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**An alternative approach to the teaching of EFL to  
secondary students of a public school in Patos-PB**

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**Maceió, AL**  
**Janeiro de 2009**

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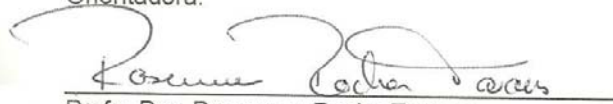
## TERMO DE APROVAÇÃO

Jarbas Medeiros de Lima Filho

### An alternative approach to the teaching of EFL to secondary students of a public school in Patos-PB

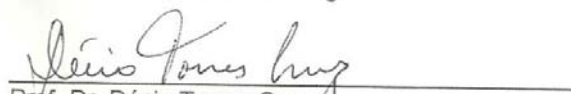
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To my mom, for everything and  
to Gabriela, who has just arrived

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## ABSTRACT

The communicative language teaching (CLT), which arose towards the end of the 1960's, is a widely promoted and studied approach. Since its advent, debates, seminars and academic productions have been conducted to discuss the appropriateness of its use and its adequateness to different socio-cultural, pedagogical and institutional settings all over the world (SAVIGNON, 1991), and also in Brazil. Thus, considering all the merits attributed to the CLT and bearing in mind the various problems in the ELT scenario in the city of Patos, PB – the current work committed itself to conduct an action-research with the objective of applying its principles in the design of an alternative approach to the teaching of EFL to secondary students in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of the local educational institution named Escola Normal D. Expedito Oliveira. The research is intended to find ways to enhance the quality of language teaching by employing activities that prioritize use over usage (WIDDOWSON, 1978), that apply the four linguistic abilities integratively (McDONOUGH and SHAW, 1993) and that evaluate the process taking into account the pupils' performance. The intervention was conducted during the entire first school semester of 2008 and the program included not only the selection, elaboration and employment of the materials and activities, but also the pedagogical techniques used during the lessons. Based on the events and on the data collected throughout the research, it was concluded that, despite the success in several didactic and methodological aspects and the high level of approval by students, a genuinely communicative approach is not the most appropriate method for the classroom context as it is found in that local public school. Political and administrative matters on the part of the school and personal and cultural reasons on the part of the students seemed to have contributed to the lack of success in the exercise of the exclusively communicative program. However, an alternative approach which contains typical traces of other methods such as the audio-lingual and classical methods revealed to be more efficient for the oral and written production of the pupils. For this reason, it was confirmed that this alternative approach can contribute significantly to enhance the quality of the activities and techniques utilized in the English classes in the local public secondary school system.

**Keywords:** Communicative approach. English language teaching. Public school system. Secondary level.

## RESUMO

A abordagem comunicativa (AC) no ensino de línguas, que surgiu no fim da década de 1960, é um paradigma mundialmente difundido e estudado. Desde seu surgimento, a conveniência de seu uso e adequação a diferentes contextos sócio-culturais, pedagógicos e institucionais tem inspirado debates, discussões e produções acadêmicas a nível mundial (SAVIGNON, 1991), inclusive no Brasil. Desta forma, em face dos méritos a ela atribuídos, e dos diversos problemas no ensino de língua inglesa na cidade de Patos, PB - objetivou-se a realização de uma pesquisa-ação ansiando aplicar um programa genuinamente comunicativo no 1º ano da Escola Normal D. Expedito Oliveira dessa cidade. Nesta pesquisa, buscou-se aprimorar a qualidade do ensino de línguas através de atividades que priorizavam o uso da língua em vez da forma (WIDDOWSON, 1978), trabalhar as habilidades lingüísticas de forma integrada (McDONOUGH and SHAW, 1993) avaliando o processo a partir da produção integrada do alunado. A intervenção estendeu-se por todo o primeiro semestre letivo de 2008 e o programa incluiu desde a seleção, elaboração e aplicação dos materiais e atividades até as técnicas pedagógicas utilizadas durante as aulas. Com base nos eventos e nos dados coletados na pesquisa, conclui-se que, apesar do sucesso em vários aspectos didáticos e metodológicos e do alto índice de aceitação por parte dos alunos, uma abordagem com princípios baseados exclusivamente nos moldes da AC não é o caminho mais apropriado para a construção de um plano de curso para os alunos dessa escola. Razões político-administrativas por parte da instituição educacional, e pessoais e culturais por parte dos alunos contribuíram para o insucesso na aplicação desse programa. No entanto, um programa de base comunicativa, mas que conteve traços típicos de outros métodos como áudio-língual e clássico revelou resultados mais eficientes na produção oral e escrita dos estudantes. Por esta razão, comprovou-se que uma abordagem alternativa (com traços de métodos e abordagens diferentes) pode contribuir significativamente para o aprimoramento da qualidade das atividades e técnicas utilizadas nas aulas de língua inglesa no sistema público de ensino médio local.

Palavras-chave: Abordagem comunicativa. Ensino de língua inglesa. Sistema público de ensino. Ensino médio.



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## INTRODUCTION

New views in the field of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, most of them occurred in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, originated the notions of Pragmatics science and the studies of language in its common use, developing new insights in the area of semiotic studies. Pragmatics also brought new perspectives in which foreign language studies could be conducted. Some special attention was then concentrated on fundamental concepts like “language in use”, “authenticity” and “communicative competence”<sup>1</sup>. Then, it was in the process of adapting these pragmatic notions into the linguistic branch of (foreign) language learning that the *communicative approach* (CA) to language teaching started to rise towards the end of the 1960’s. Since then, this new paradigm has been the subject of numerous academic debates, works and published materials all over the world. Its applicability in different contexts has been a highly controversial issue where the two parts of the discussions (the defenders – modern language linguists that defend wholly language approaches; and the critics – adepts of previous existing or posterior raised language learning paradigms) commonly diverge in their opinions.

At the beginning of the 1970’s, the CA drew the attention of a number of applied linguists, methodologists and teachers throughout the globe and many schools and language centers started to adapt the new ideas into their foreign language curriculum. In Brazil, these events started to take place towards the end of the referred decade and it soon expanded its boundaries. Meanwhile, in more recent years, a few methodological deficiencies in English language learning and teaching in public secondary schools in the city of Patos, PB were recently confirmed through scientific research in the area of language studies (LIMA FILHO, 2005). The results of the research detected flaws not only related to the teachers’ level of proficiency in the target language, but also showed a large amount of methodological incongruities in their attempt to share knowledge of English as a foreign language. The current method employed in the public secondary schools in Patos is directly bound to the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), used in its most orthodox form by European schools to teach Latin and Greek

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<sup>1</sup> These concepts are explored in the first chapter of this work.

approximately six centuries ago (BROWN, 1994; SILVEIRA, 1999) resulting on a total lack of promotion of communicative competence<sup>2</sup> upon the students.

It is also considered to be a problem, originated from the methodological deficiency, the lack of students' interest in foreign language learning due to the fact that they are taught to know a lot about the language instead of learning the language itself. Such process is described by Brown (1994) as a mere form of "mental gymnastics" employed by the classic schools of Europe around the 15<sup>th</sup> century as a way of developing students' mental capacities. This typical GTM characteristic has been criticized since Kelly's early work in 1959 (KELLY, 1959 apud STERN, 1983). That means, the students are compelled to the apprehension of communicative skills in the Anglo-American language by limiting themselves to its grammatical rules and literary texts (LARSEN-FREEMAN, 1986, p. 9), while Richards and Rodgers (1986) appoint it as an unsupported method without adherents in modern linguistic studies. These authors also express that the ideal conditions for the student to develop foreign language learning is to make it useful to their interests. Also, Almeida Filho adds that "the selection of grammar structures is indeed necessary though insufficient at any language teaching procedure"<sup>3</sup> (1993, p. 58). Thus, authentic language, that means, "a term which loosely implies as close an approximation as possible to the world outside the classroom, in the selection both of language material and of the activities and methods used for practice in the classroom" (MCDONOUGH AND SHAW, 1993, p. 43), is one of the key principles of the CA (LARSEN-FREEMAN, 1986). For this reason, the implementation of this approach would, in theoretical basis, be a possible means of conducting the learner to use the knowledge conveyed in class for the fulfilling of their personal communicative needs. Thus, the development of some interest of their own to capture what is taught during the lessons may be facilitated.

Hence, the association of the various international merits accredited to the communicative approach with the search for a means of minimization of the various

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of **communicative competence** refers to the one elaborated by Hymes (1972) and it will be further explored in chapter 1.

<sup>3</sup> The original passage in Portuguese says: "a seleção de estruturas gramaticais é necessária sim mas insuficiente em qualquer operação de ensino de línguas". The translation is of entire responsibility of the author of this work.

pedagogical incongruities existent in the context of foreign language teaching of the public school system in Patos, PB led the author to the idea of conducting an action-research where he would act as a teacher in a local public school adopting a communicative syllabus in the lessons. He was granted permission to perform his project in a local secondary school by the principal, the pedagogical coordinator and the English teacher herself, who agreed to cede one of her groups for the research, entitling the complete responsibility for the classroom activities to the researcher.

Despite various other institutional meanings attributed to the terms *project*, *experiment* and *intervention*, they will be employed as synonyms of the term *research* to avoid overuse and redundancy throughout the rest of this work.

Throughout the chapters, the author will refer to himself as the *researcher* to avoid confusion of roles during the moments of description of the in-class events and in the analysis of the data collected throughout the experiment. Ms. Maria Ferreira, the school English teacher, who very kindly agreed to actively take part on the intervention and to concede the group for the conduction of the study acted as an auxiliary during some moments of the lessons and here after she will be identified as the *collaborative teacher*. However, she was replaced by another professional by the schoolboard after the third month of research due to her health conditions. Due to her medical leave, Ms. Maria Ferreira was substituted by Miss Valmira Lopes, who also promptly agreed to participate in the project, acting as an auxiliary teacher. The identification *collaborative teacher* was then just transferred to her. Both labels, *researcher* and *collaborative teacher*, are used in the thesis textual corpus and on the transcriptions of the lessons.

The classes were performed as regular lessons to the group in the standard time (Thursdays, from 7:00 to 8:30 once a week) for an entire semester. The grades assigned to students every bimester were not attributed based on the results of written tests as it is normally done in the school. Instead, they were assigned based on the students' individual production, on their participation in the activities, and on their regular attendance to lessons. Assigning the marks and registering the classes was still a responsibility of the collaborative teacher.

All the lessons were elaborated by the researcher and placed in twelve units. The content of each unit was developed based on the most basic characteristics of the communicative approach accounted by several applied linguists reported in chapter I; on the theories of syllabus design reported by Nunan (1989) and Littlewood (1981); and also on widely known published materials and didactics employed by their authors. All these authors are cited in chapters I and II and in the references of this work. For further analysis, a print of all units employed throughout the project is available in the *appendixes*.

The research extended from February 21<sup>st</sup> until June 17<sup>th</sup> 2008 in Escola Normal Dom Expedito Eduardo Oliveira in Patos – PB. Towards the end of its period, the intervention had already undergone several unexpected steps and various unpredicted conclusions were drawn by the researcher who employed an action-research ethnographic qualitative research type. The method employed allowed a fine conduction of the entire experiment, the results of which are fully described in chapter III. The methods of data collection and how they were utilized are presented in the first subtopics of chapter 2.

The current work aimed, in general terms, at verifying the applicability of the communicative principles in the scenario currently found in the local public school. More specifically, it expected to a) improve the quality of ELT in the referred setting; b) to elicit opportunities for students to develop some communicative competence by enhancing the quality of the reading, writing, speaking and listening activities in the lessons; c) develop their taste for studies of EFL; and d) to present, to students, the teacher and to the school, alternative ways to learn and teach English that do not focus exclusively on studies of grammar rules and text translation.

In general, this thesis presents some guidelines that show how the intervention was conducted. Every action that aims to enhance the quality of our education, especially when provided to those with extremely limited resources and expectations, is worth a try.



## CHAPTER 1: THE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING – ORIGIN, PRINCIPLES AND FEATURES IN THE EFL CONTEXT

This chapter intends to present some basic and important principles of the *Communicative Approach* to language teaching in, as the title suggests, a historical and contemporary perspective. It presents a state of art that gathers some guidelines and principles that characterize an authentic communicative syllabus, such as the one envisaged by the current work.

### 1.1 THE ORIGIN OF THE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) APPROACH

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was an essential period in the history of foreign language teaching. It was the time when new approaches raised breaking with old paradigms to language teaching based on the learning of grammar rules, syntactic structures and vocabulary lists. Within this period, several other methods and approaches came to exist, namely The Silent Way, Desuggestopedia<sup>4</sup>, the Total Physical Response, the Natural Approach and especially the Audio-lingual Method. This last one most frequently used in the foreign language teaching scenario worldwide until the late 1960's.

During the 1960's, the European continent was going through some major social, economical and educational changes. The continuous interdependency between the countries regarding the amount of immigrants, guest workers and the number of possibilities for international professional cooperation and travel was rapidly increasing (SAVIGNON, 2002). This occasion encouraged the Council of Europe to be active in promoting language education programs with the signature of the European Cultural Convention in December, 1954 (TRIM, 2001). Hence, the

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<sup>4</sup> According to Larsen-Freeman (2000, p.73), the term has been reformulated. The new terminology suits more accurately the main idea of the method, which is to *disuggest*, that is, a kind of indirect suggestion of deconstruction of psychological barriers that block the students from learning which they bring to the class.

need for language learning and teaching was urgent as travelers were continuously traveling from one country to another. However, according to McDonough and Shaw (1993), language teaching practitioners and applied linguists were undergoing a rising discontentment with the predominant language learning methodologies of the time. Also, Souza (2003) states that such dissatisfaction along with the changes in the continent caused the Council of Europe to realize that those methodologies were not fulfilling the learners' expectations to use the target language in real situational contexts. At that time, learners were merely required to handle grammatical forms accurately and very little (if none) preoccupation with the communicative, cultural promoter and social interactional aspects of language (RICHARDS, 2003). As education was one of the Council's major areas of activity, the situation prompted the organization to encourage research in the field of foreign language teaching by sponsoring events (especially in UK) and financially supporting monographs, thesis and further works of this area.

That was when some linguists, theoreticians and methodologists of the time, commissioned by the European Council, started devising an approach to language teaching which could attend to needs of the people who traveled around Europe for business, tourism, studies or other purposes. This new adult-targeted perspective to language teaching aimed at teaching languages of Europe for learners based on notional-functional concepts of language use and an extensive area involving many disciplines such as philosophy, linguistics, sociology, psychology and especially anthropology (MCDONOUGH and SHAW, 1993). The combining of these sciences was the prime component that shaped the idea of communicative competence by Dell Hymes and linguistic pragmatics. It was also derived from neo-Firthian systemic or functional linguistics, in which language is viewed as "meaning potential", and the "context of situation" (SAVIGNON, 2002) is considered central to understanding language systems and how they work. Attention has been targeted at the designing and performance of syllabus and methodologies that yield the acquisition of functional language skills through learners' partaking in communicative experiences. It is at this point that the *Notional-Functional* syllabus, the predecessor of the CLT, emerges in the field of language teaching.

The conception of language acquisition, not only as an educational issue but also as a political concern, is fundamental in CLT. The process of language teaching is completely bound to language policies. Seen through a multicultural intranational (STERN, 1983) as well as global standpoint, various sociopolitical backgrounds dictate both, a vast set of language-learning purposes and a varied set of teaching methods. The elaboration and introduction of the new language teaching program relies on arrangements between the directing board, teachers, (including researchers or linguists) and coordinators (FINOCCIARO & BRUMFIT, 1983). A similar collaborative endeavor is involved in the evaluation of success of the program. The assortment of methods and resources suitable to both the objectives and the context of teaching are initiated with a study of learners' needs and techniques of learning, defined in a social way.

Some scholars' ideas of that time have had a great influence in the creation of the new language teaching process. Some of them were: 1) *Dell Hymes* - highly influenced by the issues emerged from pragmatics of *language in use*, he developed the concept of **communicative competence**. This concept can be defined as the combined knowledge of a) the correct grammar structure of the language; b) what is socially acceptable in the language; c) how to use communicative strategies (gestures, metaphors, synonyms, circumlocution, among others) to communicate an intended meaning (STURM, 2001). This theory criticized Chomsky's view of "linguistic competence", which paid exclusive attention to 'correctness' at the expense of 'appropriacy' of use in specific contexts, that is, no regards to the social aspects of a language. Hymes's focus, on the other hand, was not language as a system but *language as social behavior* (HYMES, 1972)

*Henry Widdowson*, inspired by the concepts developed by Dell Hymes, gave fundamental theoretical support to the concept of communicative competence, by applying it into the field of foreign language teaching in his world-wide known work entitled *Teaching Language as Communication* (1978). In this same work, he also presented a view of the relationship of the language systems and their communicative values in oral and written discourse. He focused on the communicative acts underlying the ability to use language for different (and real) purposes.

Similarly, *David Wilkins* was fundamental in setting out the supporting considerations for a 'notional functional' approach to syllabus design based on communicative criteria. His greatest contribution was an analysis of the communicative meanings that a language learner needs to understand and express. He attempted to demonstrate the systems of meanings that lay behind the communicative uses of the language and described two types of meanings: notional categories (concepts such as time, sequence, quantity, location and frequency) and categories of communicative function (requests, denials, offers, complaints). Later on, he revised and expanded his 1972 document into a book called *Notional Syllabus* (1976) which had a significant impact on the development of the Communicative Language Teaching analysis into a set of specifications for a first-level communicative language syllabus which had a strong influence on the design of communicative language programs and textbooks in Europe.

In addition, Sandra Savignon, in an empirical research project at the University of Illinois, studied the ability of classroom language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to recite dialogues or perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge at a time when pattern practice and error avoidance were the rule in language teaching. By encouraging learners to ask for information, to seek clarification, to use circumlocution and whatever other linguistic and nonlinguistic resources they could employ to negotiate meaning, to stick to the communicative task at hand, teachers were invariably leading learners to take risks, to venture beyond memorized patterns. Test results at the end of the eighteenth-week instructional period provided convincing evidence that learners who had practiced communication instead of pattern drills in a laboratory performed with no less accuracy on discrete-point tests of grammatical structure. Nevertheless, their communicative competence, as measured in terms of fluency, comprehensibility, effort, and amount of communication in unrehearsed communicative tasks, significantly surpassed that of learners who had had no such practice (SAVIGNON, 2002).

Many other scholars played fundamental roles in the elaboration of theories, activities and materials which helped to develop what has become the Communicative Language Teaching approach, namely Christopher Brumfit (1983),

Mary Finocciaro (1983), Jack C. Richards (1986 e 2003), Theodore Rodgers (1986), William Littlewood (1981), David Nunan (1989), Diane Larsen-Freeman (1986 and 2003), Douglas Brown (1994) among others. In Brazil, the CLT is mainly publicized by José Carlos Almeida Filho (1993) and Vilson Leffa (1988), among others.

## 1.2 THE USE OF THE CLT WORLDWIDE

The CLT has been a quite well used contemporary approach to foreign and second language teaching in the area of language pedagogy worldwide. The amount of private language institutes that apply communicative principles in the course curriculum is continuously growing along with the number of articles, papers, monographs, dissertation, thesis, course and methodology books, research projects, practical experiments and other types of scientific works in the area.

In North America curricula based on communicative approaches to language teaching is currently employed in most secondary schools and extra-curricular programs for foreign and exchange students who need further tutoring in the countries' native language, as Diffey (1992, p. 208) points out:

The advent of “communicative” second-language teaching has implications not only for classroom methodology but also for curriculum development. In North America, models for program design are exemplified by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines and the Canadian National Core French Study.

The result of this sort of enterprise are students reaching proficiency levels of communication in one or more foreign languages without ever being exposed to any further formal tutoring besides regular school lessons and their personal efforts on pursuing their own learning strategies outside the class time. More of these responsibilities of the students in the whole learning process will be further discussed on subtopic 1.3.5.2 of this chapter.

In Asia, a great number of educational institutes are adopting a communicative curriculum on their syllabus. Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew, in her 2002 paper, reports the growing of CLT practices in Singapore (CHEW, 2002). In countries such as Malaysia

and Taiwan, “the CLT principles have formed the foundation of English language syllabi” (CHUNG, 2005, p. 34). In addition, the number of research projects and literature on CLT principles is continuously rising in China (YU; REN, 2006), India (GUPTA, 2007) and neighboring countries. Most of these academic endeavors strive to adapt the CLT principles successfully to the contemporary socio-educational situation of their countries.

Not very long after the communicative movement had sprung in Europe (early 1970’s) the new ideas of teaching foreign languages came to Brazil. After attending a post-graduate study program on Applied Linguistics in England and highly influenced by the winds of change in Europe, Professors Carmen Caldas Coulthart and Almeida Filho organized the first seminar on notional-functional approach to language teaching in the Federal University of Santa Catarina. Such event is considered pioneer on launching public debate and announcing the new communicative concepts of planning the operation of teaching new languages. In national bases, the recently spread theories were firstly adopted by a few vanguard language centers such as PUC, SBCI – SP and UFSC (Almeida Filho, 2005).

Personal experience as a teacher in language institutes and as a member of an EFL teacher’s association has allowed the author of the current work to perceive that in Brazil, CLT is currently employed by some wide-range language schools (private language institutes). It receives very special theoretical attention (though with little practical studies) on teacher training programs, on the national and regional TESOL (Professional Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) chapters, university and post-graduation courses in the field of language teaching. As for national government policies, the National Curricular Parameters (PCN)<sup>5</sup> advises the use of a socio-interacional approach, that includes many CLT characteristics.

### 1.3 THE PRINCIPLES

In order to acquire a better understanding of the Communicative Approach, it is necessary to understand a few key concepts that guide it. The definitions of approach, method and technique are well exposed by Brown (1994) who defines *approach* as a “set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning and teaching”; a *method* as an “overall plan for systematic presentation of language

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<sup>5</sup> Official document issued by the National Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) that presents institutionally elaborated guidelines on how each school subject should be conducted in class.

based on a selected approach”; and *technique* as “the specific activities manifested in the classroom that are consistent with a method and therefore in harmony with an approach as well” (1994, p. 48).<sup>6</sup> Throughout this entire work, the use of these three terms will be based upon these definitions.

Before the rise of the Communicative Approach to language teaching, the methods used in foreign and second language teaching were basically concerned with the structural aspects and accuracy of the language, which was either by memorization of lists of vocabulary or charts, abstract rules (the classical method) or by habit formation through memorization of dialogs, over drilling on stimulus-response basis (behaviorist methods).

The new paradigm of language teaching named CLT had some rather different principles and objectives. It is an approach which aimed at teaching language for real-life communication acquired through practical efforts to convey authentic language in genuine linguistic contexts (set by the teacher) by trial and error attempts to achieve cooperative language interaction. The approach is completely devoted to the students’ needs where language is now being seen as a means of real communication and self-expression and not as an intellectual exercise or “mental gymnastics” (SILVEIRA, 1999; RICHARDS and RODGERS, 1989). Each of these notions shall be presented in further details in the following few topics.

### 1.3.1 Language as a means of communication

It has been previously stated that the CA arose from the fact that the methodologies used before the late 60’s did not meet the needs of the learners to use what they learned in their language courses in real communicative contexts, though the general idea that originated the notion of *language as communication* (and CLT, later on) has its foundations in linguistic pragmatics as shall be presented below.

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<sup>6</sup> Other more recent authors have redefined or reformulated these same concepts, as it is the case with Richards and Rodgers 1982 and 1986. The definition chosen to be presented in this work was Brown’s due the fact that it is the one which served as basis for the carrying out of the research.

### 1.3.1.1 The origins in pragmatics: the notion of *language in use*

In the first half of the twentieth century, there was a great concern by linguistics and philosophical sciences to search for answers about what occurs when we speak, what is actually said at the moment of a speech, to whom our utterances are directed and what content they carry to the hearer, allowing the understanding of the message transmitted in the interaction (ARMENGAUD, 2006). During this period, the studies of language and signs were divided into semantics, syntax, morphology and phonology.

These fields were the first to be established as mandatory subjects in the area of Linguistics. Yet, they could not overcome the impasse generated by the lack of studies of meaning and discourse. Another field which focused primarily on language in use, defined as PRAGMATICS (from the Greek *pragma*, which meant *action*) became necessary. This terminology was spread by Charles Peirce's work, in 1978. This author, affirmed that the human beliefs were nothing but rules of action, and what was really important was to determine what conducts the mind was apt to produce (JAMES, 1974). Pragmatics was also presented by Francis Jacques as a subject that considered language as a social, discursive and communicative phenomenon, originated from the semantic and syntactic approaches (SILVA & SILVA, 2000).

The *linguistic pragmatics*, said by Silva and Silva (2000) to be the materialization of the *linguistic pragmatism* in the study of languages and in communication, was adopted by several divergent ideological segments since it started to establish itself in the first few years of the 1970's. Levinson (1983, p. 1), however, reports that it was Charles Morris, in 1938, who proposed the trichotomical division of the study of the language (semiotics) into *syntax*, *semantics and pragmatics*, defining this last one as "the study of the relation of signs to interpreters", and later as "the relation of signs to their users".



According to Armengaud (2006), the concepts that direct the pragmatic studies are the following: 1) *The concept of act*: it is noticed that representing the world is not the only nor the foremost function of language. On the contrary, it serves for realizing actions. Speaking is acting. In an obvious sense: it is for example, acting upon another one. In a less evident sense, although completely true: it is to establish a meaning and hence it is performing a “speech act”. 2) *The concept of context* is defined as the concrete situation in which the speech acts are uttered, or said, the place, the time, the identity and the role of the speakers, among others. Everything that is necessary to know in order to understand and evaluate what is said. 3) *The concept of performance*: according to the original meaning of the word, it means the realization of the act in context.

The linguistic studies of pragmatics gained strength throughout the twentieth century. Among the scholars that influenced the concepts of linguistic pragmatics, special considerations are given to Austin and his 1962 work entitled *How to do things with words* and his theory of *speech acts*; and Grice, and his widely acknowledged theory of the cooperative conversational principles. Silva and Silva (2000) state that these authors’ ideas are the inspiring sources of linguistic pragmatics as it got that way in the 1970’s. They are the ones who originated the notions of “performative force” and the “speech-act theory” (Austin), and the “what is said / what is meant” distinction (Grice) (TAVARES, 2007).

Up to the present days, along with other tendencies, Pragmatics has been searching for strategies that focus on the intellectual subject rather than on the object of knowledge, the possibility of making rational choices.

As it has been previously reported, pragmatics’ great sphere of work is centered on *language in use*, *utterance* and *speech act*. The first means that language is not being considered as an abstract entity. The second is used to represent a discourse unit, not necessarily corresponding to the traditional grammatical *sentence*, which has to obey a number of logical criteria of correlation and acceptability. The speech act is associated to what came to be known as

*speech-act theory*, that studies the discourse units (utterances) under three forces: the **locutionary** or propositional one, or, to say something with a certain meaning in a traditional sense; the **illocutionary** one, the *performance* of an act in saying something with a determined intention; and the **perlocutionary** one, that causes an effect on the interlocutor (AUSTIN, 1962). In conclusion, Pragmatics managed to distinguish a *sentence* (unit of study of the structuralists) from *utterance* (unit of study of the discourse analysts) in its beginning. In addition, these discourse units (utterances) do not comprise pre-established forms nor rules of correctness or acceptability, as it is the case with sentences and phrases. The task of the linguistic pragmatics is thus to identify “regularities” according to the frequency with which they occur (SILVA & SILVA, 2000).

This pragmatic perspective produces exactly what was missing in the educational and language teaching scenario: changes in the methodological perspective. For these changes to take place in research methodologies of language studies, it was necessary a revolution on the concept of language which until the beginning of the twentieth century was predominantly structuralist. These new notions of *language in use* with less attention to the grammatical practices and principles supported new theories of native language teaching and learning, and later, second and foreign language. The teaching of languages for its real use had great influence on the construction of the notion of language for communication, developed by Dell Hymes as **communicative competence**.

#### 1.3.1.2 Pragmatics: the bridge to the concept of *communicative competence*

The communicative approach to language teaching has a fundamental objective of providing the learners with “authentic language”, that is, language which learners are very likely to encounter and use in the world outside the classroom, where their needs for learning another language take place and their communicative abilities will be put into practice. Thus, language should not consist of abstract rules and procedures which are totally disconnected with the students’ practical linguistic reality. Instead, language is seen as a means of communication and self-expression, an act that can be used to interact with other individuals and cultures, to understand and convey meaning causing the learner to participate actively in a

conversation of his/her interest at any given place, time and situation (KRAMSCH, 1993; LEVINSON, 2001).

According to Widdowson (1978, p. 2) we do not “acquire a language simply by composing and comprehending sentences as isolated linguistic units of random occurrence;” and he also adds that “we also learn how to use sentences appropriately to achieve a communicative purpose.” (op. cit. p.2). The process of producing instances of correct grammatical items with disregard to the context is described as *language usage* and the act of employing them into real communicative context is appointed as *language use* by Widdowson (op. cit. p.3):

The notion of competence has to do with a language user’s knowledge of abstract linguistic rules. This knowledge has to be put into effect as behavior, it has to be revealed through performance. When it is put into effect through the citation of sentences to illustrate these rules, as it is done in grammar books, then performance yields instances of usage: abstract knowledge is manifested. When language teachers select structures and vocabulary for their courses they select those items of usage which they judge to be most effective for teaching the underlying rules of the language system. Usage, then, is one aspect of performance, that aspect which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his knowledge of linguistic rules. Use is another aspect of performance: that which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his ability to use his knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication.

Based on the premises of use and usage distinction, one may conclude that the communicative approach engages itself to the teaching of both *use* and *usage*. It is true, though, that at beginner levels, the focus should be more direct on language use, as excessive attention to usage might hinder students from “achieving a more automatic, fluent grasp of the language” (BROWN, 1994, p. 17). Further clarification on the teaching of grammar and usage will be explained in section 1.3.6.1.

### 1.3.2 Curriculum and syllabus designing

According to Finocciaro and Brumfit (1983), the content of a syllabus should be constructed in terms of physical and administrative conditions in which it may operate, devised according to the students needs and the kind of meaning they will be most likely to express in the target language. It means that some special concern

should be directed to the topics which will be most immediately necessary to the learners and to the situations where L2 is required that they are most likely to face in real life. Cultural aspects of the target language are explored as well as the ones of the students' mother tongue in order to enable them to use it for promotion and advertising of their cultural values. Multi and pluriculturalism is seen as a powerful tool to prompt motivation and authentic communication between the participants of the learning process.

Questions about the type of the program (intensive or extensive), the accessible resources, the amount of experience and training of the teachers and the financial, collective, political and religious factors which will underlie the learning process are taken into consideration. The quality of systematic explanation of the basic system of the language and the provision of sufficient opportunities for the students to come across language use in all aspects are also carefully regarded

According to Almeida Filho (1993, p. 13), a well designed curriculum should contain "a planning of the course and units, a consonant production and selection of materials, the choice and construction of the procedures to employ the target language, and the means to evaluate the performance of the participants". Nunan (1988) emphasizes the importance of the succession of items which directs the teacher by pointing out what features of language shall be focused on at every stage, a set of pronunciation and grammar items to be explored within each unit, assignments and activities through which language topics and skills will be introduced and executed and propositions for collective development, as Finocciaro and Brumfit (1983, p. 49) assert:

A curriculum, therefore, specifies the knowledge, skills and insights the students will be expected to acquire through a series of in-class and out-of-school tasks and activities designed to foster learning. It will also specify the degree of performance the student will be expected to demonstrate throughout various oral and written measures.

The authors also state that a syllabus consists of a list of topics (functions and notions) to be taught in systematic order according to the most immediate needs of the students. Generally, the first items include simple greetings (hi; hello), self-identification (my name is...; I am from...), clarification (could you repeat that please?; I don't understand) and the questions that foster these communicative

functions. Although they affirm the necessity of a list of contents to be learned, they do not suggest methods and measures for evaluation.

### 1.3.3 Main activities

The trichotomy *activity/exercise/task* used in this work refers to the concepts presented by Cerqueira (2003) and Nunan (1989), where the first appoints *activity* as a practice that will prepare students to apply their classroom knowledge in daily social contexts in or outside the classroom. In addition, *exercise* is defined by Cerqueira (op. cit.) as a form of training while it is also used as a pattern of evaluation of what has been taught, not necessarily committed to the formation of principles applicable beyond the classroom environment. *Task* is then every type of work assigned in the language class regardless of its institutional objective. Therefore, task includes both exercises and activities.

Activities play a crucial role in a communicative approach to language teaching because it is through their performance that students' success or failure in developing communicative competence that it is most overtly perceived and constructed. According to Littlewood (1981, p. 20), in communicative classroom contexts, the main purpose of activities "is that learners should use language they know in order to get meaning across as effectively as possible". Activities, then, should not aim exclusively at grammar accuracy, but they must focus on meaning, fluency and acceptability of the language used by students. For these reasons, most classroom tasks and exercises involve collective work among students (group or pair work). Throughout this process, learners are induced to use the linguistic knowledge they have learned with the purpose of expressing specific meanings for specific purposes.

Littlewood (op. cit.) points out many purposes for communicative activities: a) *They provide whole-task practice*: in the learning process, students will learn to utter sentences and how to respond to some linguistic and paralinguistic features. But acquiring these notions alone will be of no use, unless they put them into practice in real life events. The way in which this type of practice is provided during the lessons is through several types of communicative exercises, organized with the objective of suiting the degree of pupils' language ability. b) *They improve motivation*: as communication is the innermost fundamental objective of the pupils, their motivation to acquire a new language is more likely to remain if they perceive how their

classroom learning relates to this purpose and triggers them to attain communicative competence with growing success. c) *They allow natural learning*: learning is mostly an intellectual process developed through exercise. Hence, practice shall elicit natural acquisition. d) *They can create a context which supports learning*: activities that involve communication educe great opportunities for constructive interpersonal rapport among the students and with the teacher. “Humanization” becomes feasible lowering *affective filters* (KRASHEN, 1983) within the class.

To sum up, according to the authors mentioned in this section, in communicative activities, the creation of real life contexts is mainly desired. However, the natural classroom setting can be very constraining, by impeding genuine communicative language and situations to take much place. Thus, adaptation and simulations are fundamental techniques for generating a broader diversity of social circumstances and relationships than would, otherwise, not naturally occur. Problem-solving tasks, role-plays, sentence unscrambling, story composing (from picture strips, poems, songs, and previous stories), surveys, interviews, and interactive games in pairs, trios or larger groups are examples of communicative activities. The more resembling the activity is to real world communicative context, the more effective it is.

#### 1.3.4 Materials

The main cause of dissatisfaction with pre-CLT language learning methods was that students were having trouble in transferring what they had learnt in the classroom to the outside world conversational contexts. The materials used then failed to provide students with natural language in a variety of situations. Thus, adherents of the communicative approach advocated the use of authentic language materials to promote true language acquisition. In previous methods, the materials utilized were classical books (for translation and memorization of sentences) in the grammar translation method; and tape recorders and visual materials (for drilling and repetition) as in the audio-visual method, which provided lots of unrealistic (imaginary) dialogues, conversations and situations.

With the rise of the communicative approach, the materials were replaced by everyday life items of native speakers, such as newspapers articles, videos

containing up-to-date radio or television broadcasts, realia, restaurant menus, timetables, brochures, adverts and other authentic features. Language in its true sense of use (not just usage) was being explored.

Since the advent of CLT, materials' writers have sought to find ways of developing classroom activities that reflected the principles of a communicative methodology. This quest continues up to the present day. Materials are viewed by CLT practitioners as a way of influencing the quality of classroom interaction and language use. Their major function is to promote communicative use (RICHARDS and RODGERS, 1989). In recent years, a myriad of complete communicative materials are available on the market. By "complete" it is meant coursebooks, workbooks, audio supplies CD-ROMS, DVD's and even internet passes for virtual interactive web domains that include all authentic features in a single package for all different levels and areas of interests facilitating the work of teachers and students.

#### 1.3.5 Students' and teachers' roles

The communicative approach diverges from past paradigms to language teaching in several aspects. Some of the most important differential features of the CLT are the roles carried out by teachers and students throughout the process.

##### 1.3.5.1 Teachers' roles

According to Larsen-Freeman (1986), the teacher in CLT, differently from previous methods to language teaching, is no longer viewed as a figure of authority, a dominant character who imposes rules or commands for students to obey in order not to fail the course. S/he acts as a "facilitator" of his/her students' learning, a manager of classroom activities. His/Her greatest responsibility is to set up classroom situations likely to promote communication. Throughout the activities, s/he works as a counselor, answering students' questions and monitoring their work and production. S/He should be engaged in the communicative activity along with the students.

The terms "facilitator", "controller" and "manager" are often used because in the communicative view of language, teachers do not just "teach" as in the traditional view. Instead, they promote ways of developing students' understanding in the target

language. Hence, teachers are responsible for setting up contexts, situations, activities and exercises that facilitates this process.

A few additional responsibilities appointed to teachers (most of them exposed by Finocciaro and Brumfit, 1983 and linked to some of Krashen's 1982 ideas) are paraphrased in the following points: a) to be attentive to the students' interests, needs, styles and aspirations and attend to them by preparing useful realistic activities that learners may take advantage from in their everyday life communicative endeavors; b) To suit the level of difficulty or simplicity of the task and activities that are used during the lesson to the level of students' knowledge of language. c) To be aware of the useful resources in promoting communicative activities available. d) To extend the experiences through various possible ways of presenting language in order to give students a meaning for pursuing communicative competence. e) Provide students with little bits of language slightly beyond the current level of knowledge to enrich their vocabulary (Krashen's *i + 1* theory). f) Present vocabulary in consonance with cultural meaning. g) To adapt activities when necessary to suit learners' immediate needs. h) To offer further contexts, uses and functions when revising pieces of language (that would make revision + 1, reporting to Krashen's theory again). i) Give students freedom to express themselves creatively during fluency activities, not interfering in this process. j) Encourage cultural knowledge in discussions. k) Conduct students to acquire linguistic independency, that means, producing intelligible language without fully relying on direct help or instruction from the teacher.

#### 1.3.5.2 Students' roles

Students are the center of the communicative approach. In contrast with other preceding teacher-centered approaches the students should have freedom for expressing themselves and working dynamically in the learning process instead of simply obeying orders or commands dictated by behavioristic principles. They are now communicators actively engaged in the negotiation of meaning in their attempts to be comprehended – even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete and their communicative competence is limited. Learners are required to



take part in classroom tasks that are based on a *cooperative* rather than an individualistic approach to learning. Students must develop familiarity with listening to their peers in group work or pair work tasks, instead of relying exclusively on the teacher for a model. They were expected to take on a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning (RICHARDS, 2003).

Breen and Candlin (1980, p. 110) summarizes the learners' role as follows:

The role of the learner as a negotiator – between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning – emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes. The implication for the learner is that he should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learn in an independent way.

As the center of the approach students are appointed a more active role in the process. This implies a greater responsibility on their part, both inside and outside the classroom. Inside, as activators of the collective cooperative process by interacting with their peers. Outside, by pursuing alternative learning resources and developing personal learning strategies that shall serve as a complement of the inside-class input.

#### 1.3.6 Grammar teaching and first language (L1) use

Communicative Language Teaching was (and, still is, sometimes) misinterpreted when it comes to this relevant issue. Many scholars of the field of language teaching understand that CLT, as it breaks with old teaching paradigms, is completely disconnected from the teaching of grammar and totally against the use of the learners' first language during the lessons. This fallacy is criticized by detractors of the approach. To demystify this inconsistent view is the reason why a large amount of CLT theoreticians dedicate a good deal of work in clarifying the principles concerning the teaching of grammar and L1 use in their publications. To be more specifically clear about the issue, grammar teaching and L1 use shall be divided into two separate subtopics.

### 1.3.6.1 Grammar Teaching

Confusion concerning the teaching of grammar (or lack of it) in CLT is probably caused due to the fact that it is *not* the primary focus of the language teaching approach, as it was with the more classical methods. They used the teaching of grammar as an attempt to produce linguistically successful learners. However, as it has been previously presented, grammar does play an important role in the CLT and “the notion that grammar and communication are incompatible opposites is based on serious misconceptions about the nature of language and language use” (LITTLEWOOD, [entre 1992 e 2007], p. 1). In this same article, Littlewood summarizes the great relevance of grammar teaching in the CLT and in any other approach:

At the core of every language is the system of regular patterns which make up the grammatical system of that language. It is this system that enables speakers to create an infinite variety of utterances, in speech or in writing, which express the meanings they wish to communicate. It is because other speakers share knowledge of the same system that they can understand what the utterances mean. One of the wonders of human language is, indeed, precisely this capacity for “rule-governed creativity”: although the system of rules itself is limited, there is no limit to the number of sentences that it can create or, therefore, to the number of meanings that it can convey.

On the other hand, previous methods that used grammar and abstract features of the language system as an exclusive source for providing language content and developing full command of the target language upon students were solely related to *usage* (WIDDOWSON, 1978). Competence, however, is the result of the combining of *usage* and *use*, this last one deficiently provided by the traditional methods. Therefore, the CLT is more directly involved with the concrete aspects of language, that is to say, as use or real communication, which Chomsky (1965) called *performance* but still concerned, up to a certain point, with the teaching of grammar, this fundamental facet of language. To achieve a balance between the two extremes (of totally disregarding the importance of grammar and the exclusive and sole use of it in the teaching process) is a vital objective intended by the CLT:

This affirmation of the importance of grammar does not mean, however, that we should ignore the insights and developments of the

last twenty years and return to the extreme grammar-oriented approaches that have often dominated language teaching in the past. Rather, we should use these insights to help us shape a more suitable approach to grammar (LITTLEWOOD, [entre 1992 e 2007], p. 2)

Grammar is thus taught peripherally in the beginning stages. Further attention is paid to it in more advanced stages for the sake of developing more accurate language on students. What is mostly pursued is the *communicative value* of an utterance, that is, the output of comprehensible messages, except in situations when acquisition of the grammar is the most immediate need of the learner. In this special case grammar can be taught in the earlier levels.

The question turns from *does grammar have any importance in the CLT?* to *how is grammar dealt with in the CLT?* Trying to answer this question is the reason why a high number of theoreticians and experts in the field have been writing several articles, papers and thesis while authors and methodologists are continuously publishing coursebooks that contain a communicative syllabus filled with “fun”, “implicit” and “innovative” ways to present grammar. Very few are those who venture to explain *how* grammar should really be taught (step by step) on a communicative basis.

#### 1.3.6.2 L1 Use

The use of the students' L1 (students' native language) in classroom has been a delicate issue since the foundation of the approach itself. What is generally defended by the principles of the approach is the idea that the L2 (the language being studied) should be the main language to be used in class and that students should be exposed as much as possible to the target language to permit its acquisition especially because, in many cases, the language class is the only time students have contact with the target language (mainly in EFL contexts) within their L1 environment. Also, CLT theoreticians advocate that by inhibiting L1 use in the class, students are forced to think and speak the target language, therefore, to produce comprehensible language and negotiate meaning. Thus, the use of L1 is recommended only in *extreme cases*, as the very last possible resource for the cases

when students fail to perceive a given meaning (after a series of attempts from the teacher to explain the referred concept in L2 by using paraphrases, gestures, circumlocution, miming, explanation of the meaning from the context, realia, among others) which would, otherwise, not be conveyed.

Some abstract or philosophical concepts may be very difficult to be presented in the target language simply by using linguistic or paralinguistic features such as miming, contextualization, paraphrasing and others of these kinds. Performing such acts may be very time-consuming and, in some ways, anguishing. In cases when a teacher spends a good deal of time trying to explain the sense of a complex concept, but the students are still unable to grasp its meaning, both the students and the teacher him/herself may acquire an unpleasant feeling of frustration, especially when dealing with beginners. Thus, providing the class with a simpler, faster and more rapidly memorable L1 equivalent can be considered a more efficient and time-saving teaching strategy.

The conditions for the use of L1 during lessons vary according to the class's linguistic environment. In multi cultural and lingual sets, where there are several L1's within the same class, it becomes virtually impossible for the teacher to use any artifice in the mother tongues of students (unless, of course, the teacher is a very high profile polyglot, familiar with every student's mother tongue). Thus, without any other alternatives, the target language is used at 100% of the time, becoming the *lingua franca* of the process.

Larrea, in his 2002 work (p. 4), presents some interesting examples of cases when the utilization of L1 should be considered in communicative contexts. Some of them are:

- When starting most real beginner or beginner classes to make (adult) students initially feel more comfortable when facing the “enormous” task of learning a foreign language.
- Using (4) *CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS*. It can be use to introduce the major grammatical differences between L1 and L2 students must be aware of.

- The teacher can take advantage of students' common training in L1, i.e. if students know the meaning of "lungs" or "market share" in L1, it might be easier to translate the terms than to try to explain or understand the concepts.
- The teacher's knowledge of students' L1 can also help him understand the learner's mistakes caused by L1 interference. For instance, knowing that Spanish does not present consonant clusters starting with the sound /s/ would help the teacher improve his students' pronunciation of words like: STOP, SPEAK, SCHOOL normally mispronounced by Spanish speakers with an initial "intruder" /e/ sound.
- L1 can successfully be used to explain complex instructions to basic levels. How could you explain in English the instructions for a (5) JIGSAW ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY, which has been designed for the level, to a group of real beginners ?
- Some researchers suggest using L1 to obtain valuable and reliable feedback from students on their doubts and suggestions about the course, teacher's approach, evaluation of self-progress, etc. Because of the linguistic barrier, most students will find it easier to speak their minds in their own languages. This can provide the teacher with priceless information to reshape his future lessons. Atkinson (1993;p.18) suggests providing "L1 problem clinics" to discuss points the students have not understood.

Larrea's insights are obviously directed to contexts where the teacher and students share or are familiar with the same L1, as it is the case in the research described in the present work.

### 1.3.7 Integrated skills

The way in which the four skills *reading, writing, speaking* and *listening* are utilized and interconnected in the CLT is another of its differentials. Classical paradigms favored one or two skills in expense of others. A few authors even advocate the impossibility of acquisition of communicative competence through the studies of one skill in isolation. It is the case of MCDONOUGH and SHAW (1993, p. 202) when exposing one of the responsibilities of the teacher:

If one of the jobs of the teacher is to make the students 'communicatively competent' in the L<sub>2</sub>, then this will involve more than being able to perform in each of the skills separately. By giving learners tasks which expose them to these skills in conjunction, it is possible that they will gain a deeper understanding of how communication works in the foreign language as well as becoming

more motivated when they see the value of performing meaningful tasks and activities in the classrooms.

According to Widdowson (1978), the aims of language teaching courses are commonly defined in terms of the four skills. In addition, the author also gives new meaning and proposes different terminologies which clearly define each of the skills in communicative basis. Previous concepts that associated one single feature to each of the skills are reviewed and, in communicative basis, they are associated with new concepts of productivity and receptivity within the performance of the four skills. To clarify this statement, it is important to remember that *speaking* and *writing* were regarded simply as *productive* (active) skills and *listening* and *reading* as *receptive* (passive). That is when Widdowson explains both the productiveness and receptiveness embodied in each of the four skills and, in addition, he exposes new terminologies that define the simultaneous use of the receptive features of each of the four skills. Widdowson's definitions are :

#### Speaking (op. cit. p. 58 - 59)

Receptive: What one speaks is always connected to a context. People just do not speak randomly (...). Speech always makes reference to what has been said before. Thus it is part of a reciprocal exchange.

Productive: Individuals associate the words, the grammar and the syntactic features in order to transmit meaningful and contextualized utterances to the hearer.

In addition, Widdowson uses the terminology *talking* to refer to the junction of the aural and visual medium, making simultaneous use of receptive and productive skills during a communicative performance.

#### Listening (op. cit. p. 60)

Receptive: We recognize the signals received by the ear, relate to the phonological and grammatical system of the language concerned, that

they constitute sentences and we understand what they mean (...) Comprehend the signification of sentences.

Productive: We figure out the meaning of the sentences we hear and place them in context. Recognition of the communicative value of utterances.

The author also mentions the term *hearing* which, differently from other sources that classify the two terms as synonyms, he defines it as the simple decodification of the sound and association with the lexis. (Listening *minus* productive skills = hearing). Differently from *listening*, such ability is not an ultimate target of the communicative methodology.

#### Writing (op. cit. p. 63)

Receptive: It precedes by reference to the writers' own interpretation of what has been produced and to his assessment as to how and what has been written will be received by the reader.

Productive: The individual uses letters to form words, words to form coherent and cohesive phrases, and phrases to form a context and communicate utterances.

#### Reading (op. cit. p. 63)

Receptive: The ability to recognize sentences through the visual medium and associate them with their correct signification (..) and their meaning as linguistic elements

Productive: The ability that enables us to create or recreate discourse from the resources available in the language system and to comprehend it responsively and actively.

The integration of the four skills and the search for proficiency on all of them as a combined whole is one of the most distinctive attributes of the Communicative Approach. Conducting such integration of skills in the lessons is another primary aim

planned to be done in the action-research in Escola Normal, as shall be further explained in chapter 2.

#### 1.4. CRITICISM TOWARDS THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

Neither the CLT or Functional-Notional Approach, nor any other approach within the communicative sphere are free of criticism. In fact, no method or approach is. Although CLT is considered a quite well-accepted approach in the area of language teaching, there are theoreticians and methodologists who think otherwise. According to them, the CLT is deficient in some aspects.

According to Thompson (1996), some scholars claim the CA *promotes fossilization*. The communicative methodology aims, most importantly, at providing learners with enough knowledge to produce *intelligible language* and develop *communicative competence*. The concept of right or wrong becomes even more relative. Language is not taught as a matter of producing immediate grammatically accurate utterances. Instead, it is based on transmitting the intended message with little regard to the grammatical form at the initial stages. If, for instance, a new student produces a piece of language that says: *I have seen a dog yesterday*, the grammatical incorrectness is clear as the speaker used the Present Perfect tense in a sentence that specifies the time when the action occurred in the past. In “correct” grammar standards the Present Perfect should be replaced by the Past Simple (I saw a dog yesterday). On a communicative basis, this error should not be paid attention to because the grammatically incorrect sentence did not block its communicative message – it was clear for the hearer that the speaker saw a canis-type animal the previous day. In this case, the intended message was conveyed, so the communicative function of the sentence was attained. Learners at the beginning stages should be encouraged to exchange meaning and it is natural that errors occur with a certain frequency. But if every mistake is corrected at this point, students may feel hindered, once they notice that they are being constantly corrected, decreasing their motivation and severely damaging fluency. The unpleasant feeling of being



constantly “wrong” may affect their production for as long as they engage themselves at learning a different language.

Therefore, a CLT professional should correct when a) the message is unintelligible, that is, conveyed in such a way that the interlocutor is unable to understand what was meant by the speaker. Using the same example of the dog, if an unfortunate speaker produced *I dog yesterday*, then it would be convenient to show the student the correct way in order to prevent the listener from thinking that the speaker probably turned into a dog the day before, and b) the utterance is inconsistent with the fact. For example, back to the example of the dog, if the speaker said *I have seen a **cat** yesterday* but s/he in fact saw a *dog* then, correction should be desired.

Grammar adjustments should be more preferably pursued in the later stages of the course, which brings the topic to the key problem. Until the time when certain types of grammar points are paid attention to in further levels, the students will have probably gotten *so accustomed* to the incorrect form that they will possibly find it hard to adapt their language to the new instructions and continue to make unnoticed errors even during the highest levels, when more accurate language is expected. This phenomenon of maintaining the old mistakes is known as *fossilization* (SELINKER, 1992).

Some linguists also state that the CA does not take into consideration different cultures or less advertised variants of language. Long term goals of the communicative approach aim at promoting accurate language according to the normative grammar and little (if no) regard to the teaching of variants of languages that are existent in less developed countries and which deviates, in some aspects, from the set of fundamental linguistic rules imposed by the originator of the language. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, people usually complain about the warm weather by saying such expression as *it's making hot*, or report their age by saying *I have X years old* (CUNHA, 2008). As they stray from the “correct” standards *it's warm* or *the temperature has risen* or simply *it has gotten so hot*, and *I am X years*

*old*, they will hardly be considered an acceptable standard in a communicative classroom. Teachers would probably accept this piece of language from students in the beginning stages (as some mistakes usually are), but the tendency is that this sort of “mistake” gets “corrected” later on, as students reach higher levels and become more aware of the “appropriate” form of the utterance.

In 1985, Michael Swan wrote two articles in which he launched some critical insights towards the communicative approach. In his texts, he criticizes the CLT of exaggerating on the concept of teaching *use* and *communicative values*. According to Swan, students can develop their own values from their mother tongues and the “limited few” expressions that carry implicit background meaning are important, but not up to the point of creating a whole new approach to teach them. He also states that the communicative approach disregards students’ previous knowledge of the world and cultural background they acquired when learning their native language, which transcends any cultural and linguistic barriers and are logical to any language. Hence, CLT overemphasizes the need for teaching **contextual meaning**.

In this same article, Swan still criticizes the approach by affirming that the emphasis that the CLT puts into the teaching of appropriacy is exaggerated and he professes that appropriacy is simply a matter of learning lexis. He also disapproves of another important aspect of the CLT, which is how patronizing it is for not taking into account some linguistic abilities inherent to any language speaker, such as negotiating meaning and guessing and what the learner needs in order to perform these features in the target language is not formal communicative training, on the contrary, s/he needs nothing but learning vocabulary of the L2:

This ‘tabula-rasa’ attitude – the belief that students do not possess, or cannot transfer from their mother tongue, normal communication skills – is one of the two complementary fallacies that characterizes the communicative approach. (...) Normal students, of course, have the opposite problem: they know what they want to say more often than they know how to say it (SWAN, 1985, p. 10 – 11).

In his second article, Swan (1985 B) asserts that no innovations have occurred in the teaching of grammar since the communicative revolution and that CLT has not made the learning of grammar any easier.

Numerous rebuttals have been written to these two articles since they were published in 1985. The author of this paper believes that it is true that the CA did not facilitate, but it surely developed the teaching of grammar. Grammar is not the main focus of the approach. CA does not use grammar and abstract linguistics features as a primary means of presenting language as other methods do. Instead, grammar is something that will complement the learning process. It is a feature that will help students to acquire both accuracy and understanding of the fundamental morphosyntactic aspects of the target language. In addition, the CA developed the teaching of grammar by eliciting ways in which it can be used for authentic communicative purposes. Creating opportunities to apply grammar and other linguistics abstract features in real communicative contexts is surely one of the characteristics that mostly distinguishes the communicative approach from previous methods.

About the “tabula-rasa” issue, Swam seems to have little knowledge of the area of ethnography of communication for underestimating the diversity of cultures around the world and how much a language can be influenced by its cultural setting. Grines (1977, apud SAVILLE-TROIKE, 1982) reports some interesting examples of probable language impasses generated by cultural disregard. One of Grines’s example is the verb *to do it*, which in Portuguese simply means *perform something*, in Mexican Spanish could signify *to urinate* and in English it can be understood as *to fornicate*. So, if there is a scene where a Brazilian and an American English speakers are walking downtown and a gorgeous Mexican lady they just met approaches them and asks: “*hey guys, I have got to do it now. Can you tell me where I can go for that?*” As both the Brazilian and the Mexican lady learned English by methods that failed to consider language in use (authentic contexts), a probable scenario would be the Brazilian’s confused expression with the desire to ask “*to do what?*”, and the American with a very concupiscent thought. That is why the communicative approach commits itself not only to teach functions and grammar, but most of all, to teach the

communicative value of utterances and the meanings entailed in the contexts they occur.

## 1.5 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN BRAZIL

Although this line of work is probably one of a kind in the city of Patos - PB and similar attempts to investigate this same issue are quite rare in the whole state, yet it is a common area of investigation in Brazil. Many other applied linguists have tried similar academic enterprises, concerning the use and (or) the appropriateness of a communicative syllabus in specific contexts. A few of them are briefly described in the paragraphs that follow.

To start over, Walesko (2006), searched, with the use of an exploratory qualitative research, for ways how a communicative syllabus could help 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade junior-high students of a private school in Curitiba, Paraná state to enhance their interests and motivations for the foreign culture. In her experiment, she assorted the various cultural stereotypes within the researched pupils' discourse. Results attained from the analysis of surveys and interviews led her to conclude that texts were considered a quite rich resource of including cultural features in the EFL class. Walesko also emphasized the importance of acquisition of knowledge by the teachers about the concepts of culture and interculture and the importance of applying these concepts in the process of language teaching.

Unlike Walesko, Silva's research (SILVA, 2001) studied how convenient the teaching method employed in a language center of a university campus in Santa Catarina was to fulfill the interests of its students whose main objective was to become proficient bi or multilingual professionals for the work market in Florianópolis. Silva performed a study case where she gathered information about their preferences and aims and compared them to the course's purposes to see how suitable it was for their needs. Based on the results acquired from the analysis of two questionnaires, she found out the course syllabus based on a Grammar Translation Method fails to provide students with enough opportunities to achieve their goals. Hence, in face of the their needs and desires, she proposes the adoption of a

communicative approach, whose theoretical and practical features could more appropriately suit their objectives.

On the same way, Portela's article (2006) investigated the effects of a communicative approach on students' motivation to learn English as foreign language in a university setting in Paraná, where students pursued mastery of the four abilities. With the use of three surveys and two oral activities, she found out that the investigated university students endured some difficulties in the learning process. Despite having a fair vocabulary, they still claimed to be unable to communicate properly in the target language. Bewildering enough, she still reports the advantages of the continuous employing of the communicative approach observed throughout her research.

Professor Lynn Mario Souza described, in his 2003 article (SOUZA, 2003), his attempt to employ an innovative and modern communicative material on the market which diverged from the traditional book format and that could assist teachers and students to achieve more productive results in ELT classes. His experiment, however, failed to accomplish the desired results as the material was adapted into a "conventional" customary language book that strayed from its original methodological goals of eliciting the teachers to have more autonomy on choosing the language topics to be taught, their order and the input steps.

Differently from Souza, Lima (2007) appeared to achieve more successful results in her 2007 research. Her research resembles quite a lot the one performed and described in this thesis in the following chapters. Lima performed an action research in a teenage secondary grade ten class, using a communicative syllabus in Arapiraca, Alagoas state, that aimed to enhance both students' interest on searching for ways to increase their professional development and the quality of the teaching of English in the classrooms. She reported achieving a certain level of success in her experiment.

Simões also performed an action research as she describes her work (SIMÕES, 2004) in a private language institute in Londrina, PR, with young adults.

She investigated the lessons throughout the semester by mapping and describing every single task performed in each class. She analyzes the level of authenticity of each task based on the principles described by Guariento and Morley's 2001 work. From that analysis, she found out that oral activities were the ones that promoted the most opportunities for authentic communication to take place in the lessons whilst the listening tasks and the exercises related to grammar use, hardly elicited any authentic communication. She concludes, however, that lessons cannot fully be composed of authentic communicative activities and she emphasizes the relevance of the conduction of exercises<sup>7</sup> in the language class.

These are some among the many works linked to this area in Brazil. Even though they were extremely interesting research papers, none of them have the same profile, objectives or investigate the same context as the one described in the current work.

The guidelines mentioned in the sections and subsections of this chapter served as basis for designing the syllabus applied in the research described by the current work. Every step mentioned was taken into consideration and put into action when feasible. The experiment, however, was not planned to be conducted in one long continuous process. Instead, it consisted of a fragmented process in which the guidelines described by Finocciaro and Brumfit, Nunan and Almeida Filho listed earlier were analyzed and employed before the elaboration of each weekly unit, one after the other. The whole process of elaboration of lessons and the units are described in details in the chapter 2.

The theories presented up to this point were gathered from a wide communicative state of the art from different applied linguists and put into practical action within a classroom. The whole communicative theoretical framework organized in the current chapter was the basis for developing the syllabus applied in the classroom, where the experiment took place. Full details on how this was done are found in the subsequent chapter of this work.

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<sup>7</sup> The concept of *exercise* here still refers to the one proposed by Cerqueira in section 1.3.3 but it was not used by Simões. Instead, it was used by the author of this paper to explain and paraphrase Simões's work.

## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

A considerable percentage of the published materials that comprise the whole range of works about the communicative approach relates to its applicability in varied socio-cultural contexts. The amount of papers that discuss the appropriacy of the communicative principles for different contexts is rising, especially in Asia. The current work describes an attempt to employ essentially communicative tasks in a public school, in its foreign language mandatory curricular component. The type of research and the syllabus employed in the experiment, the school, the students and the proceedings performed in the lessons are all described in the present chapter. The results of this endeavor are placed in the subsequent chapters.

### 2.1 THE RESEARCH METHOD

The idea of carrying out a research was derived from previous academic studies done in the area of English language teaching in Patos-PB that confirmed the existence of methodological incongruities in local ELT contexts. One of these studies showed that the Grammar Translation Method is still in current progressive use in local public schools (LIMA FILHO, 2007 b). The other study revealed the lack of educational resources, teacher training programs and social policies that would possibly minimize the difficulties on both teaching and learning foreign language in the regular school system (LIMA FILHO, 2005). The result of these events is the ever enduring of classical methods, that is, a continuous chain of “learned that way, teach that same way” basis, that, so far, has brought fewer benefits than it should in the academic lives of the public school pupils. Therefore, in order to break this chain, one important step would be working on those who shall be delivering language in the future. There is, in Patos, a Normal Pedagógico<sup>8</sup> school. This module consists of a secondary school equivalent course acknowledged by the Brazilian Ministry of Education and Culture, whose graduating students are granted legal qualification for teaching elementary levels. From that notion, it was developed the idea of employing

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<sup>8</sup> The term Normal Pedagógico (NP) shall be employed in Portuguese throughout the entire work because the author did not manage to find an equivalent term in English perhaps due a **probable** inexistence of a program with similar institutional and pedagogical goals recognized by the Educational Ministries of English speaking countries.

the new paradigm to language teaching to students of that school module, who would learn the language in a more elaborate way and convey this knowledge the same way they learned throughout their careers in the future as teachers. This plan would not be possible to occur in the secondary high school system, where students receive no qualifications to work as teachers of any level unless they undergo a standard university program.

Alike André (1995), the author of this work agrees that there are other alternative forms of assistance that could have been imparted to the underdeveloped schools. Such forms include delivering presentations, offering bibliographical suggestions to the educators or organizing workshops. The author, however, believed that first it would be necessary to embrace the challenge of realizing a deeper and more detailed kind of work, where he could be part of the process and closely follow its development and the progress (if any) of the participants.

Due to the complexity and dynamism of the phenomena that support and compose most human educational principles, it was concluded that it would be extremely difficult to state any flawlessly effective positivist results about what would be efficient measures to minimize the problems found in the public ELT system (ANDRÉ, 1995). In addition, considering the needs for a profound exploration of the setting where the research was going to take place, of the participants and the great pedagogical importance of being supported upon phenomenological concepts (that means, the active presence of the researcher within the environment) were the reasons that led to the conclusion that a qualitative research would offer more accurate results about what the project intended to find out.

As the research meant to take into consideration the participation of the students, their attitudes and, most of all, the meaning that the approach, the techniques, the principles, the lessons and the activities would have on their learning, is why it was understood that the research would be of an ethnographic type.

The method employed in the ethnographic research was shaped by its features which aimed, among its many objectives, at the creation of an isomorphism between the type of input received by the students (future teachers) and their future



professional practices, promoting changes not only in the content topics but also in the classroom practices (ANDRÉ, 1995). The process involved a series of pre-planned actions realized by the researcher himself, who simultaneously acted as the classroom teacher, the data collector, analyzer of the results and writer of the current thesis. These actions have been systematically submitted to observation, academic and professional reflection, and changes according to what the researcher judged to be necessary to promote a faster and more efficient learning. All these characteristics suggest and justify the use of an action-research method of the ethnographic qualitative research type.

One of the primary aims of the experiment was to perform actions that could result in improvements of the students' levels of language proficiency and developments of their knowledge of schemes and techniques of presenting language as future teachers. Pedagogical techniques that are typical from a communicative approach were employed, committed to bring benefits to the group of students, for the collaborative teacher and to the school itself. For all these reasons, a research plan was elaborated based on the objectives of this work and on a supervised and controlled process of the lessons, the materials, the types of activities used in the classes.

In addition, the research procedures match the criteria reported by Thiollent (1988, p. 16) as he describes some of the most basic characteristics of the action-research as he states:

Action-research is a methodological strategy of social research where:

- a) there is a broad and explicit interaction between researchers and people implicated in the investigated situation;
- b) from this interaction rises the order of priority of the problems to be studied and the solutions to be carried out under the form of concrete action
- c) the object of the investigation is not constructed by the people, but by the social situation and by the problems of different kinds found upon this situation
- d) the objective of the action-research consists in solving, or, at least, clarifying the problems of the observed situation;

- e) there is, throughout the process, a continuous up-to-date analysis of the decisions, the actions, and all intentional activities by the participants of the situation;
- f) the research is not limited to the form of action (risk of activism): it is intended to enhance the knowledge of the researchers and knowledge or “level of awareness” of the considered people or groups.

To sum up, the reflections made and described above justify the choices for the methodological approaches of research chosen to conduct the current experiment that shall be fully explained later in this work.

## 2.2 THEORETICAL BRIEFINGS

The communicative approach to language teaching (CA) has been the subject of several academic debates among applied linguists for almost forty years. A large number of authors, including Brown (1994), Widdowson (1978) and Almeida Filho (1993 and 2005), consider it a quite effective approach in contexts where the students pursue the master of the speaking, listening, writing and reading abilities in the foreign language in an integrated and simultaneous basis. All the attributes of the CA described in chapter one has made the author of the current work wonder if all those principles would bring any differential positive effects to the needy foreign language scenario of a public secondary school in Patos-PB.

After some deep methodological analysis and discussion among the author, his advisor, the schoolboard principal and the school English teacher, it was decided that the research should be carried out in grade 10 (the first year of secondary school) for the following reasons: first, basically a curricular issue, is that English is not offered in the two final years of the Normal Pedagogical mode, which left only grades 10 and 11 as options. The second reason is that grade 10 is the freshmen year. This means that Normal Pedagógico basis is a whole new experience to the students, who, in theory, are probably unfamiliar with the general curriculum and content of the lessons, more opened to new ideas and more easily adaptable to the new paradigm of foreign language teaching approach. This fact should help them to

grasp the techniques and principles more quickly, therefore increasing the chances of using and spreading what they learn during the research in their future career as teachers. It was also agreed that a sudden change in the method used in the the second year of high school, who had already adopted, for the previous year, a Grammar Translation Method (GTM), would produce a negative shock in the pupils – once accustomed to GTM, the process of adaptation would probably take a little longer, jeopardizing the effects (and a plausible success) of the research.

Another drawback endured by the public school system is the absence of books for studies of the English language. This implies that every exercise, text, learning tip or classroom note has to be written on the board so that students can write them down in their notebooks, consuming a considerable time of the lesson. In addition, this type of format does not allow the use of pictures, graphics, dialogs and tapescripts during the lesson (and if did, it would take almost the entire class time). For these reasons lessons were planned and activities and topics were placed in a systematic order divided into **units**, photocopied and handed with no costs to students and to the teacher. All expenses of printing and copying were fully covered by the researcher. It was intended to present one entire unit per class.

The entire set of practical activities utilized throughout the research, including the content of the lessons, the activities, exercises, techniques, the sequential order they were presented in each lesson and during the whole course were all based on four elements: the views presented by Nunan in his 1989 work on communicative curriculum design and planning; the needs of the students and the relevance of the topics upon their scholastic/personal life and daily culture; and the school curricular demands. Furthermore, the researcher also decided to follow a few procedures presented in some world-wide known published communicative materials. These procedures were adapted and changed (in their order and form of presentation) in order to suit the criteria previously mentioned. All these precautions were taken into consideration before and during the planning of every lesson throughout the research.

The content, specific vocabulary functions and grammar topic of each lesson from the first to last is placed in the table below:

Unit list	Date	Lesson theme	Presented content / specific vocabulary functions	Grammar topic
Unit 1	Feb. 28 <sup>th</sup>	Greetings	Daily salutations, self-introducing, numbers	Verb to be
Unit 2	Mar. 6 <sup>th</sup>	What's your last name?	The alphabet, self identifying, nationalities	Question words
Unit 3	Mar. 13 <sup>th</sup>	What is this?	Handy objects, typical classroom instructions	Indefinite articles
Unit 4	Mar. 27 <sup>th</sup>	Where is it?	Home objects, Expressing location of things	Prepositions
Unit 5	Apr. 4 <sup>th</sup>	I can do this!	Action verbs I, expressing tastes	Modal CAN
Unit 6	Apr. 10 <sup>th</sup> - 17 <sup>th</sup>	I love that	Action verbs II, expressing preferences	Verbs in the gerund
Unit 7	May 5 <sup>th</sup>	You betcha!	Expressing physical condition, identifying personal and physical attributes	Adjectives
Unit 8	May 28 <sup>th</sup>	What time is it?	Notions of time, numbers 1 to 60, expressing time	X
Unit 9	Jun. 5 <sup>th</sup>	What to do today	Action verbs III, expressing daily routines	Simple present
Unit 10	Jun. 12 <sup>th</sup>	General revision	General revision	X

Chart 1: List of the units and their contents

Testimonies of long-time teachers and board members reported no attempt of use of a different form of language teaching form, since the foundation of the school, besides the Grammar Translation Method whose focus was solely on text translation, verb memorization, and most of all, the teaching of grammar topics and syntax as the main focus of teaching language as a whole. As pointed out in chapter one, grammar is not the ultimate priority the Communicative Approach (CA) entails. Instead, much less time is devoted to the teaching of grammar. However, one of the conditions established by the school to allow the research was that it would not overlook the school's curricular demands that have been in exercise for over a decade. The curricular demand is based on a list of twenty-four grammar topics that comprise the English section of the annual entrance exam to the Federal University of Paraiba. The set of topics is available in the candidate's handbook every year. In order to fulfill the school's curricular policies, the lessons and the approach were adapted, so that they included a fair amount of grammar in a communicative way. A lot of efforts were made to adapt the grammar into authentic communication in every plausible way, including oral activities, personalization and written work.

## 2.3 DATA COLLECTION

As previously mentioned, all the lessons performed throughout the research were carefully planned beforehand. Once ready, the lesson plan was immediately presented to the collaborative teacher, who helped to carry out the plan in class. However, as it normally happens in academic research, in class, some procedures turned out differently from what was originally expected. This type of occurrence happened throughout the entire experiment, especially in the first lessons. Nevertheless, all planned and unplanned procedures played an important role in the research as a whole. Hence, in order to evaluate each of these events and give them a fair judgment upon their appropriacy or inappropriacy of the specific moments they happened was the reason why a great deal of responsibility was ascribed to the capturing and compiling every event that took place over the lessons.

In order to responsibly accomplish the task of compiling and analyzing the data it was decided to follow what ANDRÉ (1995), NUNAN (1992) and TAVARES (2007) categorized as appropriate methods for collection of information in a research, was the reason why the researcher recorded and wrote down the transcripts of most lessons, employed two surveys, had periodical sections of collective and individual feedback with students and the collaborative teacher, kept a regular journal, and conducted interviews with some pupils. Each of these research instruments shall be further explained in the following paragraphs.

The recording and transcription of the lessons were carried out with the use of an MP3 player. The lessons were recorded, transcribed and analyzed afterwards. Unfortunately, a few lessons failed to be recorded due to technical problems (Lessons 4 on March 13<sup>th</sup>; and 7 on April 10<sup>th</sup>). Two lessons (the very first and the final one) were left unrecorded on purpose because of the little relevance to the collection of data. In the first, the researcher just exposed the project, spoke about the communicative approach and employed the first survey (APPENDIX 1). In the final encounter, he simply received the second survey answersheets (APPENDIX 12) from the students', delivered a quick farewell speech where he expressed his gratitude towards the learners, the teacher and the schoolboard, and interviewed

some students individually. The following table contains the abbreviations and signs used in the transcription of the eight lessons recorded in the experiment:

Abbreviation or sign	Occurance
RT	Researcher
S	Unidentified student
CT	Collaborative teacher
[ ]	Description of a non-verbal intervention within the speech
(+)	For every second of pause
{ }	Whispering
CAPITALS	Emphatic Intonation
@@@	Laughs or giggles
<@ @>	Utterance spoken with laughs
&	Simultaneous participation in the speech event
...	Intonation indicating unfinished utterances
/	Interruption of the course of the speech
< >	Incorrectly pronounced word
(xxx)	Uncomprehended words or segments
	Joking or fun attitude in the speech
' ''	Minutes and seconds of the lesson when the extract occurred

Chart 2: Norms for transcription of the data recorded in the lessons

The table above was adapted from the work of Tavares (2007). As it can be perceived above, the table does not contain a reference for specified students. These are the ones whose voices could be clearly distinguished in the recordings. That happened because in survey 2 (which will be further explained in the next paragraph), the pupils signed an authorization that allowed their images and names to be exposed in the current academic endeavor. Thus, the ones who were easily identified in the recordings will have their real names (not fake ones) inserted throughout this paper.

Two surveys were conducted. One on the first and another one on the last day of class. The first (APPENDIX 2) was to check a few socio-demographical pieces of information from the class, a look at their previous experiences as English students

and at their objectives and feelings as foreign language learners. The second was an overall opinion about the research, comprising the students' feelings, positive and negative points of the Communicative Approach, possible problems that hindered their learning, and what suggestions they would present on how the lessons could be optimized. The answers given in both surveys will be discussed in the next chapter of this work.

Sections of feedback with the teacher and students were periodically conducted. A few days before each class, the researcher and the collaborative teacher discussed positive and negative aspects of the previous lesson. He also had frequent individual afterclass encounters with some students (especially the less productive ones) to encourage them to work a little harder or clarify uncomprehended points presented in the lessons. There were also a few moments totally dedicated to giving collective feedback to students (the Second half of both Lesson 8 on April 17<sup>th</sup> and Lesson 11 on June 5<sup>th</sup>), where the group was free to express publically their feelings of approval or disapproval of anything presented during the classes.

The researcher also kept a personal journal where all positive and negative points that took place in each lesson, including what was followed and what went astray from the plan, what worked and what failed, mishaps and surprises were all registered in drafts elaborated by the researcher himself sometimes with the help of students' accounts.

All these reported instruments of data collection aimed at a) evaluating the success or failure of every single planned and unplanned event that occurred during the lessons; b) becoming aware of the positive aspects; c) working on ways to reapply these same techniques, activities and tasks; d) using similar principles in activities to be conducted in the coming lessons; e) capturing the negative aspects of the lessons, including unsuccessful activities and forms of presenting theoretical explanation; f) trying a different approach when conducting a similar activity in the future. It was for this last reason that the units employed throughout the research were not elaborated all at once before the intervention started. On the contrary, they were elaborated weekly, one after the other, so that the appropriate modifications could be made, from one class to the next, gradually turning the lessons more efficient and more suitable to the level, preferences and the interests of the students.

## 2.4 THE SCHOOL

Escola Normal Estadual D. Expedito Eduardo de Oliveira is a well known public state educational institution located at Pedro Firmino av. S/N - Salgadinho, in Patos, Paraíba. In a reasonable structural condition, it contains approximately fifteen classrooms and attends to students not only from downtown area of Patos, but also from the surrounding little towns, villages and rural communities. The picture below shows the main entrance guarded by one of the watch-overs.



*Picture 1: Front view of the school*

The school works on a daily three-shift basis (morning, afternoon and evening periods) with an average amount of seven to eight hundred students every year that include elementary and secondary education (1<sup>st</sup> till 4<sup>th</sup> elementary grades; and 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> secondary Normal Pedagógico grades). It also offers an EJA course (educational module that places young adults and fully grown-ups into junior-high and secondary grades) in the evenings. The staff incorporates fifty to sixty members, including principals, teachers, secretarial clerks, janitors and watch-overs. About sixty students conclude the secondary pedagogical course annually. Pedagogical graduates are accredited legal qualification to teach or work with elementary pupils.



*Picture 2: Main access to the school halls*



The schoolboard was always keen to the idea of opening the doors to the experiment. This was demonstrated since the day when the researcher first exposed the project to the principal, the pedagogical coordinator and the school English teacher who gladly accepted its conduction and stated their willingness to cooperate as much as possible. Their willingness to cooperate was, in fact, called upon action right in the first lesson, when the first unit (APPENDIX 3) was presented. The principal took part in a dialogue, in spite of the fact that she does not know any English whatsoever. Still, she and one of the school's mathematics teacher and the school English teacher were part of a conversation elaborated by the RT, that was rehearsed, recorded and used in class in the first activity of the unit. In that same unit the mathematics, geography and literature teachers respectively also participated by posing to the pictures of the homework activity 1, as shown in table 1 below:

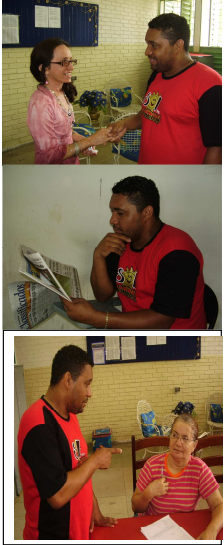

<p>1) Listen to the conversations and match the dialogs with the pictures.</p>  <p>2) Listen again and fill the blank spaces of the dialog.</p> <p>Man: Excuse-me.          Woman: _____?          Man: Are _____ Maria Ferreira?          Woman: No, I am _____          Man: Sorry.</p> <p>Man: Excuse-me.          Woman 2: _____?          Man: _____ you Maria Ferreira?          Woman 2: Yes, I _____          Man: Hi, Maria! _____ am Maurílio.          Woman 2: Nice to meet you.          Man: Nice to _____ you too!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HOMEWORK</b></p> <p>1) Complete the dialogue with questions and answers:</p>  <p>Excuse, me. Are vou Maria?</p> <p>No, I am not. I am Adriana.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____?</p> <p>Yes. I am</p> <p>No, _____ _____ Memé.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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Chart 3: Reduced fragments of Lesson 1, unit 1 on February 28<sup>th</sup> (Appendix 2)

The decision of including teachers and staff members of the school as characters of the unit activities was an attempt to make the tasks more closely related to students' reality. As it was presented in 1.3.4, *authenticity* is one of the main features of the communicative materials.

## 2.5 THE CLASSROOM

The place where the research took place was a 64m<sup>2</sup> grade 10 classroom equipped with a fan, four fluorescent lights, a 2 x 1.1 m board (half white, half green), four windows and enough room for forty to forty-five occupants, as it can be noticed in the pictures below:



Picture 3: Outside view of the classroom



Picture 4: Inside view of the classroom

## 2.6 THE STUDENTS

As it is common in the public school setting, the group of students was quite heterogenous. Such heterogeneity is marked by various factors, especially age differences and pupils' previous educational experiences. These differences are most overtly perceived in the Normal Pedagógico (NP) educational segment for one main reason: students who have already graduated from a regular secondary school module in the past but decided to resume their studies by joining a NP mode will start over on the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, just like any individual who has partially or never attended any secondary school years in the past. Also, individuals above the age of thirteen are also allowed in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade. It means that if a thirteen-year-old student decides to

join the NP mode, s/he will end up in the same class as a fully grown up despite their previous education. Consequently, the age of the participants ranged from thirteen to forty years. Such fact can, in a minor way, affect the teaching process, as fully grown ups, early adults and young adolescents have different mentalities and thus, different interest and needs. Reminding that a typical communicative syllabus takes into consideration the necessities and the aspirations of the learners (see section 1.3.2), such heterogeneity might make it difficult for the researcher to find a level ground of relevant topics that attend to the interests and needs of all the age groups.

As an attempt to find out more concrete and clear information about the students' background, the researcher issued a collective survey (APPENDIX 2) on the first day of class. In it, students were inquired about their gender, age levels, place of residency, previous educational experiences, various aspects of their past experiences, including studies with English and their feelings about them, the frequency of their extra-class contact with the foreign language, how much they desire to learn it and what skill would mostly interest them. However, few students either missed the first lesson or registered later afterwards. To those late-enrolled the answer sheets were conceded individually on different dates for them to fill out at home and return them in the following lesson.

Throughout the five months of research, the amount of students per class gradually decreased. The first lesson had twenty-four students. A total of twenty-three students were originally registered in this class at the beginning of the year but eight of them never showed up to one single lesson. Five were enrolled later and one was transferred from the afternoon to the morning class (but eventually dropped out the following week), totalizing a sum of thirty regularly registered students. Notwithstanding, the lessons never had more than twenty-five pupils and the month of March was the one with the highest attendance rates. On the first days of class, 87% of the group was composed of females, and just 13% males. But progressively, these proportions started to diminish as many students started to drop out of the course. The research ended with 19 individuals, being 89.5% females and 10.5% males. From the first to the last lesson, the average number of students per class was 19.4.

Considering the taxonomy of communicative principles presented in chapter 1 and the research setting described in this chapter, the current work attempts to find out answers to the following research questions: 1) *Is the communicative approach appropriate for the current educational scenario found in Escola Normal D. Expedito Eduardo Oliveira?* 2) *Will the age differences among the participants affect the well proceeding of the experiment?* 3) *Will the intervention help to improve the quality of English language teaching provided by the school to 1<sup>st</sup> year secondary students?* 4) *Will the project leave any contribution (even after its end) to students, teachers and to the school?.* Answers to these questions (not necessarily in that order) are discussed in the subsequent chapters.

### CHAPTER 3: DATA ANALYSIS – OUTCOMES

In his paper entitled *There is no best method. Why?*, N.S. Prabhu (1990) states that there is not a universal method which can be labeled as “the best one” for every existing teaching contexts due to a myriad of variations within these contexts that affect the process and influence what is more suitable to them. Such variations are listed by the linguist himself:

The variations are of several kinds, relating to social situation (language policy, language environment, linguistic and cultural attitudes, economic and ideological factors, etc.), educational organization (instructional objectives, constraints of time and resources, administrative efficiency, class-size, classroom ethos, etc.), teacher related factors (status, training, belief, autonomy, skill, etc.), and learner-related factors (age, aspirations, previous learning experiences, attitudes to learning, etc.) (PRABHU, 1990, p. 162).

On the other hand, Prabhu (1990) also states that there is a best method for different people and for different teaching contexts, that means, for every specific teaching context there is a method that can be considered the most appropriate one and it is possible to determine which one is based on the analysis of the variations of each learning environment. This is the connective point between Prabhu’s theory and the ideology of the project described in this thesis. The author of the current work believed that the Communicative Approach, considering its many academic and pedagogic merits described in chapter one, could provide some minimization to the various methodological incongruities existent in the public school system in Patos - PB. The author himself in past years noticed, in his experience as a public school teacher, that typically communicative activities performed in the classes produced much better results in the production of the students, increased motivation, helped them to develop a tiny level of speaking, reading and writing and enhanced their taste for the subject. This experience encouraged the author to believe that a communicative syllabus could possibly be the so-called “most suitable approach” for the current teaching and learning foreign language context of the contemporary local public secondary school system.

A general look at the results attained from the data collection resources described in the previous chapter allowed the researcher to conclude that the whole project was very successful in various aspects, fairly successful in others but underachieving in a few points. The most significant positive and negative outcomes of the experiment shall be placed in the two separate sub-topics below along with the reasons why they were attributed such classifications.

### 3.1 POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Balancing the two sides (the positive and the negative aspects) of the whole project, through an interpretative educational perspective, it can be concluded that the positive features undoubtedly suppressed the negative ones. This conclusion was drawn based on a number of reasons. The first, would be the fact that the quantity of students who left the class on the last day of the experiment on June 17<sup>th</sup> with a good/excellent impression of the whole project, expressing sorrow for its end was, indeed, greater than the ones who demonstrated some sort of relief. This affirmation was thriven from numerous unrecorded comments from students, also from information they provided on the second survey and from the interviews found in table I<sup>9</sup>, below:

<p>7) Comentários adicionais: (Caso você tenha alguma resposta diferente, que não esteja inclusa como opção nas questões acima, escreva-a(s) nas linhas abaixo)</p> <p><u>Estou muito satisfeita</u> <u>com o que aprendi</u> <u>é gostaria muito</u> <u>que o projeto fosse</u> <u>mais longo.</u></p>	<p>7) Comentários adicionais: (Caso você tenha alguma resposta diferente, que não esteja inclusa como opção nas questões acima, escreva-a(s) nas linhas abaixo)</p> <p><u>OBS: NÃO TENHO NADA</u> <u>A RECLAMAR. E SIM A AGRA</u> <u>DECER E PARABENIZAR.</u> <u>AMEI MUITO!</u></p>
<p>7) Comentários adicionais: (Caso você tenha alguma resposta diferente, que não esteja inclusa como opção nas questões acima, escreva-a(s) nas linhas abaixo)</p> <p><u>Eu gostei das aulas!</u> <u>aprendi mais um</u> <u>pouco de inglês.</u> <u>Não tenho o que reclamar.</u> <u>Thou OK.</u></p>	<p>7) Comentários adicionais: (Caso você tenha alguma resposta diferente, que não esteja inclusa como opção nas questões acima, escreva-a(s) nas linhas abaixo)</p> <p><u>Não tenho nada a</u> <u>comentar, só que o proje-</u> <u>to é ótimo e tem que</u> <u>continuar, com outras</u> <u>colégios. (ótimo projeto)</u></p>

Chart 4: Four scanned pieces of students answers to the second survey

<sup>9</sup> The scanned fragments inserted in FRAME I contains the comments posted by four students on the question #7 of the second survey (ATTACHMENT 2) where they reported how pleased they were with the whole project, their appreciation, lack of complaints, and how they wished the project would be extended for a longer period of time.

Students' preferences, however is not enough as a reason to confirm the success of a research. It was more important to conclude that over the five months of the project, the learners managed to develop some communicative skills in listening, reading, writing and especially in speaking endeavors. These features were noticed as the months went by and the pupils gradually managed to respond to more complex commands, to express longer and better elaborated utterances in L2 with their peers and with the teacher, and interacted more actively with the texts within the units. A few examples of these kinds of occurrences are show in the paragraphs that follow. To begin with, two separate events that occurred were selected, one in the beginning and the other near the end of the project.

The first happened in lesson 1, unit 1, Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>, exercise 3. After the presentation of a model on how to ask someone about their identity and introduce him/herself to them, and getting the quick grammatical explanation that encompassed all the steps normally used in this kind of interaction: 1 – Calling for some attention: *excuse me*; 2 – Asking the other person if s/he is the person they are looking for: *Are you Maria Ferreira?*; 3 – Answering: *No, I am not / Yes, I am*; 4 – Apologizing or saluting and self-introducing: *Sorry. / Hi Maria, I am Maurílio*; 5 – Expressing their pleasure on meeting them: *Nice to meet you (too)*. On PRACTICE, a mingling activity where students were supposed to find two other characters, most of them just could not remember, or follow, or utter the steps. The teacher had to intervene in nearly all the conversations performed at that moment to help the learners to follow the five steps by reminding them the keywords, what to answer after a question and what to ask/say after an answer, supply missing words and so on. A lot of instruction and exemplification on L1 was utilized then<sup>10</sup>. In contrast, some progress is well exemplified in the excerpt below where the RT approached two students, Kaliane and Edinalva, who were engaged in the performance of activity 3, lesson 10, Unit 9, June 5<sup>th</sup>, to supervise their work:

Kaliane:     ... *in the morning, I wake up (+) five o'clock*

RT:            *AT five o'clock*

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<sup>10</sup> The lesson where this episode took place failed to be recorded. The description of the events just described was registered in the RT's journal during the feedback section with the collaborative teacher subsequent to this lesson.

- Kaliane: *AT five o'clock. I have breakfast at five...* [looking a little unsure towards the RT] <thirty>?
- RT: *Thirty.*
- Kaliane: *Five thirty. I go to school at (+)(+) [hand gesture indicating a more-or-less sign] six o'clock.(+) Afternoon. Ehh... I...(+) professor, como é "novela" em ingles, hein?*
- RT: *|Sorry, I don't speak Portuguese.| (+)(+)@*
- Kaliane & Edinalva: *What is... (+)*
- RT: *| Yes, What is what? | [hand gesture as requesting her to conclude the question].*
- Edinalva: *"Novela."*
- Kaliane *"Novela" in English.*
- RT: *Repeat the entire question [gestures with his hand as indicating something long]*
- Kaliane: *What is "novela" in English?*
- RT: *Ahhhh... [moving his hand as a sign of approval] @@@... it's SOAP OPERA. [RT moves away and from students and write the word soap opera on the board].*

(LESSON 10 – June 5<sup>th</sup> – 30' 58")

Although the absence of the preposition *at* in the beginning of the dialog did not interfere in the conveying of the main message, the teacher still decided to place some correction at that moment to avoid the process of fossilization, described in section 1.4. Additionally, he played ignorant *|Sorry, I don't speak Portuguese.| (+)(+)|* in a humorous way to force the producers to use English during the interaction as the communicative principle states that the L2 should be used as the main language of communication in the classes. Such teaching strategy to avoid giving out the answer in L1 was employed quite commonly during the project.

The first survey (APPENDIX 2) showed that 96.3% of them had undergone some sort of study of the English language in previous years at school. Among the ones who had somehow been involved with English, 92.3% reported their learning was a matter of translating texts (84.6%) or studying grammar rules (34.6%)



with little (or no) contact with spoken language or oral/written interaction with other colleagues. In other words, they had never spoken real English. Instead, they *pronounced or repeated* words in English or read them out loud. Moreover, they had never used listening to process and convey information or to interact with classmates and teachers. Rather than that, they *heard* (WIDDOWSON, 1978; See chapter 1.3.7) their teachers and colleagues pronouncing and reading words, phrases and texts in English with no direct communicative response to them.

Conversely, reading and writing skills were constantly applied as text translation and grammar check exercises were the most common type of work issued in their past experiences with English. It is true though, that most of these readings were monological (did not involve the reader as part of the text); imaginary (did not inform true / authentic events or facts); unrealistic (their content could never be brought to the learner's realities).

By contrast, the communicative syllabus managed to employ opportunities for authentic verbal exchange among the students, negotiation of meaning, personalization and self-expression. It also promoted opportunities for pupils to read dialogical texts with which they could interact directly, turning them into meaningful and relevant language extracts, as shown in the picture and the chart below:



Picture 5: Students' interaction in the lessons


	<p>Katherine is a nurse at Hospital Regional de Patos. She works 24 hours and has three days off. She has breakfast at 6:00 and drives her kids to school. She has lunch at 10:00 and has lunch at midday with her family. She studies in the afternoon and goes to aerobics class. She cooks dinner at 5:00 and has dinner at 7:30. She goes to bed at 10:30 every night except when she is at work.</p>
<p>Text 2:  a - What is Katherine's profession?  b- Is your routine similar to Katherine's?  c- What is the difference between Text 1 and Text 2?</p>	

Chart 5: Enlarged fragment of text 2, Exercise 4, unit 9, June 6<sup>th</sup>. Dialogical text in which students can compare and relate to their own routines.

It is true though that these positive instances of good production did not occur instantly from the moment the experiment started. The idea of expressing themselves in English, listening to instructions in the foreign language, using deduction, interpreting the words and the expressions came as quite a shock to them, especially in the first couple of lessons. Fortunately, as weeks went by, the learners started to get more and more used to the communicative procedures that, towards the end of the research, Portuguese was being spoken in class only to and by the less productive learners.

One of the specific objectives of this project aimed at enhancing the learners' oral communicative skills. But the approach itself works with integrated skills as it is explained in sub-topic 1.3.7, it means that it is not recommended to work on one skill in isolation. As a fortunate natural consequence, a considerable progress was observed not only in their speaking but also on their writing, reading and most noticeably in their listening comprehension. In the first few lessons, highly frequent were the moments when the RT asked questions or issued some sort of work or even explained one particular topic or the meaning of a word and all he saw were faces with bewildered expressions, frowned eyebrows, frozen looks, dodged glances from one student to the other and, the worst of all, no action or response from them. Fortuitously, these scenarios became less and less frequent throughout the months. Pupils gradually developed some familiarity with the words, gestures and commands

and started to respond to them accordingly. In the beginning, even simple directions were observed to be uncomprehended, but soon enough they were instantly responding to quite complex long instructions as the following transcriptions show:

RT – *Ok, every body! Could you please take your worksheets from last week's class... please last week's worksheet. Last class's worksheet.* [**Bewildered faces with no action from students**].

(LESSON 3 – March 6<sup>th</sup> – 11' 40'')

RT – *I want you to write down, I want you to write down six problems with this picture, Ok?. You can do it in groups of two. Write in your notebooks.* [**non-verbal signal from student indicating she could not hear**].  
*You can write in your notebook. Write in your notebooks, Ok? I will give you four minutes to finish.*

(LESSON 12 – June 12<sup>th</sup> – 39' 34'')

Examples like the two presented above became quite frequent after a few lessons. It is important to state that every single activity performed in class was preceded by an oral instruction and a model and every unit contained five or more tasks. Thus, instructions and directions from the RT were highly frequent, which shows that occurrences such as the one above were likely to happen many times in a lesson. Such facts are a clear positive answer to the 3<sup>rd</sup> research question (Chapter 2) that says: *Will the intervention help to improve the quality of English language teaching provided by the school to 1<sup>st</sup> year secondary students?* Some students really seemed to develop some competence in more than one skill during the lessons throughout the intervention.

Chapter 2.2 reported that the units were elaborated in a systematic order that presented a determined language content, which served as the basis for learning a new one later on. An example of this kind of procedure was the occasions when students were taught a few *verbs of activity* (Unit 5), *numbers* and *telling the time* (Unit 10) and in the next lesson, *numbers* (telling the time) and *verbs of activity* formed *daily routines*. This type of orderly process worked well for some students who seemed to grasp what was being taught as they often employed language that had been the main content of preceding lessons in later classes while interacting with peers. It would not be honest to affirm this was the case with the entire group of learners. It was rather a privilege of some of the fast learning students, not shared by

the majority. But the production of this selected group of pupils demonstrated attention, commitment and interest in learning the foreign language in its holistic aspects.



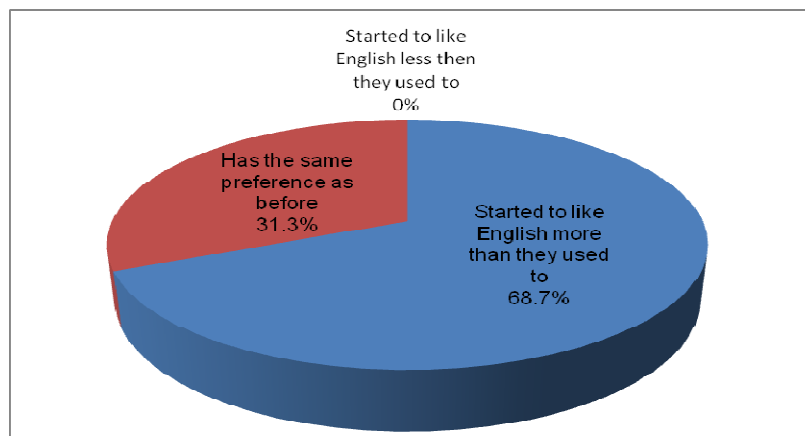
<p>1) Match the activities in the picture with the verbs below:</p>  <p>( ) drive ( ) play ( ) dance ( ) cook ( ) swim ( ) run</p>	<p>1) Revision of numbers 1 – 60. Collective work.</p> <p>2) Race the clock. Try to count from 1 to 60 in one minute! (.....)</p> <p>4) Question: <b>WHAT TIME IS IT?</b> IT'S <math>\frac{2}{\text{NUMBER}}</math> : <math>\frac{15}{\text{NUMBER}}</math> (.....)</p> <p>6) Exercise. What time is it?</p> 	<p>2) Write your daily routine in the lines below. Follow the model provided by the teacher.</p> <p>Morning: _____ _____ _____</p> <p>Afternoon: _____ _____ _____</p> <p>Evening: _____ _____ _____</p> <p>3) Oral activity. Describe your daily routine to a partner.</p>
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Chart 6: Reduced fragments of units 5, 10 and 11 respectively showing one example of how contents served as basis for the teaching of other subsequent ones

Academic observations and pedagogical analysis were not the only means of achieving conclusions. Accounts from students themselves were taken into consideration and catalogued as relevant sources of data. Reports from the second survey and oral interviews showed that the project has influenced students' interest in the English language and their opinions about language learning. The results of the referred survey are displayed in the following graphics:



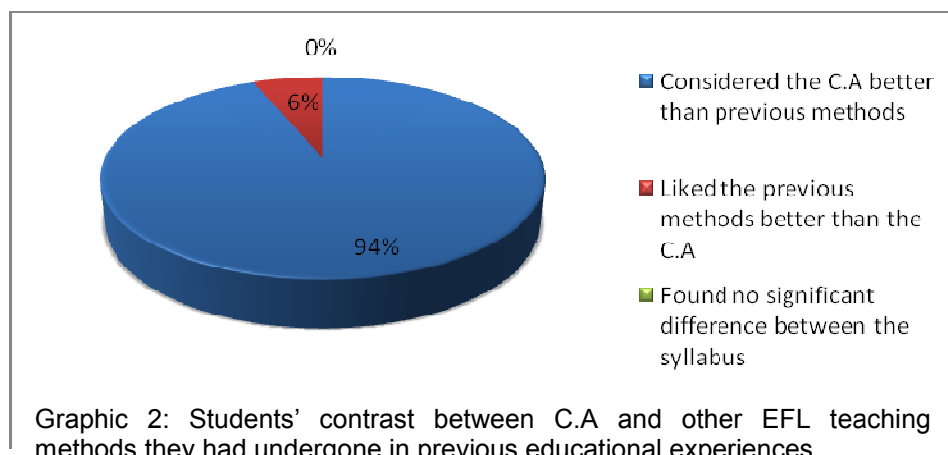
Graphic 1: Students' interest in the English language after the project

The second survey showed that 68.7% of the remaining students started to like English now more than they used to before. One of them reported that before the experiment she was planning to choose Spanish as the foreign language for the vestibular<sup>11</sup> at the end of the year despite never taking any lessons of Spanish in her whole life. Still, she decided to do that because she felt completely underprepared to face the English section based on the knowledge she acquired through previous methods, but changed her mind after taking part in the project:

RT: *E por que você achou que foi uma boa idéia, Andréia?*

Andréia: *Por que eu faço vestibular, eu presto vestibular todos os anos e eu sempre coloco inglês e esse ano eu tava pensando em colocar espanhol, mesmo não tendo noções eu pensei “não... é mais fácil”, mas agora não, agora eu já tenho certeza que pelo menos com um, com mais, assim, certeza eu vou marcar as questões.*

(INTERVIEW N° 2 – APPENDIX 16)



To sum up, it seems fair to conclude that some of the specific objectives of this research, namely a) to improve the quality of English language teaching in the public school system in Patos-PB; b) to elicit opportunities for students to develop the quality of their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills; and c) develop their taste for studies of EFL; and d) to present, to students, the teacher and to the school, alternative ways to learn and teach English that do not focus exclusively on studies of grammar rules and text translation - were satisfactorily accomplished. Such

<sup>11</sup> *Vestibular* is the name of the entrance exam used by Brazilian universities that selects the new students on a semester or annual basis.

information is also the answer to the 4<sup>th</sup> research question (Chapter 2) which inquires: *Will the project leave any contribution (even after its end) to students, teachers and to the school?* Conversely, it is also true that a few major unexpected drawbacks took place throughout the research. Some of them had no significant impact on the research as a whole. Some of them, on the contrary, affected the whole project so profoundly that caused the researcher to pursue a few remediating alternatives that, up to a certain point, led to deviations from one or two of the main objectives of the intervention. Such downsides are described in the subtopic that follows.

### 3.2 NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

The events described in the following paragraphs are the ones which, somehow, affected the research in a negative way by a) hindering students from acquiring a better understanding of the English language and its features; b) jeopardizing the continuation of the project itself; c) delaying the presentation of some topics of a lesson; d) causing the researcher to adopt alternative procedures that resulted in deviations from one or more objectives that had been originally expected to be achieved in the research. The next two subtopics give a description on how these expected events occurred during the lessons.

#### 3.2.1 Minor mishaps

The problems described in this section are the ones that did not cause major significant impacts on the carrying out of the research or on the students' positive attitudes towards learning, but still interfered in the well-being of the lessons in a way or another. Such unexpected occurrences took place with periodical frequency and they were quite hard to predict due to the fact they were out of the RT's power to solve, as most of them consisted of administrative/organizational school issues or students' personal matters. Nevertheless, lessons proceeded normally, lasting up to their appointed time.

The first minor impasse faced by the RT and students was the amount of noise in the school hallways that disturbed the lessons and made it impossible to conduct listening activities with CD's, MP 3 and stereos. Such noises from

outside the classroom consisting of students shouting, laughing and running around were common especially in the first few weeks of the project and new attempts to perform listening activities with stereo system devices were made later on the semester, but with the same misfortune. For that reason, listening activities had to be suspended and direct verbal interaction with peers and with the teacher were left as the exclusive sources of listening activities for the group.

Another less significant trouble that caused loss of some quality input was the delay during the opening of the school gates, which occurred three different times during the semester, all for different reasons. The consequence of these mishaps were a delay of approximately ten to twenty-five minutes of the class time, which forced the activities to last a lot less than they should have. Interactive tasks were shortened and there was not enough time to conclude the unit on that same day of class as it was the original plan. They had to be resumed in the following lesson, diminishing the time set for the presentation of the unit ascribed for that day. Therefore, units with less content had to be designed for these days.

There was also another problem that caused some disturbance in the teacher's plans as 36.8% of the students dropped out. Most of them for unreported reasons, and among them, were some of the top students of the class. It is true, though, that the displayed percentage comprised many pupils who contributed very little to the good progress of the class, but the amount of good contributors was greater. The absence of these good contributors, who gradually abandoned the course was clearly sensed by the RT and by a few students who had their language production decreased as their loyal working partners, who helped and encouraged them, ended up quitting. Just some of them justified their leaving. These ones claimed they found jobs or moved away.

The last minor issue to be considered was more of an administrative and political one. From the first day of the research (February 21<sup>st</sup>) until its last (June 15<sup>th</sup>), eighteen weeks had gone by. Logically, it should have been eighteen sections as the lessons happened on Thursdays once a week, but due to three holidays (March 21<sup>st</sup> – Easter; May 1<sup>st</sup> – Labor day; and May 22<sup>nd</sup> Corpus Christi), a strike organized by the local teachers' union (April 17<sup>th</sup>) and a week when the teacher was

unable to perform the lessons because of his health condition (May 15<sup>th</sup>), the lessons were canceled and not replaced. This represented a loss of approximately 28% (almost a third) of the total input time.

These events, however, did not represent an emergent threat to the well-being of the project. The next subtopic, on the other hand, lists a few points that really put the achieving of the objectives intended by the experiment to test.

### 3.2.2 Major drawbacks

Differently from the previous subtopic, the order in which the problems are listed in the following paragraphs were not placed according to their order of occurrence. On the contrary, the issues may have existed even before the whole research started, but they were gradually noticed over the months as the teacher developed a more and more accurate notion of the reality of some students.

The RT knew from day one that the research was going to face some difficulties, as the number of students who seemed a little skeptical about the idea of employment of the newly presented approach was considerable. Later on, such skepticism turned out to be just one of the symptoms of various interrelated issues among these students. The author detected one of these problems and realized that it had probably been following the learners from previous educational experiences with language learning.

It was noted that participants were so accustomed not to produce (or to produce very little) in English classes that an approach which required a certain amount of effort to achieve success (part taking in interactive activities, oral communicative endeavors, association of ideas, deduction and risk taking) caused a kind of shock and a deep feeling of incapacity, that affected them even in the performance of considerably uncomplicated activities. For many times, when engaged in these sort of activities some learners did not even start them, and if they did, they would not go very far claiming the following reasons: their lack of knowledge of the language, the difficulty of the language or not understanding what to do. A fine example of this kind of event happened during lesson 10, activity 3 on May 28<sup>th</sup>. In



order to understand how the task was handled, it is necessary to consider a few steps that had been taken prior to the initiation of the activity: a) It is important to remember that a revision and a fun activity on numbers from one to sixty were done as exercises one and two. b) The meaning of the words “minute”, “day” and “week” had already been used in previous lessons. c) The words “second”, “minute”, “hour” and “day” are of Latin origin. It means they are cognate words (of easy understanding even for those who are not proficient in the foreign language). d) Some students could possibly know the answer in their minds but they would probably not know how to spell them. Still, the answers could be found the following line.

3)	Solve the puzzle:
a)	Sixty seconds = _____
b)	Six minutes = _____
c)	Twenty-four hours = _____
d)	Seven days = _____
e)	Four weeks = _____
f)	Twelve months = _____

Chart 7: Activity 3, Unit 8, May 28<sup>th</sup> (Attachment 8)

Most of the class finished the task in approximately three minutes (just a little more than had been expected by the RT). Nevertheless, a few ones remained inactive. They were unable to figure out: a) what was been asked in the exercise (despite having a model and instructions presented by the teacher); b) the meaning of the words on questions a–f (despite the Latin origin and their use of previous classes); c) to employ the presented notions of time throughout the rest of the lesson.

The usual procedure adopted by the RT in these situations was to let advanced students do the work by themselves and focus exclusively on those who failed to understand the task instructions by giving them a personal, more specific explanation, a new model and using non-verbal language by pointing to items, numbers, words and pictures on their worksheets. At these moments, the RT was always a beneficiary of students’ classroom arrangements because the weakest learners usually sat in groups, despite RT’s occasional procedures of placing weaker

students in pairs with stronger ones. That way it was possible to reach more than one weak pupil at each assistance section. Following Larrea's recommendations (see chapter 1.3.6.2; LARREA, 2002), L1 was used as the option when all alternative resources had failed (miming, using cognates, pointing, writing). Unluckily, it was only when the RT used L1 that these students usually produced something. In the case of the time activity mentioned earlier, there was a student who barely knew the representation of time in Portuguese as the transcription shows below:

RT: (...) nã-nã-não, meu anjo, vê... Aqui ó! Sessenta segundos é igual a o que...? a...?  
 S: {sessenta segundos?... sei não, uma hora é?  
 CT: {@@@}

(LESSON 10 – May 28<sup>th</sup> 51' 09'')

Another delicate issue observed with less productive students was that they just showed little or no interest at all in learning the language. For reasons that shall be pointed out in the conclusions, a few learners just had no interest on part taking in the appointed tasks. There were times when these pupils received the unit worksheet from the RT and simply put it away in their notebooks or binders and got busy with a different activity. There were others who listened to the entire content presented, received personal assistance and even produced a bit, but as soon as the RT or the ST moved away towards a different group they simply dropped their work and turned to a partner for chatting. Despite various attempts by the RT to develop procedures recommended by Brown (1994) to enhance intrinsic motivation (activities of personalization, giving positive reinforcement and personal assistance to slower learners, issuing of interactive homework, eliciting collective involvement without exclusion, presenting playful lessons with easy accessible vocabulary, among others) some students just held themselves back and they did not produce what was expected from them.

Among this hard-dealing group of students, that encompassed six people, three different types of characters were noticed. First, the *less productive learners*: they never posed any threats to the RT's professional figure. In fact, they demonstrated some interest in learning, produced a certain amount of work and took

part in interactive activities. These ones, however, failed to understand the simplest instructions, seemed to find difficulty even in topics like *greetings* and personalization activities, where the answers they were looking for were just a few centimeters away from where they were focused in the worksheet. An example of this kind is presented in the table on the next page where a fragment of lessons 6/7, activity 4 on April 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, where a *me/not me* dictation was done.

There were also the *indifferent participants*: they were the ones who rarely seem to bother paying attention to the explanation and hardly did any work in the English class. Instead, it was very common to see them doing exercises of other subjects during the lesson and produced something only after receiving personal assistance from the RT and showed little (or sometimes no) motivation to do some work on their own, just by following the teacher's instructions. The moments when they took part in interactive activities in pairs or larger groups or answered the questions in the units' worksheets were really rare.

In addition, there were the *non-compliant students*: behaved or shared the same characteristics of the indifferent participants. The difference with them is that they often demonstrated overt dissatisfaction upon being part of the English class. They frequently disrupted the concentration of working students by talking aloud and chatting with them about trivial matters inconsistent with what was being discussed or learned in the lessons. They also constantly left and came back to the class without permission or a good motive. They were the ones who showed most explicit indignation with their grades and for more than one occasion they verbally offended the RT publically. The picture below caught one of these moments:



Picture 6: Red arrows indicate uninterested students on the background during an interactive activity

1) Find someone who can:

a) Swim in Jatobá \_\_\_\_\_

b) Run 500 meters \_\_\_\_\_

c) Play an instrument \_\_\_\_\_

d) Drive \_\_\_\_\_

e) eat a large pizza \_\_\_\_\_

f) cook well \_\_\_\_\_

g) dance funk \_\_\_\_\_

h) play sports \_\_\_\_\_

2) Associate the verbs and the complements:

		Good	Bad
Read	to João Pessoa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study	TV	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Travel	a book	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drink	late	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Walk	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watch	alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sleep	to school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4) Me / Not me. Write your name in the space below and follow the dictation.

Me	Not me
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Chart 8: Lessons 6 and 7 on April 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> (ATTACHMENT 8)

The question of doing other activities during the English lesson sometimes affected even a few students who were considered good contributors. The difference there, was that when rebuked they would promptly put the unrelated work aside and resume the tasks in the worksheets. The hard-dealing ones, on the contrary, who also customarily wrote letters, made drawings and even exchanged cake recipes during the lesson, constantly claiming that they had to meet deadline and they would get penalized if they did not finish those works in time. One of the offensive ones did not even have the courtesy of listening and simply ignored the RT's request for attention and proceeded doing what she was doing. At the moments they purposely did not take part in the activities, the RT never forced them to do anything. But on the occasions when these students disturbed the lesson with loud disconnected prolonged conversations, it was necessary, for several times, a less friendly approach by the RT to request them to quiet down. These requests were done in an extremely polite manner and uncooperative students were handled in a fun way in

the first months of the research as they were being asked to participate in the activities and to pay attention. Throughout time, politeness and jokes started to lose their efficiency and rather inimical warnings were directed towards them at times.

Another upsetting event occurred during lesson 8, on April 17<sup>th</sup>, when the collaborative teacher delivered the grades of the first bimester of the class. She had decided that she would appoint each grade according to the amount of individual participation in the activities, the completion of homework and the fulfilling of all the tasks in the units. The RT did not take part in this matter, as it was something concerning the school's policy and he was not an actual member of the school staff. Nevertheless, the CT still informally asked for him to place his opinion about each student and attending to her request, he merely classified each student as "excellent", "good" or "average" but placed no comment on those whom he thought did not belong to any of those categories and left that issue for the CT to decide for herself. A few less productive ones were really dissatisfied with the grades appointed to them and protested in the class. At that moment, they overtly expressed their discontent claiming the marks were unfairly low if compared to their amount of work. This protest became a little heated as they criticized the method and the work employed in the project. This event forced the RT to conduct an unplanned section of feedback that extended until the end of the class time, with the whole class to ask them whether the project should continue or not. Fortunately, the great majority stood up for the project by placing comments of support to the RT and the project.

The situation described above was not the first time when a protest that called for an unplanned feedback section to discuss the continuity of the project took place. There was a previous moment in lesson 4, on March 27<sup>th</sup>. At that time, the quarrel started because one student, after not understanding the instructions of a task placed by the RT in L2, suddenly got fed up with the explanation and with the whole project and started to complain. Again, the RT was well backed up by the rest of the class.

Another characteristic of the communicative approach that was never considered nor anticipated as a possible problem before the intervention started was that it requires a certain amount of cultural background and some knowledge about empirical, scientific and philosophical events that are just "out there", as part of the globalized world. In addition, some scholastic and linguistic notions of how a language and the world work might assist the learning through a communicative way.

The problem here was that some of the students seemed not to hold much of these cultural insights. One of very many examples of how the lack of cultural knowledge affected the conveying of a message is placed on chart 9. The following case happened during input time, in the class of, unit 5, task 2, on April 3<sup>th</sup>. See the reduced extract of this activity below:

2) Associate the activities with the ideas in the box.  
Follow the example:

<del>ferró</del>	a car	1 km	the guitar	ballet
fast	the drums	soccer	a truck	funk
volleyball	pagode			

ferró

The diagram shows two rows of activity balloons. The top row has a balloon labeled 'Dance' on the left and 'Run' on the right. The bottom row has a balloon labeled 'Play' on the left and 'Drive' on the right. Each balloon has four lines extending from it, intended for connecting to words from the list above. The word 'ferró' is written above the 'Dance' balloon.

Chart 9: Task 2, unit 5 on April 3<sup>rd</sup>

Notice that in activity 2, the task is to fill in the blank gaps connected to the balloons containing the verbs with the complementary words in the list above. One student did not understand the word *truck* of that list. Attempting to explain its meaning, the RT said something like: “*It’s a long car* [reaching his arms far wide and facing back, as indicating something big that stretched far behind] *that you drive* [re-facing his front side and positioning his hands making a fist, the palm faced upwards, maneuvering an imaginary giant truck steering wheel] *to transport materials*”<sup>12</sup>. At this point the teacher thought he had been perfectly clear for placing an explanation where the keywords were of Latin origin (cognate) and very similarly sounded in Portuguese (long car, transport, materials), plus non-verbal signs especially the one where he drives an imaginary truck that is of common knowledge in the culture. The student however, still did not manage to figure out its meaning after the explanation. But other students who also did not know what the word *truck* meant got that same

<sup>12</sup> The student who asked that was sitting in the back of the class and this important excerpt was unfortunately not captured by the recording device employed by the teacher, who placed it on his desk in the front part of the class, distant from where this interaction took place. This event was fortuitously registered by the RT’s journals.

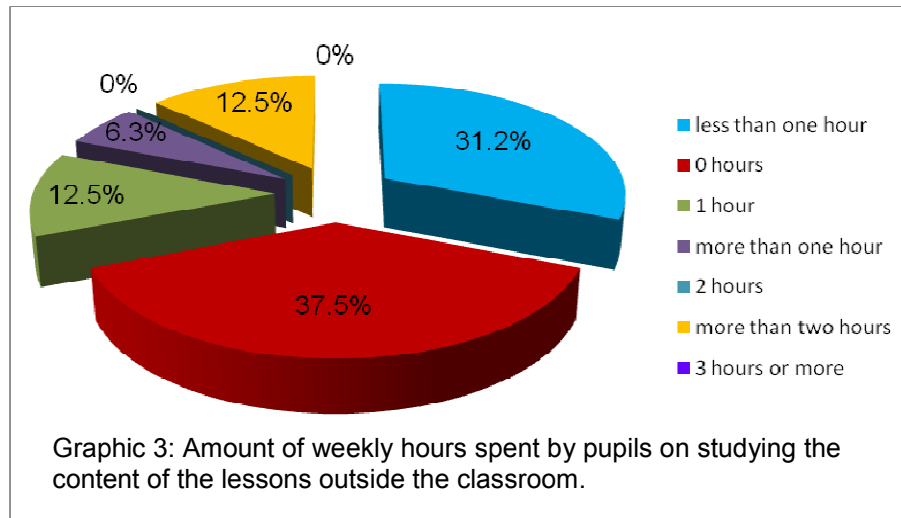
explanation. None of the other students who asked demonstrated problems in understanding the imparted description.

The type of unfortunate event just described above happened quite often basically with the same students. Another similar event is described in an interaction between the RT and S, on page 71. Such occurrences indicate they probably did not share the knowledge the RT presumed to be of common culture. As the typically communicative teacher frequently engage in simplified authentic metalanguage when explaining the meaning of a word, lack of this shared knowledge on the part of the student might result in occasional communicative impasses that can jeopardize the success of the communicative event.

All the issues mentioned above affected the research in some significant way, but the question that implied the greatest consequences upon the whole process of English learning and teaching in the public school system in Patos was surely another aspect of students' lack of interest in learning. The amount of extra-class studying and the lack of self-dedication and personal studying habits was definitely the most influencing point.

As it was reported in topic 3.1 of this chapter, a little selected group of learners managed to employ language presented in previous lessons in later interactions with their classmates successfully. The majority, on the contrary, not only failed to permanently retain what had been presented, but was rarely concerned about studying them at home. The consequence of this was just a temporary retaining of the presented content, that in order to be remembered, it was necessary for several times a little revision by the RT, who had to open an unplanned spot in the lessons to revise some content. There were times when the same topic was revised two or three times in different lessons. Moreover, the predominantly communicative syllabus consisted of systematic knowledge where a topic serves as basis for another more elaborated as reported in chapter 1 and revised in subtopic 3.1. As a result, it became difficult to achieve major progress with a fragile basis. The amount of students whose only moments of contact with the target language were the classes on Thursdays was quite considerable because they did not to study the content of the units at home. To confirm that, the second survey appointed that 37.5% of the students never studied the lessons at home, 31.2% studied less than an hour a week

and only 12.5% engaged themselves in some sort of extra-class contact with English between two and three hours a week, as it is shown in graphic 3, displayed below:

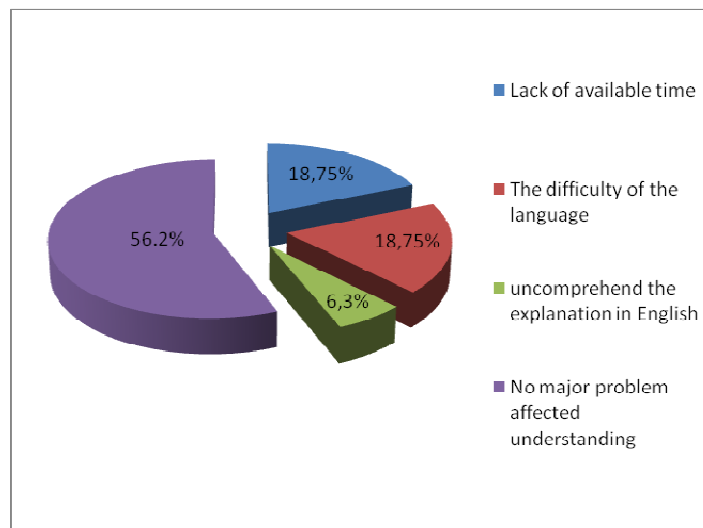


Students' lack of studies was felt much strongly after the weeks when there were no lessons. Fortnight intervals with no studies in between were too long for students to remember anything from the precedent lesson. Unit 8 was the mostly aggravated one, as before it there were two weeks without classes. Activity 5 of unit 7, on May 8<sup>th</sup>, was left undone and it was used as a revision warm up (fun activity to start the lesson) on adjectives on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The revision for the mingling activity on that date took quite longer than usual and all activities of that lesson were pushed behind schedule.

At a moment of collective feedback with the group, the teacher alerted the class about the problems brought by the lack of studies and when questioned about that issue on the second survey, 18.75% of them reported not having available time at home to dedicate to studies and another 18.75% reported being overwhelmed by the level of difficulty of the language. The question asked, however, was "what was the main problem that hindered your learning?". Amazingly, none of the respondents reported lack of interest for learning the language as displayed in graphic 4<sup>13</sup>:

<sup>13</sup> Students were given several other options to check as problems that hindered their learning including *no interest in learning English*; *no interest for interaction with peers*; *relationship problems with classmates*; *distaste for the teacher's didactics*; plus a blank slot to write any other issue that was not in the option boxes. However, no one checked these alternatives. See attachment 16.





Graphic 4: Main problems reported by students that hindered their learning

The results of the interviews and the second survey, unluckily, do not represent the opinions of the total number of students who remained in school and took part in the project. That happened because none of the indifferent nor the offensive students who were invited to participate in the interview agreed to do it on the last day of the research. In addition, one of the offensive ones did not return the second survey answer sheet. Consequently, the nine interviewed students were only the ones classified as either fast learning/productive or slow learners.

### 3.3 METHODOLOGICAL ADAPTATIONS

One of the most remarkable characteristics of the action-research is that it allows adaptations and changes according to what the researcher judges to be best for the target group. Throughout the research described in the current work, it was not any different. According to what was reported in chapters 2.3 and 3.1, the units were elaborated in systematic order one after another and not all at once, so that it was possible to make any desirable changes in the activities that seemed unsuccessful in similar previous encounters and reemploy principles that appeared to elicit fine outcomes in posterior classes.

Adaptations were employed quite frequently. In fact, they happened so often that after a period of discarding and reselecting, the units exposed procedures that seemed quite different from those used in the first few lessons of the experiment. It is worthy to consider that the first ones were based on essentially communicative

principles but throughout time, the author started to notice that some of them seemed to be less effective than what was originally expected. Thus, in later encounters, they had to be replaced by other activities. The RT, at times, chose procedures that encompassed communicative principles mixed with audio-lingual, grammar translation and principles of other methods. Amazingly, these “mixed” activities seemed to work quite effectively, where learners produced more and appeared to understand more clearly. Table 9 shows an example of how these adaptations occurred, when two different tasks, one from unit 2, on March 6<sup>th</sup>, and the other one from the final lesson, were used for a similar revision purpose in distinctive moments.

<p>5) Fill out the form with personal information:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PATOS RESORT HOTEL</b> Check in form</p> <p><i>First name:</i> _____</p> <p><i>Surname:</i> _____</p> <p><i>Place of birth:</i> _____</p> <p><i>Telephone number:</i> _____</p> <p><i>Cell phone number:</i> _____</p> <p><i>Room:</i> _____</p> <p>6) Groups of two – Do the dialogue with a partner. One will be the client and the other one the receptionist. Switch roles.</p>	<p>7) Write a little text reporting your day today. Expose your routine. See the example from the teacher.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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Chart 10: Two fragments of different units show an example in which a typically communicative activity is replaced by a more ‘behavioristic’ exercise where both shared similar teaching aims.

The first is a typical communicative activity where students had to fill out the *hotel check-in form* and perform a dialog in pairs: one as the receptionist who asked the clue questions in the form and the other was the guest who answered the questions with the authentic information completed in the gaps. On the other task, done on June 12<sup>th</sup>, they were required to write a short text based on a pre-structured model placed by the RT on the board about his personal routine. This kind of fully controlled stimulus-response work comprised the following principles: a) A model is provided and learners should be able to respond to it; b) “Particular parts of the speech occupy blanks in sentences. In order to create new sentences, students must learn which part of speech occupies which slot.”; c) “Pattern practice helps students to form habits which enable the students to use the patterns”. Items a), b) and c) are appointed by Larsen-Freeman (1986, p.41) as essentially **audio-lingual** features.

After a few months, the author observed that, in order to optimize the effectiveness of the learning process, the lessons had become so filled with activities containing “mixed” principles that he figured that, up to that point, the research **had already lost its essentially communicative identity** and the lessons had gradually been adapted into a specific focused approach instead of the genuine CLT syllabus originally envisaged by the project. A clear example of this change is shown in exercise 7 of the extract below:

5) Preferences			
I love	I like	I don't like	I hate
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
6) Group activity. Interview two different partners and check their preferences.			
GRAMMAR			
Verbs that indicate preference + Verb ING (Like, hate, don't like, etc) + sleepING			
<b><u>Verbs in the GERUND:</u></b>			
1- VERB + ING => Sleeping; Watching			
2- CONSONANT + E = E - ING. Write => Writing / Dance => Dancing			
3 – CONSONANT + VOWEL + CONSONANT Repeat consonant + ING.  Run => Running / Swim => Swimming			
7) With the help of a partner, write the answers to exercise 5 in sentences in your notebook.			

Chart 11: Fragment of unit 6. Typical GTM exercise on task 7, on April 17<sup>th</sup>

Even some students who were considered fast learners or good contributors struggled in the first few lessons, but found their way as the adaptations were being made. As asserted above, this gradual transition was not planned nor desired in the original elaboration of the project. Nevertheless, the author decided to opt for what was best for students and their learning instead of radically focus on the approach and its outcomes. Notwithstanding, a communicative syllabus was still predominant (not exclusive, but yet predominant) during the lessons as they were always presented in English and their main focus still were to promote opportunities where real communication could take place.

The various uncooperative attitudes manifested by the problematic group of students which included unwillingness to participate in social communicative tasks and lack of efforts to understand the target language in class and in the units by ignoring, giggling or changing subjects when addressed by the teacher and peers at times are all evident traces of passive behavior towards foreign language learning, as stated of chapter 3.2.2. The existence of such matters appears to be a strong legacy from their previous learning experiences. Richards and Rogers (1983) assert that the GTM (method normally used in the language classroom of the public school system – LIMA FILHO, 2007) is mainly characterized by the assignment and performance of individual mechanic tasks such as translating texts, memorizing rules of morphology and syntax where speaking and listening are reduced to absolute minimum. Souza (1983) adds that fallacious<sup>14</sup> concepts, such as considering that knowing the grammar or the vocabulary of the target language as being the same as knowing the language, are still acknowledged in the GTM. Hence, it is not strange that some participants found difficulties to cope with and to respond to elements of an educational environment that required active creative social attitudes as fundamental learning procedures. Chen (2007, p. 32) agrees with this theory as s/he states that “long-developed and deep-rooted habit of studying passively accounts partly for learners’ interactive failures in classroom activities”. For that reason, it is concluded that all their negative postures is not exactly their own fault; instead, it is the consequence of several factors that have been built over the years on the learners’ perspectives and beliefs of what it takes to develop linguistic/communicative skills in the target language.

On the process of adaptation, the research reached a methodological dilemma: on the one hand, the principles developed by various pedagogs, educational theoreticians and even communicative scholars on how teachers’ own evaluation should affect his/her professional practice, in a way it becomes more and more related to the students’ learning experiences; on the other hand, the attempt originally proposed by the research to break away with paradigms to language teaching from the past, their principles and effects, and try to implement a completely

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<sup>14</sup> The adjective was employed by the cited author in the referred work.

new approach to the group with different principles, objectives and practices. To reach a consensual ground, it was decided to include a few communicative principles and techniques that are typical of older models of foreign language teaching and add some complementary communicative features to them, as presented above.

It is clear that the results of the surveys exposed in the graphics speak pretty much for themselves. Despite the participants' preferences for the communicative syllabus, they still admitted (including the good contributors) to study very little on their own. The consequences of such scenario, along with the final considerations about the whole research process are presented in the conclusion.

## CONCLUSIONS

All the positive and negative outcomes that rose from the research contributed to the achievement of the various unexpected conclusions described in the current chapter. The links between the results and the exposed conclusions followed a logical perception of cultural aspects developed by the researcher and his experiences as an EFL teacher and also by empirically and culturally based assumptions of educational nature.

At the outset, the prime question about the applicability of a communicative syllabus within the ELT program of the public school system in Patos – PB as the “best method”, regarding all the social, demographical, institutional, political, pedagogical and cultural variants described by Prabhu (1990) and listed at the beginning of chapter 3, has been answered, at last. The answer was a well elaborated and justified **no**. A truly authentic communicative approach is not the “best method” for the teaching of English in the referred context. The reasons that led to such positive conclusion are explained in the subtopics that follow along with a few important observations related to some procedures adopted during the intervention.

In the local public school system, foreign language study is included in the school curriculum since grade 6. Thus, in order to attend the secondary English subject, students have to undergo a minimum of four years of EFL classes through a Grammar Translation methodology. Therefore, it is logical to reckon that the pupils were completely used to behaving and responding to principles of that method. This was one of the main reasons that led the research to be carried out in the 1<sup>st</sup> and not in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the secondary NP mode (see chapter 2.2). The RT hoped that the transition to the new educational environment (D. Expedito Eduardo Oliveira school does not offer the junior grades, so all secondary 1<sup>st</sup> grade attendees are freshmen), along with the contact with new teachers, setting and curriculum would be very likely to diminish the impact of a new syllabus to language teaching. However, against all expectations, the initial reaction of most students (unchanged in a few ones) was a complete estranging of the new syllabus in the first few lessons, described in chapters 2 and 3. Most of the

class found great difficulties to comply with the instructions, the language, the activities and also with the objectives of the proposed tasks. The way they were taught and accustomed to learn, that is, their approach to learning, was highly contrastive with the teacher's approach to teaching.

The effects of the contrast between the cultures (teaching and learning) are well described by Almeida Filho (1993) as a source of problems. He states that a common comprehension of both, the students' approach to learning and the teacher's approach to presenting language is crucial and that changes in the didactics and furnishing materials, alterations in the discourse of what is desired by the instructors, and modifications also in the techniques and in the audio visual resources are not sufficient to produce perceptible impact and profound sustainable changes in the ELT scenario.

Another aspect that demonstrated overt signs of contrasts between the two cultures can be perceived in Graphic 4 (chapter 3) where the students' response revealed that 25% of them considered as major problems that hindered their learning: a) finding the language too difficult and b) troubles in understanding the target language as the means of communication in the class. Such discovery came quite as a surprise to the RT due to the fact that the content of the units had always been planned for real beginners (which represents a relatively uncomplicated content, in his own perspective). In addition, the author also employed a considerate amount of effort to present language that seemed accessible to the class (using cognates, and other words of wide spread knowledge) supplemented with gestures, miming, drawings, and a myriad of other verbal and non-verbal clues that were expected to facilitate the communicative process. Yet, the culture of using verbal and non-verbal aids to assist in the process of establishing authentic communication during the lessons, and even the very process of using the target language as the lingua franca of the classroom was completely unusual to the learners. Furthermore, it is worthy to remember that the amount of students who were identified as *less productive*, *indifferent* and *offensive* earlier in this work was about five or six individuals. This is consistent with the 25 to 30 percent of the class that reported problems in Graphic 4. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the shock between the diverging cultures (teaching and learning) was a significant contributor to the occurrence of most of the negative attitudes described in section 3.2.2 manifested by

that hard-dealing group of students. Such conclusion is highly consistent with Almeida Filho's theory, as he asserts:

It might occur that a culture to learn that restrain a student to deal with a foreign language might not be compatible or convergent with a specific teaching approach of a teacher, of a school or a course book. Such divergence would be a basic source of problems, resistances, difficulties failure and upset in the learning and teaching of the target language (ALMEIDA FILHO, 1993, p. 13).<sup>15</sup>

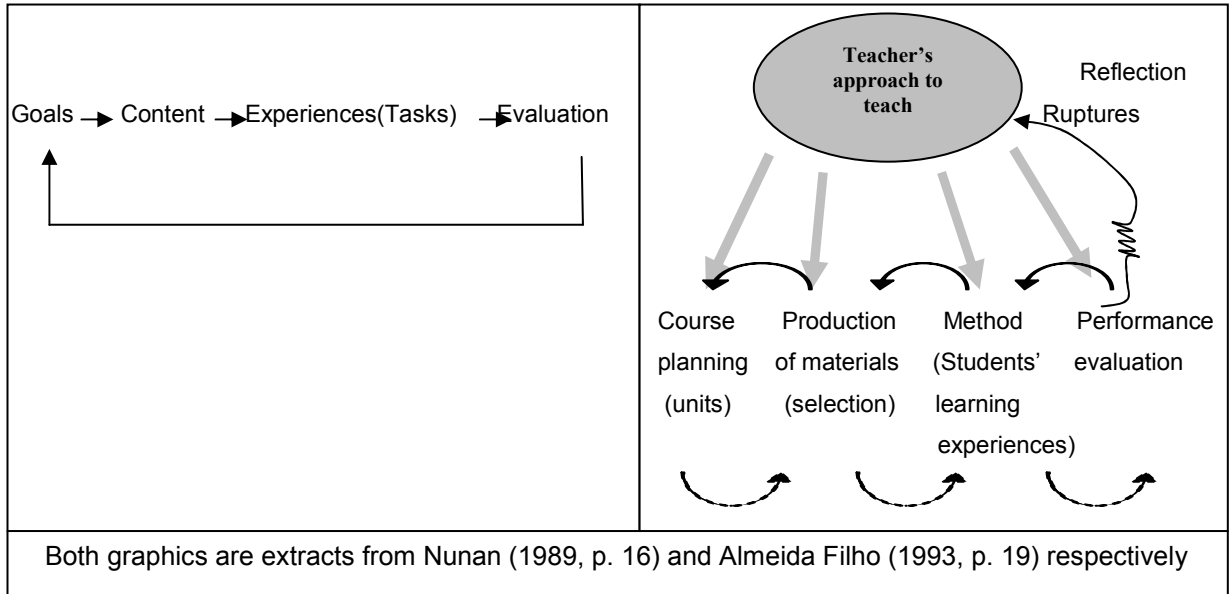
Chapter 3.2.2 also accounts for the difficulty endured by the RT to proceed along with new lesson topics caused by students' lack of personal home study of the content of the units, which impeded them to connect the subjects presented in a previous lesson to the ones tutored in the subsequent one. As they could not remember the basis for the new topic (the subject of the earlier class), the RT found himself compelled to present long unplanned revisions, which consumed a relevant amount of input time. Graphic 3 shows clear details of the pupils' personal commitment to studying as it reveals that 37.5% of them never dedicated any time to go through the units at home and 31.2% spent less than one hour a week on that. The RT constantly lectured the group about the importance of supplementing the classroom input with some home studying and that sole in-class contact is insufficient to achieve successful foreign language learning. The teacher found difficulties to manage the lessons with the absence of home studying by the group. That was another explicit sign of the shock between the cultures as, once again, Almeida Filho concordantly points out that "the approach (or culture) is characterized by the studying manners (...)" (1993, p. 13).

Considering the facts reported so far, it is clearly perceived that there was a need for adopting measures to help to overcome the impasse. To that end, it was observed what was supported by Nunan (1989) and Almeida Filho (1993), on the following graphics:

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<sup>15</sup> The original text in Portuguese reads: *Pode ocorrer que uma cultura de aprender a que se prende um aluno para abordar uma língua estrangeira não seja compatível ou convergente com uma abordagem específica de ensinar de um professor, de uma escola ou de um livro didático. O desencontro seria assim fonte básica de problemas, resistências e dificuldades, fracasso e desânimo no ensino e na aprendizagem da língua-alvo.* The translation to English is the author's responsibility.





Both diagrams explain that the experiences and the evaluation of students' performances should lead to reflection upon the teacher's approach to teaching and thus they affect the entire syllabus (including the goals, the course planning, the production of materials and their contents) in a way that it gets more and more consonant with the students' learning experiences, in a continuous cycling process of reflecting and adapting. It is valid to point out that the importance, the consequences and the merits of continuous reflection by the teacher about his/her own approach and educational practices is not an innovation outspread by the so-called 'communicative revolution'. Reflection and development was the mostly emphasized postulate of numerous pedagogical theoreticians who, up to these days, still discuss, debate and highlight the importance of self professional review.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite all its educational merits and international credits, a truly authentic communicative syllabus to language teaching was not considered the most appropriate approach for the context of the current public school system in Patos – PB, as it is asked by research question number one: *Is the communicative approach appropriate for the current educational scenario found in Escola Normal D. Expedito Eduardo Oliveira?*. Yet, a predominantly communicative syllabus filled with several

principles of other different methods seemed much more effective. In short, **the alternative approach** appeared to accomplish better results.

Similarly, it is perceived that, among the few problems occurred during the experiment, described in section 3.2.2, the age difference amongst the participants showed no signs of influence on the efficiency of the lessons as it was questioned by the second research question in chapter two.

Throughout the eleven lessons (one school semester), some language progress was observed in most of the participants. As reported in chapter 3, the clearest achievement was the development of various communicative attitudes by most learners, including participation in interactive social activities where the L2 was used as a vehicle of self expression, seeking for information and understanding grammar topics. Such breakthrough was gradually attained as a consequence of continuous observations and adaptations. Nonetheless, it was not a success achieved by the entire class, as it has been constantly pointed out in the current work. Furthermore, it is also a fact that various other essential and differential communicative principles were not absorbed by most of the class, as the project originally envisaged, including some of the fast learning pupils, such as the importance of outside-the-classroom practice, home studying and efforts to produce intelligible utterances to their peers without the teacher's interference. It appears reasonable to acknowledge that, to achieve these features, four months (one school semester) of eighty minutes of weekly input is not enough. Influencing the mentality and ideology of students and seeking for a change in their attitudes towards learning, when possible, takes some time. Wilhelm and Pei (2008, p. 92) agree with this conclusion by saying:

Another concern is with educating students and helping them to make the transition to more active learning and involvement in their language classrooms. Students accustomed to educational systems in which active learning and interaction are neither required nor assessed and in which a transmission of knowledge approach is encouraged will experience a great deal of anxiety and stress when exposed to methodology requiring interaction, risk-taking, and learner responsibility. Teachers and students must be given time to adjust to these new roles and responsibilities and must psychologically "invest" in a new way of teaching and learning in order to benefit.

Another relevant conclusion was that the students who did well throughout the semester demonstrated a strong tendency to do well in English regardless of the employed method. Nevertheless, the alternative approach mentioned earlier was the one that elicited the best results in the production and grasping of the language concerning the master of the integrated speaking, listening, reading and writing abilities.

The whole project served to the author as a meaningful source of acquisition of knowledge on the various theories developed by many modern and classic applied linguists to language teaching. It also contributed to the achievement of some academic maturity for conducting quite a complex authentic research that endowed him the honor of becoming an applied linguist. Personal growth, for learning that it is not possible to change the world with our actions, but throughout actions we are changed by the world, was another lesson learned from the intervention. This is not learned simply by reading methodology books. Authentic experiences that affect one's emotions are better teachers than hundreds of pages.

In conclusion, the whole research gave the author a great opportunity to reflect upon his personal educational practices and broaden his insights about pedagogical research and its different methods. It also expanded his knowledge about the communicative approach, its characteristics and its applicability in other language teaching contexts aside from language institutes, which helped him to develop a more enriched sense of educational ELT practices. In addition, it allowed the acquisition of new perspectives that guide the process of the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Yet, they still do not provide an ultimate answer for the methodological problems existent in the current local ELT context. Instead, they expose what worked well and what failed to succeed throughout the semester in which the research occurred.

The author hopes to use all the knowledge that he acquired throughout the Masters' course, most especially during the research, in useful purposes that could, in some way, help to develop the ELT practices of teachers and students from his community. He also hopes that the students who took part in the project will be able to use the knowledge acquired in the first semester of 2008

for personal, academic and professional reasons, like performing well in the English section of vestibular or in their future careers as elementary teachers; using the units and their notes to help in their future English classes by understanding written work or by employing it for internet purposes or any other endeavor where they may find knowledge of the English language useful. As for the auxiliary teachers, the researcher believes that they absorbed some communicative practices so that they will be able to use them with other classes and in other schools. That way, not only their teaching practice is developed but also the level of EFL lessons presented to other students is enhanced.

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# APPENDIXES



**ESTADO DA PARAIBA**  
**SECRETARIA DA EDUCAÇÃO**  
**Departamento de Ensino Médio - Modalidade Normal**  
**Escola Normal Est. Dom, Expedito E. de Oliveira**  
 Criada pelo Decreto Nº 5.240 - Pub. no D. O. de 27/02/71  
 Autorizada pela Resolução Nº 78/85  
 Reconhecida pela Resolução Nº 114/86  
 58.700-070 - PATOS - PARAIBA

DECLARAÇÃO


Declaramos para os devidos fins de direito e fazer prova junto a quem esta interessar que autorizamos o Sr. Jarbas Medeiros de Lima Filho, aluno mestrando da Universidade Federal de Alagoas (UFAL), bolsista da Fundação de Amparo a Pesquisa do Estado de Alagoas (FAPEAL), na área de Língua Inglesa: Ensino e Literaturas, a conduzir o seu experimento científico a ser realizado através de uma pesquisa de cunho etnográfico, como parte integrante de seu projeto para sua dissertação intitulada *Communicative Approach: an alternative for minimization of the methodological problems in ELT in the public secondary school system in Patos-PB* em nossa instituição.

A pesquisa consiste na realização de um programa de ensino de língua inglesa com a adoção de uma *abordagem comunicativa* de ensino com alunos da primeira série do nível médio normal e de professores da escola para fins de aperfeiçoamento metodológico, didático e pedagógico, com duração de quatro meses, a ser iniciado nos primeiros dias letivos do ano de 2008.

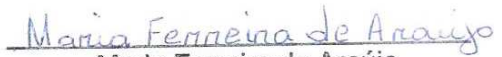
A realização do programa, incluindo o material, planejamento, andamento e ministrar das aulas serão de inteira responsabilidade do aluno-pesquisador. Dessa forma, a escola estará isenta de quaisquer prejuízos de ordem didática, moral e financeira, além de quaisquer problemas que possam comprometer a redação, apresentação, aceitabilidade ou defesa da dissertação do aluno-pesquisador diante de suas instituições de educação ou fomento.

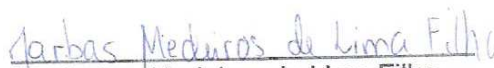
A escola sente-se feliz em receber o programa de pesquisa experimental e entende que o mesmo não fere qualquer lei interna da instituição ou código de ética profissional entre os participantes do projeto.

Patos, 01 de agosto de 2007

  
 Maria do Socorro Lucena  
 Coordenadora Pedagógica

  
 Teresa Delfino da Costa  
 Administradora escolar

  
 Maria Ferreira de Araújo  
 Professora titular de língua inglesa da escola

  
 Jarbas Medeiros de Lima Filho  
 Aluno mestrando UFAL - autor do projeto

Escola Normal Estadual D. Expedito  
Eduardo Oliveira  
Patos, PB.  
Data: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/2008  
Aula 1: Questionário de sondagem

**Pessoal**

1- Nome completo

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2- Idade/ Sexo

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3- Cidade de Residência

---

**Histórico educacional**

4- Já cursou outra modalidade de ensino médio?

---

5- Já estudou língua inglesa?

---

6- Como você avalia sua experiência como estudante de língua inglesa?

a- Ótima                      b- Boa                      c- Regular  
d- Ruim                      e- Péssima

7 – Descreva uma típica aula de língua inglesa na forma que você estudou

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Universidade Federal de Alagoas  
Programa de Pós-graduação em Letras e Linguística  
PPGLL – FALE

Área de Concentração: Língua inglesa e suas literaturas  
Communicative Approach: an alternative for minimization of the methodological problems in ELT in the public secondary school level in Patos-PB.

8 – Qual assunto você mais gostou e qual você menos enquanto estudante de língua inglesa?

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9 – Em tempos anteriores quando você estudava inglês, o que você mais gostava e o que menos gostava?

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9 – Com que frequência você tem contato ou interage de alguma forma com inglês fora de sala de aula?

a – Sempre      b – Regularmente      c- Às vezes  
d – Raramente      e- Nunca

10 – Atribua uma nota (de 0 à 10) à sua vontade de aprender inglês: \_\_\_\_\_

11 – Qual habilidade você teria mais interesse em desenvolver em língua inglesa?

a – Ouvir      b – Ler      c- Falar      d- Escrever

12 – Permito a gravação das aulas do projeto, ciente das suas finalidades acadêmicas e dou fé de que todas as informações fornecidas acima são verdadeiras. Por fim, declaro ser conhecedor da proposta do projeto, de suas intenções e comprometo-me a participar ativamente do mesmo a fim de melhorar meus conhecimentos em língua inglesa e auxiliar os professores em sua execução. Para tanto, assino esta permissão tornando-a legítima em todo o seu teor.

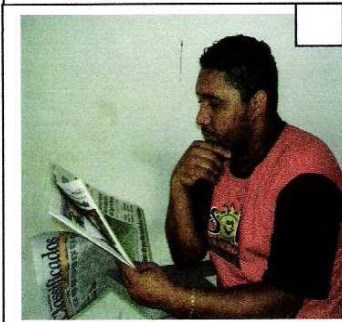
Aluno do 1ª A da E.E.E.F.M D. Expedito E. Oliveira

LESSON 1 – 28/02/08 – 1º A - MANHÃ  
 ESCOLA NORMAL DOM EXPEDITO  
 EDUARDO OLIVEIRA – PATOS -PB

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS  
 PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM  
 LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA – PPGL/UFAL

Professor: **JARBAS MEDEIROS**  
 ALUNO PPGL / BOLSISTA FAPEAL  
 Professora: **MARIA FERREIRA**  
 PROFESSORA DA ESCOLA

1) Listen to the conversations and match the dialogs with the pictures.



3) Groups of three - Substitute the information on the dialogs for some of your own and practice with your partners.

**GRAMMAR**

Verb to be

Affirmative - Negative - Interrogative

I	am	not	Am I...?
You	are	not	Are you...?
He	is	not	Is he...?
She	is	not	Is she...?
It	is	not	Is it...?
We	are	not	Are we...?
You	are	not	Are you...?
They	are	not	Are they...?

**PRACTICE**

3) Fake identity. You are a celebrity. Find the two other famous ones appointed on your identification.

**4) Numbers!**

Complete the blank spaces below

- 1 - \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ - two
- \_\_\_\_\_ - three
- 4 - \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 - \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ - six
- 7 - \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ - eight
- 9 - \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 - \_\_\_\_\_

5) Classroom choir: 1- 10

6) Listen to six conversations. Write the numbers involved.

- 1 - \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 - \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 - \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 - \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 - \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 - \_\_\_\_\_

Activity extracted from English File 1, Unit 1 A, p.5

7) Correction. Check the answers with a partner.

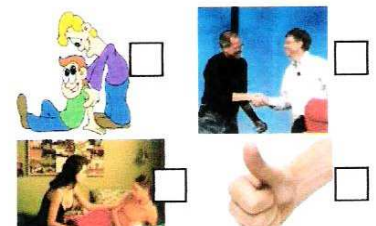
**HOMEWORK**

1) Complete the dialogue with questions and answers:



2) Associate the sentences to the pictures:

- 1 – OK
- 2 – Thank you
- 3 – Hello!
- 4 - Sorry



2) Listen again and fill the blank spaces of the dialog.

Man: Excuse-me.  
 Woman: \_\_\_\_\_?  
 Man: Are \_\_\_\_\_ Maria Ferreira?  
 Woman: No, I am \_\_\_\_\_  
 Man: Sorry.  
  
 Man: Excuse-me.  
 Woman 2: \_\_\_\_\_?  
 Man: \_\_\_\_\_ you Maria Ferreira?  
 Woman 2: Yes, I \_\_\_\_\_  
 Man: Hi, Maria! \_\_\_\_\_ am Maurílio.  
 Woman 2: Nice to meet you.  
 Man: Nice to \_\_\_\_\_ you too!

LESSON 2 – 06/03/08 – 1º A – MANHÃ ESCOLA NORMAL DOM EXPEDITO EDUARDO OLIVEIRA – PATOS –PB	UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA – PPGL/UFAL	Professor: <b>JARBAS MEDEIROS</b> ALUNO PPGL / BOLSISTA FAPEAL Professora: <b>MARIA FERREIRA</b> PROFESSORA DA ESCOLA
--	---	--

Alphabet

ei	i:	e	ai	u:	ðv	α:
A	B	F	I	O	Q	R
H	C	L	Y		U	
J	D	M			W	
K	E	N				
	G	S				
	P	X				
	T	Z				
	V					

1) Listen to the abbreviations and write them on the spaces below

- 1- IBGE
- 2- \_\_\_\_\_
- 3- \_\_\_\_\_
- 4- \_\_\_\_\_
- 5- \_\_\_\_\_
- 6- \_\_\_\_\_
- 7- \_\_\_\_\_
- 8- \_\_\_\_\_
- 9- \_\_\_\_\_
- 10- \_\_\_\_\_

2) Match the pictures and the names

- 1- Hotel    2- Room    3- Form



3) Look at the Picture and answer:



1- Where are they?  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 – Who is she?  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) Listen to the dialogue and complete the blank spaces

**RECEPTIONIST** : Good evening. What’s your name, please?  
**CLIENT**: \_\_\_\_\_  
**RECEPTIONIST**: Sorry?  
**CLIENT**: My name’s \_\_\_\_\_  
**RECEPTIONIST**: How do you spell it?  
**CLIENT**: \_\_\_\_\_  
**RECEPTIONIST**: \_\_\_\_\_  
**CLIENT**: Yes. That’s right.  
**RECEPTIONIST**: And your first name?  
**CLIENT**: \_\_\_\_\_. That’s \_\_\_\_\_.  
**RECEPTIONIST**: Where are you from?  
**CLIENT**: Marceiles, in France  
**RECEPTIONIST**: Ok. Thank you. You’re in room \_\_\_\_\_.

Dialog extracted from **English File 1** - Student’s book, pg. 34

5) Fill up the form with personal information:

**PATOS RESORT HOTEL**

Check in form

*First name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Surname:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Place of birth:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Telephone number:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Cell phone number:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Room:* \_\_\_\_\_

6) Groups of two – Do the dialogue with a partner. One with be the client and the other one the receptionist. Switch roles.

7) Find a different partner. Inform him/her your last partner’s profile.

E.g: *She is Sandra. She is...*

LESSON 3 – 13/03/08 – 1º A – MANHÃ  
 ESCOLA NORMAL DOM EXPEDITO  
 EDUARDO OLIVEIRA – PATOS –PB

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS  
 PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM  
 LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA – PPGL/UFAL

Professor: **JARBAS MEDEIROS**  
 ALUNO PPGL / BOLSISTA FAPEAL  
 Professora: **MARIA FERREIRA**  
 PROFESSORA DA ESCOLA

1) Match the words and pictures



- a- A key
- b- A wallet
- c- A CD
- d- A pencil
- e- An ID
- f- A cell phone
- g- A notebook
- h- A bag
- i- An eraser

2) Work in groups of two. Ask your partner

A: What is this?  
 B: It's a key. What is this?

**LEARNING GRAMMAR**

**Indefinite articles A / AN**

A radio      An orange

Use \_\_\_\_\_ + consonants (b, c, d, f, g...)  
 Use \_\_\_\_\_ + vowel (a, e, i, o, u)

3) Write A or AN:

- 1- \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail
- 2- \_\_\_\_\_ hotel
- 3- \_\_\_\_\_ computer
- 4- \_\_\_\_\_ friend
- 5- \_\_\_\_\_ apple
- 6- \_\_\_\_\_ hour

4) Read the text below and list the objects

**LOST IN ESCOLA NORMAL**

People lose many objects in Escola Normal every year. The objects they lose are:

- a- Watches
- b- Pens
- c- Keys
- d- Erasers
- e- Books
- f- Diaries
- g- Umbrellas
- h- Ear rings

5) Pair work. Competition! Which are the top three objects lost in Escola Normal?

1- \_\_\_\_\_ 2- \_\_\_\_\_ 3- \_\_\_\_\_

**LEARNING GRAMMAR 2**

**Plural of nouns**

- A teacher - teachers
- A watch - watches
- A diary - diaries

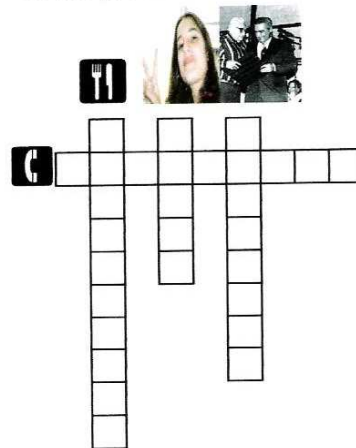
Use \_\_\_\_\_ for general plurals  
 Use \_\_\_\_\_ for nouns ended with X, O, Z, CH, SS, CH  
 Remove \_\_\_\_\_ and use \_\_\_\_\_ for nouns ended with Consonant + Y.

6) Write the plural forms:

- 1- A chair \_\_\_\_\_
- 2- A bus \_\_\_\_\_
- 3- An ID card \_\_\_\_\_
- 4- A dog \_\_\_\_\_
- 5- A bench \_\_\_\_\_
- 6- A key \_\_\_\_\_
- 7- A body \_\_\_\_\_
- 8- A cat \_\_\_\_\_

**HOMEWORK**

1) Do the puzzle



2) Link the instructions:



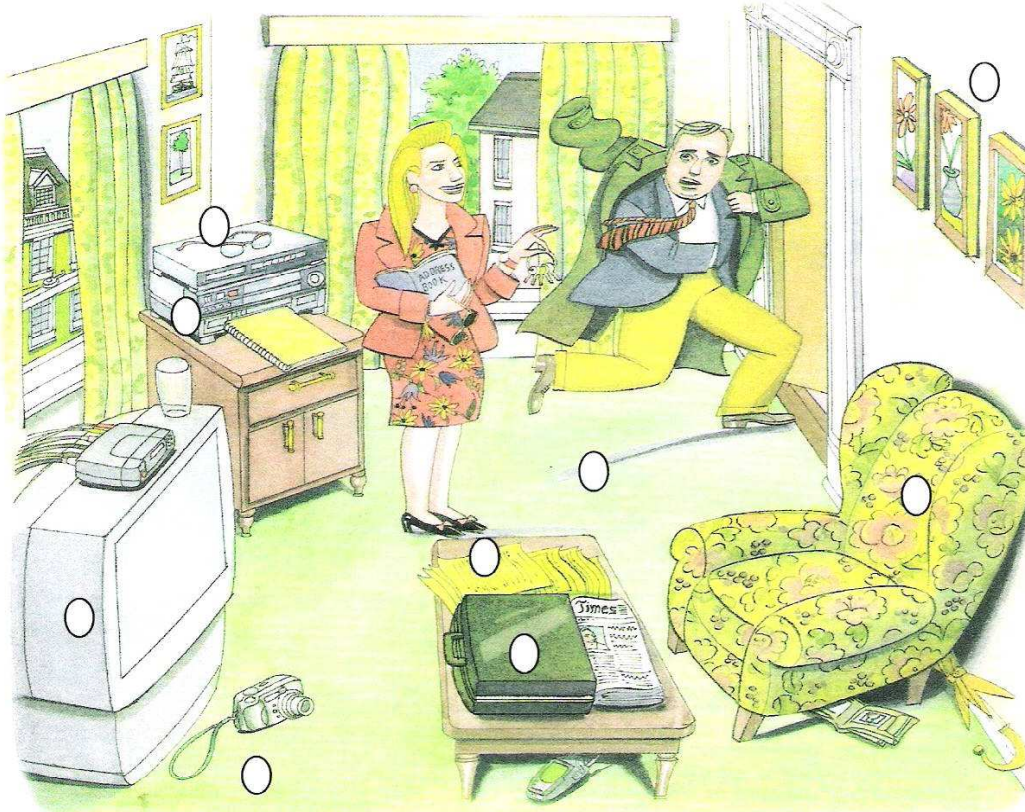
- Read the dialogue
- Don't drag the chairs
- Don't look at the pictures
- Write the correct
- Don't speak Portuguese



LESSON 4 – 27/03/08 – 1º A – MANHÃ  
 ESCOLA NORMAL DOM EXPEDITO  
 EDUARDO OLIVEIRA – PATOS –PB

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS  
 PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM  
 LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA – PPGL/UFAL

Professor: **JARBAS MEDEIROS**  
 ALUNO PPGL / BOLSISTA FAPEAL  
 Professora: **MARIA FERREIRA**  
 PROFESSORA DA ESCOLA



1) Match the names and the pictures:

- 1 – chair
- 2 – floor
- 3 – pictures
- 4 – glasses
- 5 – briefcase
- 6 – camera
- 7 – papers
- 8 – tv
- 9 - stereo

Picture extracted from *Interchange Intro* – Student’s book, pg. 13

2) Pair work. **What is this? / What are these?** – Ask your partner:

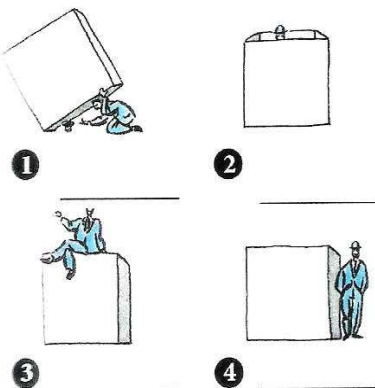
Eg.:

Fulano: What is this?

Sicrano: It’s a camera. What are these?

3) Change partners. Check if your new partner memorized everything.

4) Complete with the prepositions IN, ON, NEXT TO, UNDER.



Activity extracted from *English File 1* - Student’s book, pg. 34

5) Sing the song and memorize the prepositions: *Next to; under...*

6) Pair work. Ask your partner where the objects are in the picture:

Eg.:

- Where is the briefcase?

- It’s on the table, next to the papers

7) Pair work. Ask them about real objects or people in the class.

Eg.:

- Where is Maria Ferreira?

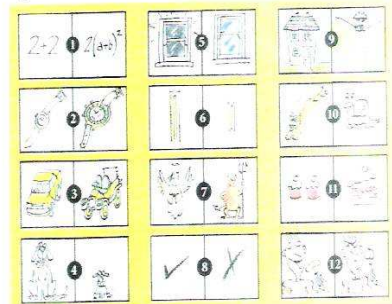
- She is on the chair, next to Jarbas.

8) Extra activity. Write on a paper sentences as you see in the picture:

Eg.: The chair is on the floor under the pictures

**HOMEWORK**

1) Match the adjectives with the pictures



- big  small
- cheap  expensive
- clean  dirty
- easy  difficult
- fast  slow
- good  bad
- long  short
- near  far
- nice  horrible
- right  wrong
- similar  different

Exercise extracted from *English File 1* - Student’s book, pg. 123

LESSON 5 – 03/04/08 – 1º A – MANHÃ  
 ESCOLA NORMAL DOM EXPEDITO  
 EDUARDO OLIVEIRA – PATOS –PB

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS  
 PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM  
 LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA – PPGL/UFAL

Professor: **JARBAS MEDEIROS**  
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 Professora: **MARIA FERREIRA**  
 PROFESSORA DA ESCOLA

1) Match the activities in the picture  
 With the verbs below

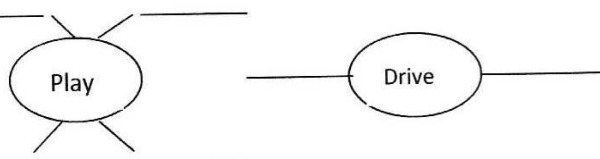
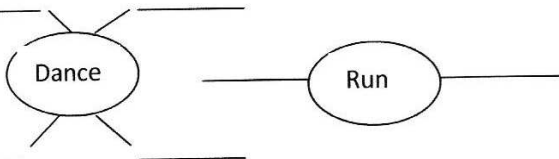


- ( ) drive    ( ) play    ( ) dance  
 ( ) cook    ( ) swim    ( ) run

2) Associate the activities with the ideas in the box.  
 Follow the example:

forró	a car	1 km	the guitar	ballet
fast	the drums	soccer	a truck	funk
volleyball	pagode			

forró



3) Pair work. Interview your partner.

E.g.: - Can you dance forró?  
 - No, I can't. Can you swim?

Grammar

Can → Ability / know how

- + I can speak portuguese
- I can't play a musical instrument
- ? Can you sing?

Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ can  
 No, \_\_\_\_\_ can't

4) Write three true sentences about your partner

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

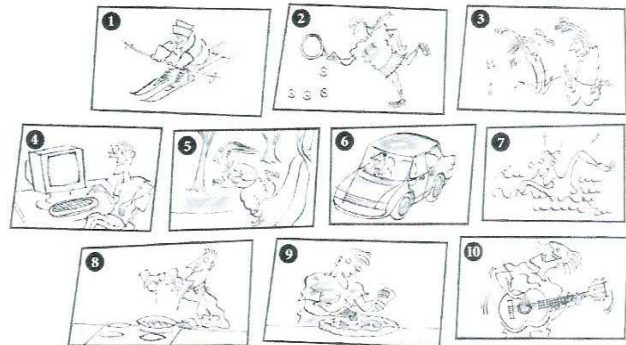
\_\_\_\_\_

Levels:

- +++ Very well
- ++ Quite well
- + Well
- + - A little
- Can't

5) Oral exercise. Tell a different partner two authentic sentences about yourself.

HOMEWORK



Exercise extracted from English File 1 - Student's book, pg. 119

- Cook     Dance     Drive  
 Make a pizza     play sports     run  
 Play the guitar     ski     swim  
 Use a computer

LESSON 6/7 – 10 e 17/04/08 – 1º A – MANHÃ  
 ESCOLA NORMAL DOM EXPEDITO  
 EDUARDO OLIVEIRA – PATOS –PB

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS  
 PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM  
 LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA – PPGL/UFAL

Professor: **JARBAS MEDEIROS**  
 ALUNO PPGL / BOLSISTA FAPEAL  
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 PROFESSORA DA ESCOLA

Find someone who can:

- Swim in Jatobá \_\_\_\_\_
- Run 500 meters \_\_\_\_\_
- Play an instrument \_\_\_\_\_
- Drive \_\_\_\_\_
- Eat a large pizza \_\_\_\_\_
- Look well \_\_\_\_\_
- Dance funk \_\_\_\_\_
- Play sports \_\_\_\_\_

Associate the verbs and the complements:

- |           |                |                          |                          |
|-----------|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|           |                | Good                     | Bad                      |
| a) Read   | to João Pessoa | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Study  | TV             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Travel | a book         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Drink  | late           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Walk   | English        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Watch  | alcohol        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) Sleep  | to school      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Pair work. Check your answers with a partner and tell the teacher how many similar opinions you got.

Me / Not me. Write your name of the space below and follow the dictation.

Me                      Not me

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5) Preferences

I love    I like    I don't like    I hate

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

6) Group activity. Interview two different partners and check their preferences.

**GRAMMAR**

Verbs that indicate preference + Verb ING  
 (Like, hate, don't like, etc) + sleeping

**Verbs in the GERUND:**

- 1- VERB + ING => Sleeping; Watching
- 2- CONSONANT + E = ~~E~~ - ING.  
Write => Writing / Dance => Dancing

3 – CONSONANT + VOWEL + CONSONANT  
 Repeat consonant + ING.

Run => Running / Swim => Swimming

7) With the help of a partner, write the answers in exercise 5 in sentences in your notebook.

8) Read the text and answer:

Do you like travelling, playing sports and swimming? Are you good with children? Here is a fantastic opportunity for you to earn money and have fun! Paraíba Tour is recruiting students to work with children in a local educational ecological program about the natural beauties of Paraíba. In Patos, call (83) 4323 – 4190 for additional information. Don't wait! Call now!

About the text:

- I) Is the article interesting to you?  
a) Yes                      b) No
- II) What abilities are necessary in order to have success in the job?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- III) In your opinion, who would be an ideal person for the job?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**HOMEWORK**

1) Interview 3 people of your house school or friends and collect answers about their preferences.

Person's name	Love	Like	Don't like	Hate

Person's name	Love	Like	Don't like	Hate

Person's name	Love	Like	Don't like	Hate

LESSON 9 – 08/05/08 – 1º A – MANHÃ ESCOLA NORMAL DOM EXPEDITO EDUARDO OLIVEIRA – PATOS –PB	UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA – PPGL/UFAL	Professor: <b>JARBAS MEDEIROS</b> ALUNO PPGL / BOLSISTA FAPEAL Professora: <b>MARIA FERREIRA</b> PROFESSORA DA ESCOLA
--	---	--

1 – Guess the age, nationality and professions of the celebrities below:



KAKA

- |                             |   |  |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 26 | <input type="checkbox"/> Rio de Janeiro | <input type="checkbox"/> Pastor        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 29 | <input type="checkbox"/> São Paulo      | <input type="checkbox"/> TV presenter  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 31 | <input type="checkbox"/> Minas Gerais   | <input type="checkbox"/> Soccer player |



BILL GATES

- |                             |                                    |   |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 42 | <input type="checkbox"/> New York  | <input type="checkbox"/> Bank manager     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 48 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vancouver | <input type="checkbox"/> Program designer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 53 | <input type="checkbox"/> Berlin    | <input type="checkbox"/> Car driver       |



ANGELINA JOLIE

- |                             |                                      |                                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 31 | <input type="checkbox"/> Los Angeles | <input type="checkbox"/> Model     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 32 | <input type="checkbox"/> London      | <input type="checkbox"/> Actress   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 33 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sidney      | <input type="checkbox"/> FBI agent |



THALIA

- |                             |                                      |  |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 29 | <input type="checkbox"/> Mexico City | <input type="checkbox"/> Singer        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 36 | <input type="checkbox"/> Bogota      | <input type="checkbox"/> Model         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 26 | <input type="checkbox"/> Caracas     | <input type="checkbox"/> Tennis player |

2) Revision activity in pairs: Tell your partner your age, nationality and profession using the verb *to be*.

**EMOTIONAL / PHYSICAL CONDITION = ADJECTIVES**

- +++ Great
- ++ Fine / Well
- + Ok
- Sick
- Tired



3) ASK THREE PARTNERS HOW THEY ARE!

STUDENT 1: How are you?  
 STUDENT 2: I am Ok. And you?

4) Observe the picture below and associate the adjectives with their opposites:

- a) Tall – short
- b) Thin - \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Quiet - \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Funny - \_\_\_\_\_
- e) \_\_\_\_\_ - ugly
- f) \_\_\_\_\_ -unfriendly
- g) \_\_\_\_\_ - outgoing



Picture extracted from *Interchange Intro – Student's book*, pg. 21

**TYPES OF ADJECTIVE**

Personality	Appearance	Physical/Emotional
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

5) Interactive activity:

- a) Each student write secretly six adjectives about themselves on a piece of paper
- b) Papers in the back. Six students write one adjective each on a piece of paper placed on the back of another student
- c) After having six adjectives written on their backs, students compare them to the adjectives they wrote themselves

**HOMEWORK**

Mystery person. In pairs, students describe one classmate using adjectives. The partner has to guess who that is.

E.g.: She is short, friendly, thin and outgoing (Maria Ferreira)

LESSON 10 – 28/05/08 – 1º A – MANHÃ  
 ESCOLA NORMAL DOM EXPEDITO  
 EDUARDO OLIVEIRA – PATOS – PB

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS  
 PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM  
 LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA – PPGL/UFAL

Professor: **JARBAS MEDEIROS**  
 ALUNO PPGL / BOLSISTA FAPEAL  
 Professora: **VALMIRA LOPES**  
 PROFESSORA DA ESCOLA

6) Revision on numbers 1 – 60. Collective work.

7) Race the clock. Try to count from 1 to 60 in one minute!

8) Solve the puzzle:

a) Sixty seconds = \_\_\_\_\_

b) Six minutes = \_\_\_\_\_

c) Twenty-four hours = \_\_\_\_\_

d) Seven days = \_\_\_\_\_

e) Four weeks = \_\_\_\_\_

f) Twelve months = \_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

7) Pair work activity. Back to back. Inform your partner what time it is in your clocks and complete the time missing in your clock with the information provided by your partner.

\_\_\_\_\_

Activity extracted from *English File 1 – Student’s book*, pg. 42

9) Question: **WHAT TIME IS IT?**

HOMEWORK

IT'S 2 : 15  
 NUMBER NUMBER

1) Answer the personal questions

10) Memorize the time indicators:

- a) :00 = (O' clock)
- b) :04 = (oh four)
- c) 12:00 a.m = (midnight)
- d) 12:00 p.m = (midday)

a) What time do you go to bed?

\_\_\_\_\_

b) What time do you get up?

\_\_\_\_\_

c) What time do you go to school?

\_\_\_\_\_

d) What time do you leave school?

\_\_\_\_\_

11) Exercise. What time is it?

e) What time is it now?

\_\_\_\_\_



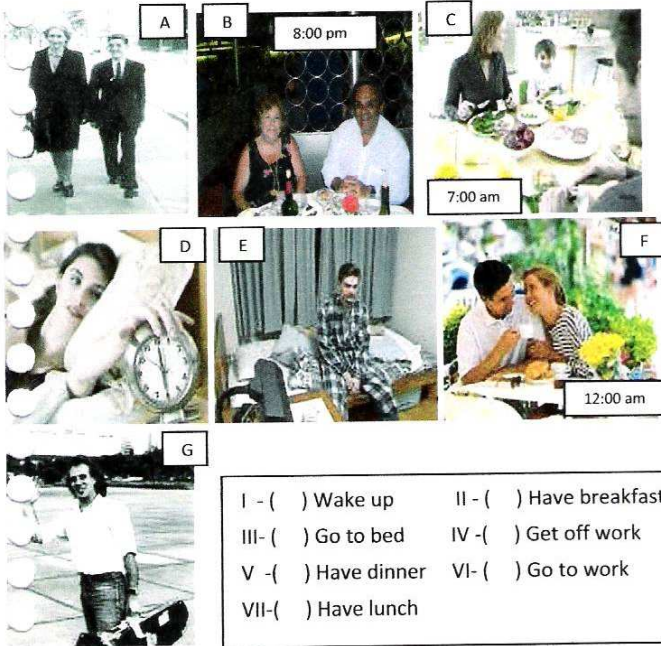
\_\_\_\_\_

LESSON 10 –05/06/08 – 1º A – MANHÃ  
 ESCOLA NORMAL DOM EXPEDITO  
 EDUARDO OLIVEIRA – PATOS –PB

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS  
 PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM  
 LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA – PPGL/UFAL

Professor: **JARBAS MEDEIROS**  
 ALUNO PPGLL / BOLSISTA FAPEAL  
 Professora: **VALMIRA LOPES**  
 PROFESSORA DA ESCOLA

1) Associate the pictures with the verbs



I - ( ) Wake up	II - ( ) Have breakfast
III - ( ) Go to bed	IV - ( ) Get off work
V - ( ) Have dinner	VI - ( ) Go to work
VII - ( ) Have lunch	

2) Write your daily routine on the lines below.  
 Follow the model provided by the teacher.

Morning:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Afternoon:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Evening:


\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_


- 3) Oral activity. Describe your daily routine to a partner.
- 4) Read the two texts and answer the question that follows:

TEXT 1



My name is Roberto and I live in Patos-PB. I wake up at 6:30 and have breakfast at 7:00 everyday. I am a taxi driver and I work long hours. I go to work at 7:30 every day. I travel to Campina at nine o'clock. We arrive at 11:30 and have lunch at midday. I return to Patos at 2 or 3 o'clock and arrive at 5:30. I have dinner in my house at seven o'clock and I go to bed 9:00. I like my work. The money is good.

TEXT 2



Katherine is a nurse at Hospital Regional de Patos. She works 24 hours and has three days off. She has breakfast at 6:00 and drives her kids to school. She cooks lunch at 10:00 and has lunch at midday with her family. She studies in the afternoon and goes to aerobics class. She cooks dinner at 5:00 and has dinner at 7:30. She goes to bed at 10:30 every night except when she is at work.

Text 1:

- a- What is Roberto's job?
- b- Is his routine stressful?
- c- Give one example of a positive aspect of his work.

Text 2:

- a - What is Katherine profession?
- b- Is your routine similar to Katerine's?
- c- What is the difference between Text 1 and Text 2?

FINAL LESSON -12/06/08 - 1º A - MANHÃ  
 ESCOLA NORMAL DOM EXPEDITO  
 EDUARDO OLIVEIRA - PATOS -PB

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS  
 PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM  
 LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA - PPGL/UFAL

Professor: **JARBAS MEDEIROS**  
 ALUNO PPGL / BOLSISTA FAPEAL  
 Professora: **VALMIRA LOPES**  
 PROFESSORA DA ESCOLA

- 1) Imagine you are a famous person. Write your name, last name, phone number and e-mail address.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_









- 2) Group work. Introduce yourself to other famous people and complete the cards

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

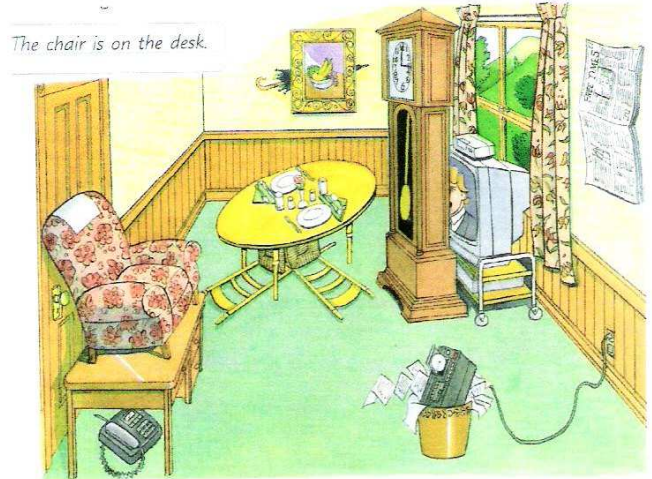
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

- 3) Associate the objects with the pictures:

- a) Telephone   
- b) Chair   
- c) Clock   
- d) TV   
- e) Desk
- f) Umbrella
- g) Picture
- h) Trashbin

- 4) Pair work. Look at the picture and write six problems with the living room:



Picture extracted from **Interchange Intro** - Student's book, pg. 15

- 5) Make a list of your abilities (artistic, working, etc)

I CAN	I CAN'T
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- 6) Find a different partner and contrast your abilities.
- 7) Write a little text reporting your day today. Expose your routine. See the example from the teacher.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

HOMEWORK

Write the daily routine of a member of your family

FINAL LESSON – 1º A – MANHÃ  
 ESCOLA NORMAL DOM EXPEDITO  
 EDUARDO OLIVEIRA – PATOS –PB  
 2º QUESTIONÁRIO DE SONDAGEM

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE ALAGOAS  
 PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM  
 LETRAS E LINGÜÍSTICA – PPGLL/UFAL

Professor: JARBAS MEDEIROS  
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 PROFESSORA DA ESCOLA

1) Como você vê inglês após o projeto?

- Passei a gostar mais  
 Da mesma forma que eu via antes de  
 começar o projeto  
 Passei a gostar menos

2) Durante o primeiro semestre (período de  
 extensão do projeto) quantas horas  
 semanais em média você estudava o  
 material ministrado na aula de língua  
 inglesa fora de sala de aula?

- 0 horas (meu contato com inglês foi só  
 durante as aulas)  
 Menos de uma hora  
 1 hora  Pouco mais de uma hora  
 2 horas  Pouco mais de duas horas  
 3 horas ou mais

3) Como você pessoalmente avalia sua  
 aprendizagem com a abordagem nova?

- Eu aprendia melhor com a metodologia  
 antiga  
 Não vi nenhuma mudança significativa  
 e acho que as duas são quase a  
 mesma coisa  
 Eu me identifiquei melhor com a nova  
 abordagem. Acho que aprendi mais  
 com ela

4) Qual foi o principal problema que impediu  
 seu aprendizado?

- Falta de tempo para estudar fora de  
 sala  
 A dificuldade da língua  
 Falta de interesse meu. Inglês não é  
 muito importante para mim  
 Não gostava de interagir (falar, ouvir,  
 etc) com os outros  
 Falta de relacionamento com meus  
 colegas  
 Não gostava da explicação do  
 professor  
 Não gostava da explicação em inglês  
 Os assuntos trabalhados nas aulas  
 não me eram úteis  
 Não acho que houve problemas  
 consideráveis e estou satisfeita(o)  
 com o que aprendi

5) Que sugestões você daria para que as  
 aulas fossem melhores?

- As aulas deveriam ser ministradas em  
 português  
 Assuntos mais fáceis deveriam ser  
 vistos  
 Traduções de textos deveriam ser  
 solicitadas periodicamente  
 Atividades individuais deveriam ser  
 mais freqüentes e tarefas em pares ou  
 grupos diminuídas.  
 Mais tempo deveria ser dedicado ao  
 ensino de gramática.  
 Não tenho sugestões. As aulas, assim  
 como foram ministradas, atenderam  
 minhas expectativas

6) Atribua uma nota ao projeto

- Zero  1 à 3  4 à 6  
 7 à 8  9  Dez

7) Comentários adicionais:

(Caso você tenha alguma resposta  
 diferente, que não esteja inclusa como  
 opção nas questões acima, escreva-a(s)  
 nas linhas abaixo)

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Autorizo minha exposição (imagem e som) para os  
 fins acadêmicos visados pelo presente projeto e  
 declaro que todas as informações prestadas acima  
 são legítimas e representam minha sincera opinião  
 acerca do que foi trabalhado na turma do durante o  
 período de pesquisa. Para tanto, assino esta  
 autorização/declaração tornando-a legítima em todo  
 o seu teor.

Patos, 17 de junho de 2008

Aluna(o) do 1ª A da Escola Normal Expedito E. Oliveira



## INTERVIEW WITH 9 STUDENTS – JUNE 17<sup>th</sup>

### QUESTIONS USED IN THE INTERVIEW (IN ORDER)

- 1- Qual seu nome completo?
- 2- Onde você estuda e qual série você faz?
- 3- Você participou da pesquisa?
- 4- O que você achou da abordagem?
- 5- Você acha que implantar a abordagem em sua sala de aula foi uma boa idéia?
- 6- Por quê?
- 7- A abordagem influenciou de alguma forma seu aprendizado?
- 8- Por quê?
- 9- Houve algum ponto negativo que você gostaria de destacar?
- 10- Houve algum ponto positivo que você gostaria de destacar?
- 11- Você preferiria voltar a estudar inglês com o método antigo?
- 12- Por quê?
- 13- Você gostaria de deixar alguma recomendação?

The individual interviews with the students were recorded and placed on APPENDIX 16 (CD). Permission for that was granted by students themselves by signing the authorization included in the second survey (APPENDIX 13). The original documents containing the answers and the signatures of the students are in the possession of the author.

**ATTENDENCY LIST**  
**1º ANO - ESCOLA NORMAL - ACTION RESEARCH**  
**FEBRUARY – JUNE 2008**

STUDENTS' NAMES	DATES OF THE LESSONS												
	21/2	28/2	6/3	13/3	27/3	3/4	10/4	24/4	8/5	29/5	5/6	12/6	17/6
Aline Medeiros Pereira	•	•	•	•	X	•	•	•	X	X	•	•	•
Simone Ferreira Lopes	•	•	X	•	•	•	X	•	-	-	-	-	-
Patrícia da Silva	•	X	•	•	X	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Marcelo Cruz dos Santos	•	•	•	•	X	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Laerte Klebson Lucena Nunes	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	-	-	-
Edinalva Soares dos Santos	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	X	•
Mariana Jordelma B. Batista	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	X	•	•	•	•
Danielly Almeida Pereira	•	•	X	•	•	•	•	X	•	•	•	•	X
Kaliane dos Santos Oliveira	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Edileuza Amara da Conceição			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Jailma Caetano dos Santos			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	X	X	X
Maria José de Almeida Soares	•	X	•	•	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Allyson Gomes da Nóbrega			•	•	•	•	X	•	•	X	•	•	•
Maria José de Jesus Silva	•	•	•	•	•	•	X	X	•	X	•	•	•
Israelly Assis de Oliveira	•	•	•	•	•	X	•	•	•	•	•	•	X
Rosilene Oliveira	•	•	•	•	X	•	•	•	•	X	-	-	-
Thelmara Kelly de O. Lopes	•	•	X	•	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Andreia Ferreira Rodrigues	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Leiliane Soares de França	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	X	•	•
Rafaela Santana da Silva	•	•	•	•	•	X	•	X	•	•	•	X	•
Paulo Sérgio F. Araújo	•	•	X	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rossana Santana da Silva	•	•	•	•	•	X	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Thamyres de O. Lopes	•	•	•	•	•	X	•	-	-	-	-	-	-
Girlene Aires Guedes Martins	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	X	-	-	-	-	-
Laryssa F. B. Nogueira	•	•	•	X	X	•	•	•	X	X	X	X	X
Edvanilda Tavares Lima			•	X	•	•	X	X	X	•	•	X	•
Francisca Simone S. Santos	X	•	•	X	•	•	•	•	-	-	-	-	-
Klivya Henrique S. Amorim	•	X	•	X	•	X	•	X	•	•	•	•	•
Valquíria Almeida Lustosa			•	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ridênia R. da Costa	•	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bruna Menezes Ramos	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Maria Aparecida S. Silva	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ana Paula Cajoeiro dos Reis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Edjaneide Oliveira Xavier	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Daniely de Araújo Dantas	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lucineide Canuto S. Pedrosa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pedro Jorge Santos Guedes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vânia Machado dos Santos	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO ATTENDED THE LESSON	24	22	25	25	22	20	21	18	16	14	16	14	15
Average number of students per class during the entire research:	19.4												

Signs:

• Presence      x Absence      - Resignation