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Developing oral interaction through collaborative group work

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Abstract

Keywords: oral interaction, group work, engagement, vocabulary, fluency

This report presents the practical component of my practicum as a trainee teacher during my Master's degree in teaching English in the 3rd cycle and secondary education. The main aim of this report is to answer my research questions, "How does collaborative group work develop EFL students' oral fluency and vocabulary learning?" and "How can collaborative group work have an impact on EFL students' behavioral engagement?", while exploring collaborative work in the EFL classroom.

This action research took place in a state secondary school in Almada, from September 2023 to June 2024. The project involved a 10th grade class consisting of 29 students, who attended 90-minute English classes twice a week in the morning. The instruments used in this study were 3 questionnaires, four voice recordings of 3 groups during the second semester, and oral interaction observations during group tasks.

The results indicate that students benefitted from classes focused on oral interaction, as opposed to classes focused on reading and writing. Generally, the students showed vocabulary and fluency development both in the written feedback and in the voice recordings of their group interactions, as they often used vocabulary learned in class. Additionally, students' levels of cognitive and social engagement were evidently higher during oral interaction both during open class work and in small group work. On the other hand, ensuring that everyone contributed equally during group activities proved challenging and not always feasible.

Desenvolver interação oral através de trabalho de grupo colaborativo

Resumo

Palavras-chave: Interação oral, trabalho de grupo, engajamento, vocabulário, fluência

Este relatório apresenta a componente prática de ensino supervisionada no âmbito do Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 3º Ciclo do Ensino Básico e no Ensino Secundário. O objetivo principal do relatório é responder às minhas questões de pesquisa e investigação, "Como o trabalho de grupo colaborativo desenvolve a fluência e a aquisição de vocabulário dos alunos?", e "Como o trabalho de grupo colaborativo impacta o envolvimento comportamental dos alunos na sala de aula?", enquanto exploro o trabalho colaborativo em sala de aula.

O projeto de investigação e observação decorreu numa escola secundária pública, no concelho de Almada, de Setembro de 2023 a Junho de 2024. A investigação incluiu uma turma de 10º ano com 29 alunos, que tinham aulas de inglês de 90 minutos, duas vezes por semana, no período da manhã. Os instrumentos de investigação utilizados incluíram 3 questionários, quatro gravações de voz de três grupos realizadas durante o segundo semestre e a observação da interação oral durante as tarefas em grupo.

Os resultados indicam que os alunos beneficiaram de aulas focadas na interação oral, em detrimento das aulas teóricas com manual. De modo geral, os alunos demonstraram progresso no vocabulário e na fluência, tanto na componente escrita como nas gravações de voz, sendo que frequentemente utilizavam vocabulário aprendido em aula. Adicionalmente, os níveis de envolvimento cognitivo e social dos alunos foram claramente mais elevados durante as interações orais, tanto em grupo quanto com a turma inteira. Por outro lado, garantir que todos os alunos contribuíssem o mesmo durante as atividades de grupo foi desafiante e nem sempre exequível.

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List of abbreviations

EFL English as a Foreign Language

L1 First Language

L2 Second Language

Introduction

The four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing - are fundamental to modern English teaching practices. Textbooks often have several activities focused on these skills reflecting their importance in language acquisition. This focus arises from the prioritization of communicative competence as the main goal to teach and learn a language (Burns & Siegel, 2017), although among these skills, speaking skills are occasionally overlooked in the EFL classroom in Portugal. However, speaking is the fundamental skill in acquiring a new language, as it enables students to practice what they have learned, by engaging in real-time communication. It allows students to experiment with the language, bridging the gap between theoretical language knowledge and practical use. Speaking skills and oral interaction are intrinsically connected, as the development of speaking abilities naturally occurs through active participation in oral exchanges. Working collaboratively in class, whether as a group or in pairs, provides an opportunity to practice oral interaction and enhances students' learning as they can lean on each other for assistance. English as a foreign language (EFL) learners need to have as much contact with the language as possible and practice the foreign language (FL) as much as they can to develop their communicative skills, pronunciation, and fluency among other competences. In that manner, being able to communicate with their peers in a less stressful, less exposed environment can develop students' confidence when communicating in a foreign language.

Oral interaction and oral production are often mistakenly seen as equivalent, assuming that both develop identical communication skills in students; however, these are very distinct. Oral production is the ability to produce language, communicate and express oneself, without necessarily implying interaction and it can be a monologue for instance (Peña & Onatra, 2009). Gill (2013), defines oral production as words combined in a meaningful way during human communication. This includes language proficiency, pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary and accuracy, focusing on the ability to produce language clearly, as seen in presentations or speeches. On the other hand, Oliver and Philp (2014), define oral interaction as students' ability to communicate

about familiar subjects, while exchanging information and expressing one's thoughts. This form of communication focuses on the meaningful exchange between individuals, as seen in conversations.

Following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2020), students at B1 level, the level of the learners in this study, are expected to initiate and sustain a conversation by posing spontaneous questions about specific experiences or events. They should also be able to express reactions and opinions on familiar topics, as well as summarize and provide opinions in various contexts, such as a "short story, article, talk, discussion, interview or documentary" (CEFR, 2020, p.174). Additionally, they should be capable of responding to detailed questions related to the content being taught (CEFR, 2020). However, this is not always the case, as numerous factors influence students' oral interaction abilities in the classroom, which will be analyzed in this report. Similarly, the official document *Aprendizagens Essenciais* (Direção-Geral da Educação, 2018), which is the set of core knowledge, skills, and competencies that students are expected to acquire during their education, also highlights that B1 level students are expected to demonstrate the ability to clarify, reformulate, repeat, and interact effectively when communicating with one another. Regarding collaborative work, the *Perfil dos Alunos à Saída da Escolaridade Obrigatória* (PASEO, 2017), a framework of the educational system's key competencies, values and skills that students should possess by the time they finish school, specifies that students should possess the capacity to work collaboratively, be tolerant, empathetic, and responsible when interacting, and accept different points of view. Nevertheless, during my practicum I often noticed that students faced challenges in interacting effectively and working collaboratively. Both documents highlight that oral interaction extends beyond language proficiency, serving as an essential component for social, emotional and collaborative development, which are essential aspects for the students' overall growth.

The motive for exploring this topic stemmed from the belief that group interaction has a positive impact on students' vocabulary acquisition, as it allows them to actively engage in language practice during each class. While in the first weeks of class observation of my practicum, I noticed that my cooperating teacher's classes

were doing group work activities regarding the European Day of Languages, followed by a research project on an English-speaking country of their choice. As it is not common to observe high school students working in groups during class, especially in the first few weeks of the 1st semester, I found this an interesting topic to work on. After a few weeks of observing each group of the three 10th grade classes, I realized that these group activities were positively impacting students in linguistic, cognitive, and social ways. The group activities facilitated the practicing of vocabulary introduced in class while simultaneously fostered connections among students as they became acquainted with their new classmates. Language classrooms should serve as environments for language acquisition where students can engage in meaningful interaction, fostering the development of their linguistic proficiency and social skills (Altamino, 2006). For that reason, I concluded this was an interesting topic to explore and to develop with one of the classes in the second semester, now as their teacher. The motive behind selecting this topic results from the belief that students must engage in active language practice through interacting with each other and working collaboratively with their peers' help, making the process of acquiring a foreign language easier and more dynamic. According to Baharun et al. (2014) when students interact, they engage in many activities, including self-repetition, offering explanations, and providing details, to make sure their message comes across effectively.

As most students did not know each other at this point of the school year, since they were 10th grade students, and most of them came from different schools. Consequently, the groups were not cohesive, as students barely knew each other and faced challenges in effective communication. This unfamiliarity also hindered their ability to collaboratively resolve conflicts, as the groups were mostly formed based on initial affinity. Still, in general, at this point, the outcome of group work was already positive. However, a challenging aspect students had to face in these first group assignments was interacting and searching for information in English. Students were clearly not prepared for this, as they had never done in-class tasks where they had to interact in English. As expected, they interacted mostly in Portuguese, and searched for information in Portuguese. This happens mainly due to teachers' reluctance to implement cooperative learning and peer interaction in the classroom, resulting in

students becoming overly reliant on teacher-centered classes. According to Tuan (2010), learners' reluctance to engage in cooperative learning stems from traditional views on the teacher-learner relationship and the methods used for student assessment (Tuan, 2010). When initially working in groups or pairs, students often do not comprehend the potential for learning from one another as they collaborate to reach a mutual goal; instead they tend to believe learning can only occur through the teacher (Tuan, 2010, p.64).

Working collectively as a team benefits students' cognitive and social development. This report will focus mainly on the linguistic benefits of working collectively, and its impact on students' behavioral engagement. It aims to present and explore several concepts related to how working collaboratively as a group can encourage students to verbally interact with their peers effectively, as well as the positive impact that being exposed to a foreign language has on oral fluency and vocabulary development. In particular, I will address the following research questions:

How does collaborative group work develop EFL students' oral fluency and vocabulary learning?

How can collaborative group work have an impact on EFL students' behavioral engagement?

Chapter I: Literature Review

The literature review of this research project aims to complement this report with the theory of how collaborative group work can enhance EFL students' communicative skills. This review will focus on the role of oral interaction in the EFL classroom when acquiring a foreign language. Furthermore, it will focus on the importance of collaborative group work, and how it can affect students' oral interaction, leading to better fluency and vocabulary acquisition, as well as increasing learner engagement. Additionally, other important aspects of oral interaction and group work will be analyzed, and some limitations of collaborative work.

I.1. Collaborative group work

I.1.1. Collaborative group work in an EFL classroom

Collaborative work is commonly associated with students working together to complete a task. However, there are many other aspects involved in collaborative group work. A key characteristic of group work according to Cohen and Lotan (2014) is when students engage in a group task where they are allowed to make mistakes and are responsible for their own individual contributions. Groups have the freedom to complete the task in the manner they find most effective, while the teacher maintains control and evaluates the final product. Another significant characteristic highlighted by the same authors, is that group members must rely on one another to complete the task, which requires effective communication, mutual assistance, and the delegation of specific roles. In groups, students are able to ask questions, provide explanations, offer suggestions, listen, discuss, and collaboratively make decisions (Cohen and Lotan, 2014).

Collaborative work provides students with more opportunities to speak compared to whole-class activities. According to Cohen and Lotan (2014), this occurs because, during collaborative work, team members engage in collective tasks and discussions where they can clarify, repeat, and articulate certain questions and instructions. They also translate for each other and organize information in diverse ways, which means students have a better chance of clearly understanding the information given and what they are supposed to do. Some students will probably feel less exposed by interacting with some of their peers instead of speaking in front of the rest of the class and the teacher, which can sometimes be quite intimidating, causing mental blocks. “While engaged in group work, students serve as academic and linguistic resources for one another” (Cohen & Lotan, 2014, p. 103).

However, group work in the classroom, either in small or larger groups, can be a rare occurrence, even in EFL contexts. Teachers tend to fear that instead of completing the task posed, students will lose focus and disrupt the class; for this reason, in Portugal students seldom interact with one another in a foreign language. In my experience as an EFL student, as well as in the classes I observed in my PES from teachers other than my cooperating teacher, students rarely interacted with each

other in English. This lack of practice means students are not prepared for collaborative work. As a result, teachers need to instruct their students on how to do so constructively. Cohen and Lotan (2014), compare how the traditional method that teachers use to encourage students to speak by assigning oral presentations is not effective, when contrasting with small group tasks where each member can communicate and give their input without requiring students to take turns delivering speeches to the entire class (Cohen & Lotan, 2014).

Oral presentations are often ineffective because language acquisition through memorization and recitation of scripted paragraphs is less effective than using language in a "meaningful context" (Cohen & Lotan, 2014). As Oliver and Philp (2014) point out, although these are important activities to practice language skills, they are usually monologues, as students are not interacting with others. Even when students present to the class in groups, there is typically no interaction among group members or with the rest of the class, who passively listen. Instead, each member delivers or reads their assigned part for a set duration. From my own experience observing other teachers' EFL lessons, in Portugal, when the teacher intervenes by asking questions after the presentation, there is often one student who assumes the role of spokesperson, usually the student with a higher proficiency; resulting in limited interaction between the teacher and that single student.

I.1.2. Teacher interaction and peer interaction

Interaction can be both between peers and also between the learner and the teacher. Oliver and Philp (2014) argue that oral interaction between teachers and students is often more formal and instructional when compared to peer interaction. Teacher-student interaction is more reciprocal, as teachers provide linguistic support by explaining and emphasizing specific language concepts. Therefore, this interaction tends to be more meaning-focused (Cohen & Lotan, 2014). The teacher also possesses the ability to ask targeted questions that prompt specific vocabulary use or conduct the conversation in a specific direction. This is because teachers typically expose students to technical terms and words that are not commonly used in everyday conversations (Oliver and Philp, 2014). Due to the age gap between the students and

the teacher, there are inevitable differences in proficiency and life perspectives, leading to teachers challenging students' viewpoints, while students find it easier to relate to their peers' opinions. However, as mentioned previously, students feel more comfortable engaging with peers of similar age and shared experiences. Peer interaction compliments the work done by the teacher, allowing students to practice language in a more informal setting, where they can assist each other and feel less exposed (Oliver & Philp, 2014).

I.1.3. Collaborative work and group size

Usually, small groups are more favorable for oral interaction and task completion, allowing each member to get involved and collaborate. For instance, in a group consisting of three members, each individual is more likely to fully comprehend the task compared to a larger group, in which some members may excessively rely too much on others. In smaller groups of three, there is a higher chance of equity, as members are able to communicate with one another more effectively, reducing the probability of relying on others to complete the work (Cohen, 1994). This environment also reduces the pressure of speaking in front of a larger audience, as larger groups reduce each member's opportunity to participate in speaking (Cohen & Lotan, 2014). Consequently, some individuals may become less active in contributing to the group's discussions and tasks (Johnson, Johnson & Smith 1991, as cited in Burke, 2011). For brief in-class tasks, where groups have only 10 to 15 minutes to complete a task and to communicate with each other, smaller groups are preferable, to minimize the time spent organizing themselves, dividing the work, and collecting the information, the less time available, the smaller the group should be (Johnson, Johnson & Smith 1991, as cited in Burke, 2011). Speaking tasks are typically conducted in pairs or groups, requiring students to orally interact with each other to complete the task.

Goh and Burns (2012) identify three types of speaking tasks that promote students' speaking skills in distinct ways; *communication-gap tasks*, *discussion tasks* and *monologic tasks*. Focusing on *communication-gap tasks*, students possess different sets of information and must communicate effectively to complete the task. This process involves describing, comparing, contrasting, listing, summarizing, explaining

and clarifying until the goal is achieved. A key advantage of *communication-gap tasks* is that students can practice all four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing (Goh & Burns, 2012).

When the teacher groups or pairs students according to their academic achievements or grades, she is separating friends from each other, who would most likely get distracted instead of focusing on the task. In addition, the issue of some students being left out is eliminated, as they do not have the freedom to choose their partners. However, this creates a new problem, as typically high-achieving students tend to dominate the group, as a hierarchy easily develops within the group (Cohen and Lotan, 2014). According to the same authors, groups and pairs should be heterogeneous, and students should be mixed according to their "academic achievement, gender, language proficiency, (…) race and ethnicity." This can be achieved by grouping students or letting students choose their group members according to preferences and interests regarding the topics being studied. If students get to work in groups multiple times they will have the opportunity to work with different classmates. The researchers emphasize that homogenous groups should be avoided, particularly low-achieving groups (Cohen and Lotan, 2014, p.71).

A study done with 10th grade Saudi Arabian students, conducted by Abulhassan & Hamid (2021), examined the effects of implementing collaborative learning. In this study, a few students had to take a survey about their experience learning in a collaborative environment. The results revealed that most students expressed satisfaction with collaborative learning, as it improved their English speaking skills (Abulhassan & Hamid, 2021). Students shared that their English had improved through collaborative learning, and that they felt more motivated to speak and learn. Additionally, it also taught them to listen to others, develop self-confidence to talk in public, and benefit from learning from their classmates. In another study conducted by Sembiring & Dewi (2022) with high school students at a private school in Indonesia, the researchers explored how collaborative work enhanced students confidence to speak in class, and how it improved their speaking skills. Online questionnaires were implemented consisting of fifteen questions aimed at capturing students' perceptions of collaborative learning, using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4

(strongly disagree). The results revealed that collaborative learning not only improved students' speaking skills, but fostered a more positive learning environment. Students enjoyed working in groups, reporting increased motivation and reduced anxiety when speaking a foreign language.

I.2. Oral interaction

I.2.1. What is oral interaction?

According to Oliver and Philp (2014, p. 5), oral interaction is the spoken language between two or more people that occurs in real-time in "communicative exchanges". This type of interaction is both collaborative and reciprocal, as both speakers strive to build a meaningful exchange. In the EFL classroom, oral interaction can be between students, where they can learn from each other, or between the teacher and students, where the English language used by the teacher is an important source of input for students.

Oral interaction enables EFL learners to experiment with and practice the language, making them more aware of their mistakes and difficulties while paying attention to specific linguistic aspects and details that can help them improve their speaking skills (Oliver & Philp, 2014).

A great deal of time is usually spent teaching students how to write or read correctly, as most EFL teachers rely heavily on textbooks, that contain more reading and writing activities, with considerably less listening and speaking ones. Teaching students how to interact and how to actively listen to one another is less of a priority in EFL classrooms (Oliver & Philp, 2014). This does not allow students to develop their communicative skills, contributing to speaking anxiety as learners rarely communicate in class (Paneerselvam & Mohamad, 2019).

It is vital to teach EFL students how to interact with each other, training them how to interact with one another and how to respond appropriately. The teacher plays an important role in facilitating student interaction by providing them with conversation prompts on the board to help guide and initiate discussions. Most teachers find developing their students' speaking skills a challenge, as they are

unfamiliar with the most effective way to practice their oral interaction and fear losing control of the class (Oliver & Philp, 2014). Teachers usually complain about group work in class as it may lead to "undesirable reliance on the first language (L1), poor social and affective relations among students, or noise and distraction from the task" (Jacobs, 1998, as cited in Naughton, 2006, p. 170). Therefore, the most common speaking activities are oral presentations or requests for students' feedback on textbook questions.

I.2.2. Prioritizing speaking in language acquisition

As stated by Paneerselvam and Mohamad (2019) EFL learners show high levels of anxiety when they have to speak in class due to not using the target language enough in class. Considering that when we learn our first language we acquire it by listening to people around us speaking and subsequently repeating the words we hear, only learning how to read and write these words at a later stage, it should be a priority to develop students' speaking skills first. Nevertheless, in EFL classes, we tend to learn all of these skills simultaneously: speaking, reading, writing and listening. This needs to change, as speaking is a fundamental element to acquire a language. Overemphasizing reading and writing can limit learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-world contexts (Oliver & Philp, 2014). A lack of focus on speaking may lead to unnatural accents or reduced intelligibility, even when learners possess strong written skills. In my class observations, at times, students experienced difficulty expressing their thoughts or articulating specific words, making it challenging for them to be understood. Upon closer observation, it became evident that they were pronouncing the word exactly how it is spelled, reflecting a tendency to focus on its written form rather than its phonetic structure. This issue arises because students often memorize the spelling of words rather than their correct pronunciation. This would not happen if ESL classes in the early stages prioritized listening and speaking skills.

I.3. Developing fluency through collaborative peer interaction

The primary goal of every foreign language learner is to be able to communicate fluently. Fluency is influenced by numerous factors; however, it can be broadly defined as how well a learner communicates. Filmore (1979), as cited by

Foster (2020), says that fluency is related to “speed, smoothness and coherence” of speech (Filmore, 2020, p. 1). Hedge (2008) defines fluency as the ability to connect speech units easily without struggle or excessive hesitation. She lists three types of fluency: “semantic fluency”, which means linking propositions and speech acts from memory; “lexical-syntactic fluency”, which is the ability to connect words and syntactic constituents; and “articulatory fluency”, meaning the ability to link speech segments. In turn, Jones, (2007), as cited in Jiménez (2013), states that fluency means speaking with confidence and assurance, ensuring that listeners can engage in a fluid conversation. Ramirez-Avila (2021) asserts that most teachers fail to create a language proficiency-friendly environment in the classroom, focusing on the theoretical aspects rather than the authentic and practical language use. However, in recent decades, many researchers have studied the benefits of cooperative learning on peer interaction. Namaziandost (2020) argues that there is a common belief that EFL students acquire the language more efficiently through peer interaction while completing oral tasks focused on real-life issues instead of paying attention to language forms. This approach impacts fluency development, as students focus on the theoretical aspects of the language rather than actively practicing it to effectively convey their messages.

I.4. Automaticity and Fluency

Many students become demotivated in learning a foreign language due to difficulties in memorizing the theoretical aspects presented in EFL classes. However, they are often unaware that by regularly engaging with and listening to the target language, they do not have to memorize anything as they will unconsciously internalize its usage. Khamesipour (2015) cites Krashen's Input hypothesis (1989) as a statement that if learners of a foreign language are exposed to the target language in varied contexts they end up acquiring the language subconsciously. This means that the language acquired is implicit, without one’s awareness. The durability of implicit memory depends on the number of repetitions, if the learner comes across the same word multiple times and in different contexts it will subconsciously memorize it. This means that the more frequently learners use a word; the more deeply it becomes fixed in their memory (Wang, 2020).

According to Oliver and Philp (2014), when EFL learners practice the language, they increase their fluency as they develop new skills and autonomy because, over time and with practice, using the target language becomes less of an effort and evolves into something that is accomplished unconsciously. “Ultimately, their responses become more automatic (…) fast, unconscious and effortless” (Oliver & Philp, 2014, p. 33). Galián-Lopez (2018) argues that automaticity is the process of acquiring implicit and automatic knowledge through consistent repeated practice, helping students speak a foreign language automatically (Galián-Lopez, 2018). As stated by Galián-López (2018), automaticity is crucial for vocabulary acquisition, as it affects all linguistic areas, since having low automaticity will inevitably impact not only speaking, but writing, reading, and listening skills as well. By collaborating, learners have more opportunities to develop the target language by using each other’s input and suggestions to help one another. When learners work together on tasks that require clear expression in the target language, they support each other’s progress in language production and to extend their linguistic skills (Oliver & Philp, 2014).

Namaziandost (2020) conducted a case study with several male teenage Iranian students in a private English language institute. The students were divided into three groups, in which one group had traditional instruction and the other two groups focused on cooperative learning techniques. The students in the traditional teaching technique group received teacher-centered classes, completing exercises individually. In contrast, the groups with the cooperative learning method were often divided into small groups or paired up to complete tasks and discuss their ideas. The aim of the study was to determine the impact of cooperative learning on EFL learners’ fluency. After analyzing the data, particularly students’ voice recordings, it was clear that the groups that had cooperative learning-focused classes improved their fluency and learning motivation compared to the group of students who had more traditional method classes. These results occurred because discussing, and thinking in a group, as opposed to working individually, can create more enjoyable classroom environments and lead to students becoming more fluent in their speaking skills (Namaziandost & Homayouni, 2020).

I.5. Developing vocabulary through collaborative peer interaction

Lightbown and Spada (2013) observe how classroom FL learners spend less time having contact with the language, as they are exposed to limited ranges of the language and are usually focused on a more formal type of discourse, which differs from the language typically used by native speakers in their daily interactions. In addition, teachers tend to use the L1 for discipline, classroom management, or simple requests, reducing opportunities for real-life, spontaneous communication and vocabulary. This is an issue because learners are not exposed to varied discourse styles or different types of vocabulary and do not get a realistic experience of the language. Students get this fixed idea of the language, where they only use it when completing textbook or worksheet exercises. Treve (2023) argues that learners need to be exposed to authentic language usage and different types of vocabulary, to improve their comprehension of the spoken language, as well as their ability to produce language accurately and fluently (Treve, 2023).

According to Horst (2019), there are several theories behind vocabulary acquisition for EFL learners. She begins by exploring the behaviorist perspective, which compares how young children acquire vocabulary by reproducing words and phrases they hear, receiving praise when replicated successfully, to how EFL students learn new vocabulary by repeating and memorizing words, for instance, by using popular word games. As stated by Horst, students' attention when faced with new vocabulary is usually drawn to unfamiliar vocabulary when coming across the same unknown word multiple times, leading them to either look up the meaning of the word or infer the meaning of the word from context or visual aids. However, they have limitations when processing new vocabulary and can be overwhelmed when faced with many new words. Adolescent learners, on the other hand, have more exposure to the FL than younger learners. According to Horst (2019), teenage learners acquire vocabulary faster than children. This assertion is supported by many studies carried out by Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle (1978) in the Netherlands, in which teenage learners made the fastest vocabulary progress during the time they participated in the investigation. Horst believes that this happens because teenagers have better memories than children and better problem-solving skills. Additionally, teenagers have more reading

experience, enabling them to more effectively deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words (Horst, 2019). The vocabulary they accumulated, developed through years of schooling, further facilitates social interaction. At this stage of their lives, students can already consciously reflect on linguistic structures and their functionality.

Vocabulary learning needs to be practiced, according to McDonough and Sato (2019). Students must be provided with opportunities to practice vocabulary, otherwise, the process of vocabulary acquisition is not sufficient or effective. For learners to develop their fluency they need interactive and spontaneous language activities. Therefore, finding activities that students will enjoy doing, such as role-play or information-gap activities, is highly important, as the task will be completed more willingly and effectively (McDonough & Sato, 2019). During these interactions, students have many opportunities to develop their lexicon and verify the meaning of the vocabulary used. Consequently, after a great deal of interaction activities, students should have made progress in their language learning since they need to understand what words the other students are using to be able to communicate (Hui-Chin Lin, 2009). According to Nunan (1999, p. 103), if students have an extensive vocabulary, they are able to acquire the meaning of spoken texts without having to understand every grammatical aspect. He goes on to say that when one is learning a foreign language it is easier to communicate or try to express oneself by learning vocabulary as opposed to learning grammar. However, this only applies when students are in the early stages of learning a foreign language, as to progress and to be able to have more complex conversations, it is necessary to master grammar as well. Folse (2004) also agrees that, at an earlier stage, vocabulary should be given priority over grammar and that students can only acquire vocabulary by doing a series of classroom activities. That has an effect on students' language use in later years, as high school students at times lack vocabulary, but have grammar structures well memorized. Regmi (2011) emphasizes that by grouping students in the classroom while learning a new language, they have the opportunity to practice their vocabulary comprehension with their peers while receiving mutual feedback, maintaining their motivation to learn.

I.6. Limitations of collaborative peer interaction

While this literary review primarily focuses on the benefits of collaborative peer interaction in the EFL classroom, it is also essential to mention the challenges associated with such group work, as frequently cooperative learning does not go as planned.

Every student possesses different personality traits, preferences, learning styles, and skill sets, which inevitably introduces challenges when organizing students into groups for collaborative tasks. Some students do not enjoy working in groups, while others simply have more dominant personalities, ultimately taking control and completing most of the tasks on their own. Students are not accustomed to or prepared to work in groups, as oftentimes they do not get the chance to practice working in groups in class. For that reason, collaboration is not an easy task and "does not come naturally" for students (Kozar, 2010, p. 17). Therefore, there are a few common obstacles when students work together in groups. One of the biggest weaknesses of working collaboratively in an EFL classroom is the predominant use of L1 during interactions. Learners use L1 to facilitate communication, particularly for clarifying instructions and explaining tasks to one another. However, to acquire a foreign language effectively, it needs constant practice, helping learners to develop automaticity and reduce difficulty of speaking it (Akazim, 2023). L1 usage should not be forbidden in group interactions; nevertheless, the teacher has to ensure that students use the foreign language to communicate with one another.

Grouping students or letting students choose their own group members is also always a challenging task, as it often results in certain students being placed at a disadvantage. This may occur either because they are working with people selected by the teacher whom they are not comfortable with, or because they are working with peers who do not contribute equally. This imbalance can occur regardless of whether group members are teacher-assigned or self-selected, as students at times choose friends over people they know will contribute. Consequently, is very difficult to compose groups where all members work equally (Cohen & Lotan, 2014). In addition, it may not be fair for the teacher to group students according to their grades and

capabilities, as some groups will be extremely efficient while others will require extra time and assistance. Additionally, grouping students with strong language proficiency with classmates who struggle significantly is not always beneficial, as the latter may play a passive role in the group interaction (Cohen & Lotan, 2014).

I.7. Engagement in the EFL classroom

Another key element of EFL learning is students' engagement. What is classroom engagement? When we hear the term *engagement*, it is usually used to refer to students' involvement and participation in class. However, engagement is a much more complex idea. According to Philp and Duchesne (2008), engagement is multidimensional and there are several types of engagement, including cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and social engagement. Therefore, when students are involved and focused on a specific task, it is the result of that multidimensional form (Philp & Duchesne, 2008). Hiver et al. (2024) say that a student must be focused on the task to be genuinely engaged, as attention is the "gatekeeper of our working memory", since we need to be deliberately aware and focused when acquiring a language (Hiver et al., 2024, p.206).

Cognitive engagement involves a range of factors, for instance, in a group task, when the members actively collaborate, questioning one another, exchanging ideas, making comments, and explaining information, it is clear they are cognitively engaged in the task. All of these cues can be perceptible when the teacher observes the group or listens to the audio recordings of group interactions (Philp & Duchesne, 2008). According to Hiver et al. (2020), students exhibit cognitive engagement when they make a "mental effort" to stay alert and focused while learning (Hiver et al., 2020, p.20).

Behavioral engagement "is typically described simply in terms of time on task or participation" (Philp & Duchesne, 2008, p.55). This means that the amount of time students spend participating in a task is related to engagement, as it reflects their willingness to persist and their effort to complete the task. Hiver et al. (2020), describe behavioral engagement as students' effort and initiative while completing a task. Therefore, in the classroom, behavioral engagement can be measured by observing

students' participation in the learning process, which it is more complicated to distinguish from other types of engagement. Consequently, behavioral engagement focuses on the continuous effort made by students (Hiver et al., 2020). According to Philp and Duchesne (2008), some researchers believe that behavioral engagement is characterizes by either engagement on a task or disengagement. In contrast, others propose that behavioral engagement is a continuum, influenced by factors such as participation and effort. Behavioral engagement is often measured qualitatively by teacher observations of student participation and effort (Philp & Duschesne, 2008).

Engagement manifests itself differently across varying contexts, and it is something critical to take into consideration when teaching a foreign language, as teachers need to find activities that capture students' attention and sustain their motivation to learn. Some students may feel extremely engaged in class when discussing a specific subject, yet become totally disengaged the next class when discussing a subject that is not particularly interesting to them. Additionally, students may not be particularly interested in the subject but may find a specific task engaging, or, in contrast, an interesting topic may not be engaging if the task is not appealing. Therefore, it is very important to recognize engagement as something multidimensional rather than focusing solely on cognitive engagement. Other types of engagement need to be taken into consideration when measuring students' level of engagement as they influence one another (Philp & Duchesne, 2008).

I.8. Summary

This literature review highlights how collaborative work is essential to develop oral interaction skills within the EFL classroom. The review is divided into two main sections: oral interaction and collaborative work.

It is important to recognize that oral interaction is a fundamental component of helping students to achieve fluency in a foreign language. For many years in Portuguese EFL classrooms, oral interaction has been frequently neglected and rarely practiced in a realistic and spontaneous manner. Instead, EFL teachers have focused on the theoretical aspects of language learning, which are essential, but should not be a primary focus. In my experience as a learner, I was never asked or encouraged to

interact with my peers in English. Our EFL classes were predominantly focused on reading, writing, and grammar activities, with oral interaction limited to exchanges between the teacher and selected students in response to direct questions (Vahdani, et al., 2016). Even though this has been changing in recent decades, this issue persists in several Portuguese EFL classes. Vahdani, et al. (2016), assert that this situation often arises due to teachers' limited knowledge concerning the different types of interaction activities that can take place in the EFL classroom.

Collaborative work in the EFL classroom represents another frequently overlooked aspect of language learning. Cooperative activities are pivotal for fostering oral interaction, particularly in pairs and small groups, as they encourage participation and reduce the pressure of speaking in front of a classroom. Collaborative work can significantly enhance EFL students' vocabulary and fluency, as students are actively practicing the target language as well as learning from their peers. However, group work presents its own challenges, as students do not always respond positively to cooperative work, and the primary difficulty in the EFL classroom is to ensure that groups interact predominantly in English, which does not happen most of the time.

Finally, collaborative work greatly impacts student engagement by integrating their social skills while practicing the language. However, engagement itself is a complex factor as it involves cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and social dimensions, which are sometimes difficult to distinguish.

Chapter II: The Action Research

II.1. Context

This study aims to explore how collaborative group work can enhance EFL students' oral interaction, with a particular focus on its effect on vocabulary acquisition, fluency development, and behavioral engagement.

The study involved 29 tenth-grade students from a secondary school in Almada. The class consisted of 11 boys and 18 girls. Despite being socially homogenous, there were five different nationalities in the classroom. Most students were Portuguese, with two Brazilian students, three Angolan students, one Cape Verdean student, and one Russian student. All students were native Portuguese speakers. The class had two 90-minute English lessons per week, in the morning. Most of the students were highly participative and enjoyed discussing different topics, demonstrating English proficiency at a B1 level, with some exceptions, as some students had more difficulties, particularly the Brazilian and Angolan students. Overall, the students were very curious and diligent, consistently committing to and completing tasks and assignments. The class enjoyed interacting in English and readily discussed current events with one another when prompted by the teacher, and even those with lower language proficiency would participate. Despite the generally high level of participation, I noticed that the same students would engage in open class discussions and quieter students would only attempt to speak when sharing answers previously debated and rehearsed in pairs, particularly during grammar lessons where they did not have to express their opinions, as the answers were clearly right or wrong. To try to combat this, on some occasions, I would pose direct questions to students who would never participate voluntarily, even though their responses were brief and they later expressed discomfort with speaking English in front of the class. Additionally, pair activities were employed, prompting quieter students to report their answers to the class previously discussed in pairs. This approach sometimes led to voluntary participation from the shyer students, as it allowed them to think and practice their answers with their peers. Regarding collaborative work, students were clearly not used to working in groups or pairs.

Initially, students were accustomed to a teacher-centered approach, where English was taught primarily through the textbook. Throughout their whole schooling, students used the textbook to complete reading and writing activities, rarely doing any type or collaborative work or oral interaction. As this was a 10th grade class, students were not familiar with their new English teacher, my cooperating teacher, and were not familiar with her teaching approach, which differed significantly from their previous experiences. Instead of using a textbook, my cooperating teacher created her own instructional materials, and assessed students mainly through research-based assignments and class participation. By the time I started teaching this class, students were already accustomed to this teaching method. Following a similar approach, instead of using the textbook, I also created original materials, such as worksheets, slides, flashcards, games, and videos. Students were required to compile these materials into a portfolio, enabling them to review the content learned in class, to be able to study; this way they would create their own personalized "textbook".

II.1.2. Lesson observations

This new teaching method was a significant change for students and as a result they were initially quite uncomfortable and did not immediately realize they were learning content aligned to the national curriculum. At the beginning of the first semester, students expressed confusion about what they were being taught and what they should study as they were not following a textbook. They would sometimes question whether the subjects being covered were part of the national curriculum or simply invented. In response, my cooperating teacher explained that the lessons were based on the national curriculum and aligned with the topics present in their textbook, regardless not being used. After a few months, my cooperating teacher asked the students if they preferred classes with the textbook or without it, and they showed a preference for student-centered classes, without relying on the textbook. They justified their preference, saying that although they initially felt disoriented without the textbook, they now preferred the interactive and engaging classes provided without it. Before I started teaching this class, my cooperating teacher had already done two major group assignments with them, dedicating some classes to group work and organization of the assignments. However, during most classes, the teacher would

focus on individual work and open class discussions without much peer interaction. As a result, whenever students were asked to collaborate and interact with their peers, they often hesitated, fearing that the teacher might reprimand them for talking, as they were used to completing tasks in silence.

II.2. Methodology

The research methodology adopted was a small-scale action research project. As stated by Burns (2010), action research (AR) is a "reflective practice" wherein the teacher needs to self-reflect on the classes, activities, and materials used. Furthermore, the teacher needs to be critical by questioning her own teaching methods and developing solutions and ideas. AR's essence focuses on intervening in a problematic situation to enhance teaching practice with changes that occur from substantial information and data collected. (Burns, 2010, p.2) According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) as stated in Burns (2010), action research involves four phases, planning, action, observation, and reflection.

To conduct this study, I carefully elaborated an action research plan. The first step was to identify the problem, which I accomplished after a few weeks of class observation. I realized that collaborative work could be extremely beneficial for students, as I felt that they were not fully taking advantage of working as a group. I observed the lack of interaction in English and unequal participation among group members. This led me to question how students could develop their oral interaction, particularly their fluency and vocabulary through group work. The next step was to plan how to implement the research and select appropriate research tools. During the first semester, while I was only observing my cooperating teacher's classes, I determined what materials to use and obtained the necessary permissions from the school board, parents, and students. As I began teaching and implementing this method, I realized collaborative work also had an impact on students' behavioral engagement, prompting me to plan the appropriate materials and research tools to address this problem.

II.2.1. Ethical considerations

Prior to obtaining students' formal consent, they were informed that in the second semester, I would be developing a research study for my final report. This study would include recording their voices and administering surveys. It was emphasized that participation would be voluntary. Additionally, it was made clear that this had no impact on their grades. To formally obtain the school and students' consent, the parents (Appendix A), the school administration (Appendix B), and the students (Appendix C), were asked to sign letters of consent. These letters were written in Portuguese and included information regarding my report topic and objectives of the study. It described how students would be involved in the study by filling out a series of surveys and granting permission to have their voices recorded. They were also assured that the participants would be anonymous. All the students and guardians granted permission to be recorded and participate in the study.

II.2.2. Collaborative work tasks

Collaborative work was something relatively new for this class. Initially, when I asked them to complete a task in pairs, most students would remain silent and complete the task individually, so I had to further remind them to interact with their peers. Over time, students realized they benefited from discussing their answers and ideas with their peers, leading to more automatic collaboration. Regarding small group work, students also showed initial apprehension, as they did not know how to interact with one another. After that, I provided clear instructions and guidelines for them to be able to interact effectively, and they would also autonomously assign roles to each other. However, a recurring pattern emerged, in which most students, accustomed to textbook activities and right or wrong questions, frequently sought validation from me when completing tasks where they were required to express their opinions. This indicates that students were not used to completing tasks that foster creativity and spontaneous discussion.

As students always had doubts and questions during group work, I would spend most of the time assisting them and making sure they were working. I would always start assisting the groups being recorded and then move on to the other groups.

Consequently, I would only have time to complete the observation grid at the end of each class, though I was not always able to collect information on every student and parameter, as some students were less participative in collaborative work.

In nearly every lesson, students were required to engage in collaborative work, typically in pairs. At least twice a month, students would undertake tasks that would require them to work in small groups. According to the topic discussed in class, these activities were designed to reinforce the lesson content providing opportunities for students to discuss and freely share their opinions and doubts with their classmates. Five group interactions were recorded for the purpose of this report.

The first small group task occurred in the first lesson, in early February. Students were divided into small groups of three and asked to describe a Steve Cutts illustration (Appendix D), connecting it to the topic being discussed in class regarding the impact of technology on people's lives. The illustration depicted a person being led on a lead by a phone. In turn, the person was walking their dog, which was walking a cat. The students completed this task without any guidelines or specific vocabulary requirements. The second small group task occurred in late February, during which students watched an Apple advertisement titled *Hello Apple Vision Pro* (Apple, 2023). The advertisement displayed multiple people wearing the Apple headset to perform daily tasks. After watching the video, the whole class discussed what they saw in the video and what their opinions were regarding virtual reality and the headsets. After this brief open class discussion, students were grouped and asked to interview one another using conversation prompts projected on the board with a few guidelines to guide them. Some of the questions prompted students to reflect on topics such as their opinions on products like the headset, its potential influence on consumerism and status symbol, as well as concerns regarding addiction and social isolation stemming from the constant usage of virtual reality. After interviewing one another, students had to report what their partners had responded to each question, using reported speech. Students were generally against these types of products and thought they could be potentially dangerous in the future. (Appendix E)

The third small group task occurred in early March and consisted of the class watching a video, featuring children from the 1960s predicting the future, entitled *1966: Children imagine life in the year 2000* (BBC Archive, 2021). In the video, many of the children's predictions were correct, prompting an open class discussion on their views about the future. Following this discussion, students were divided into small groups of three and tasked with discussing their own predictions about the future, guided by projected prompts (Appendix F) with suggested subjects to discuss. In this task, students had to use the future tense to communicate with each other. When sharing their predications with the rest of the class, each group assigned a spokesperson to present their ideas, and the rest of the class was encouraged to provide feedback on each other's predictions.

The fourth group task occurred also in March and was a more extensive task, in which students were organized in larger groups and had to read a text regarding online privacy (Appendix G) entitled *What is Online Privacy? And Why is it Important?* (Bitdefender, 2024). Students had to summarize a specific paragraph, and search for the meaning of unfamiliar words. Afterwards, they presented their summaries and vocabulary findings to the class followed by a discussion on the issues present in the text. I initially was concerned with this task, as the text was quiet extensive with formal and unfamiliar vocabulary. To maintain students' engagement, while each group reported their findings with the class, I asked follow-up questions linking the topic of online privacy to their personal experiences. The students responded positively to this activity, sharing many opinions and personal experiences with their classmates. While working in groups, as this was a larger and more complex task, students used their L1 more frequently than they did in previous tasks. The fifth and final group task occurred in mid-April, where students had to organize a written assignment regarding a short story they had read over Easter break. As there were three short stories and six groups, two groups were assigned to each story. The stories selected were *Mrs. Bixby and the Colonel's Coat (1959)* (Appendix H), *Lamb to the Slaughter (1953)* (Appendix I) and *The Landlady (1959)* (Appendix J), all written by Roald Dahl. Here, students divided the work among themselves and discussed various aspects of the short story. This task also took longer to complete and involved more L1 usage than previously, as students

were researching information and compiling it. While some groups made an effort to stick to English, others predominantly used their L1, as the task involved researching for information. Since this assignment involved short stories that were to be read independently by students rather than in class, I anticipated that students would use vocabulary previously learned in collaborative activities. This included language for requesting assistance, questioning peers, and organizing the structure of the assignment, which were skills they had learned and practiced in previous smaller tasks.

II.2.3. Research tools

II.2.3.1. Questionnaires

According to Dörnyei (2003), questionnaires can effectively collect extensive amounts of information in a short period of time. They are also extremely versatile, as they can be completed with various people in diverse situations, focusing on a wide range of subjects. Questionnaires have another important advantage, which is the reduced bias in students' opinions compared with interviews, as the results are usually anonymous, and students only need to fill them out (Dörnyei, 2003).

In this study, I administered three questionnaires: one at the beginning of the semester, after the students completed their first group task, (Appendix K), another administered in the middle of the semester after three collaborative tasks, (Appendix L), and finally at the end of the semester following all collaborative tasks (Appendix M). The objective of the questionnaires was to collect data on students' perspectives of collaborative work, their fluency and vocabulary acquisition development and the levels of behavioral engagement during each task. The questionnaire aimed to compare how students' perspectives changed and what they felt during collaborative work, including the challenges and how engaged they were during each task. Prior to distributing the questionnaires, I always clarified some unfamiliar vocabulary for the students. In certain instances, such as with the term "engagement," I provided the translation of the word, and further clarified its meaning in class. The first questionnaire was distributed in February and consisted of 12 statements on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) and four open-ended questions. The first questionnaire was filled out by 23 students on paper, in class. This

initial survey was the most comprehensive, designed to capture students' perceptions of oral interaction and collaborative work. The statements focused on students' feelings and challenges interacting in English with their group members. The second questionnaire was administered at the beginning of April and filled out by 20 students on paper in class. It contained seven statements on a Likert scale and in addition, two open-ended questions addressing group work dynamics and language development since the previous questionnaire. The final questionnaire was administered in late May, filled out by 25 students on paper in class. It contained 11 statements on a Likert scale, and focused primarily on students' engagement during collaborative interactions.

The data collected in the questionnaires was both qualitative and quantitative, given that the questionnaires included closed statements and open-ended questions. The results are displayed in tables and expressed in percentages. For the open-ended questions, I categorized students' responses based on whether they expressed agreement, disagreement or uncertainty regarding each question. I also included the most common reasons provided by students to explain their positions. While the majority of questions differed across the three questionnaires, some were repeated to compare the changes in students' perceptions and opinions regarding fluency and vocabulary.

II.4.2. Voice recordings

Regarding voice recordings, six students were systematically recorded to compare their interactions throughout the semester. The groups were identified by letters and the students were identified by numbers to distinguish them from one another. Group A consisted of three students, Student 1, Student 2, and Student 3; Group B also consisted of three students, Student 4, Student 5, and Student 6. The length of the recordings varied according to the tasks. Initially, I only recorded groups partially, but subsequently, entire interactions were recorded. The first recordings lasted around 3 to 4 minutes, and students had 5 to 10 minutes to complete the task. After that, the whole interaction started to be recorded, and it helped greatly to completely grasp students' interaction from the start till the end, as 3 minutes were

insufficient. To record the interactions, I used my phone to record Group A and my fellow teacher trainee's phone to record Group B. My phone automatically transcribed what students were saying, except when they spoke Portuguese, so I could read while I was listening to their interactions. My fellow teacher trainee's phone did not transcribe, so I transcribed the important features and interactions of that group. The transcriptions were analyzed qualitatively, focusing on vocabulary acquisition, and fluency, which included self-correction and accuracy. Fluency is challenging to measure, and there are several forms of doing so; however, some of them take a great deal of work and time. For that reason, in the voice recordings, fluency was measured by the speech rate, which is the number of words produced in certain time duration, number of pauses per utterance, and hesitation.

According to Riggenbach (1991), as stated by Wood (2010), there are four categories of pauses in a speech. "Micropause" is a silence of 0.2 seconds or less, "hesitation" is a silence of 0.5 seconds or more, "unfulfilled pause" is a silence of 0.5 seconds or more, which means that hesitation and unfulfilled pause are synonymous, and "filled pause" is a "filler" that does not add information (Wood, 2010, p.24).

Measuring vocabulary is a complex task that usually includes the size of vocabulary a learner possesses and how well a word is known (Pignot-Shahov, 2012). According to Nation (2013) as cited by Schmitt (2019) vocabulary knowledge can be divided into nine components, "spelling, word parts, meaning, grammatical functions, collocation" (Schmitt, 2019, p.2). When listening to the voice recordings it is possible to identify whether students are using specific words correctly, therefore demonstrating their understanding of the meaning of the word.

II.4.3. Group formation

From the first group task, those two small groups of three members each were recorded. Not all group interactions were recorded, but most were. Since this was the first time I recorded students, they were grouped according to their seating arrangement. I always made sure that these two groups remained the same, even when other students joined them for larger tasks. One of the groups recorded consisted of two high-proficiency students and one low-proficiency student. Although I

initially believed it would be beneficial to mix students of varying proficiency levels, I later realized that this group may have been too unbalanced, as I had two really good students with one student with more difficulties. However, this presented a challenge, as the two higher-proficiency students dominated most of the discussions, while the lower-proficiency student adopted a more passive role and possibly did not feel the need to intervene as much. Had this student been grouped with peers of similar proficiency, there is a possibility he would have interjected more in the discussions, as all the members would have been on the same level.

This group was initially selected because I believed that if I chose students with greater language proficiency, they could discuss in English more readily, while still including a member with lower proficiency. However, after the first two recordings, it became evident that the two higher-proficiency students had limited opportunities for further improvement in their English-speaking skills, as their English was already significantly advanced compared to the rest of the class. Despite this, the dynamic of the group was effective, with the lower proficiency student communicating more actively than he did in whole-class activities and with fewer inhibitions due to familiarity of his peers. The other group consisted of three medium- to low-proficiency students, who rarely participated in class and often expressed discomfort speaking English in front of their classmates. However, these students demonstrated greater proficiency than I expected, and improved through their interactions with each other. They effectively applied vocabulary learned in class, self-corrected mistakes during communication, and, for some members, the simple effort to speak in English with one another was a significant accomplishment. This group was selected after the first group in an effort to find a more balanced composition of members. One of the group members, an extremely introverted student with social challenges, was included based on his seating arrangement. Additionally, I wanted to observe whether he could develop and begin interacting with his classmates, though this did not occur. Unlike the first group, this one was more homogenous, with all the three members possessing similar proficiency levels, with slight differences, as one student was slightly more proficient. These students struggled more with expressing themselves in English, which allowed for clearer evidence of improvement compared to the first group. As these

members were not accustomed to interacting in English, their progress became evident over time. By the final recordings, they were more comfortable and exhibited a broader range of lexicon.

The recordings were conducted during class while the other groups were completing the task proposed. Recording these interactions allowed me to listen to their entire exchange, from beginning to end, without the pressure of having the rest of the class listen to them. I could also review the recordings numerous times and capture certain aspects that I might have missed the first time I listened to them. Reviewing the recordings was also helpful to identify patterns in their oral progression.

According to Burns (2010), recording oral interactions is more practical than attempting to write down what students are communicating with each other, as it captured the interactions precisely as they occurred. Burns, also notes that students may get distracted by the recording equipment initially, leading them to not interact normally. To overcome this issue, Burns suggests recording several times, so students get used to being recorded (Burns, 2010).

II.5. Observation of collaborative work

Observing classroom dynamics can be challenging, as teachers often focus on their own instructions and students' responses, making it difficult to see beyond broader interactions. Having tools that can help us capture what really happened during our lesson, such as observation grids, or voice recordings, can be a significant help. These tools allow us to become "strangers" in our classrooms and perceive things that we had not "consciously noticed before" (Burns, 2010, p.57).

To help with my collaborative work observations, during my lessons I used an observation grid (Appendix N) to help me collect specific information during each lesson, such as each student's reading and comprehension skills, fluency, vocabulary, engagement and behavior. The observation grid was adapted from their daily assessment grid that my cooperating teacher had used with the class since the first semester. In this modified version, I included the name of each student and focused on specific aspects of their oral performance, such as their range of vocabulary, their level

of fluency, measured by their speech rate and pauses, and overall coherence. Vocabulary was measured on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating minimal vocabulary use, 2 indicating limited vocabulary use, 3 moderate vocabulary use, 4 signifying good vocabulary use and 5 indicating excellent vocabulary use.

The criteria used to assess students' fluency were adapted from the *Cambridge B1 Preliminary Assessing speaking performance* and were therefore graded from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating very limited fluency, 2 indicating limited fluency, 3 indicating moderate fluency, 4 indicating good fluency, and 5 indicating excellent fluency. For this report, only the group members who were recorded are included in the grid. In my report, I used column charts to compare different students' fluency, vocabulary and engagement development throughout the different recorded tasks.

Behavioral engagement was also measured on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating that the student did not demonstrate engagement throughout the entire task, usually attributed to students who refused to contribute. A score of 2 signified minimal signs of engagement with many distractions. A score of 3 was attributed to students exhibiting moderate engagement, while a score of 4 was attributed to students who were engaged in the majority of the task. Finally, a score of 5 was attributed to students who were highly engaged in the task. I observed whether students consistently completed the tasks requested and whether they demonstrated initiative during task completion or class participation.

II.6. Written feedback

From the first semester, students had a compulsory task required by my cooperating teacher, involving the submission of three pieces of feedback on different lessons and different topics discussed in class, via e-mail. Even though this was a mandatory task, a smaller number of students never submitted their feedback. However, the majority was very consistent, always submitting their pieces of feedback on time. In the feedback, students selected a specific lesson, mentioned what was taught, explained what they learned, and commented on what they enjoyed or did not enjoy about that lesson. After students submitted their feedback I had to correct their language mistakes and grade it. The correction process used a color-coded system, in

which the teacher highlighted in red what required removal or correction, such as grammatical mistakes or poorly structured sentences. Information provided by the teacher, such as simple word substitutions, was highlighted in green. Subsequently, students were expected to revise their feedback, and upon submission, they were instructed to highlight in yellow all the newly added information. (Appendix O) This was a valuable insight into students' perceptions of my classes, revealing what was effective and what needed improvement, and if they were engaged in the topics discussed. This feedback proved particularly useful to understand students' attitudes towards collaborative work and classes focused on oral interaction.

Written feedback was a great tool to complement my observations, as I was able to have a clearer understanding of student engagement and participation during tasks. While observations offered a superficial view of engagement and task completion, student reflections provided deeper insights into their experiences and thoughts during these activities. For this report, I only analyzed the feedback that addressed oral interaction, vocabulary, fluency, collaborative work, and engagement, including quotations from their text, as evidence of students' opinions and perceptions on these topics.

II.3. Results

The following section of this research aims to display the results of my action research study. The data collection tools were the questionnaire, the voice recordings, the written reflections and the observation grid. The data collected was analyzed to answer to the research questions which originated this research:

- How does collaborative group work develop EFL students' oral fluency and vocabulary learning?
- How can collaborative group work have an impact on EFL students' behavioral engagement?

II.3.1. Questionnaires

The questionnaires were administered to students with the purpose of collecting information about their perspectives on collaborative group work, oral

interaction, the impact of collaborative group work on their oral interaction, and their engagement during collaborative work. Table 1 presents and compares the results from the first, second and third questionnaires.

Table 1

Students' perceptions of collaborative group work, oral interaction and engagement levels

Students	Students' answers (% and numbers of students)														
	Questionnaire 1 – February (23 students)					Questionnaire 2 – April (20 students)					Questionnaire 3 – May (25 students)				
	1 Totally disagree	2 Partially disagree	3 Neutral	4 Partially agree	5 Totally agree	1 Totally disagree	2 Partially disagree	3 Neutral	4 Partially agree	5 Totally agree	1 Totally disagree	2 Partially disagree	3 Neutral	4 Partially agree	5 Totally agree
1- I feel comfortable speaking English in small groups.	8, 7% (2)	8,7% (2)	21,7% (5)	43,5% (10)	17,4% (4)										
2- I believe interacting in groups develops my fluency skills.	8,7% (2)	0% (0)	17,4% (4)	47,8% (11)	26,1% (6)	5% (1)	0% (0)	20% (5)	50% (10)	20% (4)					
3- I believe interacting in groups develops my vocabulary.	8,7% (2)	0% (0)	17,4% (4)	47,8% (11)	26,1% (6)	0% (0)	10% (2)	15% (3)	55% (11)	20% (4)					
4- Every member of the group was willing to engage in the group work.						10% (2)	10% (2)	10% (2)	30% (6)	40% (8)					
5- During group work, I reflected on the language I was using.											8% (2)	8% (2)	32% (8)	36% (9)	16% (4)
6- During group work, I was supportive of my classmates and tried to understand											4% (1)	8% (2)	24% (6)	20% (5)	44% (11)

what they were trying to say.										
7- During group work, I tried to speak solely in English.	8,7% (2)	17,4% (4)	21,7% (5)	30,4% (7)	21,7% (5)					16% (4)	24% (6)	24% (6)	24% (6)	12% (3)
8- During group work, I was always focused on the task I was performing.										4% (1)	4% (1)	24% (6)	48% (12)	20% (5)
9- During group work I was bored.										0% (0)	40% (10)	48% (12)	8% (2)	4% (1)
10- I am more willing to speak English since I've had several interactions with my classmates during our classes.						8,7% (2)	4,4% (1)	30,4% (7)	13% (3)	26,1% (6)				

The questionnaires contained different statements. Only a few of them were repeated, as the last questionnaire was heavily focused on engagement, rather than speaking interaction. In the first questionnaire, in response to the first statement, "I feel comfortable speaking English in small groups", 60.9% students stated they felt comfortable. This statement was posed after two collaborative work tasks where students had to interact in English; however, this statement wasn't repeated in the second questionnaire. A significant portion of students remained neutral to this statement (21.7%), leading me to conclude that I should not have included this option in my questionnaires, as students would often vote "neutral" to finish filling out the questionnaire faster.

In the second statement, 73.9% of students revealed they believed that interacting in groups developed their fluency. This percentage decreased to 70% in the second questionnaire. This means that, in general, students were aware that they were developing their fluency by interacting with their peers.

In the third statement of the first questionnaire, most students (73.9%) believed their vocabulary developed due to group interaction. In the fourth statement of the second questionnaire, the percentage of students declined slightly, as most students (70%) felt like every member of the group was willing to engage in the group work. However, 20% of students disagreed with this statement, which was something I witnessed while observing some interactions. During the short story assignment, some students did not collaborate with their groups. While some were frequently distracted in unrelated conversations, others simply refused to collaborate. This behavior was addressed in class following their oral presentations and had an impact on their grades. In the fifth statement, most students (52%) reflected on the language used during group work; however, a considerable number of students remained "neutral" (32%), which again made me regret including this possibility of answer in the questionnaires, as I feel students were avoiding answering by choosing "neutral". In the sixth statement, most students (64%) stated they were supportive of their classmates and tried to understand what they were trying to communicate during their interaction. Still, 12% of the class, which means 3 students in total, chose "totally disagree" and "partially disagree", something that I did not notice when observing their interactions and during voice recordings.

In the seventh statement, most students (52.1%) stated they made an effort to speak solely in English during group interactions; however, this percentage declined in the third questionnaire to 36%. In this case, even though the majority stated they made an effort to speak only English, the percentage of students who stated they did not make an effort to interact only in English increased comparing to the first questionnaire. In the first questionnaire, 8.7% of students stated they totally disagreed with the statement, while in the third questionnaire, this percentage rose to 16%. By the end of the second semester, students were required to complete a major compulsory assignment that was not particularly well-received: reading and analyzing a short story in groups of six. As groups sizes increased, many students began to rely on group members with higher proficiency to interact between themselves in English and to search for information, contributing to a decline in oral interaction within the groups. Another contributing factor was their general dislike for the task of reading

and analyzing the short story, which resulted in a lack of motivation and engagement. Consequently, many students showed less interest in completing the assignment or in supporting their group members during the organization and search phases of group work. As a result, I believe they became less convinced that group work contributed to the development of their vocabulary and fluency, and their interaction in English decreased due to the complexity of the assignment.

In the eight statement, the vast majority of students (68%) reported that they remained focused throughout the collaborative activities, though 26% remained neutral. This suggests a degree of behavioral engagement, as most students appeared to make an effort to concentrate and complete the tasks assigned. In the ninth statement, 40% of students indicated they did not feel bored during group work, while 48% selected the "neutral" option. This neutrality may suggest reluctance to openly express boredom, especially as the survey was filled out after their last big assignment that was not particularly well-received. It's likely that this assignment contributed to students feeling less engaged and perhaps hesitant to report it. In the tenth statement, most students (39.1%) believed that practicing oral interaction increased their willingness to speak English. While 30.4% of students remained neutral. This suggests some uncertainty among students regarding the impact of oral interaction practice on their willingness to speak English.

Although there were eight open-ended questions in total, I will focus on only four, as they elicited more complete and interesting responses from the students. In response to the question, *"Do you think interacting with your group can help you become more fluent in English? Why?"* sixteen students answered affirmatively, two answered negatively, and two other students were uncertain. Those who responded affirmatively cited less pressure and increased opportunities to communicate compared to whole class activities, "*Yes, because it is an opportunity to practice my English*." The students who answered negatively or were uncertain mentioned that they tended to only use words they were familiar with and often spoke in Portuguese, "No, because we only use words we know, so basically we don't learn new words."

For the question, *"Do you believe that working as a group makes you feel more engaged while speaking English? Why?"* nine students answered affirmatively, six students were uncertain, and five students answered negatively. The students who answered affirmatively, explained that there was less pressure when working in groups and that they enjoyed working with their classmates, "*Yes, because I'm talking with my friends*." One of the students who was uncertain explained that while he felt more comfortable speaking English in small groups this comfort led to a perception that speaking was less necessary, "*Maybe, on the one hand, yes, because it helps me getting more comfortable, but on the hand, I'm more relaxed and I end up speaking less.*" I found interesting that the student recognized the reason he felt less inclined to interact due to his engagement with his friends. Additionally, through my observations of group work, I noticed that students who interacted with their friends made a conscious effort to speak English as they were more comfortable and motivated to do so, because they were communicating with peers they knew well. Those who answered negatively indicated that some group members did not want to speak English, which I witnessed during some group work observations.

In response to the question "*What causes you to feel more comfortable or uncomfortable (depending on your previous answer) about speaking English in groups?",* most students indicated that they felt more comfortable speaking English in small groups, as they had fewer people listening, which made them feel less judged and nervous, "*I feel more comfortable because I'm in a group with people I trust*." They also appreciated that their classmates were required to speak, as well. However, a few students revealed they felt nervous speaking in groups due to a sense of embarrassment regarding their English proficiency.

Regarding the question "*In your opinion, what were the main difficulties faced by you or the group while communicating with each other?*", many students noted that varying levels of English proficiency within the same group made it challenging to sustain conversations, as some students struggled to convey their message effectively, "*There were different speaking levels on the group, so that made the task harder*." Other students pointed out the lack of effort from some group members to speak

English, hindering their communication, a challenge I observed during some group interactions, "*Probably the lack of effort of some*."

Overall, the questionnaires revealed that students preferred small group interactions rather than whole class discussions, as they felt less pressured and anxious speaking in small groups, especially with peers they knew well, as they felt a more supportive environment. The majority of students said they agreed with the statement that interacting in groups developed their vocabulary acquisition in both questionnaires. They also identified group work as a source of improving fluency, as it provided more opportunities to speak English and interact with their classmates. Regarding engagement, students mentioned that working with people they are comfortable with makes them feel more engaged in the tasks. However, a significant number of students expressed uncertainty on this matter, as not everyone made an effort to speak in the discussions. Challenges such as lack of effort, varying language proficiencies, and self-consciousness, created barriers to fully effective communication.

II.3.2. Voice recordings

II.3.2.1. Qualitative analysis

Skehan and Foster (2007), as stated by Bosker et al., (2014), noticed that native speakers exhibit a "different pause distribution" compared to non-native speakers. They explain that non-native speakers tend to pause or stutter due to not having complete grammar and vocabulary knowledge, as well as not having enough automaticity skills (Bosker et al., 2014). This was evident in some cases, as some students would often pause in the middle of their speech to find the right word. Less fluent students made more and longer pauses.

During the first collaborative task, students analyzed an illustration and related it to the concepts discussed in that lesson. All groups completed the task successfully, as it was a fairly accessible task and students had the support of their group members. Group A's interaction was quite fluid, with no major pronunciation issues and without long pauses or hesitations. It is important to mention that Students 1 (S1) and 2 (S2)

had a higher English proficiency than Student 3 (S3). In this recording, they notably carried out the discussion, without much intervention from S3. In excerpt 1, Student 2 self-corrected himself while taking a *micropause* to notice the lexical mistake made, which is a sign of fluency and language proficiency, as the student was self-aware of the language being used. The numbers preceding each student's transcription are referred to as "turns" and help the reader follow the flow of the conversation, indicating the sequence in which students interact. The numbers in brackets indicate the pauses made by the students within their sentence, which serve as markers of their fluency or lack of it.

Excerpt I

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1 **S2** Technology can control everything and is power (.1) powerful.

In Excerpt II, Group A continues working on the same activity, demonstrating other moments of hesitation when attempting to articulate certain words, despite ultimately pronouncing them correctly. The support and reassurance provided by the other group members play a crucial role in maintaining the flow of the conversation. In Turn 3, S3 commented that he did not notice the mouse in the illustration due to his poor eyesight, making the group laugh. This interaction was one of the early indications of the group members' comfort with each other and their social engagement while completing the tasks. The students also exhibit signs of behavioral engagement as they appear involved in the task, collaborating with each other to solve problems.

Excerpt II

---

1 **S2** I don't know how to say it, but the cat is holding a (.2) mouse.

2 **S1** A mouse, yeah!

3 **S3** Oh, I don't see very well. (laughs)

During the second collaborative task, in which students had to interview one another, Group A and Group B displayed significant differences in interaction; however, some aspects were quite similar. As already mentioned, S3 of Group A had lower English proficiency as his group members. For that reason, he would not interact much and would occasionally ask for clarification; however, S1 explanations are quite confusing. In Turn 1, S1 attempted to explain the task to S3, but her explanation was not clear and is characterized by many pauses and laughter, indicating her discomfort with explaining the activity and her distraction. As a result, in Turn 2, S3 asked S1 to repeat what she has said. In Turn 3, S1 complied, but her response was still marked by several short pauses, reflecting a disruption in fluency, likely due to her inexperience with explaining concepts in English.

Excerpt III

---

1 **S1** So (.1), do you think (.2) you have to answer *(ask)* me this question and I answer (.2) hum, and then (.2) when the teacher asks (.9) *(laughs)* you have to say S3 answered this, and I'm going to give you the answer and you have to (.1) say the answer.

2 **S3** Explain again.

3 **S1** You're just going to (.1) answer (.1) when teacher asks you my answer you just say this thing. *(points to their answer)* (.3) But then, she is going to ask me what you answered to this question, and you have to tell me so I can tell (.1) her. Do you understand the question?

4 **S3** Yes.

Even though the group helped S3 understanding the guidelines projected on the board to help the groups' interaction, this group communicated in English the entire time, even S3. The interaction did not flow as smoothly as the first one, and S3 was taking longer pauses while speaking and was repeating the question multiple times to try to understand it. As the group had a reduced amount of time to interview each other and they still had a few questions left, S1 tried to hurry S3, as it is visible in the following excerpt.

Excerpt IV

---

1 **S1** Yes, no?

2 **S3** Wait.

3 **S1** Ok. (.15)

4 **S1** So, yes or no.

5 **S3** Wait.

6 **S1** We have to hurry, we have to answer two questions each, so six questions.

7 **S3** Eeerrr. *(the student is stretching)*

8 **S1** Don't. (.1) Focus, you just have to say yes or no.

9 **S3** Maybe (.6)

10 **S1** Oh my god you have to hurry (.4).

11 **S2** Say yes.

In the Excerpt V, in turn 1, S1 doubted her vocabulary choice, hesitating briefly before uttering the word and concluding her sentence in a questioning tone. In Turn 2, S2 reassured her by repeating the same word and confirming its correctness. However, S2, remained uncertain and, in Turn 3, repeated the word again, seeking further

reassurance from S1, this time using her L1. In Turn 4, S1 reassured S2 again by responding affirmatively in Portuguese. In Turn 5, S2 completed her thought without restating the whole sentence. In this exchange, the students assisted each other by being the source of vocabulary; however, Tthey show a fluency break by using Portuguese to assist one another.

Excerpt V

---

1 **S2** So, basically, we can (.1) conclude?

2 **S1** Conclude, yes.

3 **S2** Conclude … *isso faz sentido*? (Does that make sense?)

4 **S1** *Faz.* (Yes)

5 **S2** That technology controls everything.

Meanwhile, Group B, which consisted of three medium- to low-proficiency speakers, is completing the same task. Student 4 (S4) took the lead in every interaction. Every member of the group took long pauses between utterances and spoke quite slowly, with S4 translating from English to Portuguese every single guideline projected on the board. The conversation did not flow smoothly, and S4 ended up being the only one to express her opinions in a somewhat coherent form. Student 6 (S6) is an extremely quiet student who did not even socialize with his classmates, never spoke in class, and rarely changed his facial expression. In this task, he barely interjected. In Turn 1, S4 rushed S5 to begin asking the question projected on the board due to the limited time to complete this task. In Turn 2, S5 took time reading the question, possibly feeling nervous about being recorded. She made a few mistakes while reading the question but did not notice it, indicating a lack of control over the language and unawareness of the vocabulary used. In Turn 3, S4 also needed to reread the question and paused frequently while giving her answer, which suggests that she

was not fully in control of the language used. Unlike Group 1, students in this group used their L1 frequently to communicate with each other.

Excerpt VI

---

1 **S4** Student 5, *faz a pergunta!* (Ask the question!)

2 **S5** *Calma estava a ler* (Wait, I was reading). Do you think *Apple projects* (products) have become status symbols more than (.2) devices?

3 **S4** I think (.2), *calma qual é que era a pergunta?* (Wait, what was the question?) (laughs) (.5) I think some people buy (.1) *Apple* products more because (.3) it's the most famous brand, not because the products are good. (.5) Because there are other brands like *Samsung* that sell good (.1) devices.

4 **S5** Yeah!

5 **S5** Do you think the (.2) headsets *show* (shown) in the video are dangerous? (laughs)

6 **S4** In some cases it can be (laughs) (they are interrupted by the trainee teacher who tells them to interact normally without holding the phone)

Throughout the interaction, S4 and S5 laughed numerous times as they were being recorded for the first time, which increased the number of pauses. S5 had negative feelings towards English and often expressed her dislike for learning the language. She would give up easily and would feel embarrassed even when her speech was coherent. In the following excerpt, S5 said she did not know what to say multiple times throughout the interaction, which frustrated S4. In Turn 2, S5 quickly answered in Portuguese, stating that she did not know the answer to the question asked by S4. This indicates a lack of effort to utilize both the vocabulary she possessed and the terms learned in class. In Turn 5, when S5 finally answered the question, she made many grammatical mistakes and paused frequently, reflecting discomfort with the

language and a lack of fluency. She concluded her answer by saying she did not know what to say. In Turn 6, the group seemed to disregard S5's answer, as S6 immediately asked her another question, suggesting a lack of collaborative support in terms of vocabulary and emotional support, unlike Group 1. In Turn 7, S5 made an effort to answer the question with the vocabulary she possessed. Although she made many pauses and her discourse was not entirely coherent, her message was conveyed, which showed signs of development in the language. By collaboratively interact with her group, this student was encouraged to use the vocabulary she has acquired, an opportunity that would not have happened in open discussion settings, where she typically remained silent.

Excerpt VII

---

1 **S4** (reading) How can this connect us with other people?

2 **S5** *Sei lá!* (I don't know)

3 **S4** *Tu nem estás a pensar!* (You are not even thinking!)

4 **S5** *Porque eu não sei!* (Because I don't know!) (.8) Hum, yes to the Facetime, and (.1) Messanger, *sei lá* (I don't know).

5 **S6** (reading) Do you think devices like these can be addictive?

6 **S5** Yes, because the people (.1) you can (.1) isolated for real world and (.4) yes.

Even though the interaction in Excerpt VII involved a lot of Portuguese, with many pronunciation and fluency issues, this was a big milestone for these students, especially for S5, who cried and refused to speak English in the first semester. These students would never participate in class, so after listening to the recordings, I was very proud and surprised that they actually tried to communicate in English with one

another. This was clearly due to the fact that they felt comfortable with each other and felt less exposed.

The last interaction to be analyzed involved a task in which students had to imagine what the near future might look like. They also had guidelines projected onto the board, as previously mentioned. This task was executed successfully, and students were able to interact with one another and seek answers from their peers. Group A's discourse is generally fluid and smooth. This interaction was quite particular, as this group was so comfortable with one another that they would intercalate the task with jokes and non-related conversations. This concerned me at first, but after reading some literature on student engagement, I realized that social engagement is as important as cognitive engagement. Students continued relying on each other for answers and assistance while interacting, demonstrating autonomy in solving communicative issues. They also corrected each other's pronunciations, as it visible in the following excerpts. In turn 1, S2 was unsure of the word "receptions" in English, so he said he was going to ask the teacher how to say it. In turn 2, S3 said in Portuguese he was going to look up the word, and then said it again in English, which revealed that, this time, the group was not making an effort to interact solely in English.

Excerpt VIII

---

1 **S2** *Receções* (Receptions) … *receptionairies*, *não sei dizer* (I don't know how to say it). I'm going to ask the teacher.

2 **S3** *Vou ver isso online*. I'm going to check on my phone (.1) on Oxford Dictionary.

3 **S2** *É* (is it) Reception?

4 **S1** Reception, yes.

Excerpt VXI

---

1 **S1** I am now *conting* the…

2 **S2** *Conting?*

3 **S3** Counting.

Another interesting aspect of this interaction is that the group would ask each other to speak in English when a member would speak Portuguese, as illustrated in the following transcript.

Excerpt X

---

1 **S2** *Eu escrevo o índice e ninguém me diz nada.* (I write the Index and no one tells me anything)

2 **S1** In English, please.

Group B's interaction was not as fluent as Group A; however, they used one another for assistance to use the language. In Turn 1, S4 asked the group if the vocabulary used was correct and in Turn 2 S5 reassured her she was right.

Excerpt XI

---

1 **S4** In terms of, *isto existe?* (Does this exist?) In terms of?

2 **S5** *Acho que sim.*(I think so.)

In Excerpt XII, a distinct difference is evident in this group's interaction, as S5 participated more frequently and was a bit more confident about her language skills.

She offered suggestions to the group on how to answer the question, as seen in Turns 6 and 8. S6 intervened once in the whole interaction; however, due to his low volume and the high volume of the background noise, it was not clear what he said.

Excerpt XII

---

1 **S4** *(Reading)* What do you think life will look like in the year 2050?

2 **S5** (.5) I think the world will be different? *Sei lá.* (I don't know) (.10) The world will be diferent *ou não*? (Or not?)

3 **S4** *O mundo vai evoluir muito.* (The world will evolve a lot)

4 **S5** The world *evulates*? (will evolve) (.10)

5 **S4** The world will be much more developed.

6 **S5** In terms of technology.

7 **S4** Okay, technology, jobs and (.5) human relationships. (writes down their answer)

8 **S5** (.10) We can say smart cities and smart homes too.

After listening to the groups' recordings and analyzing their interactions, it became evident that a primary challenge for groups in an EFL classroom is maintaining the use of English during interactions. Nonetheless, it is a positive development when students make an effort to speak English and assist their peers. Repetition, extended and frequent pauses were a pattern of their interactions, as students would take a while to think of specific words. They exhibited some vocabulary and pronunciation issues but made an effort to use vocabulary learned in class in their interactions. Group A appeared more engaged in the activities than Group B, who, at times, appeared disengaged and intolerant toward one another. For instance, in Excerpt V, S4 hurried S5 to ask a question "Student 5, ask the question!", but then failed to pay

attention when S5 was reading it, requiring S4 to read it herself. Throughout their interactions, S4 constantly rushed S5 in an impatient tone, as S5 was uncomfortable speaking in English and found it difficult to answer the questions. Additionally, S5 often responded “I don’t know” immediately after questions were posed, without pausing to reflect, which is a sign of disengagement and a lack of motivation. This stems, I believe, from the relationship they have with the language. Group A enjoyed interacting in English, while Group B was actively making an effort to communicate. On the other hand, it was surprising how much of an effort this group made to communicate with one another and to use vocabulary learned in class. This was possibly due to their awareness of being recorded, which likely motivated them to make an effort to communicate more effectively.

I was able to conclude that these groups’ fluency and vocabulary developed primarily through peer assistance and consistent oral interaction practice. Students regularly assisted one another with vocabulary and were language sources within their groups. Practice was the major factor in improving their fluency since the beginning of the school year, as they hesitated less while communicating. In Group B’s last recorded interaction, improvements in fluency and vocabulary were evident, with S5 appearing more comfortable, refraining from laughing and effectively using vocabulary learned in class. Group A, however, exhibited limited improvement, likely due to their high level of proficiency; instead, they became more relaxed over time.

Comparing these results with studies from my literature review, I observed some similarities, as this class also benefited from collaborative work, showing progress in their vocabulary acquisition. For instance, McDonough and Sato (2019) mention how vocabulary requires constant practice to be acquired. For that reason, during lessons in which students learned a significant amount of new words, group activities were incorporated. This approach aligns with findings from Namaziandost’s study (2020), which demonstrated that students taught with cooperative learning method, working small groups benefitted from group interaction, as they could think and discuss in groups. Similarly, this class also benefitted from collaborative classes focused on group interaction. In terms of engagement, students demonstrated enthusiasm for group work, initially; however, as it became a common occurrence,

students started to appreciate it less over time. Group interactions began to involve assessed assignments and include a larger number of students. In some cases, groups were not given the opportunity to choose their members. As a result, I believe students' appreciation for group work diminished. In regards to self-confidence, in Abulhassan & Hamid's (2021) study, students gained self-confidence to speak in public. The same happened with some students in my study, such as the case of S5, who exhibited more confidence in herself and made an effort to interact with her peers. By the end of the school year, S5 also became more willing to participate in class. Regarding engagement, Hiver et al.'s (2021) theory that learning is more effective when students are socially engaged proved accurate in my observations. For instance, Group A, which consistently demonstrated high levels of social engagement, always completed tasks successfully and actively debated topics learned in class.

II.3.2.2. Quantitative analysis

Figure 1 illustrates the six recorded students' fluency progression during the five specific tasks they were recorded.

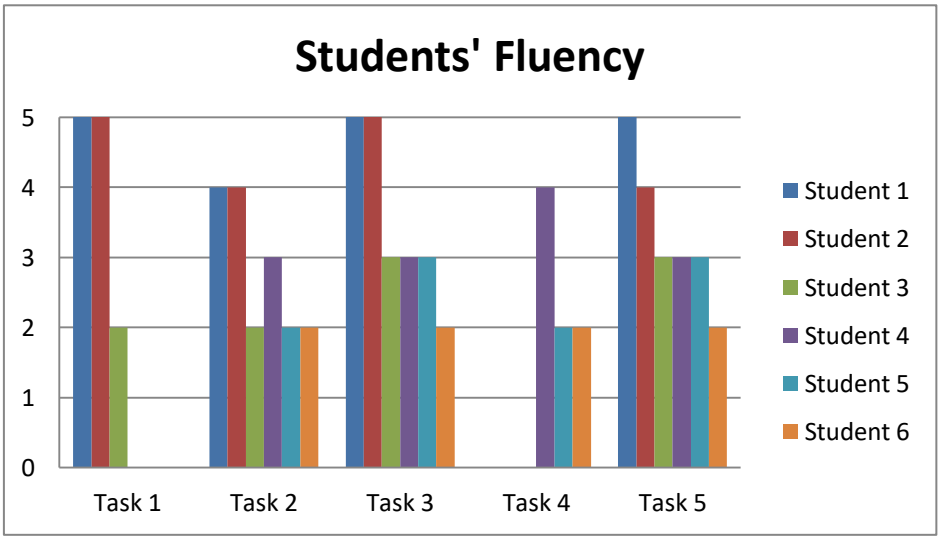

Figure 1 – Comparison of fluency results

As previously mentioned, I used a 5-number scale to score students' oral interactions. The assessment scale ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating minimal fluency, 2 representing limited fluency, 3 indicating moderate fluency, 4 indicating good fluency and 5 representing excellent fluency. Regarding fluency I considered

several factors, including students' rate of speech, the number of pauses they made during their responses, and self-corrections. Regarding self-correction, when the student realizes he made a mistake and corrects himself, he exhibits control over the language, which is indicative of fluency. S1, S2 and S3 do not have scores for task 4, as the recording did not include enough data to analyze their fluency on that specific task. Similarly, S4, S5 and S6 do not have scores for Task 1 because I did not record them. S1's fluency exhibited some fluctuations across the various tasks, which appeared to be linked to her engagement with the task itself. In Task 2, the student appeared less engaged, leading her to speak more Portuguese and resulting in less polished English compared to tasks on the topics she enjoyed. S3, for instance, has a positive development in his fluency. In the first task, he barely intervened, leaving most of the interaction to S1 and S2. In the final tasks, he started interacting more with the group, facilitating a more accurate assessment of his fluency level. S4 was able to produce elaborate responses with a coherent speech in most tasks; however, she frequently used Portuguese to interact with her group members. Additionally, her speech rate was relatively slow with multiple pauses in between utterances. S6 did not have a clear development as he rarely interacted with his classmates, spending most of the time in silence.

The following component to be analyzed is vocabulary. Vocabulary was also measured on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating minimal vocabulary use, which means that the student barely intervened or intervened mostly in Portuguese, 2 indicating limited vocabulary use, 3 moderate vocabulary use, 4 signifying good vocabulary use and 5 indicating excellent vocabulary use. There are big discrepancies between the two groups and the six students. S1 and S2's vocabulary use is by far higher than any other recorded students.

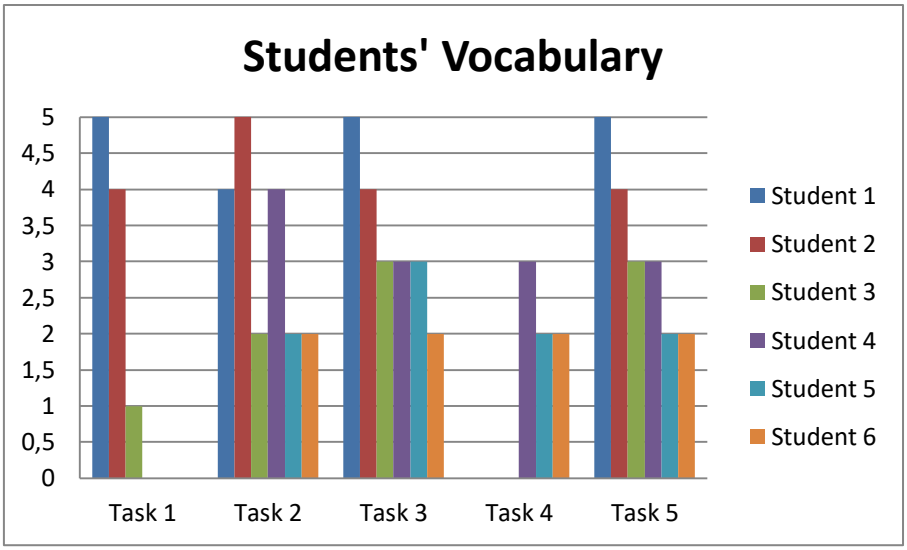

Figure 2 – Comparison of vocabulary results

S1 and S2's vocabulary use is generally well-balanced, with S1 taking the lead in every group interaction and contributing with the most spoken language; therefore, providing the largest amount of data regarding vocabulary use. Among the three members of Group A, S3 interacted the least. In the first tasks, S3 allowed the other group members to dominate the conversation, occasionally offering a sporadic affirmation such as, "Yes, I agree". His contributions to the conversation became more frequent and more complete from task to task; however, he still showed a limited range of vocabulary when interacting with his classmates. In Task 3, he became more comfortable and was able to show an appropriate range of vocabulary. S4's vocabulary use was usually quite appropriate as she frequently expressed her opinion during interactions. In Task 2, she demonstrated a good vocabulary range, which surprised me as she never participated in class. However, in Task 4 and Task 5 she spoke more Portuguese than English, as the groups were larger and some group members were reluctant to interact in English, as they would tell her to speak Portuguese. I only became aware of this dynamic after listening to the recordings, as my interactions with the group elicited answers in English. This is the evidence that small groups are more favorable to oral interaction, as larger groups limit equal participation from all group members. It also highlights the value of classroom observation tools, such as voice recordings, in capturing challenges that may not be apparent to teachers during the

lesson. Additionally, not all students are prone to interact in English and will avoid doing so whenever possible.

Behavioral engagement was another important component for me to analyze in this report. My observations focused on students' participation during group work, their behavior, their collaboration with the group and their overall effort to complete the task. In my observation grid, I included the same 5 points scale for collaboration and participation, with 1 representing minimum collaboration or participation, and 5 reflecting active participation and collaboration. Regarding behavior, I used the class observation grid registers I had from each student. When assigning a negative grade to a specific student, I included a side note stating "did not collaborate in group work" to distinguish it from actual misbehavior.

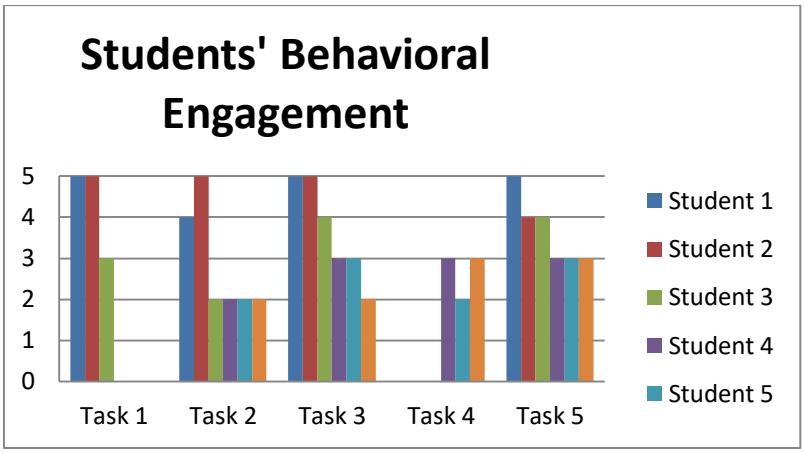

Figure 3 – Comparison of engagement results

S2 was the most engaged student of all the six recorded students, and one of the most engaged students in the class overall. He actively participated in every discussion and was always willing to collaborate with his classmates, even in larger groups. Even though S3 exhibited many difficulties, he always appeared engaged in the tasks and always fulfilled his responsibilities. As he had trouble expressing himself in English, he would write everything said during the discussions, to be prepared for potential questions from me. In contrast, S6 was probably the most socially, emotionally, and behaviorally disengaged student in the class. He rarely participated in group interactions, even when persuaded by me to do so. It was extremely challenging to understand what this student was thinking or feeling throughout most of our

lessons, so I had to observe him for long periods of time to catch him briefly interact with his group mates and change his facial expressions. In group work he would contribute a few times, which indicated that he was not totally disengaged. His development was clear, and he became more comfortable with his group members; however, I also felt like his group members would overlook his rare interjections. Even though he started to participate a bit more in later group assignments, his contribution was not proportional with the rest of the group.

Overall, behavioral engagement is complex and shaped by multiple factors, including language proficiency and social skills, which appeared to have an impact on engagement levels in group tasks. Group work promotes engagement by allowing students to socialize; however, after analyzing both the voice recordings and the questionnaires, it indicates that this engagement has also an intrinsic dimension. If a student lacks interest in the subject being studied, does not feel connected to his peers, achieving full engagement will be challenging. Although collaborative work can reduce performance pressure and increase motivation though social interaction, students without strong social bonds with their classmates may display lower levels of engagement.

II.3.3. Collaborative work observation grid

Observation is a vital tool for data collection, not only to be able to assess students but also to gather information about each student. Analyzing the data we collected is a great way to find patterns and explanations, according to Burns (2010).

The two groups selected showed two different sides of this class: students with a higher English proficiency level, who enjoyed interacting with one another, and students with a lower English proficiency level, who were not particularly keen on learning the language but still made an effort to communicate with each other. During collaborative work, either in small groups or pairs, I tried to collect as much information as I could on each student's development, focusing on fluency, vocabulary, language comprehension, and engagement. To this end, I used an observation grid adapted from an everyday assessment tool. (Appendix P) The original observation grid included all groups formed in class; however, as some group member would change,

with the exception of these two groups recorded for the study (which always maintained the same three original members), I simplified the grid presented here by including only the recorded groups. As students were assessed from a scale of 1 to 5, the results in this observation grid represent their average scores. Regarding behavioral engagement, both S1 and S2 had an average score of 5 points, as they consistently remained focused, listened to their group members and contributed the most by offering the majority of ideas. S3, S4, and S5 all scored an average of 4 points. S3 and S5 generally paid attention, listened to the group and contributed with some ideas. Although S4 was the most active contributor of the group, providing many ideas and leading interactions, she often failed to listen to other members' suggestions, occasionally showing disengagement. S6 had an average score of 2 points. Although he paid attention and listened to the group, he seldom interacted and contributed with ideas. Therefore, in relation to my research question, "How can collaborative group work have an impact on EFL students' behavioral engagement?", I believe that in cases like this, where a student is not socially engaged, collaboration with classmates will not have an positive impact on their behavioral engagement.

II.3.4. Written feedback data

Written feedback consisted of mandatory pieces of feedback students had to write three times per semester. In these reflections they had to include what was taught in class, what they learned and what they enjoyed most or least about the lesson. As students usually focused on recounting what happened in class, providing only a short paragraph at the end to express their opinion on the lesson itself, those short paragraphs that referred to fluency, vocabulary, engagement or collaborative work will to be the focus of my data collection regarding written feedback.

In one piece of written feedback, concerning a group task where groups were asked to deliver the same story in different media outlets, a student reflected on the importance of collaborative work in his feedback: "(…) working in groups makes me think more about the subject we are discussing and overall makes me improve my speaking skills as I try to communicate with my classmates the best I can." The student

is conscious that collaborative work has an impact on his fluency as he mentions that he makes an effort to speak in the highest of his abilities.

On another occasion, a different student expressed his preference with communicating in small groups rather than in front of the whole class, as he felt more comfortable and less exposed. This task involved students interviewing each other after watching a video, with guidelines provided to help them maintain the flow of the conversation. Regarding this task, the student wrote the following in his feedback, “I particularly enjoyed this activity because I was able to speak English more comfortably, and I discovered that sometimes I said the wrong sentences due to the stress of speaking to the class and being evaluated.” This is an example of how shier students, who have less confidence in their abilities and fear being exposed in front of the class or in front of the teacher, make an effort to speak when in an environment they feel less exposed.

Regarding collaborative work, another student shared in his written feedback that collaborative work increased his confidence in interacting in English “I notice that I have lost a little of the embarrassment of speaking, and my pronunciation is improving.” He also mentioned how he noticed his linguistic development due to constant peer interaction “I feel I've developed in my English because I've had to talk with my classmates only in English.” Since these were 10th grade students, they were not accustomed to having classes only in English. In addition, students had to adapt to listen to the teacher speaking exclusively in English, they also had to interact with one another in English, which was something that took them some time to get accustomed to. In the end, students recognized differences and a development in their fluency and vocabulary acquisition.

Regarding engagement, another student mentioned how he was engaged in the task that required them to choose a type of media, creating a news story and presenting it. He remarked, “I really enjoyed this activity because it was very engaging, and at the same time, I feel I've developed my English…” Another student also expressed a sense of engagement when providing feedback on the same lesson,

stating “I really enjoyed this class because we discussed topics that I consider important in a fun and different way.”

II.4. Discussion and Conclusion

II.4.1. Research questions and findings

This small-scale action research project addressed the role of collaborative work in promoting oral interaction, with a focus on fluency, vocabulary and behavioral engagement among a class of 29 tenth grade students. Classes without the reliance on textbook activities and implementation of dynamic activities prompting students to interact with one another, was a format that students found engaging and beneficial, for vocabulary acquisition. The research was carried out from early February to early June, and the primary objective was to enhance students’ fluency skills and vocabulary acquisition by structuring regular activities to practice interaction, reinforcing vocabulary learned in class. To answer the first research question, “How does collaborative group work develop EFL students' oral fluency and vocabulary learning?” I grouped students and designed activities, such as role-plays, interviews, and discussion activities with guidelines for students. As students had difficulty interacting with one another, the guidelines projected during their interactions were beneficial, especially for students who struggled to communicate in English. Following vocabulary-focused lessons, these structured group interactions reinforced the retention of new vocabulary, as students were required to use newly introduced words to complete the tasks. As high school students are less inclined to participate actively compared to younger students, grouping them in small groups of three made this language practice easier and less intimidating. Students were able to identify the positive effects of collaborative work on their vocabulary acquisition and fluency, through questionnaires and written feedback. For the students who initially found interacting in English daunting, it eventually became a familiar and less intimidating routine, with noticeable reductions in hesitation when speaking in English. However, I later realized that including only six students in the study was not ideal, as I did not have enough data to effectively analyze students’ development and fully address my research questions. Grouping students also presented a challenge, as I was uncertain

about the most effective approach. I mostly allowed students to choose their own groups, which did not at times work out, because some members would not would have significant differences in language proficiency. When groups were assigned by either me or my cooperating teacher, the level of collaboration was uneven, with some members completing the whole assignment, mostly on their own.

To answer the second research questions "How can collaborative group work have an impact on EFL students' behavioral engagement?" the study also aimed to determine whether collaborative work impacted students' engagement, yielding both positive and negative results. I added this question to my research later on, as I noticed that peer interaction impacted students' behavioral engagement, as students became more confident and less scared to make mistakes because they could rely on their peers. This is a sign of behavioral engagement, because behavioral engagement is related to participation and time focused on the task. As students became more comfortable, their level of participation increased. Initially, collaborative work was a source of behavioral and social engagement for students, allowing them to use their peers' assistance and guidance to complete the tasks, with even shy students volunteering to participate as group spokespersons after some interactions. As the study progressed, collaborative work in larger groups became a source of disengagement for some students, who appeared somewhat restless and unfocused, showing a preference for smaller groups. Engagement levels in group work appeared closely linked to students' interest in the subject and their comfort level when communicating with their classmates. Thus, while collaborative work fostered engagement initially, the size and composition of groups, as well as students' social dynamics, played a crucial role in sustaining this engagement over time.

II.4.2. Importance of this AR for my development as a teacher

This research project was developed during my practicum as a future teacher of teenage learners, which allowed me to develop my understanding and knowledge of collaborative work and oral interaction. It gave me the opportunity to look at my classes and teaching materials from an outside and analytical perspective and to always strive for better methods to engage and teach my future students. Observing

students' development was definitely not easy, as often teachers are so centered on teaching and managing the class that they forget to actually look at their students and see how they are responding to their lessons and materials. I learned more about the importance of oral interaction when learning a foreign language and how overlooked it is in Portuguese schools, which often focus on reading and writing activities, relying too much on the textbook. Collecting data is not an easy task, but it can greatly help the teacher and the students to improve any aspects that are not working out for a specific group. After analyzing the data I collected, I can understand what I should have done differently, especially regarding group work, and what other materials I could have used. It also showed me what activities and materials I should keep investing in for future students. I further realized that every student is different, and that we should adapt our lessons to be innovative and diverse, so every student can benefit from learning a foreign language. Additionally, the research heightened my interest in student engagement and how we can engage students in different ways.

Fluency assessment is also a complex and nuanced process that poses significant challenges to analyze properly, especially compared to vocabulary acquisition which is more straightforward to monitor and practice. Fostering fluency requires constant practice, as students cannot reach fluency with limited hours of school classes per week. It must be supported by an intrinsic factor and self-directed practice outside of a classroom. Engagement was also a factor that was difficult to measure and observe, as it encompasses different forms, and different students may exhibit engagement in different ways. It is difficult to determine whether a student is genuinely engaged in the activity or not, as well as sustaining the engagement levels over time.

II.4.3. Future research

Oral interaction in the EFL classroom is a research that is constantly evolving, as there are always more modern tools and new problems that arise. During my internship, students often showed a preference for classes where they could interact with each other instead of grammar or reading-focused classes. They also preferred oral production assignments over traditional formative assessment. This indicated that

students were more engaged in the practical part of the language rather than the theoretical one. The topic of focus in this report was oral interaction, which is an interesting topic to further develop and learn about.

Still, another aspect also interested me while I was doing my practicum, which was student engagement. Engagement is a very complex concept that needs extensive research and analysis in multiple contexts and was only very briefly mentioned in this report. I noticed that students' engagement would vary according to context. Some students would demonstrate different types of engagement, and it would be interesting to understand why different subjects engage students in different ways and how to develop each type of engagement. Social engagement was very present in group tasks, but not always cognitive. On the other hand, during whole-class activities, students' cognitive engagement would heighten. Student engagement can be helpful for teachers to reflect on how they can stimulate different sides of engagement in an EFL classroom.

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List of Figures

Appendices

Appendix A

Consent letters to parents

Carta de Consentimento aos Encarregados(as) de Educação

Assunto: Pedido de autorização para realização de estudo no âmbito do Relatório Final de Estágio

Caro(a), Encarregado(a) de Educação,

O meu nome é Margarida Ferreira, e no âmbito do Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 3° Ciclo do Ensino Básico e Secundário da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, estou neste momento a desenvolver a investigação conducente à realização do relatório final de estágio intitulado "*Developing oral interaction through collaborative group work*" (Desenvolver interação através de trabalho em grupo colaborativo) no decorrer do presente ano letivo, na vossa instituição, e sob a supervisão pedagógica da professora cooperante Luz Baião.

Este projeto de investigação visa desenvolver as competências linguísticas dos alunos, por implementar trabalhos de grupo em sala de aula, promovendo a interação oral entre os alunos. Durante as atividades implementadas em sala de aula pela professora estagiária, a voz dos alunos será gravada para fins exclusivamente de investigação, onde a evolução linguística dos alunos irá ser analisada e estudada.

A recolha de informação será realizada através de questionários e gravação de voz dos alunos. Venho por este meio solicitar a vossa autorização para desenvolver o supracitado projeto com as turmas, sendo que, igualmente, solicitarei autorização aos alunos(as) e aos respetivos Encarregados(as) de Educação.

É ainda importante realçar que a participação neste projeto será voluntária, e que tanto a instituição bem como os participantes serão anónimos, atendendo à proteção da identidade e de dados pessoais. Salientar por fim, que toda a informação recolhida ao longo do projeto constituirá e será mencionada no meu relatório final de estágio e, eventualmente, em publicações no âmbito académico, sendo o tratamento de dados utilizado exclusivamente para este fim.

Por último, informar igualmente que foi obtida autorização para realização deste projeto de investigação por parte do respetivo Diretor da Escola Secundária Romeu Correia.

Em caso de dúvidas ou necessidade de mais esclarecimentos, podem contactar-me através do email pes.margarida@romeucorreia.pt. Agradeço, desde já, a vossa disponibilidade, atenção e apoio prestados e fico a aguardar a vossa autorização.

Margarida Ferreira   Luz Baião

- -

Eu, ____, Encarregado(a) de Educação, do aluno(a) ____ que frequenta a Escola Secundária Romeu Correia, declaro que fui informado(a) dos objetivos do projeto de investigação intitulado "*Developing oral interaction through collaborative group work*" e ☐ autorizo / ☐ não autorizo a proceder à recolha de informação que será recolhida no âmbito do referido estudo e utilizada para fins exclusivos de tratamento académico.

Data: ___________________   Assinatura: _________________________________

Appendix B

Consent letter to school administration

Carta de Consentimento ao Diretor de Escola

Assunto: Pedido de autorização para realização de estudo no âmbito do Relatório Final de Estágio

Exmo. Diretor da Escola Secundária Romeu Correia,

O meu nome é Margarida Ferreira, e no âmbito do Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 3° Ciclo do Ensino Básico e Secundário da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, estou neste momento a desenvolver a investigação conducente à realização do relatório final de estágio intitulado "*Developing oral interaction through collaborative group work*" (Desenvolver interação através de trabalho de grupo colaborativo) no decorrer do presente ano letivo, na vossa instituição, e sob a supervisão pedagógica da professora cooperante Luz Baião.

Este projeto de investigação visa desenvolver as competências linguísticas dos alunos, por implementar trabalhos de grupo em sala de aula, promovendo a interação oral entre os alunos. Durante as atividades implementadas em sala de aula pela professora estagiária, a voz dos alunos será gravada para fins exclusivamente de investigação, onde a evolução linguística dos alunos irá ser analisada e estudada.

A recolha de informação será realizada através de questionários e gravação de voz dos alunos. Venho por este meio solicitar a vossa autorização para desenvolver o supracitado projeto com as turmas, sendo que, igualmente, solicitarei autorização aos alunos(as) e aos respetivos Encarregados(as) de Educação.

É ainda importante realçar que a participação neste projeto será voluntária, e que tanto a instituição bem como os participantes serão anónimos, atendendo à proteção da identidade e de dados pessoais. Salientar por fim, que toda a informação recolhida ao longo do projeto constituirá e será mencionada no meu relatório final de estágio e, eventualmente, em publicações no âmbito académico, sendo o tratamento de dados utilizado exclusivamente para este fim.

Margarida Ferreira   Luz Baião

Em caso de dúvidas ou necessidade de mais esclarecimentos, podem contactar-me através do email pes.margarida@romeucorreia.pt. Agradeço, desde já, a vossa disponibilidade, atenção e apoio prestados e fico a aguardar a vossa autorização.

- -

Eu, ____, Diretor da Escola Secundária Romeu Correia, declaro que fui informado dos objetivos do projeto de investigação intitulado "*Developing oral interaction through collaborative group work*" e autorizo a proceder à recolha de informação junto de uma amostra de alunos e professores selecionada para o efeito.

Data: ____________________________   Assinatura: ____________________________

Appendix C

Consent letter to students

Carta de Consentimento aos Alunos e Alunas

Assunto: Convite para participação no estudo no âmbito do Relatório Final de Estágio

Caro(a), Aluno(a),

O meu nome é Margarida Ferreira, e no âmbito do Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 3º Ciclo do Ensino Básico e Secundário da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, estou neste momento a desenvolver a investigação conducente à realização do relatório final de estágio intitulado "*Developing oral interaction through collaborative group work*" (Desenvolver interação oral através de trabalho em grupo colaborativo) no decorrer do presente ano letivo, na vossa instituição, e sob a supervisão pedagógica da professora cooperante Luz Baião.

Este projeto de investigação visa desenvolver as competências linguísticas dos alunos, por implementar trabalhos de grupo em sala de aula, promovendo a interação oral entre os alunos. Durante as atividades implementadas em sala de aula pela professora estagiária, a voz dos alunos será gravada para fins exclusivamente de investigação, onde a evolução linguística dos alunos irá ser analisada e estudada.

A recolha de informação será realizada através de questionários e gravação de voz dos alunos. Venho por este meio solicitar a vossa autorização para desenvolver o supracitado projeto com as turmas, sendo que, igualmente, solicitarei autorização aos alunos(as) e aos respetivos Encarregados(as) de Educação

Neste sentido, venho convidar-te para participar neste estudo. A tua participação consistirá em responder a um questionário e uma entrevista de carácter informal, acerca do mesmo tópico de investigação. É importante referir que a tua a resposta ao questionário será anónima e que, durante a entrevista, apenas a tua voz será gravada e usada para fins exclusivos de tratamento académico.

É ainda importante realçar que a tua participação neste projeto será voluntária e que estou disponível para esclarecer quaisquer dúvidas que persistam. Evidenciar que tanto a instituição bem como os participantes serão anónimos, atendendo à proteção da identidade e de dados pessoais. Salientar, por fim, que toda a informação recolhida ao longo do projeto constituirá e será mencionada no meu relatório final de estágio e, eventualmente, em publicações no âmbito académico, sendo o tratamento de dados utilizado exclusivamente para este fim.

Em caso de dúvidas ou necessidade de mais esclarecimentos, podem contactar-me através do email pes.margarida@romeucorreia.pt. Agradeço, desde já, a vossa disponibilidade, atenção e apoio prestados.

Margarida Ferreira Luz Baião

Eu, _____, aluno(a) da Escola Secundária Romeu Correia, declaro que fui informado(a) dos objetivos do projeto de investigação intitulado "*Developing oral interaction through collaborative group work*" e ☐ aceito / ☐ não aceito participar no referido estudo, cuja informação será recolhida e utilizada para fins exclusivos de tratamento académico.

Data: _____ Assinatura: _____

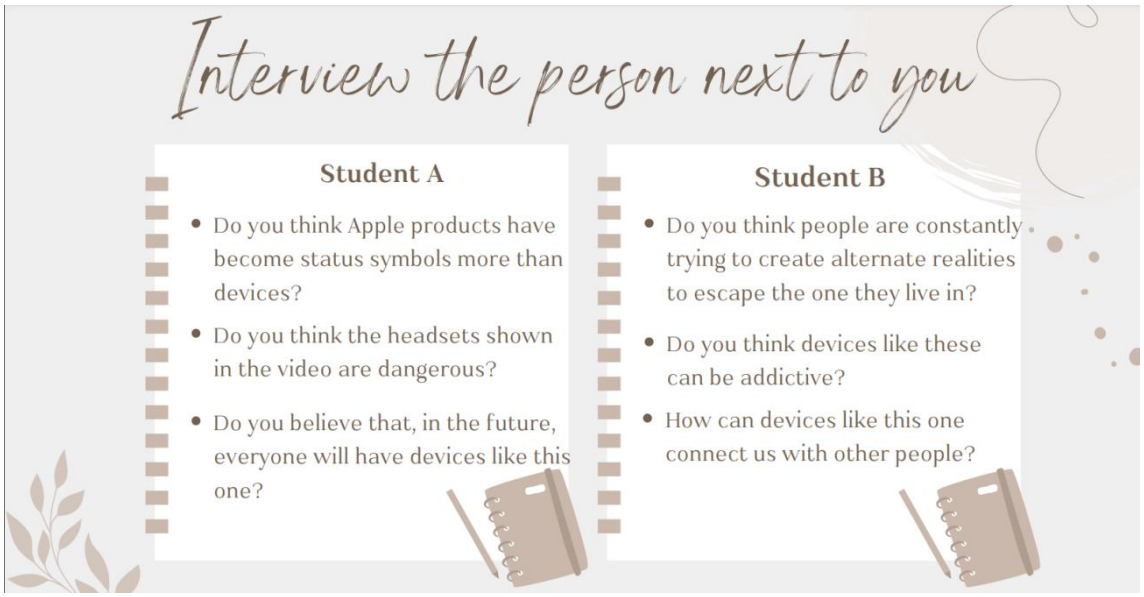
Appendix D

Steve Cutts illustration

Cutts, S. (2015). Owned. *Steve Cutts*. https://www.stevecutts.com/

Appendix E

Interview guidelines



Apple. (2024, January 28). Hello Apple Vision Pro. [Video]. [YouTube]. https://youtu.be/IY4x85zqoJM?si=hjVLRei1M-FgwZdY

Appendix F

What will life be like in the year 2050?

Guidelines

- **What technological advancements will we have in the future?**
- **What will some of the new jobs be, and will the old ones be the same?**
- **How many people will our planet have?**
- **Will we have some type of technology controlling every move of ours?**
- **What will our homes look like?**
- **What will people be capable of doing in the future that they cannot do today?**
- **What will human relationships look like?**

Appendix G

Online privacy text

What is online privacy? And why is it Important?

I. What does online privacy mean to you? Speculate and write a few lines on the issue!

II. Now read the text and find out what online privacy is and why it is worth your time and attention (from Bitdefender cybersecurity experts)!

A. What is online privacy? A definition

The standard definition of privacy incorporates two important elements: "the state of being alone and not being watched or interrupted by other people." When you are by yourself, scrolling through your go-to social media app, you are physically alone. However, you are also "watched or interrupted by other people." While they may not be in the same room, you are still a number on a screen for someone. On top of that, you are constantly interrupted by ads that interfere with your videos, articles, and browsing.

The definition of online privacy covers the idea of having your personal data protected and your behavior not tracked when you are connected to the Internet. At least not without your explicit consent. And what exactly does "personal data" include?

B. What is personal data?

According to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), "personal data is any information that relates to an identified or identifiable living individual. Different pieces of information, which collected together can lead to the identification of a particular person, also constitute personal data."
Online privacy is deeply rooted in our fundamental need for safety. If you find it natural to protect your home and physical belongings, the same applies to your digital life. No matter what technology you use, privacy gives you control over your identity and all the things it is made of. But because things are not as palpable or visible to everyone, online privacy is not on the priority list for most people. Moreover, the complex technological, legal, commercial, and social combo does not make online privacy easy to achieve. However, it does make it essential.

Every time you sign up for a new app or make a purchase, you agree with a set of terms and conditions. Your agreement means organizations can legally collect information about you such as what you buy, which websites you visit, and your preferences related to a wide range of topics. Although this type of personal data collection is legal, it does not mean you cannot take steps to limit these privacy invasion tactics.

Online privacy exists and it is up to each and every one of us to make it the norm instead of the exception.

C. Why is online privacy important?

Online privacy is involved in everything from how technology evolves to how this evolution impacts your personal safety and security. The real, "offline" dangers that poor online privacy creates include doxing, harassment, extortion, and swatting, to name a few.
Let's talk about how it affects you personally. You probably do not want thieves to know you live alone or the exact time you are not home, giving them an opportunity to break into your apartment. You do not want to give scammers a chance to use your date and place of birth and other personal data to take out loans in your name. You also expect cybercriminals to be stopped before they can trick you into opening malicious emails that install malware which records everything you type.

"We can look at our personal data as something hackers either directly exploit or use as soon as they get a hold of it. It's also something they can trade with other cybercriminal organizations. So, personal data is commoditized. It has a price. Your medical data, your financial history, your credit card data, your online shopping preferences have a price." Liviu Arsene (Senior E-Threat Analyst, Bitdefender)

Take a moment to list your most important online accounts. They may include your online banking account, your email address, and your favorite social media platform. Now try to list the types of information they have about you. You don't have to look far, just start with your social media profiles! You probably shared your phone number and contacts, email, your place and date of birth, where you work, where you went to school, and your relationship status.

This is an opportunity to evaluate whether the trade-off between your privacy and the benefits you get by using that service is still fair. Remember you can revoke their rights at any time, even if you have been comfortable using a product or a service until now. Internet privacy is important because it gives you control over your identity and personal information. Without that control, anyone with the intention and means can manipulate your identity to serve their goals, whether it is selling you a more expensive vacation or stealing your savings.

What you post on social media, what you write about in the comments section of websites, and how well you protect your data also influence the people closest to you, whether it's family, friends, or colleagues. That is why everything you do for your own privacy also has a positive impact on others.

Let's review the most frequent issues that consistently reduce your safety online.

D. Weak, reused passwords

At some point or another, we all used weak passwords. Maybe you still do. It is not uncommon. But it is, however, one the biggest threats to your privacy.

Reusing weak passwords is one of the leading causes for the massive data breaches you see in the news. That is because it allows cybercriminals to break

into multiple accounts at once and engage in identity theft or financial fraud - often both.

Oversharing

Social media and other technology advancements have made it incredibly easy to share every aspect of our lives to expand our social ties. Oversharing gives malicious onlookers more information about you than you would ever want to divulge. Posting videos of your home gives them a full map of your belongings and how to get to them. Pictures of your boarding passes reveal how long you will be gone and where you are traveling. With every post, you create a clearer picture of your life, habits, key relationships, and possessions.

IoT devices[1]

Another threat to your online privacy: all the Internet-connected devices that are constantly listening, recording, and gathering data about you. Our shopping lists, our body temperature, the contents of our fridge – we have been producing this personal data for years, but no one has been interested in it before. Now we have connected toothbrushes, toasters, and TVs all over the place. IoT devices are easy to use, and they keep getting better and better, increasing the risks to your online privacy on the way.

E. Unsecured web browsing

The browser is probably the app you use the most on your devices. Each time you open a link or run an online search, your default browser is one of the main ways you connect to the Internet. You may even have let it remember your passwords. Cybercriminals know that too! And they're going after everything in it through malicious extensions, infected ads, links that lead to scam websites, and a lot more. Security and privacy risks usually come as a combo. Besides cybercrooks and scammers, companies can also build an accurate profile of you based on your browser history.

Security vulnerabilities

It is not just your habits and the mechanisms of the platforms and devices you use that weaken your privacy on the Internet. Security vulnerabilities also create massive issues. They range from data breaches, where a set of your personal data ends up in publicly accessible places online, to security issues that make devices… misbehave.

Security vulnerabilities leak data that hurts not only your personal privacy online but also that of millions of users which weakens the overall security level for all of us.

Cyberattacks

[1] IoT devices are non-standard computing devices that connect wirelessly to a network, that is, pieces of hardware, such as sensors, actuators, gadgets, appliances, or machines, that are programmed for certain applications and can transmit data over the internet or other networks.

Your online privacy has everything to do with your security on and off the Internet.

Relying on default settings for everything and using the simplest passwords you can set makes you an easy target for cybercriminals. Malicious hackers combine their tech skills with psychological manipulation to exploit your habits and preferences so that you will click, tap, download, and open their traps.

They bait you into opening deceiving emails (phishing), taping links in misleading messages on your phone (smishing), or even provide personal data in fake phone calls (vishing). Their attacks almost always include malicious software designed to capture everything you type on your device (keyloggers) and collect your usernames and passwords. They will later use them against you to steal your money, access confidential information, or simply make your life hell. Anyone can become a target. Most ongoing cyberattacks are automated and simply search for people with unprotected accounts, apps, and devices, which are easy to hack into and maliciously exploit.

A. What can you do?

Now that you have a solid grasp of what online privacy is and what threatens it, you can take meaningful steps to reclaim it and protect it. One of the first things you can do is set up an early-warning system that patrols the Internet for you. Bitdefender Digital Identity Protection helps you take control of your online privacy and personal data so you can take decisive action when something pops up on its radar. The service monitors your digital footprint starting with just your email address and phone number and alerts you if your personal data is leaked in new breaches and through privacy threats, including social media impersonators.

https://www.bitdefender.com/cyberpedia/what-is-online-privacy/

Appendix H

Mrs. Bixby and the Colonel's Coat assignment

MRS. BIXBY AND THE COLONEL'S COAT

Student's name, No.

Student's name, No.

Student's name, No.

Student's name, No.

Student's name, No.

10

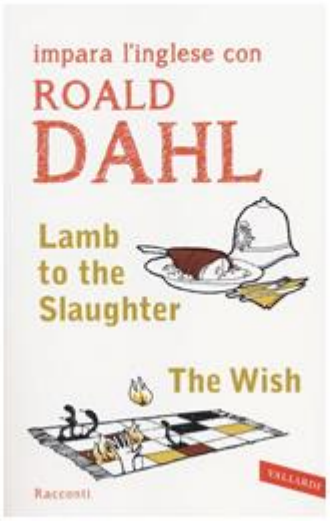
April - 2024

Teacher - Margarida Ferreira

1

Appendix I

Lamb to the Slaughter assignment



Lamb to the Slaughter

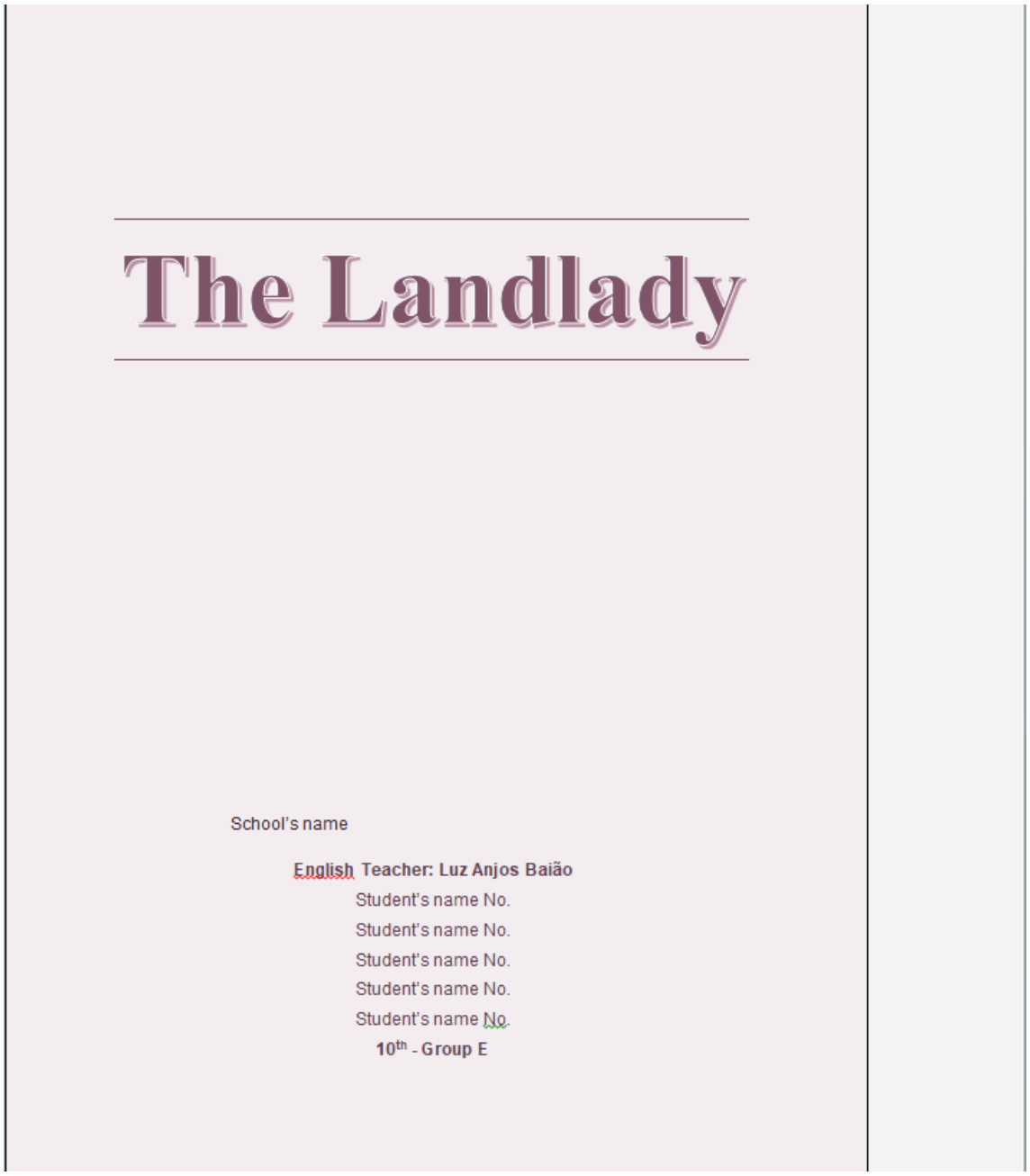
SCHOOL'S NAME

2023/2024 – 10th

Student's name, No.
Student's name, No.
Student's name, No.
Student's name, No.
Student's name, No.
Teacher: Luz Baião

Appendix J

The Landlady assignment



The Landlady

School's name

English Teacher: Luz Anjos Baião

Student's name No.

Student's name No.

Student's name No.

Student's name No.

Student's name No.

10th - Group E

Appendix K

Questionnaire 1

NOVAFCSH
FACULDADE DE CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS E HUMANAS
UNIVERSIDADE NOVA DE LISBOA

Personal Survey

Answer the following questions honestly and to the best of your ability. There is no right or wrong answer.

Your answers will be kept confidential, and your identity will remain anonymous. Your responses are solely for my research project; therefore, this won't have an impact on your grade.

The first set of questions is to be answered on a scale of 1 to 5, with **1** being totally disagree, **2** being partially disagree, **3** being neutral, **4** being partially agree and **5** being totally agree. The second part contains open-ended questions, which means you will have to provide more detailed answers. Remember, this is just your opinion; there are no wrong answers!

Thank you so much for participating in my questionnaire!

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable speaking English in small groups.					
I am confident in expressing my thoughts and opinions in English.					
I believe interacting in groups develops my fluency.					
I believe interacting in groups develops my vocabulary.					
My group faced many difficulties while communicating with each other.					
During my group discussions I spoke as many times as I wanted.					
Everyone in the group spoke an equal amount of times.					
I often spoke or felt the need to speak Portuguese instead of English during the group tasks.					
I made an effort to speak only English.					
I Goggled certain words or expressions when I didn't know how to say them in English.					
I think doing tasks where I have to interact orally with my peers develops my speaking skills.					
I would you like to do more collaborative activities in groups.					

Open-ended questions:

Why do you feel more or less comfortable (depending on your answer on the scale) about speaking English in groups?

Do you feel more engaged speaking in a group activity than in front of the whole class? Justify your answer.

In your opinion, what were the main difficulties faced by you or the group while communicating with each other?

What type of speaking group activities would you prefer to do in the future?

Appendix L

Questionnaire 2

Personal Survey

Answer the following questions honestly and to the best of your ability. There is no right or wrong answer.

Your answers will be kept confidential, and your identity will remain anonymous. Your responses are solely for my research project; therefore, this won't have an impact on your grade.

The first set of questions is to be answered on a scale of 1 to 5, with **1** being totally disagree, **2** being partially disagree, **3** being neutral, **4** being partially agree and **5** being totally agree. The second part contains open-ended questions, which means you will have to provide more detailed answers. Remember, this is just your opinion; there are no wrong answers!

Thank you so much for participating in my questionnaire!

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
I felt more motivated to try to speak English because I was working in a group.					
Every member of the group was willing to engage in the group work.					
Working collaboratively helped me develop my English vocabulary.					
Working in group had no impact on the development of my linguistic skills.					
There was one member of the group who overpowered the interaction of the group.					
I am more willing to use English since I've had several interactions with my classmates during English classes.					
I believe I can improve my fluency by only interacting with my teacher instead of interacting in groups.					

Open-ended questions:

Do you think interacting with your group can help you become more fluent in English? Why?

_____

_____

Do you believe that working as a group makes you feel more engaged in speaking English? Why?

_____

_____

Appendix M

Questionnaire 3

Personal Survey

Answer the following statements honestly and to the best of your ability. There is no right or wrong answer.

Your answers will be kept confidential, and your identity will remain anonymous. Your responses are solely for my research project; therefore, this won't have an impact on your grade.

The first set of statements is to be answered on a scale of 1 to 5, with **1** being totally disagree, **2** being partially disagree, **3** being neutral, **4** being partially agree and **5** being totally agree. Remember, this is just your opinion; there are no wrong answers!

This survey will be focused on your engagement throughout your group tasks.

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
During group work, I was always focused on the task I was performing.					
During group work, I reflected on the language I was using.					
During group work, I would feel more energetic and motivated to interact with my classmates.					
During group work, I tried to speak English.					
During group work, I was bored.					
During group work, I tried to be independent and autonomous.					
During group work, I interacted with my classmates to develop my English abilities.					
During group work, I was supportive of my classmates and tried to understand what they were trying to say.					
During group work, I felt like my classmates didn't support me or make me feel comfortable speaking English.					
During group work, I was always the one initiating the conversation.					
During group work, I would only speak when someone asked me to.					

Appendix N

Daily observation grid

		February							March						
No.	Student	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Reading	Participation	Behavior	Engagement	Fleuncy	Vocab.	Compre.	Reading	Particip.	Behavior	Engage.
1															
2															
3															
4															
5															
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30															

Appendix O

Written feedback example

Feedback

In today's class, Student's name was the one who took attendance. Teacher Margarida began by asking what we had discussed in the last lesson. Then we watched a short film called "Distracted." In this video, it was about a father, his daughter, and the impact that technology has on us and our lives. This father only has eyes for his cell phone and constantly ignores his daughter. Later on, he faces the consequences of his actions, not accompanying the different phases of his daughter's life.

Afterwards, teacher Margarida handed out a worksheet with 5 sentences to complete the blank spaces with words provided beforehand on the worksheet. The content of the worksheet addressed some positive and negative aspects of technology. We analyzed each of the sentences, where each person could express their opinion on them.

Next, the teacher presented us with a Canva about "FOMO" that is the fear of missing out. To continue the class, we watched another video, this time about "Apple Vision Pro," which are virtual glasses that perform the same functions as a mobile phone. In conclusion, the teacher proposed that we interview with our partner on this topic.

In today's class, I understood the importance of valuing the moments of our lives more and focusing on reality, instead of constantly being in front of screens, whether they are mobile phones, computers, or other devices. I acknowledged that technology is a useful tool for some tasks but also has negative aspects. I also learned about the meaning of "FOMO"; it was something new to me, and it was interesting to discover.

I really enjoyed this class. One of the topics discussed, the impact of technology on our lives, seemed quite interesting to me. This subject has a significant impact on each of us, making us reflect on our actions in our daily lives.

This is a Suf text that you can still improve.

The size of the font is wrong.

Appendix P

Collaborative work observation grid

May							
	Students	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Initiative	Accuracy	Engagement
Group A	Student 1						
	Student 2						
	Student 3						
Group B	Student 4						
	Student 5						
	Student 6						

5	• Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views • Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation • Contributions are relevant despite some repetition • Is intelligible and well-articulated • Initiates conversation and maintains the interaction • Pays attention, listens to the group, contributes by offering ideas
4	• Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views with some limitations • Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation • Contributions are relevant despite some repetition • Is intelligible and well-articulated with some flaws • Initiates conversation and maintains the interaction • Pays attention, listens to the group, contributes by offering ideas
3	• Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary • Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation • Contributions are mostly relevant, but there may be some repetition • Is mostly intelligible and well-articulated • Initiates conversation and keeps the interaction going • Usually pays attention and listens to the group, sometimes contributes with ideas
2	• Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary with limitations • Produces responses which are sometimes extended by short phrases with hesitation • Contributions are sometimes relevant with repetitions • Is sometimes intelligible • Rarely initiates conversation but is able to at times maintain the interaction • Rarely pays attention, listens to the group and contributes with ideas
1	• Uses a limited range of appropriate vocabulary • Produced responses which are characterized by short phrases and frequent hesitation • Repeats information • Is mostly intelligible, despite limited control of phonological features • Never initiates conversation and maintains simple exchanges • Never pays attention, listens to the group and contributes with ideas