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Oral Interaction activities in the EFL Classroom:

Overcoming learners' speaking inhibitions

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Abstract

Keywords: Oral interaction; speaking inhibitions; communication anxiety; willingness to communicate; foreign language classrooms.

When invited to communicate using the English language, students often succumb to their inhibitions and withdraw into their metaphorical shells. The state of anxiety that oral communication incites in students can be considered to be one of the major factors in their reticence to speak using the target language. In a classroom which has come to associate speaking activities, with anxiety and self-consciousness it is necessary to understand how to combat these metaphorical adversaries of oral communication. As such, in order to understand how to assist students in overcoming these inhibitions the question "How can peer oral interaction activities contribute to learners overcoming their speaking inhibitions?" was posed. The participants of this research project consisted of twenty-five Year 11 students and twenty-one Year 7 students, studying in the Ibn-Mucana school cluster. Both participating classes were comprised of students with a mixed skill level, with both learners above and below the expected proficiency level for their age group. For the duration of this research project, students participated in a series of spoken

interaction activities wherein their behaviour and language skills were observed and analysed. At the end of each activity, participants were also invited to answer a questionnaire where their opinions on both the activity, as well as English language learning in general, were assessed. The resulting data indicates that students' speaking inhibitions were at their lowest when their comfort level with their peers was at its highest. These results were most apparent for the Year 11 group, which seems to indicate that longer coexistence with their classmates reduces students' speaking inhibitions. In contrast, the Year 7 group were less confidence when speaking with their peers due to lower peer-familiarity and reduced language skill levels. Finally, students also revealed that an increased interest in the topic and self-assuredness with the language promoted their desire to communicate during each activity.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iii

Abstract iv

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 – Theoretical Background 3

1.1 – Importance of Peer Interaction in Language Learning 3

1.2 – Speaking inhibitions in the EFL classroom 6

1.3 – Potential origins of oral communication inhibitions 7

1.4 – Promoting EFL Communication 11

1.5 – Origins of the Willingness to Communicate Model 13

1.6 – Willingness to Communicate in the EFL Classroom 17

Chapter Summary 17

Chapter 2 – Methodology 19

2.1 – Action Research 19

2.2 – Activities 20

2.2.1 – Year 11 21

2.2.2 – Year 7 23

2.3 – Research Tools 23

2.3.1 – Observation Grids 24

2.3.2 – Questionnaires 25

Chapter 3 – The *Practicum* 26

3.1 – Context 27

3.1.1 – The school 27

3.1.2 – The classroom setting 27

3.1.3 – Observation, and Extra-curricular Activities 29

3.1.4 – Results 32

3.1.4.1 Year 11 Debate – Observation Grid 32

3.1.4.2 Year 11 Debate – Questionnaire 34

3.1.4.3 Year 11 Group Discussion - Observation Grid 37

3.1.4.4 Year 11 Group Discussion - Questionnaire 39

3.1.4.5 Year 11 Final Questionnaire 42

3.1.4.6 Year 7 Roleplay activity 45

3.1.4.7 Year 7 Questionnaire 45

Chapter 4 – Discussion and Conclusion 48
4.1 – Year 11 48
4.1.1 – Preparation & Debate 48
4.1.2 – Group discussion 52
4.1.3 – Final questionnaire 57
4.2 – Year 7 59
4.3 – Conclusion 60
References 65

Introduction

This report aims to delineate the outcome of an action research project that took place in the Ibn Mucana School cluster during the 2021-2022 academic year. This project served as the main focus of the writer's Supervised Teaching Practice report for the Masters in Teaching English in the 3rd Cycle of Basic Education and in Secondary Education.

English language learning has come to be associated with an unavoidable hurdle to be overcome by many Portuguese 3rd Cycle of Basic Education and Secondary Education students. The growing globalisation of our culture should indicate an increased desire to expand on one's ability to communicate with people of other countries. However, despite having "significant spoken language needs at the intermediate, advanced, and professional levels" (Murphy, 1991, p. 53), some students seem to present some reticence in participating in the English as a foreign language classroom. Thus, it became imperative to this research to determine why students presented such resistance towards oral communication, and how to properly motivate them to want to overcome their inhibitions while improving their English language skills.

During the observation period of the *practicum*, a total of four classrooms were observed. Of the observed classes, three were Year 11 science and technology courses and one was a Year 7 class. With all classes it became possible to recognise a certain trend in how lessons were taught. Most classes were spent either practicing reading/listening comprehension or revising grammar which had already been learnt the years before. Students showed themselves somewhat unwilling to participate in the lessons (i.e., brainstorming activities, class questions), preferring to respond only when called upon directly by their teacher. Speaking activities were mostly focused on spoken production (i.e., oral presentations) wherein students were merely expected to read aloud a text they had previously written. As a result, the students initially were unmotivated towards language learning and fearful of participating fully in the lesson. However, when observing a debate activity between the Year 11 students, it was possible to verify a change in the class's behaviour. Students who had previously been quiet and unresponsive, started to come out of their metaphorical "shells" and were more active in sharing their opinions with others. This led to an interest in discovering what else students had to say when given the opportunity to express themselves in the classroom.

While most English as a foreign language (EFL) learners are subjected to a high degree of theoretical input in their English language classes, they lack the ability to apply it in real life situations. Thornbury (2005), cited in Amiri et al. *(*2017) indicates that even though "[students] have [a] satisfactory level of grammar and vocabulary knowledge, … they do not know how to make use of it in real life situations because they do not get enough opportunity to practice and use that knowledge." (Amiri et al., 2017, p. 120). It is thus necessary for teachers to create lesson plans which cover current topics, appeal to students' interest in the language and culture, whilst promoting critical thinking and self-confidence. This way, it is possible to expand the students' oral communication skills beyond their current capabilities.

The project proposed, aims to study the importance of oral interaction activities in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom in an attempt to answer the following research question:

How can peer oral interaction activities contribute to learners overcoming their speaking inhibitions?

The goal of this *practicum* became to try to verify how the application of spoken interaction activities in the EFL classroom, could be used to reduce student's speaking inhibitions in the foreign language. Thus, promoting students' desire to speak in English in the EFL classroom, while overcoming their inhibitions to do so, became the main goal of this research project.

In view of this, a literature review was conducted in order to understand the need to promote oral interaction in the classroom. It is necessary to begin by understanding the importance of communication in the English language and why we must impart to students a desire to further their English language skills. It is also necessary to address the importance of planning speaking interaction activities with the goal of dealing with current events and topics which are relevant to the students. Once these two topics have been addressed, the origin and evolution of the Willingness to Communicate model, and how it has evolved from L1 communication to be closely associated with foreign language learning will be covered. By understanding the Willingness to Communicate model it becomes possible to recognize which areas to study when gathering data for this research project.

As such, this facilitated the development of an action research project which studied students' willingness to communicate in the target language, (i.e., whether they feel capable of participating in a dialogue in the English language), as well as their motivation to interact with others in the classroom, referred to as motivational propensities in MacIntyre et al. (1998, p.550)

Finally, once the data was gathered it was possible to verify the results and conduct an analysis of the potential benefits of promoting spoken interaction activities in the English language classroom as a means to reduce students' communicative inhibitions.

Chapter 1 – Theoretical Background

In order to answer the research question "How can peer oral interaction activities contribute to learners overcoming their speaking inhibitions?" it was necessary to understand the importance of communication in the language classroom. Promoting spoken interaction in class has become a difficult hurdle to overcome for English language teachers. In order to analyse how peer oral interaction activities can contribute to learners overcoming their speaking inhibitions, this literature review starts by working to understand the importance of EFL communication in language learning. Afterwards a discussion of speaking inhibition will be conducted followed by an analysis of how spoken interaction activities can be used to promote learners' desire to participate orally in the English language classroom. Finally, a study of the origins of the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) model, and how it came to be applied to English language acquisition will be conducted. We will then be able to analyse how it can be used to determine how to approach students' participation in the classroom, as well as their personal investment in the language learning process.

1.1 – Importance of Peer Interaction in Language Learning

Speaking is one of the four language skills which teachers must take into account when planning lessons: reading, listening, witing and speaking. The speaking and writing skills focus on students producing the language themselves, unlike the receptive skills, reading

and listening, which hinge on students receiving information in a visual, or audio, format. Speaking skills, therefore, require more active participation from the students.

Philp et al. (2014) define peer interaction as any activity carried out between learners, where they communicate with minimal input from their teacher. According to the authors, *peer* can be defined as being an individual of the same language skill level, or class group with the possibility of difference within any one of these categories. Therefore, it can be assumed that, bar any extenuating factor, the students present within a single classroom can all be classified as *peers*. Regarding interaction, it can be defined as any dyadic or multiparty verbal communication with a focus on meaning, rather than on language form (Philp et al., 2014). Interaction, then, facilitates learning by "promoting mutual comprehension and providing learners with opportunities to hear the target language, to pay attention to how meaning is expressed in the target language, and to try out that language themselves" (Philp et al., 2014, p. 8). Through peer interaction students avoid the high pressure of student-teacher interaction, which can serve to hinder their self-confidence and speaking motivation. At the same time, unlike oral production, peer interaction demands a higher level of language skills, as well as the ability to communicate beyond a pre-written speech.

According to Philp et al. (2014, p. 11) peer interaction as a learning mechanism is dependent on language used in the interaction, the participants within the group, their relationship with one-another and the medium and mode of instruction, whether it be face-to-face, or online, all contribute to enhance, or hinder, peer interaction in the classroom. Finally, the type of task and how it is presented to the learners must also be taken into consideration.

When discussing peer interaction, the level of proficiency of students must be taken into account. García Mayo and Lázaro Ibarrola (2015) as cited in Leslie (2021, p.67) indicated there is a minimum level of proficiency required with the target language, in order for learners to be able to negotiate for meaning. As such, learners which failed to meet this minimum level could potentially be faced with increased difficulty as the contents of their lessons grew more complex over the year. There also exists conflicting information pertaining to the benefits of mixed-proficiency pairs in peer interaction activities. A mixed-proficiency pair, refers to a dyad of students with differing levels of language proficiency. Regarding the benefits of mixed pairs, Ohta (2000) as cited in Philp et al.

(2014, p. 73), indicated that when working with Japanese students, more proficient learners would provide assistance to their less proficient classmates "in coping with the linguistic demands of the task" they were performing (Philp et al., 2014, p. 73). In contrast, when comparing learners' patterns of interaction with different interlocutors, in order to verify whether this would affect how learners interacted with different partners, Kim and McDonough (2008, p. 223) reported that advanced interlocutors tended to dominate the discussion, which prevented their weaker partners from taking part in the task. This could call into question the potential benefits of mixed-proficiency pairs, and lead weaker students to further fall prey to their speaking inhibitions.

Philp et al. (2008) as cited in Leslie (2021) writes that students can use peer interaction to "grapple with the target language at a more challenging level" (2021, p.66). Leslie (2008) further adds that peer interaction allows learners to "try out their hypotheses" (p.66) without the pressure of the teacher always controlling the discourse. Students are also more likely to use a much greater range of functions and be more daring with their language use. Due to the more relaxed environment, students feel more confident to use the language in such a way they would not employ when interacting with the teacher, as usually if they talk to the teacher they are mostly restricted to asking and answering questions. Gagné and Parks (2013) as cited in Leslie (2021, p.67) proposed in their study on cooperative learning tasks, that classrooms where the teacher encouraged learners to work together, led students to start engaging with oral tasks as opportunities for language learning. This occurred after their research revealed students were making use of supportive strategies when performing these tasks. While requests for assistance and other-correction made up a majority of the strategies employed by these students, negotiation of meaning was a rare occurrence among the learners. Still, it is necessary to address the potential derailment of the task that may occur when conducting peer interaction activities with young learners. Failed classroom management may lead children to go off-task. At the same time, disagreements between peers may lead to disruptions to occur in the classroom which may hinder the learning of other students.

When addressing speaking skills in the classroom, Amiri et al. (2007) address the necessity of focusing on the concepts of accuracy and fluency. The authors refer to accuracy as "the correct use of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation," and fluency as "the ability to keep going when speaking spontaneously" (Amiri et al., 2007, p.121). The authors warn though, of the belief among certain educators that there is no necessity to

strictly enforce a need for language accuracy amongst learners. These educators believe that "having a flow of conversation is considered to be more important in keeping a conversation alive." (Amiri et al., 2007, p. 121). As will be seen later, the fear of being perceived as less capable speakers than their peers can lead to an increase in reticence when presented with the opportunity to pursue spoken interaction in class.

Finally, Ellis (2003) indicates there to be a blur in the separation between 'use' and 'knowledge' of a language. According to the author, "knowledge is use, and use creates knowledge" (Ellis 2003, p.176). This can be taken to mean that oral interaction promotes the learning and internalisation of the target language. Continual use of the language, can then be used to lead learners to internalise the new forms and functions learned in such a way that, over time, their use becomes an autonomous action. While peer interaction may lead to inaccuracies, students' desire to make themselves understood can lead to a rapid development of their language skills. As such, "the use of peer oral interaction activities with both adults and children has been shown to lead to improved learning." (Leslie, 2021, p.66)

1.2 – Speaking inhibitions in the EFL classroom

Learners' speaking inhibitions can often result in students presenting a defensive posture in the classroom. This results in many students presenting body language (i.e., lowered heads, hunched shoulders and crossed arms) which indicates a clear desire to avoid participation in the lesson. Studies indicate that students' oral communication inhibition, in the form of non-verbal response, severely hinders their overall language acquisition and oral competency due to a lack of language output from the students. (Wu, 2019)

Student's inhibitions towards oral communication have been studied extensively by experts under a variety of labels. The most common amongst these, McCroskey (1977) writes, have been: stage fright, reticence, shyness, audience sensitivity and communication apprehension. McCroskey's (1977) definition of communication apprehension (CA) determines that, students' speaking inhibitions originate from a "level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78).

Communication apprehension in the classroom can then lead into what McCroskey (1977) calls "unwillingness to communicate", a concept which ties to a predisposition to avoid oral communication. The author recognizes the existence of multiple potential inciting factors behind students' oral communication inhibitions: apprehension, alienation, low self-esteem and introversion.

Therefore, the concept of "communication apprehension" can be divided into two categories: Trait apprehension and state apprehension. McCroskey (1977) defines the first of these, as the result of a state of anxiety in response to different types of oral communication encounters. Trait apprehension is inherent to the individual and may occur in a variety of situations. This can span from a low-stress situation such as talking to a single individual, to giving a speech before a large group of people. Finally, McCroskey (1977) likens "state apprehension" to the common concept of "stage fright". In contrast to trait apprehension, "state apprehension" results from a specific oral communication scenario. Therefore, high stress situations such as giving a speech to a group of strangers may lead to the speaker demonstrating high levels of communication apprehension. (McCroskey, 1977, p. 79).

1.3 – Potential origins of oral communication inhibitions

In order to combat students' speaking inhibitions in the classroom, it is necessary to understand where these difficulties originate. It can be argued that, while speaking inhibitions in students can originate before they step into the classroom, children are not born with an inherent difficulty in engaging in spoken interaction (McCroskey, 1977). Therefore, it can be assumed to be a learned trait that is reinforced in the child throughout their development by means of environmental factors.

Regarding potential origins for student' speaking inhibitions, Wen and Clement (2003) and Wu (2019) point to the learners' cultural background as a source. According to the studies conducted by these authors, Chinese learners displayed a high level of "face-saving (Wen and Clement, 2003, p.29)" mechanisms and presented a preference for a "submissive way of learning" (Wen and Clement, 2003, p.19). The "face-saving mechanism", refers to students' avoidance of communication as a means to protect their "face", or reputation with their peers and teachers. Regarding the concept of face, it has

come to be discussed in the area of sociology, where Brown and Levinson (1987), as cited in Ginsburg et al. (2016), are credited to have brought the concept into the field. This concept refers to the public self-image that individuals try to protect (Ginsburg et al., 2016, p.176). Therefore, students avoid communication in order not to reveal any potential weaknesses in their language skills. While the concept of "face" is highly regarded in Chinese culture, it can be assumed that EFL students may still display reticence in English language communication with a similar desire to avoid appearing less competent than their peers.

Regarding the "submissive way of learning", this refers to students preferring a lesson in which the teacher is perceived as an expert in the area and dominates the entire lecture. It can be assumed that both 3rd Cycle and Secondary school students, have a very different experience between their English language classes and the ones of their other subjects. As such, it can be inferred that Portuguese students may present a dichotomy which could lead them to have difficulty changing their classroom etiquette when engaging in the EFL classroom.

A third explanation can be found with Prusank (1987). Daly and McCroskey (1984) are cited by Orusank (1987), when referring to "Learned helplessness", as being an environmental explanation for the development of CA. Prusank (1987, p.39) writes that people "typically behave in ways that bring the greatest amount of reward and the least amount of punishment." Therefore, placing students in a situation in which they fail to recognise the appropriate behaviours which bring the most rewards results in an increase in anxiety levels. Failing to understand how to get the most out of the English language classroom, may lead students to feel lost and unsupported by their teacher. This can inevitably lead to a disconnect between the learner and the subject, which leads to a loss of learning potential for the student. This fatalistic attitude may lead to CA being developed at a very early age. It is, therefore, necessary to imbue the students with a sense of achievement in the English language classroom whenever they display behaviours which help promote their learning.

Communication anxiety in the EFL classroom can also be considered to be a promoter of speaking inhibition in students. Hashemi (2011) cites Hilgard, Atkinson, & Atkinson (1971) when defining anxiety as being a state of apprehension "that is only indirectly associated with an object". (p.1812) Anxiety is something that negatively influences the learning process and is "one of the most highly examined variables in all of psychology

and education" (Hashemi, 2011, p.1812). When pertaining to language learners, they can be diagnosed with a specific form of the condition called second/foreign language anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) would also define this form of anxiety as "communication apprehension" (cited in Mak, 2009, p.203).

The anxiety associated with either real, or potential, communication with another can be perceived as a major factor in communication apprehension. In McCroskey and McCroskey's (1986) study cited in Baker and MacIntyre (2000, p. 314-315), a "negative correlation between communication apprehension and willingness to communicate" was determined to exist. The authors go on to add, that communication apprehension is a learned behaviour, originating in the expectations placed on the speaker. These expectations can either bolster the speaker's confidence levels, when their successes are recognised, or on the other hand, they may lead the speaker to develop apprehension in communicating if they consistently face pushback over their repeated inaccuracies when trying to communicate. Brophy (2004, p. 11) describes anxiety as being the chief threat to flow potential. According to the author, flow potential refers to people's desire to pursue challenging endeavours and work to surpass their limits. Limiting students' flow potential can lead them to prefer the safety of routine to the learning opportunities of a challenging lesson. This, however, leads to lower student involvement in class, as well as the decrease in their learning potential (9). Similarly, Maftoon and Ziafar (2013, p.75) discovered, in their study of Japanese EFL classrooms that there exists in students an "anxiety factor [which] inhibits them from initiating conversations, raising new topics, challenging their teachers, asking for clarification, and volunteering to answer questions." As such, it became necessary to understand the needs of the students and recognising how to improve their desire to communicate in the classroom. McCroskey (1977, p.80) argues that, in learning environments where oral communication is required, lower skilled learners receive less reinforcement for communication than their peers. This can occur due to weaker students fading into the background of the classroom, or engaging in disruptive behaviour, which may lead the teacher to spend less time attempting to engage with them. This can occur either through an oversight, where the teacher overlooks the presence of this students in the classroom, or through continuous disruptions by these students leading them to have to be invited to leave the classroom. At the same time, Prusank (1987) identified that teachers may potentially demonstrate a lower level of expectations of achievement for students who display a higher level of communication

apprehension. These authors indicate that students who are identified as having a high level of CA are faced with a bias which might hinder their overall achievements in the classroom, as well as their language acquisition. Due to their high level of CA, these students can be perceived as either being uninterested, or incapable, of participating in the lesson. This can lead the teacher, to once again fail to engage with these students. It is therefore necessary to attempt to overcome the preconceived notion that all non-participative students, are simply uninterested in engaging in the EFL class, and attempt to engage with all students equally.

Finally, a lack of motivation can also be considered to be a potential cause for speaking inhibitions in the classroom. According to Deci (1972, p.113), motivation can be divided into two differing categories when it comes to performing a certain task: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Motivation can be considered to be intrinsic when a person performs an activity for no apparent external reward. Intrinsic motivation in the language classroom can be considered to be the act of learning the language for the sake of bettering oneself, whilst finding such to be an enjoyable and satisfying experience. When referring to intrinsic motivation, Deci and Ryan (2013) write, "students' natural curiosity and interest energize their learning" (p.245). In contrast, extrinsic motivation can be defined as performing an activity because it leads to a reward. (Deci, 1972, p.113) Accordingly, when a student only performs a task with the goal of receiving better grades, they are being extrinsically motivated to participate in the activity. As such, addressing learners' interests and future prospects can help motivate them to further engage with their studies of the English language. Dörnyei (2001) furthers this, by stating that it can be highly demotivating for young learners to have to learn something when they cannot see its relevance to their lives (p.63). This leads to a need for English language teachers to emphasize in students, how important the language is in modern society.

While many teachers have come to focus their lessons on grammar acquisition and vocabulary knowledge, such endeavour can prove detrimental to learners. Amiri *et al.* would thus suggest that it is necessary to create activities which are based on real life situations in order to give students enough opportunity to practice and use their knowledge. Whilst defending the learning benefits of classroom debates, Jagger (2013, p.39) quotes Joughin's study on the use of oral presentations which "confirmed that students were more 'likely to work hard, [when they] experience[d] material [which had] a high degree of personal relevance". This personal relationship with the language ties

into the intrinsic motivation which Deci and Ryan (2013) indicate to be motivated by students' innate desire to learn about their world. Students were also more likely to "accept a high level of ownership of their work and, perhaps more importantly, develop a deeper understanding of what they [were] studying" (Jagger, 2013, p. 39). Taking this into consideration, the pride associated with producing quality work can also serve as a personal motivation for students raising their intrinsic motivation further.

1.4 – Promoting EFL Communication

Communication can be considered to be one of the primary aims of learning a new language. Despite the rise of globalisation, as well as the Internet, for many a student, English still exists as a foreign language. This means that it is a language that is "learned in a place […] is not typically used as the medium of ordinary communication" (Oxford & Shearin, 1994, p. 14). In addition, "foreign language learners […] are surrounded by their own native language and must search for stimulation in the target language." (Baker & Macintyre, 2000, p. 312). It is, thus, necessary for EFL teachers to provide students with that stimulation, while managing students' expectations towards language acquisition and use.

For English language teachers, it is necessary to question how to promote language acquisition in the classroom. Dörnyei (2001) argues that language learning requires a "positive disposition towards everything the [target language] is associated with" (p. 54). Taking this into account, teachers can develop lesson plans which better promote language learning by looking to create activities which are highly interactive for the students, in order to promote peer interaction, while promoting their desire to learn about the English language and culture. Murphy (1991) wrote nearly three decades ago, that many ESL students "aspire to professional careers in English-dominant communities" (p. 52). As the decades passed, so has the reach of the English language in the professional and academic world. As such, more and more are students facing a need to complete their secondary education with a respectable command of the English language, both spoken as well as written to become successful in later life. According to Maftoon and Ziafar (2013), students' attitudes towards the role of the English language in their society directly influence their interaction patterns in the EFL classroom (p. 75). Unlike their ESL counterparts, some Portuguese EFL students can be considered to fail to see the importance of the English language in their lives, despite the importance English

language skills have in their future professional and social growth. The detachment Portuguese students have with society beyond their immediate circles (i.e., school, hobbies, home), means that they fail to see the positive ramifications of learning a foreign language (especially the English language), and the negative ramifications of refusing to do so. This criticism, whilst not applicable to all students, could also be applied to some learners' views of all other materials students are expected to learn in their academic career. This may lead to a detachment among weaker learners, who begin to show less interest in interacting more than what is strictly necessary in class. They must, therefore, be led to recognise the importance of the English language as a part of their education in order to increase their participation in class.

Scrivener considers fluency and confidence to be of great importance when addressing speaking activities in lessons. (Scrivener, 2011, p. 212). The author points to language learners who, while "able to conjugate a verb" are still "unable to respond to a simple question". Therefore, it is imperative that students are provided with as many opportunities as possible to interact using the target language. The author concludes that, while useful, activities in which the whole class is allowed to speak are too time consuming. This can lead some students to speak less than their peers. As such, Scrivener indicates that it is better to "organise speaking activities in pairs, threes and small groups, as well as with the class as a whole" (Scrivener, 2011, p. 212). This practice can allow weaker, and less confident students to practice speaking in a more controlled, and friendly, environment without the fear of being spoken over by their stronger classmates. Murphy adds that "dyads and small groups […] are less intimidating than [formats] that require individual students to take turns speaking in front of an entire class." (Murphy, 1991, p.54). This means that students with a lower level of proficiency will feel more comfortable in class, due to not being exposed, as often, to the "pressures that are likely to be encountered in content-area courses and in [a] nonclassroom setting" (Murphy, 1991, p.55)

Despite the increased necessity for English communication skills, spoken interaction has often come to be overlooked in the Third Cycle and Secondary classroom settings. For many a school teacher, it can be a difficult skill to promote among the students. Still, the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR-CV) defines spoken interaction as the origin of language. According to it, "interpersonal, collaborative and transactional functions" can be attributed to the act of spoken interaction (North et al., 2020, p. 81).

Despite the importance of its nature, spoken interaction in the EFL classroom tends to result in some aversion from the learners. MacIntyre and Doucette (2010, p.162) use Dörnyei's "crossing the Rubicon" analogy, to explain EFL learners' perspective towards initiating oral conversations: It is "an irrevocable decision that can lead to success or failure." It becomes, therefore, the EFL teacher's responsibility to create a lesson plan where meaningful communication takes place (Amiri et al., 2017, p. 121). To achieve this goal, Dörnyei (2001) suggests: Presenting students with challenging and foreign aspects of EFL learning; developing activities that students are already interested in or familiarized with; and presenting a wide variety of activities. This goes in accordance with Deci and Ryan's (2013, p.248) work which highlights "the importance of interesting, optimally challenging activities for maintaining or enhancing intrinsic motivation."

1.5 – Origins of the Willingness to Communicate Model

Spoken interaction is a major part of interpersonal communication. But, as Baker and MacIntyre (2000) indicate, variability can be found among individuals in how much they attempt to communicate orally (p. 313). This variability, pertains not only to the target language, but to the L1 as well. The original concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) was aimed at the level of native language communication. McIntyre et al. (1998), refers to the model proposed by McCroskey and Baer in 1985, which originally conceptualized WTC as the "probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so" (McIntyre et al., 1998, 546). McCroskey and Richmond (1987) cited in Zarrinabadi and Tayebeh (2014, p. 2012) would later conceptualize WTC as a personality trait, to be measured through the analysis of different communication situations and different target audiences. As such, the personality of the individual was determined to be a major contributor to their choices when faced with opportunities to communicate.

Macintyre et al. (1998, p. 546), considered the early model of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) as being predicated on specific variables. According to the authors, WTC was mostly influenced by the "combination of communication apprehension and perceived communication competence." In addition, the levels of introversion/extroversion of the speaker, as well as their level of self-esteem were also considered to be influential to their WTC. Thus, the initial model of WTC, proposed that a higher level of perceived competence in combination with reduced anxiety would result

in an increase in WTC, thus resulting in more frequent communication in the foreign language. (Barjesteh et al., 2012, p. 933).

Phillips' (1967 and 1977) studies as cited by Baker and MacIntyre (2000) reveal that individuals who express a high degree of communicative reticence increased their willingness to communicate about a topic when they feel confident in their skills in that particular area. Still, assessing an individual's perceived level of communication competence is a difficult task due to the shifting perceptions of what their true communicative competence actually is. As previously seen in the potential causes of speaking inhibitions, students who lack motivation or portray a high level of communication anxiety may fade into the background of the EFL classroom. This can, in turn, lead teachers to develop a belief that students are less capable to use the language effectively than they really are. When addressing this topic, it is necessary to consider how the speaker themselves perceive their own communication competence, instead of focusing solely on our own perceptions of their skills (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000, p. 315). This can be achieved through promoting self-assessment of the individual, in a setting in which they feel comfortable to express their honest opinions. As such, it becomes imperative to assess how students perceive themselves in the classroom and how it influences their desire towards participating in spoken interaction activities.

MacIntyre (1998) would expand upon the original McCroskey and Baer's (1985) WTC model by adding more variables while, at the same time, taking into account foreign language acquisition. According to the author, there exists a difference between an individual's willingness to communicate in either the L1 or the foreign language. Accordingly, a number of studies have revealed that individuals speaking a second language experience higher levels of communication anxiety than when asked to speak in their first language (Burroughs, Marie & McCroskey, 2003, p. 232). As MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 546) indicates, there appears to be an "uncertainty inherent in [foreign language] use that interacts in a more complex manner with those variables that influence Ll WTC."

The pyramid in figure 1 presents MacIntyre et al.'s (1998, p. 547) heuristic model of variables influencing WTC which refers to the situational nature of WTC and divides it into six layers of variables, culminating in the individual's target language use. According to MacIntyre and Legatto (2011, p. 150), this model combines the linguistic dimensions

of prior learning with social and psychological aspects of language use in order to create WTC. This model is divided in layers comprised of different attributes which are all related to target language use.

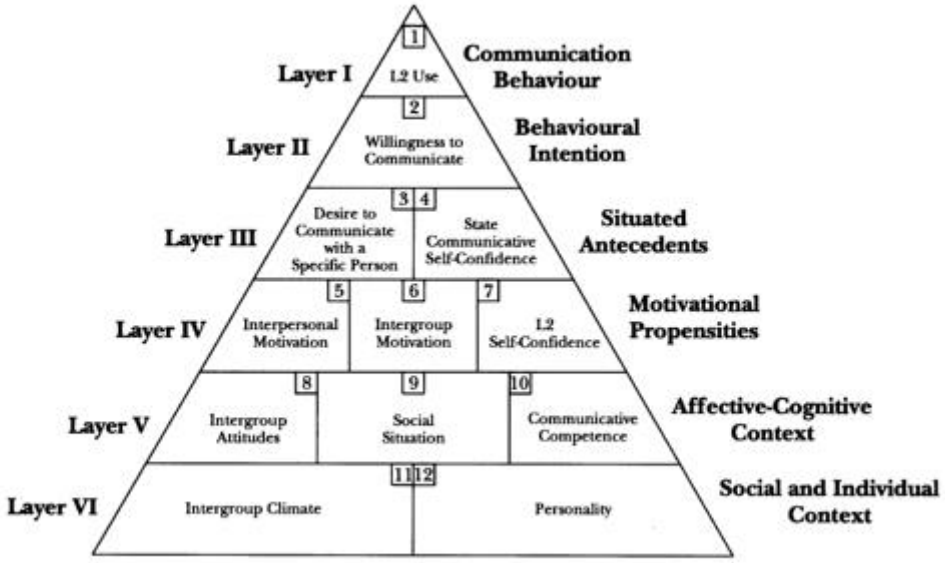

Figure 1: MacIntyre's Heuristic Model of Variables influencing WTC

In order to conduct this research, it was necessary to address which of the layers of MacIntyre's model were to be analysed. Whilst all layers connect to one another, culminating in target language use, the focus of this research became the second and fourth layers, due to a desire to understand how peer interaction influenced students speaking inhibitions. The focus of layers IV on student-student and student-teacher relations, as a form of motivation made both a necessary point of focus for this research project.

Motivational Propensities (Layer IV) are described by MacIntyre et al. (1998) to be based on the affective and cognitive contexts of inter-group interaction (p. 550). It was determined early into this research project, that students' motivation in the classroom would be an invaluable asset in order to promote spoken interaction and combat learners' speaking inhibitions. Bloom's Taxonomy, which is a "multi-tiered model [for] classifying thinking" (Forehand, 2010, p.2), refers to the affective domain as being comprised of the emotional aspects of learning. As such, it focuses on learners' "feelings, values, motivations, attitudes and dispositions" (Jagger, 2013, p. 40). Therefore, in accordance

with Bloom's taxonomy the promotion of positive emotional responses in students towards learning the target language is an imperative in EFL.

MacIntyre *et al.* consider the decision to initiate speech to be motivated by both situation-specific as well as enduring influences (p. 550). Layer IV is divided into what the authors call three clusters of variables: Interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation and language confidence. Intergroup motivation comes from a need to belong to a particular group, unlike the need to perform a specific role within the group. EFL learners are more motivated towards language acquisition when they feel like it helps solidify their standing within their group. Still, in a similar vein to interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation can also be divided between a need for control and affiliation. Regarding control, learners are still motivated by a member of the group in a higher hierarchical position. MacIntyre *et al.* (1998) indicate that using task-based activities can be used to promote intergroup motivation in EFL learners. As previously stated, by working together in a group, stronger students can potentially motivate their peers to overcome their inhibitions.

Finally, L2 confidence refers to the "relationship between the individual and the [target language]" (MacIntyre *et al.*, 1998, 551). Self-confidence in the foreign language, is defined by the authors as being entirely dependent on the individual, and their perception of their own abilities regarding the language. Language confidence is divided into two components: Cognitive and affective. The cognitive component refers to the individual's self-evaluation of their dominion of the language. As such, this component is based on quantifiable information regarding their degree of language acquisition. In contrast, the affective component is focused on students' language anxiety. The authors indicate that the level of discomfort experienced when using a foreign language may hider their language acquisition. MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 551) write that a relationship exists between language anxiety and self-evaluation, which demonstrates the "value of combining the two variables into a single, self-confidence construct." Confidence in one's own skills, is an invaluable tool to combat students' anxiety in the classroom. Having taken this into consideration, analysing students' perception of their own language skills and their confidence in communicating in class needed to be analysed.

1.6 – Willingness to Communicate in the EFL Classroom

The concept of willingness to communicate (Layer II), when applied to the EFL classroom, is defined by MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547) as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a foreign language." Munezane (2015, p.176) expands upon MacIntyre's definition by considering WTC in an foreign language as being the force, which motivates learners to look for opportunities to attempt to communicate in the foreign language. MacIntyre (2007, p. 564), defined WTC as an important factor in target language acquisition, serving as a "non-linguistic outcome of the language learning process." According to the author, WTC can be measured beyond the verbalization of the target language. The action of raising their hands in order to participate in class, can be viewed as an expression of WTC. MacIntyre et al. (1998, p.547) write, "[e]ven if only one student among many actually verbalizes the answer, all of the students who raise their hand express WTC in the [target language]."

Kang (2005) and MacIntyre (2007) as cited by Cao (2014, 790), indicate WTC can be seen as "a complex but important component of communicative language teaching and [EFL] pedagogy, [acting] as both a facilitating factor of instructed language learning and a non-linguistic outcome of the [EFL] learning process." Cao distinguishes WTC, a voluntary behaviour, from the moments in class in which a student is "obliged" to answer a question posed by the teacher, indicating that the former yields more notable results in the English learning process. Cao also indicates that "strong and positive correlations were found between learners' WTC and the amount of [target language] they produced when performing the task in the case of learners with a very positive attitude towards the task" (791). It is, therefore, necessary to work towards creating a lesson that will increase students' receptiveness towards learning the English language.

Chapter Summary

Taking this brief literature review into consideration, it can be concluded that creating lessons and activities which appeal, not only to students' interests and future prospects, but that also address their most pressing language learning needs, is necessary to reduce their inhibitions in the classroom.

Firstly, some Portuguese students have shown significant difficulty interacting using the English language. Facing this dilemma, it became necessary to develop the ability to express their ideas with both accuracy and fluency. While language accuracy is an important point of focus, merely having the ability to conjugate a verb doesn't help when a learner struggles to answer a more difficult question. It thus brings to mind the necessity of allowing students to work together to develop their speaking and communicative skills. It may even be possible to bolster results by allowing weaker students to practice in small groups, or pairs, so as to relieve them of the pressure of whole class activities.

The need to promote English interaction skills in learners, leads to MacIntyre's Heuristic model of Variables Influencing WTC (see figure 1). This model, which focuses on the situational nature of WTC, adds variables that serve as the basis for learners' willingness to communicate. It can, as such, be divided into six layers: communication behaviour, behaviour intention, situated antecedents, motivational propensities, affective-cognitive context and social and individual context. Taking into account the needs of this study the second and fourth of the model became the focus of this research project. The second layer of MacIntyre's WTC model refers, not only to students who actually use the target language in class, but any learner who chooses to try to participate in the classroom activities. Therefore, the mere act of raising their hand in class, can be seen as a student's demonstration of their willingness to communicate in the lesson.

After understanding the importance of willingness to communicate, it is necessary to understand what motivates students to participate in the classroom. Motivational propensities (Layer IV), are divided into three different variables: interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation and L2 self-confidence. Intergroup motivation originates from learners' need to belong to a specific group. As students, learners already belong to their class, to their school and to their community. It is necessary, as EFL teachers, to create in the students a desire to be part of the group of English language speakers. The final variable in the motivational propensities layer is L2 self-confidence. This variable is fully dependant on the learners. In order to consider L2 self-confidence we must take into account students' language anxiety and their perception of their own competence when using the language.

In conclusion, all the factors covered throughout this theoretical review were taken into consideration when planning the lessons and activities which will be explored in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

2.1 – Action Research

This project was carried out using Nunan's model of Action Research (Nunan, 2006), which encourages teachers to take a more investigative role in their classrooms. Through this practice, teachers can "bridge the gap between the ideal […] and the real" (Burns, 290) allowing them to properly recognise how the effective way of doing things differs from the actual reality of the classroom. Nunan's model divides the process into two cycles.

In the first cycle (Cycle 1) Nunan (2006) indicates that: first, a problem must be identified. In this case, the problem to be considered was: "Students are resistant to interact in the English language in class". During the class, students were observed to be reluctant to speak in most situations. Only when asked a direct question, did students attempt to interact using the target language, both with the teacher as well as their peers. Following this identification, a preliminary investigation was conducted. Observation of student behaviour in class revealed that student participation increased when presented with topics that spoke to their current goals and interests. This allowed for a hypothesis to be put into consideration: "Students are more motivated to interact with others in class when presented with activities which they deem important to their personal development." This problem, allowed for an intervention strategy to be planned out.

The second cycle (Cycle 2) of Nunan's methodology, required the conclusion of the previous cycle's activities. Once concluded, it was possible to identify where the previous plan of action had failed and create a hypothesis on how to potentially resolve the upcoming issues. A potential flaw to the original hypothesis was that students lacked confidence in themselves to speak in English in front of their class. Such problem required

more observation and intervention from the researcher in order to promote student motivation. Therefore, a second intervention strategy was planned in order to gather more results, whilst improving on the failings of the previous activities. Finally, a critical reflection of the overall supervised teaching practice and of the topic developed was conducted.

2.2 – Activities

The aim of the activities developed throughout this *practicum* was to provide students with the "informational limits" which Deci & Ryan (2013) indicate "provide informative structures around which people tend to experience greater choice," (251) in the hope that learners demonstrated a marked improvement when given more control over their participations in class.

Throughout each lesson, students were invited to participate in brainstorming sessions related to the topic of the class, covering concepts such as "advertising and consumerism" and "the world around us", in the case of Year 11 students (Moreira et al. 2003), and the "types of houses" for Year 7 students in accordance with the official Aprendizagens Essenciais (Ministério da Educação, 2018b) document for this age group. Due to the difference in skill level between the two age groups, more spontaneous interaction was expected from Year 11 students than their younger counterparts. In addition, each group of students in both age groups were asked to participate in three focal language interaction activities, designed to focus on assessing this skill, and their participation in it, more thoroughly.

During the observation period of this practicum, students were determined to possess an adequate language level for their respective age groups, barring the presence of specific outliers within each class. Although these outliers were below the average language level, they were deemed to be capable of participating in the activities and providing the necessary data.

For the duration of the teaching portion of the practicum, both classes of students were frequently presented with activities which promoted their speaking and listening skills. Students in the Year 7 class were often asked simple questions to answer in class, while also doing a group activity where they were asked to work together to design a house and

present it to their classmates. Due to the higher skill level, students in the Year 11 group were often invited to participate in whole class discussions and brainstorming sessions, as well as being presented with direct questions from the teacher. These students also did activities where they were invited to read different texts and, in their own words, present a summarized account of the events to the class.

2.2.1 – Year 11

The first language interaction activity took place with the Year 11 students and occurred in two lesson blocks, amounting to 180 minutes overall. After 8 lessons covering the different facets of advertising, as well as its impact on society, students were deemed ready to prepare a debate on the topic of the dangers of advertising. This activity took place as a formal moment of evaluation for the students, and as such, students were prepared accordingly. As mentioned above, for the duration of these lessons, students were invited to participate in whole class discussions, brainstorming activities and listening activities in order to promote their speaking and listening skills. Lessons 9 & 10 (appendix A) covered the preparation phase of the debates. Students were expected to use the information they acquired during the previous eight lessons, as well as their own research, to organize arguments for their group's debate. In this 90-minute class, students were divided into five groups. Two groups would be debating the statement "Children should be shielded from advertising", while another two groups would be debating "Targeted advertising is a breach of privacy". The decision to choose this approach was to follow up on Amiri et al. (2017) and Jagger's (2013) idea that students produced better results when presented with activities which held a "high degree of personal relevance". The final group, composed of two students, served as moderators for the debate. Each group was given a worksheet (appendixes B and C) which served as an aide for their debate planning. Students were then given the rest of the lesson to plan their roles in the debate and what they would be saying throughout the debate in the next lesson. For the duration of the preparation phase, and later the debate, students were observed and graded using an observation grid (appendix D)

The debate in Lessons 11 & 12 (appendix E) had originally been planned to span only the initial 45 minutes of the block. Yet, both pairs of debate groups proved highly invested in the debates and showed an overall high level of participation in the activity. For the duration of the debates, data was collected using an observation grid (appendix D) which

detailed the skills to be observed throughout the classroom debate. In the end, the debates took over the majority of the lesson block. Once concluded, the students were asked to answer the questionnaire "Debate self-assessment" (appendix F) detailing their experiences with the debate activity. More information on the observation grids will be given in the research tools section.

During the teaching period of the Year 7 class, interaction with the Year 11 students was limited. Once back with the Year 11 students, there was an opportunity to address some of the issues encountered in the debate activity. Due to personal feelings and skill level, certain students had a very low level of participation in the debate activity. It thus became necessary to implement an activity in class which allowed them to practice spoken interaction without the pressure of debating in front of the entire classroom. Lessons 19 & 20 (appendixes H and I) were designed to allow students to practice spoken interaction in a more contained setting. This group discussion activity was based on Scrivener's (2011) work which indicates that organising speaking activities in small groups allows weaker and less confident students to practice speaking in an environment which they deem more agreeable. During this phase of the school year, students were covering the unit "the world around us" and, more specifically, the topic of animal testing. Therefore, the jigsaw reading activity planned covered potential alternatives to animal testing. Students were separated in four horizontal rows. Then, each row of students was given a text (appendixes J-K) detailing an alternative to animal testing. Students were asked to read their text and take notes on the contents of the text, specifically: potential benefits, potential flaws and how it compared to animal testing. Once the preparation phase was concluded, students were invited to group up with the student in their lane, making for a group of four students with a different text each to read as a group. Afterwards, students were asked to pretend to be scientists planning to develop a new product for the market and discuss amongst themselves which alternative to animal testing they would employ to test their product. During the time students prepared their work, the teacher observed the classroom while filling in an observation grid (appendix L). Finally, students presented their product and animal testing alternative to the class, along with their reasoning, with students being invited to discuss whether they agreed or not with the selection. After the class, students were invited to fill in the questionnaire "Group discussion: Self-assessment" on their performance in the activity (appendix M).

2.2.2 – Year 7

Due to extenuating circumstances, to be covered in the overview of the *practicum* at a later point, it was only possible to conduct a single, major, language interaction activity with the Year 7 students. This activity took place during lessons 6 & 7 (appendix N), whereas previous lessons had whole class questions and activities to help students practice their English-speaking skills. The students were asked to participate in a roleplay activity, in pairs, where they were asked to take part in a dialogue describing their weekend to one another. The role play activity was planned to verify the importance of spoken interaction activities in students' willingness to communicate in the classroom. This activity involved giving the students a dialogue to read, where two characters described their weekend to each other. Students were then asked to, in pairs, describe their weekend to a classmate as a means to practice spoken interaction, recounting past events, while reinforcing the use of the past simple verb tense. This activity took place with the Year 7 students. Of the 21 students in the class, only 12 were present to participate in the activity. Due to students' age and skill level, they were given a worksheet to serve as a guideline (appendix O) for their dialogue. Student participation was observed by the teacher for specific behaviours, such as participation, language use and interest in speaking beyond the script provided. In the end of the activity, students were asked to fill in a questionnaire "Roleplay: Self-assessment" (appendix P) to understand their opinion of the activity. The research tools mentioned here are described in greater detail in the following section on research tools

2.3 – Research Tools

In order to analyse whether speaking activities could be used to help reduce student's speaking inhibitions, it was important to consider which tools better met the criteria necessary to gather the appropriate data. As such, two sets of tools were contemplated. Initially, observation grids were considered as a reliable tool to evaluate students' performance (i.e., their participation, fluency, grammatical accuracy and willingness to communicate with their peers) during each interaction activity. Yet, the tools proved somewhat unreliable in practice due to the large number of students and my unfamiliarity with them. The criteria of the Willingness to Communicate model that were being

analysed (i.e., Willingness to communicate and motivational propensities) depended highly on the self-perception of students. Therefore, it was necessary to assess their willingness to communicate in the target language making use of questionnaires in order to understand students' motivational propensities in the classroom. In the end, observation grids became an extra source of data that merely complemented the main tools.

The use of anonymous questionnaires has proven to be an invaluable tool when gathering data on the personal feelings of subjects. When prompted to share their experiences under the safety of anonymity, students reveal themselves more receptive to self-reflect and expose their feelings more honestly. For each major spoken interaction activity, the participating students were asked to fill in a questionnaire detailing their feelings towards the activity in general, how they felt they performed in it, and the reason behind that performance. In the end of the semester, the Year 11 students were given a final questionnaire (Appendix Q) where they were asked to talk about spoken interaction in general and their feelings towards English language communication in class.

2.3.1 – Observation Grids

Observation is considered to be one of the foremost methods for collecting data for research studies. (Tomal, 2010, p. 38) As Tomal (2010) writes, direct observation allows for the gathering of data in real-life situations which could not be gathered through self-report methods. As such, while taking into account the fact that subjects aware of their observation may change their pattern of behaviour, observation grids were chosen as the optimal method to record the data observed throughout the activities. The use of observation grids in data collecting, was restricted to the two activities that took place with the Year 11 students. In each of these activities, a different observation grid was employed. The initial observation grid, meant to fully evaluate the twenty students who participated in the debate activity, sought to grade students under the following criteria: participation during the preparation phase; language use (fluency/use of English); self-confidence; willingness to communicate; willingness to communicate with another. The different factors to be observed were in accordance with MacIntyre's (1998) WTC model (p. 547). Accordingly, the portions of the model which were intended to be observed

were: L2 use, behavioural intention (willingness to communicate), motivational propensities (self-confidence and willingness to communicate with another). During the observation phase of this activity, it became apparent that some factors in this grid could not be properly assessed. Students' self-confidence could not be reliably observed; therefore, it could not be graded accurately.

The second observation grid observed all twenty-five students of the Year 11 class and was designed taking into account the failings of the previous grid. The language skills portion of the evaluation were thus divided into vocabulary appropriacy, fluency and language accuracy in order to more properly access the specific areas of language and provide a better understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses. Topic development was observed in order to access students understanding of the topic and their ability to share information. Social skills (i.e., how students engage with their peers) were observed for students' willingness to communicate (behavioural intention) whereas willingness to communicate with another was once again accessed to assess students' motivational propensities, in order to understand what motivated students to try to overcome their inhibitions and attempt to engage in spoken communication in the EFL classroom. Observation of the Year 7 students, was measured for their participation in the activity, their ability to use the correct language and their ability to speak beyond the example they were provided. Each observation grid was used once per activity. The results gathered were then analysed for frequency and the resulting data converted into a bar chart in order to facilitate a comparison with students' responses to the questionnaires.

2.3.2 – Questionnaires

Questionnaires were determined to be the most accurate tool for gathering data related to how speaking activities aid them in overcoming their speaking inhibitions. In action research, questionnaires are a form of descriptive research, meant to gather information pertaining to people's feelings about a particular topic. This research instrument is most often used in situations where a large number of respondents and respondent anonymity is desired. (Tomal, 2010, p.8) The questionnaire was meant to identify students' personal feelings towards the activity they participated in, and served as a self-assessment of their performance in the task. Due to time restraints and need to gather as much data as possible, it was necessary to introduce questions related to students' feelings towards the

English language in all the questionnaires. Through the questionnaire it became possible to assess 11th year students' self-confidence and interpersonal and group motivation (motivational propensities), as well as their perceived level of language competence (L2 Use). In total four questionnaires were created in order to gather data among the students. Of these four questionnaires, three were directly related to the activity's students participated in and were answered only by the students who were present to participate in their designated task in the activity and were distributed at the end of the lesson. Of these questionnaires, participation was limited to the number of students present in the classroom for the activities. This meant that only 19 students answered the debate questionnaire (Year 11), 25 students answered the group discussion questionnaire (Year 11), and 12 students answered the role play questionnaire (Year 7). The final questionnaire, which was presented to the Year 11 students, had full participation from the classroom (all 25 students). This questionnaire gathered data on their personal feelings towards the English language, as well as how they felt about speaking (in English) in the classroom. In order to understand students' feelings at the end of the school year, it was distributed in their final lesson. All questionnaires had an average of 9-10 questions, with the majority of the questions being of a closed nature. Each questionnaire, with the exception of the final questionnaire had one open question for students to answer. The final questionnaire had an extra open question to allow students to share their feelings about the different parts of the questionnaire. Once the data was gathered, it was analysed for frequency of results and presented as bar charts where each answer to the questions can be verified. Open questions were analysed, for frequency and contents in order to understand more deeply why students would choose certain answers in the previous questions. The most common responses were then chosen to be displayed and serve as indicators of students' feelings towards the questions.

Chapter 3 – The *Practicum*

3.1 – Context

3.1.1 – The school

The Ibn Mucana school cluster in the Alcabideche region of Cascais, provides education for 2nd cycle, 3rd cycle and secondary school students. The school is currently divided between two distinct school sites, side-by-side. The second and third cycle campus, is currently serving as the cluster's headquarters.

The school was named after the Muslim poet Ibn Mucana, who was born and lived in the Alcabideche region in the 11th century. During Mucana's lifetime, the Alcabideche region was under Muslim ownership and, as the poet's writings indicate, its population was mostly rural. The region was also well known for the high number of windmills across its area.

The school possesses a very active sense of community. Students from years 7-11 are motivated to participate in activities meant to promote their sense of citizenship and environmental awareness: From volunteering, to taking part in seminars and Eco-Escolas activities. As such, the students are very engaged in social discourse, and motivated to participate in school activities.

3.1.2 – The classroom setting

This report is based on my teacher-training experience in the Ibn Mucana School cluster during the 2021-2022 academic year. The classes taught during my training program were class 11C, in which the majority of the lessons took place, and class 7E, where I was allowed to acquire some classroom experience with students in the third cycle. As the majority of the practical teaching experience took place with class 11C, the majority of the data gathered will refer to their experiences.

Overall, there were fifty-two, 45-minute classes, combined in two weekly blocks of 90 minutes with these students. Of these, twenty-two classes accounted for practical teaching, whereas the remaining 30 were exclusively observation classes. The Portuguese curriculum for Year 11 of Secondary School expects students be able to "interact effectively in the English language, while actively participating in discussions within the

topics covered, defending points of view and opinions, integrating their experience and mobilizing knowledge acquired in other disciplines" and "demonstrate the ability to connect information, while being able to synthesise it in a logical and coherent manner." (Ministério da Educação, 2018a, p. 10) The students in the 11C class were in the Sciences and Technologies field, with the students showing a preference for factual and objective information over literary analysis and discussion. All students were native Portuguese speakers, without any major special educational needs. Of the 25 students, four had greater difficulties with the English language. Even still, only one could be considered as being particularly weak. Of the remaining students, three could be considered to be slightly above their peers in overall language skill. The majority of the class appeared to meet the standard expected by the *Aprendizagens Essenciais* (Ministério da Educação, 2018a), yet while working with the students it was possible to observe a level of difficulty with connecting information, being unable to associate two pieces of information without teacher guidance, and critical thinking. These difficulties were most evident when asked to analyse videos or texts for meaning, where students had difficulty to come up with answers beyond the most objective responses. Overall, the class was relatively homogenous in their skill level, with the stronger students helping their peers overcome their weaknesses. The students had no behavioural issues to report, yet their motivation levels and willingness to participate were low. It was the observation of this passivity in the classroom, that originally inspired the creation of this research project.

Year 7 accounted for the smallest number of classes. It was only possible to have seven 45-minute classes with this group, due to the unavailability of this class' English teacher, who had graciously allowed me to teach her class. This unfortunately meant there was less of an opportunity to gather data for this report.The *Aprendizagens Essencias* document for Year 7 students (Ministério da Educação, 2018b) indicates that students in this age group should be able to "[u]nderstand and trade ideas in predictable everyday situations; initiate, maintain and finish a brief conversation" (p. 5). The 7E class was composed of a mixed level of students. This class had only 21 students, of which two had special educational needs which made participation in the EFL classroom impossible for them. Of the remaining 19 students, one had special educational needs which required extra attention from the educator, but was able to participate in the lessons. As such, it was easier to assess the level of ability of each individual student. There were no behavioural issues of note in the classroom, and students were mostly participative in

class. Despite the setback suffered during the past two years, resulting in many of these students not having had in-person English lesson during that timeframe, many of the students in this classroom appeared to meet the standards set by the *Aprendizagens Essenciais*. While there were no students who could be considered to be far below their peers in language skill level, there were two students who stood apart from their peers as being overall stronger and more engaged in class. Overall, students in the 7E class presented themselves as being capable of meeting expectations whilst showing good promise for growth. Finally, all students in both classes were native Portuguese speakers.

3.1.3 – Observation, and Extra-curricular Activities

As stated previously there was a period of the school year in which observation was conducted. During this period, it was possible to study the students, and how the classroom was usually managed, in order to prepare for the upcoming teaching period of the practicum. For the duration of the practicum, the adopted coursebooks were *What's up* 7 (Costa et al.) for the Year 7 students and *Link up to you!* (Martins et al.) for the Year 11 classes. While the official teaching portion of this Practicum focused on the 11C and 7E classes, classes 11A and 11B were also subjects for the observation period. All year 11 classes were pursuing the science and technology branch, of secondary education. This allowed for an understanding of how different groups of students of the same year group can be from one-another. As such, it was possible to experience a much more enriching experience by observing three different classes of the same age group, than it would otherwise be, had only one class been observed.

Observation allowed for a better understanding of classroom management, and how it was usually conducted with these specific classes. It also allowed for an understanding of each class' skill levels and what type of activities they were accustomed to in their EFL lessons. While Year 11 students had a wider variety of speaking activities than their younger peers (oral presentations, classroom debates, brainstorming activities), only classroom debates presented an opportunity for spoken interaction between students. At the same time, Year 7 students had a very reduced scope of speaking activities, with oral production (oral presentations) taking the greater focus. Finally, contact with the students during this period allowed for all parties to learn about one-another before the teaching period. Thus, once the teaching period began, it was possible to conduct the transition

from the main teacher (i.e., the class' usual EFL teacher) to student-teacher without any extensive adjustment period.

The first teaching moment in this school was a special activity with the students meant to celebrate Halloween with the students. This activity took place twice, once with the 11C class and, afterwards with the 11A class. During this activity, students were told about the concept of urban legends and given an opportunity to share what they knew about them. After sharing a story with the students, they were separated into groups (4-5 students) and given an urban legend (age appropriate) per group. Students were then invited to read the story, and discuss among themselves how they thought the story came into existence, what they thought about it, and how they would improve the tale. In the end, the groups shared their tales with each other and voted on the best tale. This activity, allowed for an understanding of students' group working skills, as well as their reading comprehension skills and creativity.

During the observation period, it was possible to teach a select number of lessons to all year 11 classes before the teaching period officially began. This endeavour allowed for the practice of teaching without the pressure of being observed by the cooperating teacher. This occurrence allowed for the student-teacher to experience the different ways different classrooms respond to the same material.

At a later date, it was possible to teach the 11A and 11B classes during the teaching period of the practicum. During this period, it was possible to take one of the lesson plans applied on the 11C class and reuse it with the other two. This allowed for a better understanding of how different students respond to the same material, as well to realise how to better organise future lesson plans and adapt them to the different needs and skill levels of different classes in the same year group.

During the teaching period, it was possible to engage in different types of activities with the students. Throughout the semester, Year 11 students got to experience news broadcasts and articles to help them understand the world around them and how information is presented in English-speaking countries. Students also got to listen to TED talks, and read texts meant to promote critical thinking and deeper analysis. Whenever a new topic was broached, students were invited to participate in brainstorming activities, share their opinions and ideas on the topic and discuss it in pairs/small groups. It was also possible to teach the students relative clauses, and revise the first and second conditionals.

Finally, it was also possible to teach the year 11 students about the third conditional. All the grammar lessons took place with all three Year 11 classes, due to the previously mentioned circumstances.

As stated before, Year 7 students participated in a group activity where they were invited to create their own house, from among the set types of houses they were taught about in the curriculum, and talk about it to their classmates. Students also did reading and listening activities, and revised the past simple of the verb "to be", while expanding their knowledge of the verb tense to the remaining regular and irregular verbs. Similarly, to the Year 11 students, there was an attempt to have the Year 7 students share their thoughts and ideas in the class whenever a new topic arose. Unfortunately, students' lack of proficiency led to these attempts to end prematurely due to poor engagement. Ultimately, it is the teacher's responsibility to make activities suitable for the proficiency level of the students. As such, the students needed to have received the necessary scaffolding so that they could have better dealt with the activities proposed.

Finally, one extra-curricular activity was organised over the course of the second semester. The was an activity meant to assist secondary school students in selecting their path after finishing Year 12, both focusing on university applications as well as potential alternatives for students who wished to take a different path. This activity brought the organisation *Inspiring Future (*Associação Juvenil "Inspirar o Futuro", n.d) to Ibn-Mucana to bring much-needed clarity to all students. This organization is a non-profit group which focuses on developing initiatives in the area of education, and aims to take innovative projects to schools in order to help secondary school students with the information necessary to make an educated decision regarding their academic and professional futures. Throughout the week, the organisation brought a university fair for students to visit and have their questions answered by members of their organization of choice. This fair had the participation of 21 universities, and took place in the school grounds being open to all students who wished to visit it. Students were able to walk among the different booths and get as much information as they wanted from the participating Universities. *Inspiring Future* also gave three workshops in the school. The first workshop, teaching students how to apply to University and the tools available, was open to all participants. The following two workshops, dealing with motivation and the choices students have to make for their future, was restricted to 3 classes per workshop due to the highly participative nature of the workshop.

3.1.4 – Results

Observation of students' performance in the first semester allowed for an overall understanding of where their English language skills lay. When the initial observation of class 11C started, it was possible to observe that these students were to be somewhat reticent to engage with their teachers and less participative than their peers. The first semester allowed for an unbiased observation of these students from an outsider's perspective, while establishing a fragile, initial bond, with them. This observation proved the previous assumption to be true. Still, observation of the students first oral interaction activity of the year, a classroom debate organised by the cooperating teacher, presented a different side of the students. When presented with the opportunity many students who had been quiet throughout the semester, suddenly started sharing their opinions more freely with their peers. The observation of this change is what gave birth to the research question which serves as a focus of this research project: "How can peer oral interaction activities contribute to learners overcoming their speaking inhibitions?"

3.1.4.1 Year 11 Debate – Observation Grid

During the preparation phase of the debate (mentioned in section 2.2.1 above), students were observed and scored in accordance to their participation in the group's work. Students were graded from 1 (non-participative), 2 (minimum participation), 3 (somewhat participative), 4 (participative) and 5 (highly participative). According to the behaviours observed, the following data was obtained. 25% of students were determined to be highly participative, moving the planning phase forward, whilst most of their classmates were graded as either a 3 or 4 (60%) depending on how more reactive, instead of proactive, their participation was. Only a small subsection of the participants was graded as a 2 (15%), as they were deemed to be very non-participative and depended on their classmates to encourage them to engage. (Figure 2)

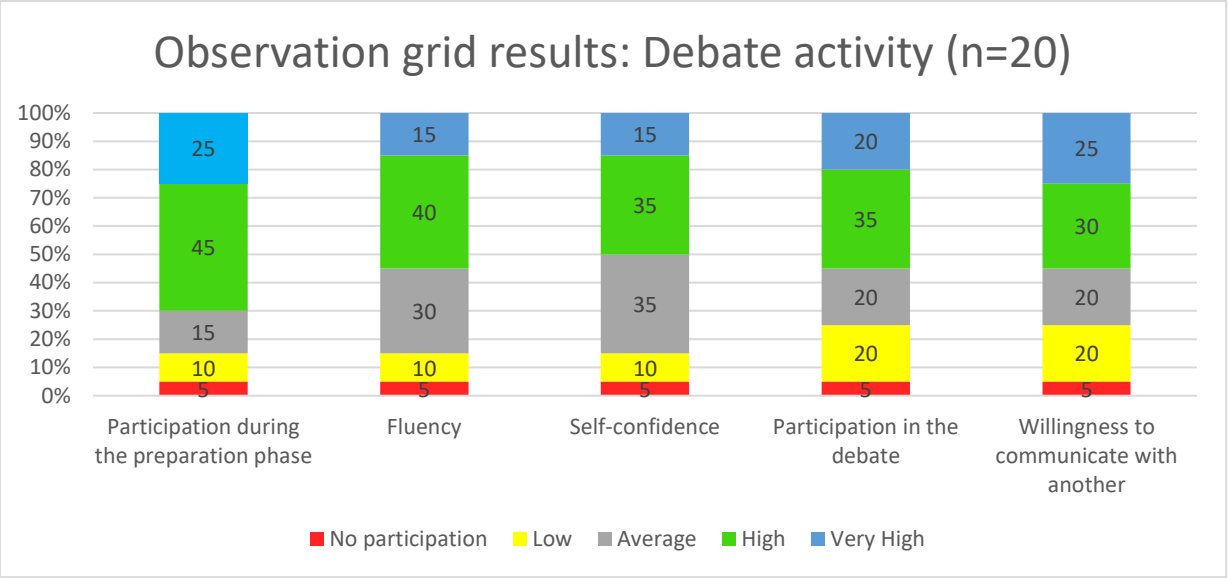

Figure 2: Results of the observation grid for the debate activity (n=20)

During the debate phase, students were scored using three different criteria. Those criteria were: fluency, participation and willingness to communicate with another.

Regarding students' English language fluency, the chart in figure 2 reveals that, on average, students had a high level of fluency when speaking in English. The data gathered graded students from 1 (very weak) to 5 (high fluency). Students were considered very weak, when they showed considerable difficulty expressing any idea in English, taking a high number of breaks between words and were overly reliant on reading to express themselves. Of the 20 students, only 26% revealed enough difficulties to be considered weak or very weak in their oral fluency.

Regarding students' participation in the debate, students were evaluated according to how often students engaged, be it by actively asking and answering questions or by defending their position unprompted. Students were assessed between 1 (no participation), 2 (minimum participation), 3 (1 argument and 2 questions/answers), 4 (participated regularly), 5 (participated fully). Thus, the results in figure 2 were gathered. 58% of students were considered to have had a highly positive impact in the development of the debate. On the other hand, only a small number 21%, restricted themselves to reading the paragraphs they had prepared prior to the debate. Finally, only 5% of students refrained from any participation in the debate.

The final data gathered in the observation portion of the debate was students' willingness to communicate with another. Unlike the previous criteria, here students were graded on how often they attempted to establish a dialogue with the other participants in the debate. There was also a focus, on whether students chose to interact with only a specific student/group of students, or if they chose to engage freely throughout the debate. Thus, students were evaluated whether they chose not to participate at all (1), read only their parts (2), answer or ask at least one question (3), answer and ask at least one question (4), ask and answer questions throughout the debate (5). As can be seen in figure 2, 58% of students were shown to be able to ask and answer questions in the debate beyond what they had prepared in the preparation phase. Also, 16% of students attempted to promote a dialogue in the debate in some fashion. Finally, 26% of students chose to only read their pre-prepared paragraphs, while 5% failed to participate. These results indicated that around a quarter of the Year 11 class, possessed a high level of communication apprehension which would need to be combated in the upcoming activities. In conclusion, the debate was observed to have been a successful activity to aid students overcome their speaking inhibitions through peer interaction. It can be speculated that students were highly comfortable with their peers, which compounded with their interest in the topic allowed for an overall successful activity.

3.1.4.2 Year 11 Debate – Questionnaire

After the debate activity, students were asked to fill in a questionnaire where they were invited to answer a series of questions pertaining to their feelings on the speaking interaction activity. Of the 20 students which participated in this debate activity, all participants answered the questionnaire. Results can be seen in Figure 3.

When asked to share their feelings towards the statement "I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts and opinions in English", around 95% of students indicated that they felt at least some level of comfort when using the English language to share their opinions. According to the graph (Figure 3), only 5% of the students disagreed with this statement. No students (0%) indicated a strong disagreement with this statement.

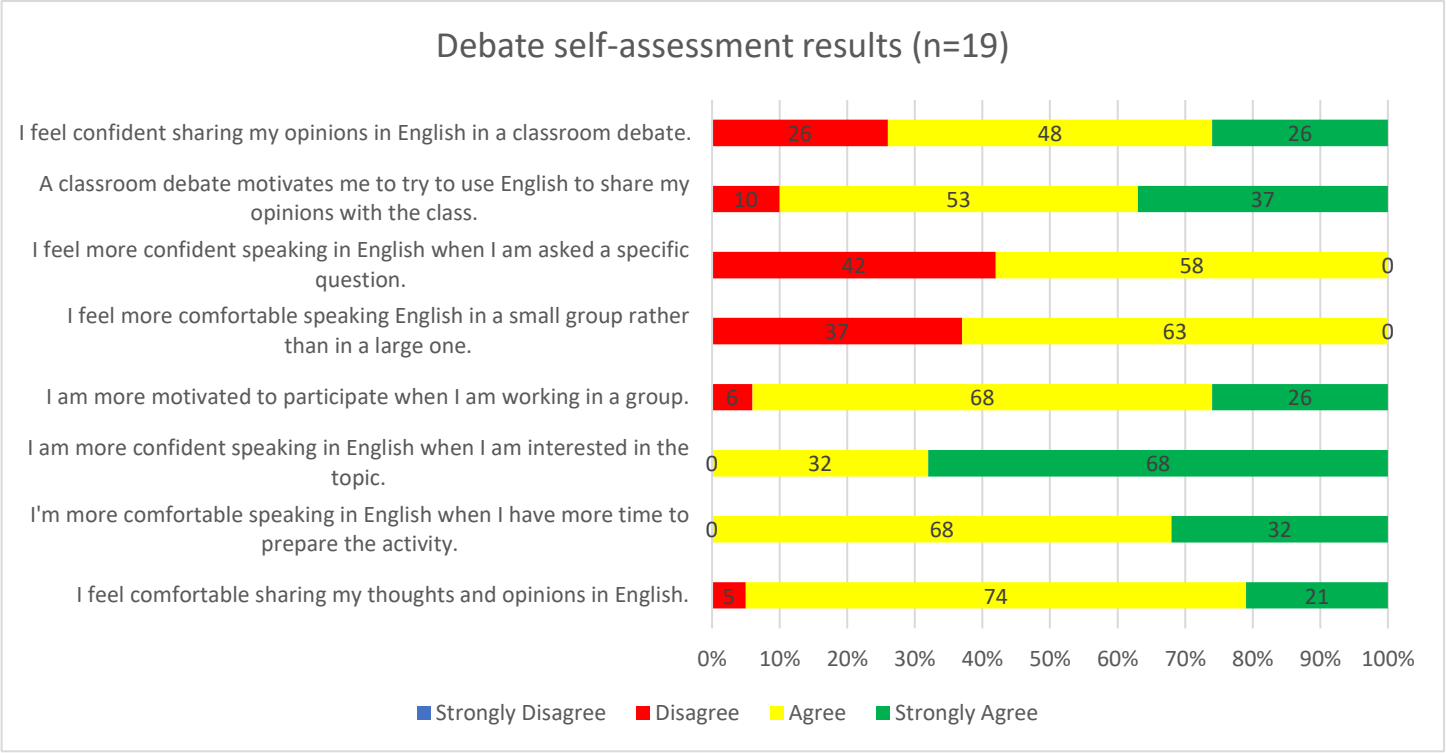

Figure 3: Debate questionnaire results (n=19)

Regarding the statement "I'm more comfortable speaking in English when I have more time to prepare the activity", student response was unanimously positive. As Figure 3 demonstrates, students all answered that they either agreed, or strongly agreed, that being given time to prepare a speaking activity raises their comfort levels when they are asked to speak later.

As seen previously in the literature review, the interest level of students is a strong motivator towards their desire to communicate. When asked to analyse their feelings towards the statement "I am more confident speaking in English when I am interested in the topic" students revealed an equally positive response. Yet, Figure 3 indicates that students have much stronger feelings towards the importance of the "topic" when it comes to their confidence level, than their need to prepare the activity in advance. According to the data gathered 68% of students strongly agreed with the statement, while 32% answered they agreed.

Response to the statement "I am more motivated to participate when I am working in a group" shows that students, overall, are quite receptive to group work in speaking activities. Figure 3 shows that nearly 95% of students share the feeling that they are most motivated to participate when working in a group.

Figure 3 indicates that the size of a group is of some importance to students. When asked about the statement "I feel more comfortable speaking in English in a small group rather than a large one", students answers were divided. Around 63% of students answered affirmatively, agreeing that small groups are preferable, whereas 37% of students seemed to indicate a preference for larger groups. It can be believed that students with a preference for larger groups were either weaker or shyer students who preferred to fade into the background during the speaking activity.

Students revealed themselves equally divided in their answers to the statement "I feel more confident speaking in English when I am asked a specific question." Figure 3 presents a near 50/50 division between the students who agree with the statement (58%) and those who disagree (42%).

Regarding the statement "A classroom debate motivates me to try to use English to share my opinions with the class", figure 3 presents an overwhelming positive response from the students. 89% of the students answered positively to the statement with 37% strongly agreeing with the statement. Yet 10% of students disagree with this statement, which can potentially relate with the verified discomfort with large groups which some students indicate in a later question.

When asked whether they agreed with the statement, "I feel confident sharing my opinions in English in a classroom debate." the response was once again positive for the majority of students (74%). Yet, Figure 3 shows that nearly a quarter of the class (26%) felt like they were not confident about sharing their opinions in a debate.

When asked to explain their answer to the statement "I feel confident sharing my opinions in English in a classroom debate", students revealed how their classroom environment influences their confidence level. One student admitted to having difficulties speaking in English, yet writes "I feel confident around my class so I know they won't judge me if I make any mistake." Of the 19 students who participated in the questionnaire, 30% answered in a similar manner. Another student adds that they felt confident sharing their opinions in the debate because they "know [these] people since [they were] 5 and they [had seen] their evolution". Many students shared the opinion that a shared past with their classmates helped make them more confident in the classroom debate, one student even wrote that "[their] colleagues are very respectful and understanding [which made them] feel comfortable". Intergroup motivation, or the desire to belong to a particular group is

considered one of the cornerstones of MacIntyre et al's (1998) Willingness' to communicate model (figure 1). The collective answers of the students seem to indicate that their sense of belonging to the class served as a catalyst for their self-confidence during the debate activity.

Still, some students share that they didn't feel confident because they were: "not prepared for the type of questions the moderators might ask", or because they were "shy and [didn't feel like [they] have a great vocabulary". One student shared that they had difficulty sharing their opinion in general, indicating their struggle extended beyond the English language classroom.

These results seem to indicate that students have an understanding of how their speaking inhibitions hinder their language learning. The high level of comfort with the classroom seems to be a strong facilitator to many of the students, who credit this feeling to their ability to participate in the activities. The change of classroom activity to a more interactive style, in combination with this sense of familiarity between the students, seems to have promoted a lowering of the speaking inhibitions of some of the students.

3.1.4.3 Year 11 Group Discussion - Observation Grid

The observation of the group discussion activity focused on the target language use, which was divided in vocabulary appropriacy, fluency and accuracy, topic development, social skills and willingness to communicate with another. Students were expected to discuss in small groups, the potential alternatives to animal testing they had been presented. In the end, they were invited to discuss as a class which alternative they considered the most viable.

In relation to appropriacy of vocabulary, figure 4 shows a majority of the students (64%) were capable of maintaining an appropriate level of English vocabulary during the group discussions. In this section, students were graded on a scale of 1-5, where 1 represented low vocabulary level (inappropriate or below expected grade level vocabulary) and 5 represented high vocabulary skills, where students used language appropriate for the activity.

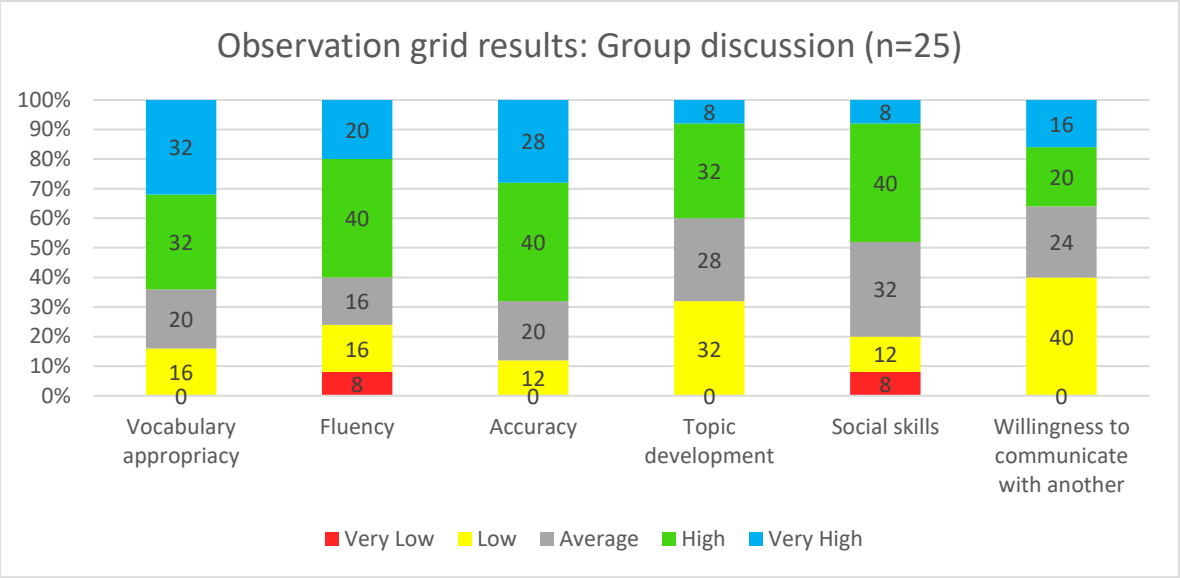

Figure 4: Results of observation grid for group discussion activity

Students' level of fluency was also graded on a scale of 1 to 5 (figure 4), where students were observed for their ability to speak easily and with as few stops and pauses as possible. Students were considered to have low fluency (1) when they spoke with difficulty, expressing themselves in simple sentences and with uneven breaks. Students were determined to have high fluency (5) when they were able to express their ideas with ease, using more complex sentences and with less irregular breaks. The data gathered revealed that, overall, students were capable of conversing with each other with an appropriate level of fluency (60%)

The final component of language use for this activity was the grammatical accuracy of the students. Students were then graded on their ability to maintain their speech with as few mistakes as possible. Throughout the activity students maintained a high, or very high, level of accuracy (68%) when doing the group discussion. On the other hand, very few students (12%) were considered below the average level of accuracy expected of them. (Figure 4)

Regarding the development of the topic, each student had been expected to share with their classmates a small summary of the alternative to animal testing they had been assigned. Unlike fluency and accuracy, which were graded on students' English language skills and *how* students shared the information, development of the topic focused on the content of their speech. As such, students' ability to retain data and share it became the focus of this portion of the observation. Figure 4 reveals that of the 25 students, 48% were

capable of sharing the information in its entirety with their classmates, 28% of students, showed some difficulty in exchanging information, failing to convey some of their information without resorting to shifting into Portuguese, and 32% of students revealed themselves to have a low level of information sharing competences, requiring a mostly Portuguese dialogue to share their content.

Students' social skills were assessed on a scale of 1 to 5 depending on their ability to maintain the conversation throughout the discussion. The resulting data shows that 48% of students were graded as being capable of maintaining a dialogue with their group. 32% of students were given the grade of 3 due to fading in and out of the discussion, while 20% of students showed themselves either interacting minimally with their peers (12%) or choosing to avoid any form of interaction (8%). (Figure 4)

The final data to be assessed in this observation grid was students' willingness to communicate with another (Figure 4). Similar to the previous observation grid, students were observed for how often they attempted to interact with different members of their group (i.e., asking and answering questions) during the group discussion. The resulting data indicates that only 36% of students attempted to further the dialogue in their group, while 40% of students chose to engage minimally with one another. In comparison with the debate activity, the group discussion was less successful in reducing learners' speaking inhibitions. This could have occurred due to the smaller, less formal format of the activity which may have lessened the motivation to perform well within students. It can also be argued that students who were less participative in the debate activity were unable to hide their weaknesses behind their peers and were therefore observed to be weaker during the group discussion activity.

3.1.4.4 Year 11 Group Discussion - Questionnaire

Once the activity was concluded, students were invited to fill in a questionnaire detailing their performance and their feelings towards spoken interaction in the activity.

The initial statement of the questionnaire was "I found the topic of the activity relevant to my [Portuguese] culture/interests." Student response to this statement was mostly positive, with 84% of students either agreeing, or strongly agreeing with the statement.

According to the data, the remaining students found the topic to be irrelevant to their interests. (Figure 5)

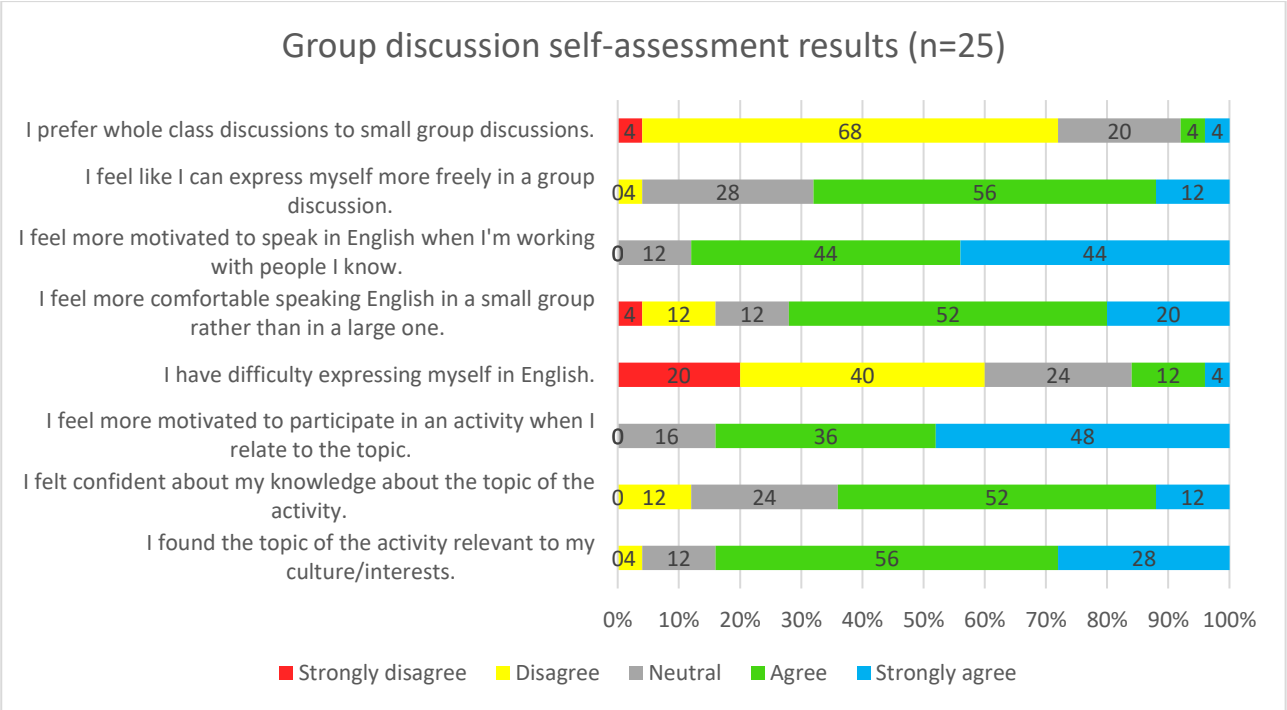

Figure 5: Group discussion self-assessment results (n=25)

Regarding the statement "I felt confident about my knowledge about the topic of the activity", Figure 5 shows that, once again, the majority of students were positive in their response to the statement. 64% of students responded positively, whereas only 12% indicated a lack of confidence in their knowledge of the topic.

When presented with the statement "I feel more motivated to participate in an activity when I relate to the topic", students answered mostly positively. Once again, 84% of students were in strong agreement when presented with a topic they were interested in. Unlike previous results, no students revealed a negative response to the statement. (Figure 5)

When students were asked whether they felt like they had difficulty expressing themselves in English, the response tended more towards the negative. 60% of students in the class, indicated they felt comfortable expressing themselves in English, with only 16% of students indicating they felt any difficulty expressing themselves in the foreign language. (Figure 5)

Regarding the statement “I feel more comfortable speaking English in a small group rather than in a large one”, student responses tended towards a mostly positive outlook. 72% of students indicated feeling more comfortable speaking in a smaller group, whereas only 16% presented a level of discomfort when working with a reduced number of classmates. (Figure 5)

When asked if they felt more motivated to speak in English when working with people they knew, students answered mostly affirmatively. 88% of students indicated that they either agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement, with 12% of students claiming that they felt neither more, nor less, motivated when working with people they knew. (Figure 5)

With regard to the statement “I feel I can express myself more freely in a group discussion”, student response maintained an affirmative connotation. Only 4% of students indicated they felt like a group discussion prevented them from expressing themselves freely. At the same time, 12% of students indicated the group discussion format did not influence how they expressed themselves. (Figure 5)

When asked whether they preferred a whole class discussion to smaller group discussions, students’ response was overwhelmingly negative. 72% of students either disagreed, or strongly disagreed, with the idea that whole class discussion was preferable. As such, only 8% of students indicated a preference for whole class discussions. (Figure 5)

When asked to justify why they had chosen their answer to the previous question, one student responded by saying: “I prefer small group discussions… because it’s easier to explain myself and hear the ideas of others.” Many students wrote that small group discussions allowed each member to be more active and participate more than a class discussion. One student wrote they “prefer[red] small groups… because [they felt] more confidence talking with only 3 people […] than talking with 25 people” indicating that intergroup motivation and the feeling of belonging, as seen in layer IV of the WTC model (Figure 1) served as a powerful tool to bolster learners’ self-confidence and desire to interact in the target language. Another student further explained how they believe that a small group allowed them to improve more than a whole class discussion. Still, there were students who believed that “whole class discussions… [make the class] more dynamic and fun.” These students seem to reveal a preference for teacher control in speaking

activities which for some students serves as a stronger motivation than peer interaction, as seen in the WTC model's interpersonal motivation (figure 1).

3.1.4.5 Year 11 Final Questionnaire

Once the teaching period ended, students of the Year 11 class were given a final questionnaire to answer. This questionnaire took into account the willingness to communicate (WTC) model, and was meant to collect a final set of data relating to their speaking experiences in the English classroom. All 25 students in the class answered the questionnaire according to their personal feelings and experiences.

Regarding the initial statement "I prefer to speak only when the teacher asks me to", 42% of students agreed with the idea. Of the remaining students, 27% indicated they preferred only to speak when requested to do so by the teacher, while the remaining 31% presented themselves as neutral. (Figure 6)

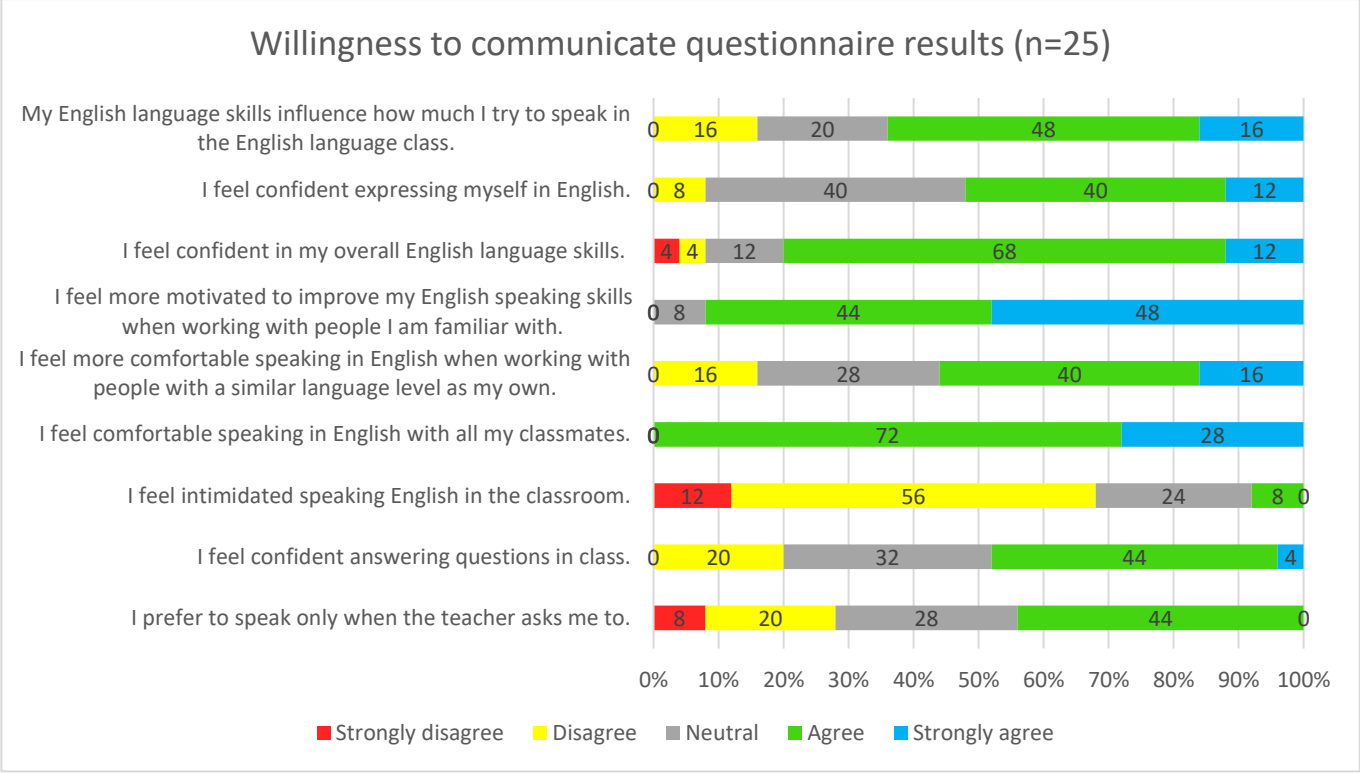

Figure 6: Willingness to communicate questionnaire results (n=25)

When asked whether they felt confident answering questions in class, 46% of students responded affirmatively. 19% of students indicated a lack of confidence in the ability to answer questions in class, and 35% of students were neutral to the statement. (Figure 6)

Regarding the statement "I feel intimidated speaking English in the classroom", students were somewhat divided. Around 54% of students indicated they felt no discomfort whatsoever when speaking English in the classroom, yet 19% indicated they did, in fact, feel intimidated speaking in the foreign language. Once again, a large portion of students (27%) indicated they felt neither intimidated, nor confident, speaking English in the classroom. (Figure 6)

When asked to justify their answers to this question, one student wrote "I don't feel intimidated speaking in class, but I don't speak voluntarily. I would rather be chosen to speak." A lot of students seem to share the sentiment that rather than a level of intimidation, it is their personality that influences their lack of spoken participation in class.

However, some students admitted to feeling intimidated when they didn't know how to convey what they wanted to say in English. One student wrote they felt a little intimidated because they were afraid someone would judge them.

Finally, students argued that they felt comfortable with their classmates which led to a reduced level of intimidation that could rise from speaking in English during the lesson.

When asked whether they felt comfortable speaking English with all their classmates, the response was unanimously positive. According to the data gathered, 96% of students responded in agreement with the statement, with 27% indicating a strong agreement. (Figure 6)

Regarding the statement "I feel more comfortable speaking in English when working with people with a similar language level as my own", student response was mostly positive. 54% of students answered in agreement with the statement, 31% indicated feeling neutral to the idea, and 15% of students indicated they felt uncomfortable speaking in English with people of a similar language level as their own. (Figure 6)

When asked if they felt more motivated to improve their English-speaking skills when working with people they are familiar with, student response was entirely positive.

According to student response 89% of students indicated feeling highly motivated to improve their language skills when working with their classmates. Only 11% of students indicated feeling neutral to the question asked. (Figure 6)

In regards to the statement "I feel confident in my overall English language skills," 77% of students responded positively to the idea, while 15% of students answered that they were neither confident nor self-conscious of their language skills. In contrast, 7% of students indicated they were not confident in their overall English language skills. (Figure 6)

When questioned whether they felt confident expressing themselves in English, 50% of students answered affirmatively, with 12% of students indicating they were highly confident in their ability to express themselves. In contrast only 8% of students indicated feeling self-conscious about expressing themselves in English. (Figure 6**)**

Finally, regarding the statement "My English language skills influence how much I try to speak in the English language class," 62% of students answered affirmatively. Of these, 15% responded they strongly agreed their language skills influenced how much they spoke in class. Of the 25 students questioned, only 15% answered their language skills did not influence how much they participated in the class. (Figure 6)

When asked to explain their answers to this statement, one student writes "when [the] teacher asks questions during class, most of the time I want to give my opinion and answer, but since my English is not very good, I end up not answering." Another student shares "If I don't know much about English I won't be as motivated as I would if my English skills were better."

Some students indicate that while they feel like they have the knowledge to speak in class, they still feel nervous when the "teacher […] and sometimes [their] classmates look [at them]." Which they believe makes them unable to express themselves the way they would like. This can potentially indicate that some students' have too high a level of CA that when presented with large group interaction activities, their learning can be hindered rather than promoted. However, the results gathered seem to be overall positive and hint that the desire to participate in the lesson exists even in students with a high level of CA. Therefore, promoting a high comfort level between peers seems to be a useful tool to lessen the speaking inhibitions in these students.

3.1.4.6 Year 7 Roleplay activity

The roleplay requested that students work in pairs to describe their weekend to each other. This activity was meant to promote peer interaction whilst reinforcing the use of past simple. Only 12 of the 21 students, were present to participate in the activity. An observation grid was not applied in this activity due to the nature of the class the type of activity conducted. It was thus determined to be more important to address students' own feelings towards the activity instead.

Overall, the participating students presented some difficulty understanding the goal of this activity. As such, it was necessary to repeat the purpose, and steps, of the activity more than once throughout the course of the activity.

3.1.4.7 Year 7 Questionnaire

Once the activity was concluded, the students were asked to fill in a questionnaire to analyse their participation in the spoken interaction activity. The students were asked to answer the questionnaire honestly in accordance to their feelings towards the task and spoken interaction in general.

Regarding the statement "I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts in English." Students answered with a mostly positive outlook. 75% of students answered that they either agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement, while 25% indicated that they disagreed with the idea. (Figure 7)

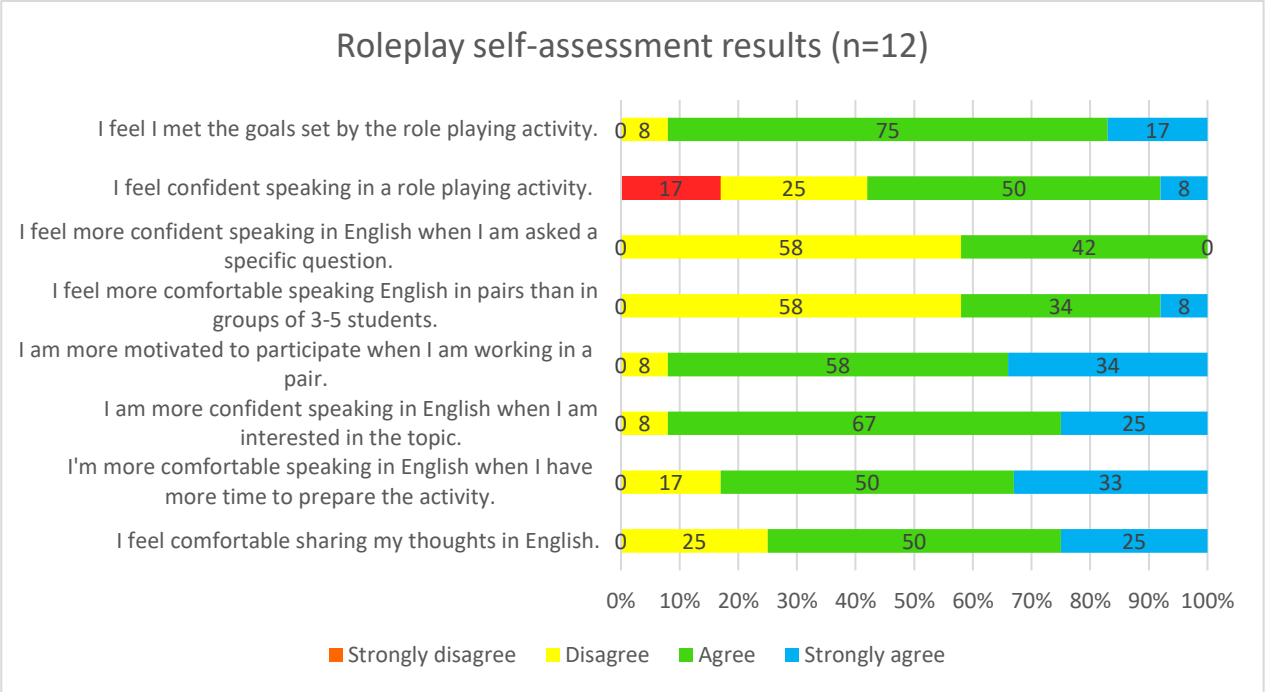

Figure 7: Roleplay self-assessment results.

When asked about the statement "I am more comfortable speaking in English when I have more time to prepare the activity," students answered positively. 83% of students claimed that they either agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. At the same time, only 17% of students showed disagreement with the idea. (Figure 7)

Figure 7 shows us students' answer to the statement "I am more confident speaking in English when I am interested in the topic." Once again, students showed an overall positive response to the statement, with only 8% indicating a disagreement with the statement.

Regarding the statement "I am more motivated to participate when I am working in a pair", Figure 7 shows that once again students agreed with the idea. Similar to the previous statement, only 8% of responses were in disagreement to pair work as a motivator for oral participation.

The statement "I feel more comfortable speaking English in pairs than in groups of 3-5 students" was met with more negative feedback from the students. According to the data gathered 58% of the students disagreed with the idea of pair work being favourable to small group work. Only 33% of students answered in agreement to this statement, with an even smaller number (8%) strongly agreeing with the statement. (Figure 7)

Similarly, the statement "I feel more confident speaking in English when I am asked a specific question" was met with a mostly negative response. According to Figure 7, 58% of students felt being asked a specific question made them less confident in their English-speaking skills. On the other hand, 42% of students responded positively to the idea. (Figure 7)

Regarding the statement "I feel confident speaking in a role play activity", students' response revealed stronger feelings than with the previous statement. Figure 7 shows that while 58% of the class agrees with the statement, 8% of which agreeing strongly, 42% of students disagreed about feeling confident in the role-playing activity. 17% of those students going so far as to disagreeing quite strongly with the idea.

When asked whether they felt they met the goals set by the role-playing activity, most students (75%) indicated that they believed they did. In addition, 17% of students strongly believed that they had met the goal of the activity. Only 8% of the students who participated in this questionnaire indicated that they did not believe they had met the goals set for them. (Figure 7)

The final question of the questionnaire asked students to explain why they felt they had chosen the answer to the previous question. Students answered that, in their opinion, they had managed to meet the goals of the activity. One student admitted that they may have failed because they "had some doubts understanding the objective of the activity". Another student wrote that "they worked very well on the role-playing activity". Unlike their Year 11 peers, these students were invited to do pair work due to their young age. It is often feared that younger students lack the ability to focus, and engage, in spoken interaction activities in the classroom due to their immaturity. The Year 7 students clearly showed some difficulty in participating in the activity, both emotionally and skill wise. Still, they tried to engage to the extent of their capabilities in the activity despite their difficulties. For some of the stronger students, this activity helped them work in activities which promoted their skills while necessitating that they help their weaker classmates to engage and learn. It can be considered, that due to their younger age, Year 7 students had more difficulty in conducting an accurate self-assessment than their peers in Year 11. Even still, students in the Year 11 age group indicated a higher level of comfort expressing themselves in English (figure 3) than their younger peers. This could have been born from a combination of higher English language skill level, as well as a higher

level of familiarity with their peers (as the Year 7 class was recently formed unlike the Year 11 class).

Chapter 4 – Discussion and Conclusion

The work conducted throughout this practicum had the goal of answering the research question: How can peer oral interaction activities contribute to learners overcoming their speaking inhibitions? In order to answer this problem, it was necessary to address MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) theory that task-based activities could be used to promote language learning in EFL learners, and how peer interaction allows learners to overcome their reluctance to speak in the target language. As the focus of the research would be oral interaction, it was imperative to create activities where students would have to speak with one another using the target language as often as possible.

Throughout the school year it was possible to verify that peer oral interaction activities alone could not fully aid students, particularly those with a high level of stress or self-consciousness, in overcoming their personal difficulties. As shown in figures 2 and 4, for the Year 11 group, particularly weak students were observed to refrain from participating in the spoken interaction activities. In both cases, these students required a verbal request from the teacher to engage in the tasks. Similarly, when asked about their levels of self-confidence when speaking, some students pointed to a lack of preparation time and their low level of English language skill as a demotivating factor. Still, it was possible to verify a minor improvement in students' English language skills, from one task to another, which could be attributed to a combination of factors in association with peer oral interaction activities.

4.1 – Year 11

4.1.1 – Preparation & Debate

The debate activity was the first attempt at answering the research question. Therefore, it served not only to determine the activity's viability in helping overcome speaking inhibitions, but also to identify which students struggled the most with spoken interaction. As such, this activity could be considered an initial success. Through this activity, it was possible to verify that students who were observed to hold back during class questions were more participative in peer interaction activities. Overall, 75% of students were

evaluated as having a high/very high level of participation (figure 2), which was a stark contrast to the behaviour previously observed in the class observation period. The data gathered from the questionnaires revealed that this was due to their feeling of comfort with their peers helping reduce their fear of communicating in English. This could mean that the promotion of a healthy, and friendly classroom environment can greatly aid students to feel comfortable interacting in the English language. It can, then, be estimated that the longer a group of students has been together, the more comfortable they will feel interacting in the target language with their peers.

The division of the debate activity between preparation phase and observation phase allowed for a better understanding of the way students work in the English language classroom. When originally planning how the debate activity would be evaluated in its entirety, the preparation phase had been taken into account as an opportunity for students to use the English language in smaller groups. While English was not entirely absent from the preparation phase, there was a clear preference from the students to prepare their side of the debate in their first language. This allowed group members to prepare their work together, regardless of their language skill level. While not ideal, students' usage of the L1 in the EFL class is to be expected. Swain and Lapkin (2000) as cited in Alegría de la Colina and del Pilar García Mayo (2009) showed that students resorted to L1 use for three main functions. These were to understand and manage the task, to focus attention on vocabulary and grammar and to enhance their personal interaction through the shared L1 (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009, p.328). Thus, L1 use in the classroom may be a useful tool to aid low-proficiency students in participating in classroom activities, allowing them to work together to understand and achieve complex tasks. Alegría de la Colina and del Pilar García Mayo (2009) further cite Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) who concluded that "the L1 can be especially useful in meaning-focused activities" because learners can more easily delve into a complex task without being set back by their lack of proficiency with the target language. As such, it can be concluded that use of the L1 could be beneficial to weaker students in order for them to be able to work at higher cognitive levels than they would otherwise be capable of, either individually or working exclusively in the target language. The authors conclude by arguing that "The use of the L1 provides learners with cognitive support [which] allows them to analyse language and perform tasks at a higher level than they would be able to in the [target language]" (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009, p. 327). Still, when learners

understood they were being observed, it was clear that English language participation in the preparation phase was sporadically attempted by students when crafting their arguments for the debate. This was planned in accordance with the proposed idea that more proficient students would provide assistance to their less proficient classmates, therefore reducing their level of anxiety when speaking with their peers. Still, it can be argued that the action of crafting arguments for a debate is a task management activity rather than the main task itself, and therefore L1 use is a legitimate practice which doesn't hinder the peer interaction activity which followed (i.e., the main debate).

As answered in the debate questionnaire, a small number of students associated their reticence to interact orally with their underdeveloped English language skills. MacIntyre's model of Willingness to communicate highlights target language use as the end goal of its multiple layers, (Nematizadeh and Wood, 2021, p. 9) and, therefore, it was necessary to address this competence when observing the debate activity. Yet, MacIntyre's concept of language use, refers only to the general use of the target language (i.e., activities as speaking up in class, reading newspapers or watching television in the target language, or utilizing it on the job). As such, the first observation grid, which followed MacIntyre's model focused only on general target language use during the activity, presenting a difficult measuring tool during the debate. This data-gathering instrument attempted to take into account both use of English and fluency all in one, which raised the need for a more specific grid to be employed in later observations. While the students were graded highly, there was no distinction being made between use of English, accuracy or fluency which made it difficult to assess which area of the language students needed to improve in order to promote their language confidence. Still, it is true that neither their accuracy, nor their fluency levels will increase unless students engage in EFL communication more. While general language use is the end goal of MacIntyre's WTC model, students in the Year 11 class seemed to associate their speaking inhibitions with their low proficiency level. It thus becomes a difficult dilemma; language use is necessary to promote willingness to communicate, yet students who share speaking inhibitions feel unprepared to use the language. Peer interaction activities, as seen previously, should allow for a more relaxed environment which in theory allows students to feel more confident to use the language uninhibited.

During the debate, willingness to communicate was evaluated on the basis of whether the student looked for "opportunities to communicate in the target language" (i.e., choosing

to speak beyond their pre-prepared role). On the other hand, "willingness to communicate with another" was defined under MacIntyre's (1998) interpersonal and intergroup motivational propensities (i.e., identifying with their peers and feeling the desire to improve in order to match with their stronger classmates.). Students showing a desire to interact with their peers, asking questions to different classmates and asking for each other's opinions, was reported as being a demonstration of the desire to belong to the group and share information. Overall, observation would seem to indicate that, apart from a small group of students, there was a high level of engagement in the debate activity. As it was, students who had previously been observed to be reticent to engage in the lesson, revealed a higher degree of participation in the classroom debate. All in all, this seems to indicate that whole class debate activities, in particular in classes where students feel at ease with each other, can be highly beneficial to reduce students' speaking inhibitions.

The questionnaire presented at the end of the debate served to assess the feelings of the students towards the activity they had just participated in, whilst having some general questions about their feelings towards the English language and language learning due to time constraints. The students were overall confident in their language skills, with only a very negligible number revealing a level of self-consciousness about their abilities. Students indicated that they felt a higher level of self-confidence when speaking in English when they were discussing a topic which they were interested in. When formulating the questionnaire, and the activities for this practicum, it was conceptualized that students would favour smaller groups when asked to perform speaking activities. Still, the questioned students revealed a higher-than-expected number which seemed to prefer to work with a larger group. This could be the result of two possible situations. First, that students feel more engaged when discussing topics which they are interested in with a large group of their peers. On the other hand, it is possible that such a large number of students working together may have led to some stragglers managing to avoid participating in the activity due to the sheer number of members in each group. As such, it is necessary that teachers conduct this type of activities by carefully managing the participation of all students. At the same time, the number of students who indicated they felt more confident speaking in English when asked a specific question was equally high. This could mean that certain students depend on their teacher as a motivator to participate in the lesson. If we take Cao's (2014) perspective into consideration (that answering a question is an involuntary occurrence and not an example of WTC) we could consider

that a rather large number of students (42%) show rather low propensity for voluntary communication. This means that, it might be necessary for teachers to consider catering to both types of students (those who prefer peer interaction and those who prefer teacher-centred interaction) when preparing their lessons for the year. Still, it is clear that when presented with a topic to discuss, a large number of students present a higher desire to express themselves as shown in figure 3. According to these results, students show a high level of motivation and self-confidence when sharing their opinions in a classroom debate. Students' justifications for the final question of the questionnaire, where they indicate that their feeling of familiarity with their classmates help bolster their self-confidence, and comfort levels in the debate match MacIntyre's concept that Intergroup climate (i.e., the feeling of belonging to a particular group) helps students overcome their speaking inhibitions. Accordingly, through belonging to a certain group for a large number of years these students have developed a sense of camaraderie which has helped them overcome their personal inhibitions. Accordingly, it can be considered that oral interaction activities in a large group setting, help reduce students' oral inhibitions when learners feel a high level of comfort with their peers. Still, this activity, and student response reveal the importance of group-belonging as a strong motivator to communication. Therefore, debate activities are a useful tool when applied to classrooms with a strong sense of unity between the students. All in all, student response indicated that 89% of students (figure 3) believed that debate activities were strong motivators for sharing their opinion in the classroom. At the same time 74% of students (figure 3) felt confident sharing their opinions in English in the debate. Taking this information into account, it is possible to consider this activity a successful tool in decreasing students' speaking inhibitions.

4.1.2 – Group discussion

Following up on the debate activity's results, the group discussion activity was planned to give the Year 11 a second opportunity to practice peer spoken interaction in class. This activity was designed to avoid the debate activity's format, which had allowed some of the weaker students to fade into the background during the presentation phase.

Unlike the previous activity, the language use data gathered throughout this activity was divided into three categories: vocabulary appropriacy, fluency and accuracy. The division of this criteria allowed for a more detailed understanding of each individual student's

specific difficulties in spoken interaction. Throughout the activity a majority of students revealed an understanding of the topic of animal testing and the importance of discovering alternatives to the practice. As would be expected, a larger number of students had more difficulty maintaining fluent and accurate speech when presenting their own data to their classmates. As such, the number of students with a high/very high level of fluency (60%) and accuracy (68%) remained equal to the results of the previous activity, which presented a high/very high level of vocabulary appropriacy of 68%. This seems to indicate that students have both the necessary vocabulary for the activity, as well as the fluency and grammatical accuracy for communicating effectively. This can, in turn, lead to Wen and Clément's (2003, p. 25) belief that the desire to participate in an activity can be quashed by students' lack of oral communication skills. Promoting students' language use, allows them to feel more confident in sharing their opinions as without using the language they cannot improve their use of it. As seen in the questionnaires, students indicated that they felt that many times, they wished to speak but lacked the proper words to do so. Therefore, language self-confidence (through the increase of students' vocabulary and grammar) needs to be promoted in order to combat foreign language anxiety. This could be achieved through the increase of spoken interaction activities in the classroom, as well as the promotion of student oral participation through brainstorming activities and whole class questions. The promotion of target language use in a familiar, safe, environment could therefore help reduce the speaking inhibitions of students in the classroom. Thereby, helping students to understand that even though they make mistakes, the act of trying will always be a necessary step towards their goal of learning a language.

The results of the topic development assessment revealed that, while students might possess the technical knowledge of English, they still struggled with reading comprehension. According to the data, either students lacked the language skills to share the information in its entirety, students lacked the ability to gather pertinent information reliably, or students were held back by their own personal and psychological reasons. The three criteria used to gather data on target language use (fluency, accuracy and language use), reveal that the number of students with truly low target language use skills is rather low when compared to the students who showed difficulty in sharing their information. As all students were given ample time to read and take notes of their assigned texts, we will have to turn to motivational propensities, as well as behavioural intention and

situational antecedents (as seen in MacIntyre's Heuristic Model) as potential reasons for why the number of students who failed this portion of the activity increased in relation to the class' overall English language skills. It is also possible that the novelty of the activity, unlike the debate activity which they had conducted in previous years, could have caused students to be less sure of how to conduct themselves. In the end, the activity did promote peer-interaction among the students but their low target language use could indicate that they either lacked enough time to prepare for the activity, or simply were less aware of the topic they were to discuss.

Regarding social interaction skills, students had a reasonably high level overall. Students present similar results when comparing the values of social skills and willingness to communicate gathered in the first Year 11 activity. On both occasions, students were overall highly capable of maintaining a dialogue when interacting with each other. This could either be attributed to MacIntyre *et al.*'s (1998) assumption that there exists an innate quality to WTC (i.e., that students possess a high propensity towards communication.) or that students possess an elevated level of intergroup motivation. As stated previously, these students were known to be prone to low levels of communication in classroom. They were also known to be a tightknit group of students. Therefore, it can be assumed that the peer-interactive nature of the activities served as a motivator to overcome their speaking inhibitions. At the same time, students were observed to possess a lower level of willingness to communicate with another in the small group discussion. While in the debate activity students showed a strong desire to rebuff, question and further statements, the group discussion fell down the path of each member sharing their specific information and then quickly moving on to the process of coming up with a product and deciding the appropriate testing alternative. These results would go against Ohta's (2000) (cited in Philp et al. (2014)) and Murphy's (1991) assessment that small groups allow for more interaction from students due to their less-intimidating natures. This could be the result of the more formal nature of the debate, which served as a formal moment of evaluation for the students, which placed a higher pressure to succeed onto the students. Alternatively, the results gathered could have been less accurate due to the impossibility of monitoring every student at every point of the activity at the same time. This task could have also caused some students to develop a high level of anxiety which could have led to a decrease in participation. The nature of the task, also differed from the debate activity. As mentioned previously, students had less time to prepare for the activity as it took place

in a single lesson, than they had had in the debate activity. They were also expected to share the points of view of others in this activity, rather than their own, which could have contributed to a less personal nature for the task. This in turn, could indicate that promoting tasks of a personal nature for the students, leads to better results in their engagement levels, as well as, their overall results.

Finally, after concluding the activity students were given a questionnaire to help gather data on their feelings towards this activity. In accordance with Deci and Ryan (2013) and Dörnyei (2001), when questioned about the importance of the relevance of a topic, the majority of students answered that it went in accordance with their personal interests. At the same time, a majority of students indicated they felt confident in their knowledge about the topic. Yet, despite Scrivener (2011) and MacIntyre et al. (1998) associating a high level of self-confidence with high participation, there was a clear lack of dialogue between the students beyond sharing their parts during the group discussion. The high level of confidence in their knowledge, only encouraged participation when the students were invited to share their findings with the class and discuss among themselves with the teacher as a mediator. This could indicate that the need for active teacher participation in the English language class, and how much learners are involved in gathering info or expressing their own ideas rather than the ideas of others are necessary contributors to encouraging oral interaction.

When asked whether they felt difficulty expressing themselves in English, while the majority of students answered in disagreement, a small portion of the class (16%) shared that they felt some kind of difficulty. This data shows a similar result as the data gathered in the previous activity, when students were asked whether they felt confident sharing their opinions in a classroom debate. Taking Scrivener (2011) and MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) work into consideration it might be possible that there is an association between the number of students who demonstrate a low level of WTC in the activities, with the number of students who present a low level of self-confidence in their English communication skills. This in turn hinders their language development, as their reticence towards oral communication leads to a lack of the language output which is fundamental for developing oral competency (Wu, 2019, p.115)

When asked again whether they felt more comfortable speaking in a small group rather than a large one, student response shifted slightly from the previous activity. Whereas in

the previous activity a majority of students agreed with the statement, when asked the same question the number of students who strongly preferred smaller groups was slightly higher (72%). It could be possible that students preferred smaller group activities by providing less exposure and allowing them to interact only with a smaller sample of classmates. As such, while in smaller groups weaker students were expected to participate far more than in large group activities, these activities also allowed them to participate with a reduced amount of pressure. These results seem to support Ohta's (2000) (cited in Philp et al. (2014)) and Murphy's (1991) assessment that smaller group activities promote student's desire to communicate, and contradict Kim and McDonough's (2008) findings that weaker students prefer large group activities due to the being able to go unnoticed by the teacher during the task. Even still, it must be taken into account that a desire to communicate does not equal a willingness to communicate. Wen and Clement (2003) argue that a student may withdraw from asking, or answering a question, due to anxiety or the tense atmosphere. This does not mean the learner lacks the desire to communicate, but that their unpreparedness may present itself as an "unwillingness to communicate." (2003, p. 25)

In order to assess interpersonal motivation, according to MacIntyre's (1998) Willingness to communicate model, the students were asked whether they felt more motivated to speak in English when they were working with people they knew. The results indicated a strong agreement from the students, who mostly answered affirmatively. This could indicate that students highly prefer to speak in English when working with those they feel comfortable with and who are of a similar status as them. When asked if they felt they could express themselves more freely talking in a group, students maintained an affirmative response. The 68% of students who answered positively, could indicate that intergroup motivation (*i*.e., the desire to belong to a specific group) leads them to make more of an effort in their spoken interactions. Also, as stated before students seem to indicate a level of comfort with their classmates which they argue helps them express themselves with a reduced amount of stress.

Finally, when asked whether they preferred whole class discussion to small group discussion the responses were overwhelmingly negative. 72% of students seemed to indicate they preferred to hold smaller group discussions and, when asked to justify, indicated that such practice allowed them to better listen to their classmates, share their opinions, and feel more confident. This response falls in line with Philp et al.'s (2014)

assessment that dyadic or small group work allows students to better pay attention to how the target language is expressed, and to try speaking with less inhibitions. This could equally indicate that the feeling of belonging to a specific group, as argued by MacIntyre (1998), can be an important tool for teachers to use when promoting student spoken interaction. Oddly, it may be possible that students differentiate between large group activities, such as the debate activity, and whole class discussions. Taking this into account, it can be assumed that while students prefer smaller group discussions for regular class activities, when it comes to large evaluation moments, they prefer activities with larger groups. Taking previous answers into consideration, it is possible that average, and weaker, students prefer activities where they may fade into the background, when faced with a more formal activity. The nature of the activity, as well as the formality of the setting also help to distinguish how students responded to each activity. Where the debate activity allowed for more preparation, while having a clear objective (to win the debate) and a formal evaluation setting. The group discussion was in a smaller, more informal, scale and had a more abstract purpose. Therefore, it can be speculated that students feel a preference towards the debate, where they are more aware of what is expected of them, than the group discussion where they feel less sure of the expectations.

4.1.3 – Final questionnaire

The final questionnaire revealed that, unlike the previous data had indicated, around half the class (42%) preferred to speak only when asked a question by the teacher. Similarly, 46% of students answered that they felt confident to speak unprompted. MacIntyre's (1998) WTC model, states that student-teacher relationships influence their desire to communicate with the teacher. The presence of such a high number of students who prefer to speak only when prompted by the teacher, may tie into the WTC model's concept of interpersonal motivation when related to control, indicating that some students, when in the class, wish to relinquish control over when they speak English and wish for the teacher to be the one to determine when and why they speak. As such, it is possible that a somewhat significant number of students, particularly the weaker ones, look to the teacher as a motivator to speak in the EFL classroom. At the same time, similarly to the original Willingness to communicate model indicates, some students argued that they chose not to participate in class due to personal issues, such as the fear of being judged by their teacher or peers. A small minority of students, argued that they were merely participative

by nature and their English language skills were unrelated to their lack of participation. This idea could go against the studies by Burroughs, Marie and McCroskey (2003), who believed that foreign language communication led to a higher level of communication anxiety in learners, than when asked to speak in their first language.

As previously stated, most of the students in the Year 11 classroom indicated a high level of comfort with their peers. This overall group dynamic led to 96% of students answering affirmatively when asked whether they felt comfortable speaking in English with all their classmates. At the same time, 54% of students indicated that they felt more comfortable when speaking with classmates who shared a similar level of English skill as them. Combined, both of these answers could lend some credence to MacIntyre's (1998) intergroup motivation concept (i.e., that the feeling of belonging to a group tied by similar traits motivates students desire to communicate) as well as Philp et al.'s (2014) importance of peer interaction as a motivator for language learning, meaning that the feeling of belonging to the classroom, and the sense of feeling comfortable with a group of people they share a common skill with can lead to a higher level of confidence for the students. The following question helps further this assumption by showing that 89% of students believed they felt more motivated to further their language skills when working with their friends and classmates. This does lead some credence to Ohta (2000) as cited in Philp et al. (2014), who found that students motivated each other to improve their language learning. Organising students into groups/pairs helps raise students' interpersonal and intergroup motivation, which promotes their willingness to communicate in the activity while allowing students to work together to overcome their personal difficulties with the target language.

Finally, when asked if their English language skills influence how much they try to speak in the English language class, a large number of students answered affirmatively. As seen previously, these students answered that while they may want to share their opinion, they feel like they lack the appropriate skills to verbalise it properly. This matches with the MacIntyre's L2 confidence. Students' relationship with the target language, particularly how much they feel they know of the language influences how much participation they have in class.

Taking the original research question into consideration it seems that, for the Year 11 students, peer oral interaction activities allowed them to overcome their speaking

inhibitions. This was the result of the strong bond between the students, as well, as the nature of the activities which seemed to have bolstered students' desire to communicate. In the end, while the debate activity was revealed to be the most successful of the two activities, both increased students WTC and reduced their speaking inhibitions.

4.2 – Year 7

The role play activity was grounded in Murphy's (1991) statement that working in a dyad makes for a less intimidating activity format. The activity was designed taking into account that Year 7 students were of a lower proficiency level than their older counterparts, and that Murphy's observation indicated pair work to be more appropriate for these lower levels.

Despite their young age and the irregular English language levels between the different students in the classroom, it can be considered that they believed themselves to be relatively confident about their ability to share their thoughts in English. Similar to their older counterparts, the Year 7 students indicated that they, mostly, felt more comfortable speaking in English when given time to prepare the activity, they also indicated feeling more confident when interested in the topic. Yet, unlike the Year 11 students, the Year 7 students seemed to tend to feel less confident speaking in English when asked a specific question.

As Murphy (1991) had foreseen, students answered that pair work activities served as good motivation for spoken interaction (Figure 16). This information should have set the precedent that pair work would be more favourable to the students than group work. Yet, the same students went on to indicate that larger groups of 3-5 people to be preferable to pair work (Figure 17).

Finally, when asked whether they had felt confident speaking in the role play activity and whether they felt they met the goals set by the activity, the answer was mostly affirmative. A small number of students indicated being unable to meet the goal due to failing to understand what was expected of them in the activity. This could potentially stem from either external factors (the activity was poorly explained) or internal factors (the student was not paying attention when the activity was explained). It can be said that teaching younger students is a rather difficult challenge to beginner teachers. As such, there is a

level of care that must be taken when designing and conducting activities for these age groups. Taking the research question into consideration, and the reduced time spent with the Year 7 class, it is difficult to assess how successful peer interaction activities are in reducing speaking inhibitions with younger students. The lack of a group identity, which had been found in the Year 11 students, seemed to have hindered the intergroup motivation of the Year 7 class. At the same time, the low level of English language skills, in combination with the low level of maturity of the students made the interaction activity somewhat unsuccessful. It might then be necessary to either take care when developing peer interaction activities with younger students, or have strong classroom management skills when conducting this type of activities with these age group.

This activity could be said to have failed at meeting both the goals set for the research project as well as the students' language acquisition. To begin with, students seemed to lack the attention span, and more importantly the self-discipline, for the activity, which took around 10 minutes. Students had also been expected to practice their use of the past simple tense which, for most of them, they were still in the early stages of learning.

4.3 – Conclusion

In conclusion, while preparing this study, the question of how peer oral interaction activities helped learners overcoming their speaking inhibitions became a focusing point. Yet, it cannot be stated in good faith that peer oral interaction activities alone can overcome the many barriers which compose students' speaking inhibitions.

Over the course of the school year, students were given many opportunities to express themselves either in whole class discussions, brainstorming sessions and select activities meant to promote spoken interaction. Through these, it was possible to see where their strengths and weaknesses lay. It was to be expected, that students in the Year 7 would present a difficult scenario for this specific research project. These students had, unfortunately, come into Year 7 after two years of a pandemic causing them to have lessons on and off, and their language skills, and classroom etiquette, certainly suffered from it. While these students did not lack the desire to communicate in English, they lacked the language skills to go beyond the basic requirements of assignments. It is also possible, that the activity presented was of an inappropriate level for these students. It had originally been expected that students in the Year 7 age group would have very little difficulty in engaging in a simple role play describing their weekend. Unfortunately,

perhaps due to mismanagement of the class or inability to accurately describe the activity students failed to meet the expectations originally set for this activity. Managing expectations when creating activities, especially for younger students, was a lesson that needed to be learned.

Regarding the Year 11 students, it was unexpected to find them so reluctant to participate during the observation period. Originally, the students were highly unmotivated towards language learning and presented no desire to participate in the lesson. Unmotivated students can be a big demotivator for any teacher and at times their lack of participation could be somewhat contagious. As such, it took a lot of time and exposure in order to reach the Year 11 students and help them open up over the course of the year. It is the goal of any teacher to impart in their students a fraction of their passion for the subject being taught. Perhaps due to the initial disinterest of the students, in the end, the experience itself was highly rewarding. Throughout the school year it was possible to see the students grow from an uninterested audience into highly engaged participants motivated to engage and participate in the EFL lessons.

The activities themselves allowed for an understanding of how student interaction functions in the English language classroom, as well as their relationship with the target language. Accordingly, through consistent guidance and motivation to use the target language students made a strong effort and revealed a level of understanding and skill that they otherwise kept hidden throughout the lessons. First impressions are usually quite lasting. As teachers, especially as novices, the first few classes might set the tone to the rest of the school year. The Year 11 class, in particular, was seen as uncooperative for the first few classes. When planning the activity, the goal had been to entice this class to participate more, and while that worked in the end, there were some hiccups to be considered. Weaker students need far more help than a few activities to grow more comfortable interacting. A lot of these weaker students had fossilized difficulties that needed to be addressed and overcome. These difficulties were beyond the possible scope of the Year 11 EFL classroom, which they had to share with their stronger peers. Also, not all students had an inherent desire to speak. Some students are quite content in sitting in the background and avoid the English language class as much as possible. Planning lessons around promoting communication can be highly beneficial to stronger students, and weaker students wishing to participate, but for those who outright reject the EFL class, it is quite difficult to gain their trust and engagement. Once again, expectations also

need to be managed. A student in their eleventh year of secondary education might not have the language skills to meet the standards set for this particular age group. This can mean that entering the class expecting all students to understand a full English dialogue can be considered an impossibility.

There is also a number of elements that need to be taken into account when attempting to reduce student inhibitions in the English language classroom. As stated by MacIntyre (1998), the students' relationship with the language needs to be taken into account. Too many students saw their skill level, as measured by objective grades, to be a deterrent to attempt sharing their opinions in class. This led to many situations where a question was left unanswered, for quite some time, when posed to the class. Too often, students demonstrated avoidance tactics in order to avoid showcasing their inability to meet standards set by their own personal expectations. This made the students difficult to grade accurately, while at the same time making it difficult to assess which difficulties they needed help overcoming. It is, thus, necessary to create an environment in which students feel safe enough to expose their weaknesses in order to promote their learning.

It is also necessary to take the classroom environment into account. The relationship between student-student and student-teacher inform how the class progresses and how often students attempt to speak. The students, when questioned, indicated that their level of familiarity with the class helped them feel less fearful when speaking in English. Their progress along the year, as they got more used to me as their teacher, also showed that their level of comfort with their educator influences how much they attempt to speak. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a high level of trust, both between peers, as well as between students-teacher. This creates a safe environment in which students are more willing to expose themselves, while showing a stronger desire to engage in the activities and learn the language. When setting up activities, it is imperative to take students' difficulties and interests in mind, and combining these with the unit's content in order to produce tasks which appeal to students and motivate them to participate more fully.

If one thing had to be learnt in this *practicum*, it was to manage my expectations regarding the extent of students' language skills. For many, learning English is a chore they have to slog through so their language skills will match their level of disinterest in the language. While a somewhat defeatist idea, it might be necessary to understand that some students' goal regarding language learning classes is merely to get a passing grade. While it is

commendable to want to reach all students and raise their interest in learning the target language, compulsory education means that teachers will always be faced with learners who have no desire to learn.

Finally, there exist many aspects that need to be taken into account in a classroom when studying how to reduce students' inhibitions when speaking. When trying to promote peer interaction in Year 7 students, it is necessary that teachers take into account their language level, as well as the level of maturity of the class. Even a reduced class can be destabilised by the presence of disruptive elements and having a strong classroom management ability will help keep the class on target when conducting interaction abilities. While this is necessary for all age groups, younger students require the most supervision form their teacher, as well as demanding more teacher intervention during the activity. Contrary to the younger students, the Year 11 age group shows a higher level of self-sufficiency when asked to perform oral interaction activities. Still, while more motivated to participate they are also more likely to revert to their L1 when unsupervised. When trying to promote peer interaction in the target language it is necessary to consider constant supervision as a necessity. Year 11 students also show the highest discrepancy of skill level between the strongest student and the weakest. This means that any activity the strongest student benefits the most from will be useless to the weakest student, and vice versa. It is then recommended to create activities with the middle ground students in mind, while trying to promote stronger students to work beyond the expectations of the activity. Weaker students can then be guided to try to work to meet the expectations, by pairing them with peers they feel comfortable with while discussing topics which appeal to them. In the end, while peer oral interactions fail to entirely reduce learners' difficulty with speaking, they can serve as tool to promote group work, empathy and help students better their relationship with the English language.

There were several constraints encountered in this practicum. The need to both learn the basics of teaching and classroom management, as well as trying to conduct a research project, meant that both endeavours ended with sub-optimal results. There were also some time constraints to take into consideration. The small window of opportunity which allowed for working with the Year 7 age group, meant that there was not enough time to both learn how to shift the teaching method to a younger audience, while trying to construct activities which focused on peer interaction. This meant that the students only had access to a single peer interaction activity and questionnaire. Originally, the intention

was to produce a final questionnaire for Year 7 students (similar to the final questionnaire the Year 11 group took), but time constraints kept that from happening. Too often, there was a desire to focus on producing and researching spoken interaction activities but a desperate need to learn how to properly teach grammar, or a particularly difficult kind of vocabulary.

A large regret I felt as a researcher, was that the number of spoken interaction activities should have been higher. In order to properly assess how appropriate peer interaction is in reducing speaking inhibitions, all forms of peer interaction activities should have been conducted with both age groups. Also, had time and availability not been an issue, it would have been ideal to have conducted questionnaires with the remaining classes of each respective year in order to gather some control groups with which to compare the results of this research project. Even still, more questionnaires should have been conducted, and more regularly, with each age group in order to assess their progress throughout the school year. This would also have aided in addressing their shifting feelings towards peer interaction activities and how their motivations changed over time. Finally, questionnaires should have been more focused, in terms of what they related to, and addressed students' growth and feelings more clearly.

A teacher grows through their exposure to the many trials and tribulations they face throughout their teaching career. Each student is different, and has specific needs that need to be addressed. The continuous struggle to help their students grow, is what makes someone a good teacher. Going into this practicum with no teaching experience, my biggest fear was that I was woefully unprepared for the real world of teaching. I had little knowledge on how to prepare a lesson, account for time, or the different needs each individual student has. In many ways, that feeling has only somewhat abated one year later. During the practicum, I was allowed to work with some amazing students and learn from a very talented and highly involved cooperating-teacher. It was through their support that I was able to grow at all as a teacher, and for that I will always be thankful. The part of me that wished to be a better researcher, and do a good job answering the research question, ended being quashed by my desire to grow as a teacher. And, at least, I feel I succeeded in that endeavour. There is still much learn before I become the best teacher I can be, and perhaps in the future that may cross the path of conducting another research project. But, for now at least, I feel I have built the foundation to who I will become as a teacher, and in that sense this practicum was a resounding success.

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Appendix A – Debate preparation lesson plan

Class: grade 11

Unit: Advertising

Lesson nº 9 and 10

Objectives:

Develop students' spoken production skills;

Develop students' critical thinking skills;

Learning objectives	Procedures	Interaction	Time	Materials and teaching aids
--	Teacher checks attendance	Whole class	5'	---
To summarise the activities to be developed in the lesson.	Teacher projects the summary on the screen. • Presentation of group advertisements; • Preparing a group debate;	Whole class	5'	Computer Projector
To advertise a product.	Students present their advertisements to the class.	Whole class	30'	Grammar Worksheet.
To understand the roles of each participant in a debate.	Teacher tells students they will be preparing a debate on the topics: • Children should be shielded from advertising. • Targeted advertising is a breach of privacy. Students are divided into 5 groups of roughly 5 students each. One group is assigned the role of moderators whereas the remaining 4 groups are assigned their topic of debate and their position on it. Teacher explains the rules of the debate and what is expected of each group.	Group Work	10'	
To discuss the topic of advertising. To find arguments to defend their ideas.	Groups prepare their talking points for the debate, who will make which interventions and what counter-arguments they might need.	Group Work	40'	

EDUCAÇÃO	AGRUPAMENTO DE ESCOLAS IBN MUCANA
Ano Letivo 2021/2022	Topic: Debate roles Year 11

Work with your group to determine your roles in the debate.

Opening Statement Presenter:
Take notes of the main arguments your team will be using. Start the debate with a small introduction of what your main arguments will be. "We strongly believe that… because of A and B"

1._____

Topic Presenters:
Present the main arguments for the team. Each presenter gives specific details that **prove** A and B. Keep in mind what the opposing team might say to disprove your arguments and how you can defend your position.

1._____
2._____

Rebuttal Presenters:
Answer the arguments of the other team.

Try to guess what the other team is going to say to support their position and how you can argue against them. (1 or 2)

1._____
2._____

Closing Statement Presenter:
Presents the closing arguments for the team. Repeats the main idea for this and these reasons.

1._____

You can use the expressions in this table to add some realism to your debate.

To present your position	To support your team's arguments	To be against the other team's arguments
We think… We must say that… We strongly believe…	That's exactly what I think. I totally agree with him/her. That's true.	I see, but on the other hand… I don't think so…

Appendix C – Debate moderator worksheet

The Host/s for "Children should be shielded from advertising" debate
Prepare the presentation of the two groups. Prepare what will be said to start and end the debate. Prepare questions for the groups.

1._____

2._____

The Host/s for "Targeted advertising is a breach of privacy" debate
Prepare the presentation of the two groups. Prepare what will be said to start and end the debate. Prepare questions for the groups.

1._____

2._____

In our opinion…	I'm of the same opinion	That point is not true/ important. Ok, but what if… Yes, but what about… Your example is not important because…

Work with your group to prepare how you will be hosting the debates.

You can use the following tips in this table to guide your moderating of the debate.

Starting the programme	Conducting the programme	Ending the programme
Greet the participants and the audience. Tell the audience what the programme is going to be about. Ask the first questions.	Ask for clarification when what the debaters say is not very clear. Interrupt politely if a debater is taking too long. Ask for order if participants talk at the same time.	Make a short summary of the debate. That the participants and the audience.

Appendix D – Debate observation grid

	Preparation phase					Debate phase																			
	Participation during the preparation phase.					L2 Use (Fluency/Use of English)					Self-confidence					Willingness to communicate					Willingness to communicate with another				
Student 1	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 2	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 3	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 6	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 7	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 8	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 9	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 10	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 11	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 12	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 13	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 14	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 15	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 16	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 17	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 18	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 19	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 20	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 21	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 22	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 23	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 24	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 25	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

*1 – No participation 2 – Minimum participation 3 – Tries to add to the group's work 4 – Participates regularly 5 – Participates fully.

Appendix E – Class debate lesson plan

Class: grade 11

Unit: Advertising

Lesson nº 11 and 12

Objectives:

Develop students' spoken interaction skills;

Develop students' critical thinking skills;

Learning objectives	Procedures	Interaction	Time	Materials and teaching aids
--	Teacher checks attendance	Whole class	5'	---
To summarise the activities to be developed in the lesson.	Teacher projects the summary on the screen. • Group debates on the subject of advertising.	Whole class	5'	Computer Projector
To defend their arguments in a debate.	Groups participate in a debate in front of the class.	Whole class	80'	

Appendix F – Group debate

Debate self-assessment

Answer each question honestly to assess how you feel you performed in the Dangers of Advertising debate.

1. I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts and opinions in English.

   Marcar apenas uma oval.

   - ◯ Strongly disagree
   - ◯ Disagree
   - ◯ Agree
   - ◯ Strongly agree

2. I'm more comfortable speaking in English when I have more time to prepare the activity.

   Marcar apenas uma oval.

   - ◯ Strongly disagree
   - ◯ Disagree
   - ◯ Agree
   - ◯ Strongly Agree

3. I am more confident speaking in English when I am interested in the topic.

   Marcar apenas uma oval.

   - ◯ Strongly disagree
   - ◯ Disagree
   - ◯ Agree
   - ◯ Strongly agree

4. I am more motivated to participate when I am working in a group.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

5. I feel more comfortable speaking English in a small group rather than in a large one.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

6. I feel more confident speaking in English when I am asked a specific question.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

7. A classroom debate motivates me to try to use English to share my opinions with the class.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

8. I feel confident sharing my opinions in English in a classroom debate.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

9. In your own words, explain why you chose that particular answer in the previous question.

Appendix G – Group discussion lesson plan

Appendix J

Class: grade 11

Unit: The world around us

Lesson nº 19 and 20

Objectives:

Recognising alternatives to animal testing in science.

Develop reading comprehension skills.

Develop spoken interaction skills.

Learning objectives	Procedures	Interaction	Time	Materials and teaching aids
	Teacher greets the students and takes attendance.	Whole class	5’	
To summarise the activities to be developed in the lesson.	Teacher projects the summary on the board Summary: - Speaking assessment. - Reading texts about alternatives to animal testing: comprehension and notetaking. - Spoken interaction activity: discussing alternatives to animal testing.	Whole class	5’	Computer Projector

To present information about the topics of their choice covered in class.	Students present their spoken production works to the class.	Whole class	20’	Computer Projector
To recall information gathered in the previous lesson.	Students are asked to recall situations in which animal testing is used. Teacher writes down their answers on the board.	Whole class	5’	Blackboard/Whiteboard
	Teacher tells students they will be roleplaying as scientists preparing to start testing a new product (check the list in previous activity). - Students are told they will each be given an excerpt detailing an alternative to animal testing. - Students are told they will be working in group to debate which alternative they would choose. - Students are told they will share their decision with the class.	Whole class	5’	
To identify key information in a text. To organize their arguments.	Students are given a small excerpt describing an alternative to animal testing. (4 different excerpts) Pay attention to: - Benefits; - Potential flaws; - How it compares to animal testing. Students read their excerpt and take notes.	Individual work	15’	Animal testing alternatives excerpts.
To share information orally. To defend their opinion with proper arguments.	Students are divided into small groups (4 students per group). Students explain the contents of their text to their classmates, and the group works together to agree on which alternative they prefer.	Small group work	20’	Animal testing alternatives excerpts.
To argue their opinion in a large group.	Students discuss with the class their answers to the previous activity.	Whole class	20’	Animal testing alternatives excerpts.

In Vitro Testing

Researchers have created “organs-on-chips” that contain human cells grown in a state-of-the-art system to mimic the structure and function of human organs and organ systems. The chips can be used instead of animals in disease research, drug testing, and toxicity testing and have been shown to replicate human physiology, diseases, and drug responses more accurately than crude animal experiments do. A variety of cell-based tests and tissue models can be used to assess the safety of drugs, chemicals, cosmetics, and consumer products. For example, a human cell–derived model can be used to replace rabbits in painful, prolonged experiments that have traditionally been used to evaluate chemicals for their ability to corrode or irritate the skin.

Adapted from
https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-experimentation/alternatives-animal-testing

Computer (*in Silico*) Modeling

Researchers have developed a wide range of sophisticated computer models that simulate human biology and the progression of developing diseases. Studies show that these models can accurately predict the ways that new drugs will react in the human body and replace the use of animals in exploratory research and many standard drug tests. Computer-based techniques can replace animal tests by making sophisticated estimates of a substance's likelihood of being hazardous, based on its similarity to existing substances and our knowledge of human biology. Companies and governments are increasingly using QSAR tools to avoid testing chemicals on animals.

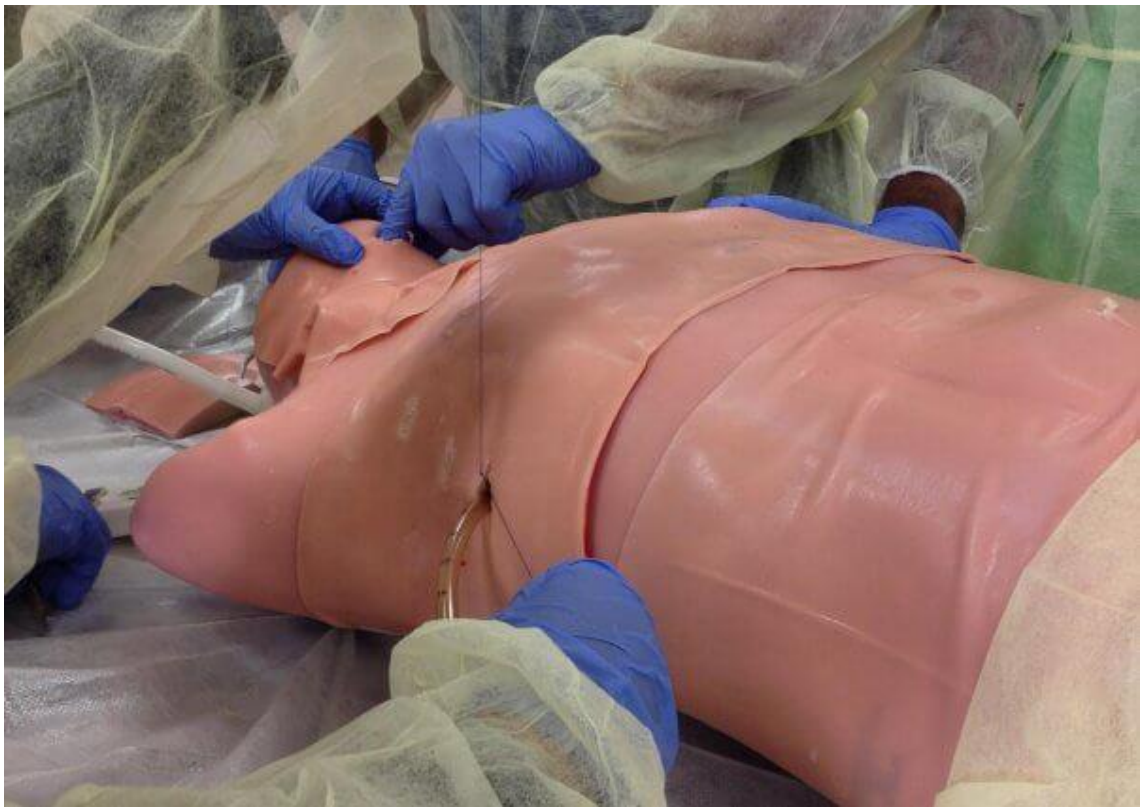
Adapted from
https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-experimentation/alternatives-animal-testing

Research With Human Volunteers

A method called “microdosing” can provide vital information on the safety of an experimental drug and how it is metabolized in humans prior to large-scale human trials. Volunteers are given an extremely small one-time drug dose, and sophisticated imaging techniques are used to monitor how the drug behaves in the body. Microdosing can replace certain tests on animals and help screen out drug compounds that won’t work in humans so that they are never tested in animals. Also, advanced brain imaging and recording techniques with human volunteers can be used to replace archaic experiments in which rats, cats, and monkeys have their brains damaged. These modern techniques allow the human brain to be safely studied down to the level of a single neuron, and researchers can even temporarily and reversibly induce brain disorders using transcranial magnetic stimulation.

Adapted from
https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-experimentation/alternatives-animal-testing

Human-Patient Simulators



Strikingly lifelike computerized human-patient simulators that breathe, bleed, convulse, talk, and even “die” have been shown to teach students physiology and pharmacology better than crude exercises that involve cutting up animals. The most high-tech simulators mimic illnesses and injuries and give the appropriate biological response to medical interventions and medication injections.

All medical schools across the U.S., Canada, and India have completely replaced the use of animal laboratories in medical training with simulators as well as virtual reality systems, computer simulators, and supervised clinical experience. For more advanced medical training, systems which replicate a breathing, bleeding human torso and have realistic layers of skin and tissue, ribs, and internal organs—are widely used to teach emergency surgical procedures and have been shown in numerous studies to impart lifesaving skills better than courses that require students to cut into live pigs, goats, or dogs.

Adapted from
https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-experimentation/alternatives-animal-testing

Appendix L – Group discussion observation grid

Students	Criteria						Total
	Use of language	Fluency	Accuracy	Topic development	Social skills	Willingness to communicate with another	
	1/2/3/4/5	1/2/3/4/5	1/2/3/4/5	1/2/3/4/5	1/2/3/4/5	1/2/3/4/5	
Student 1							
Student 2							
Student 3							
Student 4							
Student 5							
Student 6							
Student 7							
Student 8							
Student 9							
Student 10							
Student 11							
Student 12							
Student 13							
Student 14							
Student 15							
Student 16							
Student 17							
Student 18							
Student 19							
Student 20							
Student 21							
Student 22							
Student 23							
Student 24							
Student 25							

*1 – No participation 2 – Minimum participation 3 – Tries to add to the group's work 4 – Participates regularly 5 – Participates fully.

Appendix M – Group discussion questionnaire

Group discussion self-assessment

Answer each question honestly to assess how you feel you performed in the Alternatives to Animal testing group discussion.

*Obrigatório

1. I found the topic of the activity relevant to my culture/interests. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly Agree

2. I felt confident about my knowledge about the topic of the activity. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

3. I feel more motivated to participate in an activity when I relate to the topic. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly Agree

4. I have difficulty expressing myself in English. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

5. I feel more comfortable speaking English in a small group rather than in a large one. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

6. I feel more motivated to speak in English when I'm working with people I know. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

7. I feel like I can express myself more freely in a group discussion. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly Agree

8. I prefer whole class discussions to small group discussions. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

9. In your own words, explain why you chose that particular answer in the previous question. *

Appendix N – Willingness to communicate questionnaire

Willingness to Communicate

Answer each question honestly to assess how you feel you performed in the Alternatives to Animal testing group discussion.

*Obrigatório

1. I prefer to speak only when the teacher asks me to. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

2. I feel confident answering questions in class. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

3. I feel intimidated speaking English in the classroom. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly Agree

4. In your own words, explain your answer to the previous question. *

5. I feel comfortable speaking in english with all my classmates. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

6. I feel more comfortable speaking in English when working with people with a similar language level as my own. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

7. I feel more motivated to improve my English speaking skills when working with people I am familiar with. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

8. I feel confident in my overall English language skills. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

9. I feel confident expressing myself in English. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

10. My English language skills influence how much I try to speak in the English language class. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

11. In your own words, explain your answer to the previous question. *

Appendix O – Debate observation grid (results)

	Preparation phase					Debate phase														
	Participation during the preparation phase.					L2 Use (Fluency/Use of English)					Willingness to communicate					Willingness to communicate with another				
Student 1	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	4	**5**	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	**4**	5
Student 2	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 3	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	4	**5**	1	2	**3**	4	5	1	2	**3**	4	5
Student 4	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	**3**	4	5	1	2	3	4	**5**	1	2	3	4	**5**
Student 5	1	2	**3**	4	5	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	**3**	4	5	1	**2**	3	4	5
Student 6	1	**2**	3	4	5	**1**	2	3	4	5	**1**	2	3	4	5	**1**	2	3	4	5
Student 7	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 8	1	2	3	4	**5**	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	4	**5**	1	2	3	4	**5**
Student 9	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	**3**	4	5	1	**2**	3	4	5	1	2	3	**4**	5
Student 10	1	2	3	4	**5**	1	2	3	4	**5**	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	**4**	5
Student 11	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	**3**	4	5
Student 12	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 13	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	4	**5**	1	2	3	4	**5**
Student 14	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 15	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	**3**	4	5	1	**2**	3	4	5	1	**2**	3	4	5
Student 16	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	**3**	4	5
Student 17	1	2	**3**	4	5	1	**2**	3	4	5	1	**2**	3	4	5	1	2	3	**4**	5
Student 18	1	2	3	4	**5**	1	2	**3**	4	5	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	4	**5**
Student 19	1	2	3	4	**5**	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	4	**5**
Student 20	1	**2**	3	4	5	1	2	**3**	4	5	1	2	**3**	4	5	1	**2**	3	4	5
Student 21	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 22	1	2	3	4	**5**	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	2	3	**4**	5
Student 23	1	**2**	3	4	5	1	**2**	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	**5**	1	2	3	**4**	5
Student 24	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Student 25	1	2	**3**	4	5	1	2	3	**4**	5	1	**2**	3	4	5	1	**2**	3	4	5

*1 – No participation 2 – Minimum participation 3 – Tries to add to the group's work 4 – Participates regularly 5 – Participates fully.

Appendix P– Group discussion observation grid (results)

	Criteria						Total
	Use of language	Fluency	Accuracy	Topic development	Social skills	Willingness to communicate with another	
	1/2/3/4/5	1/2/3/4/5	1/2/3/4/5	1/2/3/4/5	1/2/3/4/5	1/2/3/4/5	
Student 1	5	5	4	4	4	5	5
Student 2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2
Student 3	5	5	4	4	4	3	4
Student 4	3	3	3	2	3	2	3
Student 5	4	4	4	3	3	3	4
Student 6	2	1	2	2	1	2	2
Student 7	3	3	3	3	4	3	3
Student 8	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
Student 9	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
Student 10	5	5	5	5	4	5	5
Student 11	4	5	4	3	3	2	4
Student 12	2	1	2	2	1	2	2
Student 13	4	4	5	4	4	4	4
Student 14	5	4	5	4	4	4	4
Student 15	4	4	4	2	3	2	3
Student 16	5	4	5	3	3	3	4
Student 17	2	2	2	2	4	4	3
Student 18	5	4	5	4	3	2	4
Student 19	4	4	4	4	5	5	4
Student 20	3	2	3	2	3	2	3
Student 21	5	5	5	3	4	3	4
Student 22	5	4	5	4	4	4	4
Student 23	2	2	3	2	2	2	2
Student 24	4	3	4	3	2	3	3
Student 25	4	4	4	3	3	2	3

*1 – No participation 2 – Minimum participation 3 – Tries to add to the group's work 4 – Participates regularly 5 – Participates fully.

Appendix Q– Roleplay activity lesson plan

Class: 7E

Unit: All about my home

Lesson nº 6 & 7 (90 mins)

Objectives:

Spoken interaction practice.
Develop listening comprehension skills.
Develop reading comprehension skills.
Understand how to form the past simple of irregular verbs.

Learning objectives	Procedures	Interaction	Time	Materials and teaching aids
---	The teacher greets the students and checks attendance	Whole class	5’	
To summarise the activities to be developed in the lesson.	The teacher projects the summary on the screen. Summary: - Role play activity: My weekend - Reading comprehension: *My travel journal* - Past Simple: Irregular verbs: *grammar presentation*. - Autonomous work: Pages 172 of Student’s book.	Whole class	5’	Computer Projector Blackboard/Whiteboard
To understand when to use the past simple in a conversation.	Students are told they will be doing a role play activity describing their weekend. Students read a small dialogue where two characters interact about their weekend.	Whole class	5’	Role play worksheet
To use the past simple when describing past events.	In pairs, students role play a conversation where they describe their weekend activities to each other. Students take note of their partner’s weekend activities.	Pair work	15’	Role play worksheet

To use the past simple when describing past events.	Some students are invited to share their partner's weekend.	Whole class	10'	Computer Projector
To identify the main content of the video.	Students watch the video *My travel journal*. Students answer questions based on the video: -What was the video about? -Where did Isaac go? -Who lived in those houses?	Whole class	5'	Computer Projector Video: *My travel journal*
To read for specific information.	Students read the text *My trave journal* and do activities B and C of page 95. Students share their answers with the class	Individual work	15'	Student's book Computer Projector
To understand the use and form of the past simple of irregular verbs.	Students watch the Grammar presentation for irregular verbs. Teacher pauses at appropriate intervals to expand on the information in the video.	Whole class	15'	Computer Projector
To consolidate the use and form of the past simple of irregular verbs.	Students do activities A and B of page 96. Students share their answers with the class.	Individual work	10'	Student's book.

Appendix R – Roleplay activity guide worksheet

ANO LETIVO 2021/2022	AGRUPAMENTO DE ESCOLAS IBN MUCANA
	Topic: Animal testing Year 11

Role-play a dialogue with your partner. Describe what your weekend was like.

Follow the example:

Tim

Cassie

T: Hi Cassie! How was your weekend?

C: It was **great**. On Saturday, I **watched a movie**. It was very **good**.

T: Oh really! What about on Sunday?

C: On Sunday, I **finished my homework**. What about you, how was your weekend?

T: It was **fun**. I **listened to music** and **played videogames**.

Here is some help:

Activities:

Watch a movie; finish homework; listen to music; watch TV; learn to juggle; play guitar; dance; join a book club; visit friends/family; visit a museum; visit the zoo; listen to music; walk my dog; clean my room; play videogames.

Adjectives:

great; good; nice; cool; fantastic; fun; funny; fine; easy; boring; terrible; lousy; horrible.

Appendix S – Roleplay activity questionnaire

Roleplay: Self-assessment

Answer each question honestly to assess how you feel you performed in the Roleplay: My Weekend activity.

O email do inquirido (**null**) foi gravado ao enviar este formulário.
*Obrigatório

1. Email *

2. I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts in English. / Sinto-me confortável a partilhar as minhas ideias em inglês. *

   Marcar apenas uma oval.

   - ◯ Strongly disagree / Discordo totalmente
   - ◯ Disagree / Discordo
   - ◯ Agree / Concordo
   - ◯ Strongly agree / Concordo totalmente

3. I'm more comfortable speaking in English when I have more time to prepare the activity. / Sinto-me mais confortável a falar inglês, quando tenho tempo para preparar a atividade. *

   Marcar apenas uma oval.

   - ◯ Strongly disagree / Discordo totalmente
   - ◯ Disagree / Discordo
   - ◯ Agree / Concordo
   - ◯ Strongly agree / Concordo totalmente

4. I am more confident speaking in English when I am interested in the topic. / Sinto-me mais confortável a falar inglês quando tenho interesse no tópico. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree / Discordo totalmente
- Disagree / Discordo
- Agree / Concordo
- Strongly agree / Concordo totalmente

5. I am more motivated to participate when I am working in a pair. / Sinto-me mais motivado/a a participar numa atividade quando é em pares. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree / Discordo totalmente
- Disagree / Discordo
- Agree / Concordo
- Strongly agree / Concordo totalmente

6. I feel more comfortable speaking English in pairs than in groups of 3-5 students. / Sinto-me mais confortável a a falar em trabalhos a pares, do que em trabalhos com grupos de 3-5 alunos. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Strongly disagree / Discordo totalmente
- Disagree / Discordo
- Agree / Concordo
- Strongly agree / Concordo totalmente

7. I feel more confident speaking in English when I am asked a specific question. / Sinto-me mais confortável a falar em inglês quando tenho de responder a uma pergunta específica. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree / Discordo totalmente
- ◯ Disagree / Discordo
- ◯ Agree / Concordo
- ◯ Strongly agree / Concordo totalmente

8. I feel confident speaking in a role playing activity. / Sinto-me confiante a falar em atividades de dramatização. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree / Discordo totalmente
- ◯ Disagree / Discordo
- ◯ Agree / Concordo
- ◯ Strongly agree / Concordo totalmente

9. I feel I met the goals set by the role playing activity. / Sinto que cumpri com os objetivos da atividade de dramatização. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ◯ Strongly disagree / Discordo totalmente
- ◯ Disagree / Discordo
- ◯ Agree / Concordo
- ◯ Strongly agree / Concordo totalmente

10. In your own words, explain why you chose that particular answer in the previous question. / Nas tuas próprias palavras, justifica a resposta à pergunta anterior. *