" or "stimulating", with the pupils showing "great enthusiasm" for what was happening and responding unreservedly to the teachers' appeals for active participation.

Less positive aspects of the observations include, among others, moments when language items cropped up at random, out of context with excessive emphasis on form accompanied by lack of fluency or phonological deviation on the part of a particular teacher. As we have stated before, language competence is closely linked with the ability to put teaching techniques and suitable activities into practice; even at this level of teaching these are a decisive factor in the successful attainment of objectives.

This desire for success, and the difficulties and uncertainties which make it so hard to achieve, could well serve as the basis for a few closing words in answer to the second question the trainee teachers seem to have been wholly successful in their attempt to incorporate in their teaching practice techniques suited to FL teaching. Although this was invariably as new for them as for their pupils, they acted according to the theoretical and methodological principles they had studied, despite certain difficulties that arose, sometimes caused by their own representations about the particular issues under discussion. But this conflict was always the focus of analysis and reflection after their classes, since they were anxious to achieve success. The conceptualizations elaborated by the teacher concerning his/her role in curricular innovation, whatever form that may take, always play a crucial role in that the processes of reflection which pit personal theories against practical classroom action constitute the pivot of curricular implementation; they are the necessary guarantee of the continued dynamic between experimentation and knowledge which characterizes teacher development. Every classroom is, or should be, composed of a community of people in a state of change, change which can only be sustained if accompanied by the necessary support-systems.

The following reflection, produced by one of our CESE students, is a clear indication that training can also imply a degree of inner anguish which will have to be overcome if we are to state with conviction that training has led to a "safe haven":

"I must confess that before starting the English Language classes

with my pupils, I was often assailed by the fear of the problems and difficulties I would come up against (...) How would such young pupils react? (...) I began my classes, cautious as always, trying by means of interesting materials and games that children of that age love to play, to sensitize them to the new language. I have to admit that the results were very encouraging from the word go (...) It is rewarding to watch them every day at break-time playing and singing the games and songs they have learned in their English lessons (...) Only time and a lot of dedication, which I don't think I can give, will make me more professional and competent (...) Today I just congratulate myself on the discovery that most of the doubts that assailed me were unfounded and disappeared with the evidence of my own practice."

Innovation and profound change in the system only take place when accompanied by change within ourselves!

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