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AUTHOR Cabral, Maria
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ABSTRACT

In Portugal's monolingual school system, foreign students are expected to succeed just like Portuguese native students, despite their linguistic and cultural needs and differences. This study characterized the attitudes and motivation of four 9th grade foreign students toward Portuguese and English language classrooms in two Portuguese public schools, noting the affective and motivational factors associated with second language learning in a monolingual school context. The study focused on interest in language classroom activities, involvement in classroom activities, and feelings toward the teacher and peers. Data collection included interviews with students, interviews with teachers, and classroom observations. Data analysis indicated that participating students developed negative attitudes toward language learning and classroom work in Portuguese as well as English classrooms. These attitudes were associated with their interest in the tasks and learning activities they were asked to do in class, their language proficiency (in Portuguese classrooms), and the relationship contexts allowed by the teachers. Students were slightly more motivated in and positive about English language classrooms, mainly due to their high English language competence and English cultural knowledge. (Contains 26 references.) (SM)

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Foreign students' attitudes in Portuguese language classrooms. A case study.

Abstract

In the Portuguese monolingual school system language teachers acknowledge the presence of foreign students in class but do not usually provide them with specific language help. In the Portuguese monolingual school system foreign students are expected to succeed just like any Portuguese native student is expected to succeed, despite their language needs and cultural interests.

This study aims at the characterization of the attitudes and motivation of four foreign students towards Portuguese and English language classrooms in two Portuguese public schools. The study also aims to contribute to a reflection about the affective and motivational factors associated with second language learning in a monolingual school context.

The study is oriented by principles of the qualitative research paradigm. It was conducted within a classroom centred research approach and its methodological procedures were inspired in case-study methods. Data consisted of the students' answers to an interview and of field notes taken during classroom. The students' teachers were also interviewed in order to try to gather complementary data for the characterisation of the dimensions

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examined. Data were recorded, transcribed, coded and analysed with a content analysis technique.

The analysis of the data collected with the interviews and the field notes allowed the author to conclude that the students involved in the study developed negative attitudes toward language learning and classroom work, in Portuguese as well as in English. These attitudes were found to be associated with their interest in the tasks and the learning activities they were asked to do in class, as well as with the relationship contexts allowed by the teachers.

Key words:

foreign language learning; foreign language teaching; bilingual education; attitudes and motivation; language minority students.

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Introduction

In spite of the presence of increasing numbers of foreign students in the Portuguese public schools, the national educational system remains monolingual and, therefore, does not yet fully recognize the foreign students' rights to be instructed in a curriculum that respects and integrates their mother tongues and cultures, and that, at the same time, provides them with adequate contexts to learn Portuguese as a second language. Official documents (i. e., language syllabi, and other documents edited by the government) do not ignore the concepts of bilingualism, multilingualism and interculturalism, but the actual reality of the language classrooms is still marked by learning contexts and practices that seem to reject the prevalence of multilingual and multicultural students within the classroom walls.

Recently, and for the first time ever, the national ministry of education surveyed all Portuguese teachers in basic public schools (grades 1 to 9) in order to find out the exact number of foreign students in Portuguese schools (except schools in the Portuguese islands of the Azores and Madeira). Results revealed that there are 19 435 foreign students (1.98 % of school population) in the Portuguese classrooms of grades 1 to 9. According to their teachers'

perceptions, within these 19 435 students, there are 290 who do not demonstrate any Portuguese language competence and 5.517 who do not seem to know enough Portuguese to be successful in school.

Table 1 (p. 3) shows the number of foreign students who use English (as their first, second or foreign language) in Portuguese public schools. Among them, there are 947 foreign students for whom English is the preferred language in interpersonal situations of communication in social interactions, irrespective of their mother language. In the school context all these children are required to use Portuguese, except in English foreign language classrooms. However, within these 947 foreign students, 30 are not considered by their teachers to be minimally competent in Portuguese language and 226 are not expected to succeed in school, due to their low level of Portuguese language knowledge¹.

Foreign students in Portuguese monolingual public schools are treated exactly like any Portuguese native student. They attend mainstream classrooms where Portuguese is the only language used in academic instruction. Language teachers (at least in most language classrooms observed) usually acknowledge their presence in class, but do not provide them with specific language help. The students are usually evaluated with the same tests, built for the whole class.

¹ There were not any other criteria for determination of the students' Portuguese proficiency besides the opinion of the teachers themselves, who, in the end of the process, decide if the student is or is not able to succeed. The decision is usually based on the students' achievement scores on classroom assessment measures, including paper and pencil non-standard tests. Evaluation focuses on the contents listed on the national language syllabuses.

Particularly in Portuguese native language classes, they are expected to succeed just like any other student is expected to succeed... regardless of their level of competence in Portuguese language and culture.

Table 1. English speaking students in Portuguese basic public schools.

Students' Nationality	Do not know Portuguese at all	Do not know enough Portuguese to succeed in school	Total of English speaking students
American	4	20	65
Australian	0	5	20
Austrian	0	1	6
Canadian	3	16	70
Danish	0	0	5
Dutch	2	25	151
English	14	100	405
Finnish	0	1	6
Irish	0	2	13
Israelite	0	0	6
Norwegian	0	1	9
South-African	7	49	174
Swedish	0	6	17
Total	30	226	947

Teaching language teachers in university programs has provided me with opportunities to observe many language classrooms in Portuguese schools that included foreign language speaking students. The transcripts of those observations led me to reflect and wonder about the attitudes and motivation of those foreign students for whom Portuguese is not their native language. Some of them seemed to be able “to swim” and succeed in the task of learning Portuguese, but others did not seem to be able to cope with the tasks required to succeed and, consequently, were virtually condemned “to sink”.

This study is the first attempt to comprehend the problem I sensed during my days of work in schools. This study is exploratory by nature and it aims at the characterization of the attitudes and motivation of four English speaking students towards their Portuguese and English language classes, in two Portuguese public schools. It also aims to contribute to the teachers' reflection about the affective and motivational factors associated with second language learning in monolingual schools. That is, I also hope that the particular cases here portrayed may lead to a reflection about the eventual existence of similar realities in language learning school contexts.

Attitudes and motivation to language learning

Research on second language acquisition has long demonstrated that affective factors are associated with success in second language learning. Empirical research on affect in second language learning has focused on different learner variables, demonstrating, for instance: a) that attitudes and motivation play a definite role in language learning (e.g., Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1994; Anderman & Midgley, 1999; Dornyei, 2001; Norris-Holt, 2001); and b) that students' beliefs about language learning, as well as their affective states, are interrelated factors influencing language learning outcomes on proficiency, on achievement and on

rate of acquisition (e.g., Horwitz, 1987, Wenden & Rubin, 1987; Abraham & Vann, 1987; Bailey, 1991, 1994; Ellis, 1994).

As a result of various theoretical perspectives in research on language motivation, the concept has been defined as a multifaceted construct including various dimensions (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). Within Gardner's socio-educational model, motivation (*integrative* and *instrumental*) has been defined as a factor of different kinds of attitudes, which influence interaction patterns and participation in classroom. Ames & Ames (1989, cited in Ngeow, 1998) defined language-learning motivation as "the impetus to create and sustain intentions and goal-seeking acts" that will help the language learning process. Crookes & Schmidt (1991) and Gardner & Tremblay (1994) proposed that motivation for language learning is a key factor in successful language learning. The authors define motivation as a result of four interrelated dimensions: a) the reason for learning; b) interest in the learning situation; c) a wish to attain a learning goal; and d) the learner's effort to learn. Oxford & Shearin (1994) identified six factors related to motivation in language learning: 1) attitudes; 2) beliefs about self; 3) learning goals; 4) involvement in the language learning process; 5) support from the environment; and 6) personal attributes like age, sex, language aptitude and previous language learning experience.

In this study, language-learning motivation is taken to be associated to students' attitudes and behaviors of interest (receptivity) towards language classrooms, towards interaction with teachers and with peers, as well as to students' involvement in classroom tasks.

The Study

This study focuses on the following dimensions of the attitudes and motivation of the cases in analysis (four foreign students) towards Portuguese and English language learning situations in two Portuguese public schools: a) interest in language classroom activities; b) involvement in classroom activities; c) feelings toward the teacher and their peers.

The study was guided by the following research question: Are these four students motivated to learn Portuguese and English? The research question included some other sub-questions that also oriented the development of the study: a) Are the foreign students actively involved in the language learning situations created by their teachers? b) Do they feel they are learning? c) How do they feel about their teachers and their peers? d) How do they interact with their teachers and with their peers in classroom?

The study was conducted within a classroom centered research approach. As Alright & Bailey (1991: 2) have stated, classroom-centered research differs from any other type of language learning research in that it

emphasis the attempt to “understand what goes on in the classroom setting”. Principles and perspectives of the qualitative research paradigm and the case-study design oriented methodological procedures. The sources of data were the discourse of the students, the field notes taken during observed classroom situations, and the teachers’ opinions about the personal and academic profiles of the students involved. Data treatment included analysis of the transcripts of the recorded conversations with the students and with the teachers, as well analysis of the field notes. All texts were coded and further analyzed in search for emergent patterns of meaning that might lead to the comprehension of the focused reality, from the perspective of the subjects involved.

The context of the study: The Portuguese language curriculum structure

The Portuguese basic school curriculum naturally includes Portuguese, as native language (PNL), which is taught from 5th to 9th grade in lessons of 50 or 90 minutes, in a total of four hours a week.

The English language is only taught in Portuguese public schools (basic and secondary) as a foreign language (EFL). The Portuguese curriculum specifies the compulsory learning of at least two foreign languages. Both foreign languages are taught in lessons of 50 minutes, three times a week. From

7th to 9th grade students are exposed to approximately three hours of foreign language per week.

The PNL and the EFL syllabuses for each level of studies (basic and secondary) have been reviewed in 1995. Curricula are currently designed in accordance with educational principles and goals that take school as the context not only for the acquisition of knowledge, but for the students' development at the psychological, cultural and social dimensions as well.

The EFL syllabus clearly states that “the process of learning a foreign language is viewed within a dynamic of the construction of the self which presupposes the development of all the dimensions of the personality of the learner: to think, to act, to feel, to create” (EFL Syllabus, 1995:4). In other words, the process of learning a foreign language is seen as a privileged field for the knowledge building necessary for individual global development.

Task-based learning methodology is suggested for classroom work, within a general communicative approach in both language syllabuses. For all the 9 years (1st – 9th grade) of compulsory education (secondary school is not yet mandatory) evaluation is defined as a continuous process, integrated in the global process of teaching and learning.

However, besides the theoretical coherence and consistency of the text of the native and foreign language curricula, the Ministry for Education has not

done much to promote in-service teacher education programs aiming at the necessary actualization of teachers' professional knowledge. As a consequence, at least in the south of the country, some teachers still seem to avoid the methodological views and the curricular structure stated in the language syllabuses documents. The most widely used source for the teachers' selection of content, is the language textbook, which, in many cases, is not structured in accordance with the latest informed views on the process of language learning and teaching.

Participants

The participants in this multi-case study were four foreign English-speaking students, who attended regular EFL classes and regular PNL classes in two Portuguese schools. The real names of the students here mentioned have been omitted and they will be referred to as Andrew, Ann, Bob and Jimmy. Students were invited and freely accepted to participate in the study.

The selection of these students as participants occurred because they were the only foreign students attending 9th grade PNL and EFL classes in two basic public schools associated with a Teaching Education Program of a Portuguese university.

The characterization of the participants in this study was built on the basis of their answers to the first questions of the interview.

Andrew (S1)

Andrew is 15 years old. He came from South Africa when he was 9 years old. When he arrived in Portugal he went to a regular primary state school. He managed to complete primary school with some extra help in the Portuguese language. He said he already knew some Portuguese words since his parents were Portuguese. He likes the Portuguese school he attends. He remembers that in his first months in Portugal his friends and relatives helped him with the Portuguese language; he had some friends from South Africa with whom he used to go out. Andrew thinks he could be a better student than he is now. For this to happen he is well aware that he has to improve his Portuguese language knowledge.

Ann (S2)

Ann is 15 years old. She came from South Africa the summer before that school year. Her father is Dutch and her mother is Portuguese. They always speak English at home, but she knew some Portuguese words when she came. She is still learning Portuguese with friends and with a private teacher. She has always been a good student. She still misses her old school, but she likes her

schoolmates very much. She complains she doesn't get much attention from her teachers. Still, for her, "school is a nice place to be with friends". Ann is convinced that she is a good student regardless of the opinion her teachers of Portuguese may have about her.

Bob (S3)

Bob is a 16-year-old boy who came from Scotland to Portugal four years ago. His father is Scottish and his mother is American. The first year in Portugal he attended 6th grade at a private English school. Then, his parents decided to move him into a Portuguese public school. He failed 7th grade once. He does not like to remember that first year in the Portuguese school. He couldn't understand the teachers. He only spoke with his former English-speaking friends and with a few Portuguese that lived near his place. Now he is much happier. He has passed Portuguese language; he does not have many problems with the other disciplines. He receives extra help from a private Portuguese teacher. He has a Portuguese girl friend. He thinks he could be a better student if only he improved his knowledge of the Portuguese language.

Jimmy (S4)

Jimmy is a 15-year-old boy who was born near Boston. His parents are Portuguese; they had immigrated to the United States a few years before he was born. Four years ago they decided to return to Portugal and he lives now in a small Portuguese city with his mother and father. Before coming to Portugal, Jimmy had complete 6 years of regular state American schooling in Cambridge. There, he was a very good student. He told us the American school was really “cool”. All his friends were there. He had good grades; the teachers were very nice to him. He used to play football every week, but he also played tennis. He likes it in Portugal. He doesn’t have big problems with the language, because he always spoke Portuguese at home. Jimmy’s school is new, has a good library, computers, and plenty of sport facilities. He has many friends that invite him to parties and to go out. His teachers say his knowledge of formal Portuguese is still only reasonable, but he is studying hard.

Table II (p. 13) summarizes the characterization of the classes in which the foreign students were included.

The teachers of these students were informally interviewed in order to find out their opinions about the foreign speaking students. The teachers involved were four English teachers and four Portuguese teachers. All of them were female professional teachers who had been working in Portuguese public

schools for more than 1 year. Their ages ranged from 23 to 34 years old. All of them voluntarily accepted to talk about their foreign students.

Table II Characteristics of the foreign students' language classes

Classes	Andrew's class	Ann's class	Bob's class	Jimmy's class
9th grade public schools	School in the South of Portugal	School in the South of Portugal	School in the South of Portugal	School in South of Portugal
N. of students in class	21 native Portuguese speakers (8 boys; 13 girls)	23 native Portuguese speakers (11 boys; 12 girls)	22 native Portuguese speakers (10 boys; 12 girls)	23 native Portuguese speakers (13 boys; 10 girls)
Students' Age range	14 to 16 years old	14 to 17 years old	14 to 17 years old	14 to 18 years old

Method

Database for the multi-case study consisted of field notes taken during the classroom observations, student interviews and conversations with their teachers. Data were recorded during 16 classroom observations of both language classes (8 observations in EFL classrooms and 8 observations in PNL classrooms), as well as during an interview with each of the students and their teachers of Portuguese and English language.

Field notes consisted of descriptions of the observed students' involvement in the actual language tasks in class, that is, of the students'

communicative interactions with peers and with the teacher, as well as the description of behaviors of the students during class. The behaviors considered as indicators of classroom active participation and the behaviors that were considered as indicators of non-participation or boredom were selected in accordance with lists of students' behavior in language classes described in other classroom based research studies (e.g., Coleman, 1996; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Behaviors indicating active participation were: hand raising, asking questions; volunteering comments; participation in group discussions; helping other students; initiating requests for help; helping the teacher prepare classroom materials. Behaviors indicating non-participation and boredom were: frequent looking at the watch; frequent looking at window; drawing in notebooks; reading or writing texts other than the ones required for class-work; avoiding answering teacher questions or requests; avoiding answering other students' questions or requests; keeping silent in group discussions; constantly chatting with other students.

Interviews took place in the student's leisure room, after class observations. Participants were informed that the conversation was confidential, that the data were going to be used in a research study, and that their names and their most identity revealing aspects would be omitted or transformed in order to protect their real identity. The interviewer explained to respondents that they

could answer in the way they believed best represented their thoughts and feelings.

The semi-structured interview consisted of several questions. The first questions aimed at collecting information concerning: (1) the student's nationality, identity and family background; (2) the student's attitudes towards Portuguese school in general and towards PNL and EFL classes in particular; (3) the student's role during classroom language tasks;

Other questions of the interview focused on the participants' attitudes and motivation towards PNL and EFL classrooms. There were questions that intended to get information on the student's interest and participation in the language classes, and questions that aimed at the characterization of the student's involvement with the teacher and with the other students in class.

The conversations with the eight teachers were rather informal and took place after the classroom observations. Each conversation with the teachers focused on the following topics: a) the teacher’s age, years of experience and teaching qualifications; b) the teacher’s opinion about foreign language students in their own language classes; c) her perceptions of the role of the foreign language students in language classes.

Procedures

Classroom observations generated field notes that were then analyzed in order to characterize the observed behaviors of the four students.

Data collected with the students’ interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed using content analysis procedures. Disregarding predetermined questions, texts were first read and analyzed in search of text units which were afterwards further analyzed in search for their underlying meanings (Creswell, 1998). A set of categories was then devised and applied to the different text units. These procedures allowed for a deeper understanding of the meanings expressed in the interview texts. Tables III and IV (p.17) indicate the set of categories that were used for the text analysis, and include examples of the text units associated with each category.

Table III Example of the set of categories and text units for PNL class data

Theme	Categories	Example of text units
Positive	Interest in classroom	S1- “I like to pay attention in classroom. I understand

Attitudes Towards Portuguese Language Classes	activities	better”.
	Active participation in class	S3- “every time I raise my hand she gives me attention”
	Involvement with the teacher with the other students	S3- “the teacher is always telling jokes”; S4 - The Portuguese teacher knows me well. We usually talk after class.”
Theme	Categories	Example of text units
Negative Attitudes towards Portuguese Language Classes	Lack of interest in classroom activities	S1-“Portuguese language classes are very dull. All we do is read texts, Camões, and stuff like that...” S4 “//All we do is read and complete grammar exercises.”
	Passive role in class	S2-“It’s difficult to participate in class”. S1-“PNL classes are boring, I prefer to stay outside”.
	Detachment from the teacher /the students	S2-“ The teacher speaks too fast...She is always asking questions. I don’t understand her. She uses very difficult words.”

The conversations with the eight teachers were recorded, then transcribed and analyzed with an informal discourse analysis technique. Texts were read and analyzed in search for units of meaning that condensed the subjects’ opinions. The teachers’ opinions about the foreign students were summarized and presented to them in order to check for content validation. The final accepted versions of these texts (Tables V and VI) result from the teachers’ comments on previous versions.

Table IV Example of the set of categories and text units for EFL class data

Theme	Categories	Example of text units
Positive Attitudes towards English Language Classes	Interest in classroom activities	S1-“English language activities are interesting. // In the beginning it was kind of dull, I already knew all that stuff.”
	Active participation in class	S2- “I like to do group work. It’s good to find out how the others think and feel about something.”
	Involvement with the teacher / the students	S2-“I usually help the other students.” S4-“The teacher sometimes asks me the American

Theme	Categories	English translation of a word. Example of text units
Negative Attitudes Towards English Language Classes	Lack of interest in classroom activities	S4- "I do not pay much attention. I already know the words and the grammar they are learning."
	Passive role in class	S3- "I don't do much in class. I just sit there //"
	Detachment from the teacher / the students	S2- "The teacher doesn't ask me anything, only to other kids." S3- "They speak a lot of Portuguese."

Analysis and discussion

Are these foreign students motivated to learn Portuguese and English?

The four students that constitute this multi-case study revealed a rather heterogeneous personal and linguistic profile (see characterization of participants). Like it happens with all foreign students who come to the Portuguese school system, they were placed in regular PNL and in regular EFL classes according to their prior school curriculum. Their language competence in Portuguese and in English was not specifically evaluated. Their life stories and their linguistic and cultural background were not particularly taken into account.

The analysis of the collected data allowed me to attempt to better understand the way these four students felt in their language classes. The discourse of the four students involved in this study revealed that their attitudes and motivation toward language and classroom work, whether in Portuguese or in English, were largely associated with their interest in classroom activities,

their participation in class, and their involvement with their teacher and their mates.

Although there were occasional methodological differences in both language classrooms (EFL and PNL), most of the classes observed followed a rather traditional teaching approach. Nevertheless, students' interest in classroom activities seemed to be higher in EFL than in PNL classes.

Their participation in class was valued differently in EFL and PNL classrooms. They felt they were able to successfully participate in EFL classes, but in PNL they felt they were not sufficiently involved with the tasks required by their teachers.

The attitudes and motivation of these four students also seemed to be associated with the kind of relationship contexts allowed by their teachers. They seemed to be more comfortable in the EFL rather than in the PNL relationship contexts.

Interest, participation and involvement in EFL and in PNL classrooms

Although none of the 8 EFL classes observed included such kind of activities, whenever students expressed a positive attitude towards EFL classes they always referred to particular kinds of tasks they liked to perform in class, e.g., "English classes are fun and interesting // we listen to stories and we

participate in debates” (S1). Students overtly indicated that their interest in classroom work increased every time they were asked to participate in language games, which were nothing more than grammar competitive exercises: e.g., “The teacher asks us to participate in games to check our grammar knowledge” (S3). They manifested their preference for group work in stead of individual work; in fact, they were often chosen by their mates to be the spokesperson of their group: e.g., “We work in small groups and it is challenging when we have to present our work to the whole group, in class” (S2). They also said they liked to cooperate with the teacher in classroom management, and they clearly demonstrated that they enjoy participating in the organization of class work. However, it seems that what these students really valued was their active participation in class, which was successfully performed due to their higher than their mates target language competence, e.g., “I sometimes suggest exercises from my old English text books. We practice them in class and then we all correct them... We learn and we have fun”(S4). Given their ability to understand the teacher and the materials, they usually felt teachers’ instructions and presentations were worthwhile paying attention to, e.g., “It’s not difficult to pay attention in EFL classes.”(S1).

The nature of the relationship with their teacher and with their schoolmates was also a reason for their interest in the discipline. In EFL classes

they enjoyed having the attention of the teacher and of their mates, e.g., “The teacher is always asking me to tell the others about my former school, about my country...She gives me some attention” (S1); “The other students like to hear stories about my country” (S4). They seemed to like to feel they were needed in class, but they did not like to perform the same roles repeatedly, e.g., “I like to help my friends in class” (S1); “I am frequently asked to help the other kids in class... I like it because I feel useful, but if it happens everyday I get tired of that kind of work”(S2).

In the case of the PNL classes, none of the four students revealed great interest in classroom activities. Only one of the students mentioned the teacher as a reason for his interest in PNL classes: “The teacher tells jokes in class...”(S3).

The negative aspects referred to by the students also helped to identify their attitude towards language learning in the classroom. Again, their answers revealed their high expectations of participation and involvement in classroom work.

In EFL classes, students negatively mentioned the fact that they had to re-learn the same grammar items again, e.g., “EFL classes are always the same – grammar. I never write anything in class” (S4); that the teachers sometimes asked too much from them just because they were English speakers, or that the

teachers often ignored them because they were supposed to know what was being learnt in class, e.g., “The teacher does not give me much attention... she says I already know what they are learning” (S2.). One student was aware of his slow progression in English, his own native language, as a result of his low interest in the discipline: “I don’t study and I’m starting to have difficulties (...) with some words// “(S3); “The teacher speaks too much Portuguese in class... How are we supposed to learn English?” (S3).

Foreign students were aware of their lack of interest in class work and clearly indicated that their inadequate behaviors were the result of low attention and lack of challenge in their EFL classes, e.g., “//it’s difficult to listen to all that stuff once more... I’m tired of that class//.. I draw in my notebook.”(S4).

Foreign students were also able to identify what, in their opinion, did not contribute to their language development. For instance, the monotonous nature of EFL class work, e.g., “We all do the same activities, sometimes I’m bored with what we do in EFL classes” (S1), or the kind of tasks they were asked to complete, e.g., “Instead of doing translations we should read more, debate more...”(S3). Students clearly expect to participate more in EFL classes; all the four students interviewed referred to the fact that their EFL teachers sometimes ignored them in class, e.g., “I never speak in class //... every time I raise my hand the teacher asks another kid to answer//”(S1); “//the teacher

doesn't ask me anything, only to other kids.”(S2); “Except in group work, I don't work very hard in EFL classes. “S3); “The other kids work much more in class// I don't do much// (S4).

Negative attitudes towards PNL classes seemed to be even more strongly associated with the tasks performed, with their passive role in class and with their detachment from the teacher and from their mates.

Their low interest in classroom work seemed to be associated with their lower than their mates language competence, e.g., “PNL classes are boring // they all speak too fast. I prefer to be outside.”(S4). As a reason for their low motivation for PNL, students also mentioned the teachers' lack of enthusiasm in class work, manifested in their mood, e. g., “ PNL classes are boring, the teacher is never happy...”(S1); or in their typical teaching routines, e.g., “All we do is reading and answering questions” (S4); “We always have to copy what's written on the board... the whole class.”(S2). The kind of teacher attention given to the particular language needs of the students also seemed to make a difference. The students did not feel confident enough to use the Portuguese language, e.g., “I don't feel comfortable to speak in PNL classes, the other kids make fun of my accent //”(S3); “The teacher never gives enough time to answer, most of the times she answers the questions she asks...”(S2). The students' discourse also revealed their sensitivity to the quality of the

teachers' speech, e.g., "The teacher uses very difficult words...often I don't understand her"(S2), and their awareness of their particular learning needs, e.g., "Portuguese grammar is very difficult... the teacher doesn't explain the way I need."(S1).

Field notes taken during classroom observations revealed information that seems to agree with the students' negative opinion towards PNL classes. The observed behaviors of these four students in PNL classes indicated their frequent lack of attention in class. There were several references to foreign students drawing in their notebooks (4 references), as well as looking through the window (8 refs.), or even reading magazines (2 refs.), which they put inside their student's book. In fact, there were frequent occurrences of foreign students attempting to answer the teacher's questions (3 or 4 per class), but these questions were usually answered by the other kids...Some teacher behaviors could also be interpreted as lack of patience with those students that did not master the Portuguese language effectively. For example, frequent corrections of mispronounced words (16 refs.), interruptions of the students when they were reading or speaking (12 refs.); calls for quicker answers or for faster completion of written tasks (5 refs.); avoidance of the participation of the foreign language student in conversations occurring in class (8 refs.)...

We also noted that in EFL classes some teachers seemed not to notice the participation of foreign students. Sometimes teachers avoided asking them to answer their questions (8 refs.), and some teachers rarely asked them to read (4 refs.), or to be the spokesperson of their group (2 refs.)... Their opinion was asked in the end of the discussions occurring in class (4 refs.). They were told to wait for the others to speak, because they surely knew the answer (2 refs.)...

What do teachers think about foreign language students?

The Portuguese teachers' opinions about these foreign students in PNL classes indicated that they were aware of their language difficulties, but also that they were aware of their role as PNL teachers. It is difficult to attend to the different language needs of a large number of students in class. Besides, the PNL syllabus is designed to meet the Portuguese native students' language needs, which are different from the heterogeneous language needs of the foreign students.

The teaching qualifications of PNL teachers were specifically oriented to Portuguese language and Portuguese literature; therefore, these teachers did not feel they were able to cope with the complexities of a multilingual and multicultural teaching context. Tables V and VI (p. 26 and p. 27) represent the

synthesis of the PNL and of the EFL teachers' opinion about foreign students in their language classes.

The EFL teachers interviewed had a high opinion of the foreign students in their classes. All of them mentioned the fact that their English was very good, that they were able to successfully complete the language tasks in class.

Table V
PNL teachers' opinion about foreign students in class

Teacher A

Female, 23 years old, completed her professional degree in Portuguese Studies the year before. She thinks foreign students should have extra help in Portuguese language. Her duty is to complete the Portuguese language syllabus, designed for a native language class. She is aware of the foreign students' language problems in Portuguese language classes.

Teacher B

Female, 34 years old, completed her professional degree in Portuguese Studies 3 years ago. She thinks foreign students should have extra help in Portuguese language. This help should be provided by specific language teachers, with foreign language teaching qualifications. Parents should be involved in the solution of the problem. Her main duty is to complete the Portuguese language syllabus, designed for a native language class. She is aware of the foreign students' language problems in Portuguese language classes.

Teacher C Female, 25 years old, completed her professional degree in Portuguese and French 2 years ago.

She thinks foreign students should have extra help in Portuguese language. Her duty is to complete the Portuguese language syllabus, designed for a native language class. She is aware of the foreign students' language problems in Portuguese language classes, but it is the school's responsibility to provide specific language programs for these students.

Teacher D Female, 24 years old, completed her professional degree in Portuguese Studies the year before.

She thinks foreign students should have extra help in Portuguese language. Her duty is to complete the Portuguese language syllabus, designed for a native language class. She is aware of the foreign students' language problems in Portuguese language classes. The Ministry of Education should initiate a bilingual educational program in order to meet these students' needs.

The teachers also mentioned the fact that these students were frequently a challenge to their daily work in class. They made them prepare their classes very carefully, in terms of cultural content, vocabulary, and grammar structures. The EFL teachers considered that these students were a great help in oral language activities because they were good language models for the rest of the students in the class and because they helped to create a real multicultural learning context.

Table VI EFL teachers' opinion about foreign students in class

Teacher A'

Female, 26 years old, completed her professional degree in English and German 2 years ago. She thinks foreign students are a great help in her classes. They are language models for the other students.

Teacher B'

Female, 27 years old, completed her professional degree in Portuguese and English 3 years ago. She thinks foreign students are both a challenge and a help in her language classes. They make her prepare her classes carefully and they are good models for oral language production activities.

She often requires their help in communicative language tasks.

Teacher C'

Female, 32 years old, completed her professional degree in English and German 8 years ago. She likes having foreign students in her EFL classes. Foreign students help to maintain "real language activities", and help to make language classes more multilingual and multicultural.

Teacher D'

Female, 24 years old, completed her degree in Portuguese and English the year before. She thinks foreign students are often bored in her classes because they already know the content she teaches in class. Her EFL class is rather large and many Portuguese native speaking students have difficulties in English. She feels she has to attend to their language needs first. Ordinarily, she asks foreign students to participate as models in language production activities.

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Reflecting on our findings

This brief incursion into the world of four foreign students' attitudes and motivation towards their language classrooms revealed that these students were not happy in their Portuguese language classes, and that they also did not seem to be at home in their English language classes. Their negative attitudes towards the learning of the Portuguese language seemed to be associated with the kind of tasks they were required to complete in class, and with their high sensitivity to the learning and to the interactive contexts created by the teacher in class. However, an attentive analysis of their reasons revealed that their lack of interest in PNL classes was more often than not associated with their lower than their mates communicative competence.

PNL lessons were described by three of the four students involved in this study as being monotonous, repetitive and boring... Indeed, 4 of the 8 lessons observed consisted mainly in the repetition of teaching practices that included: a) the presentation of the topic of the teaching unit, usually dedicating some time to its discussion; b) reading a text and answering comprehension questions, mostly included in the students' text book; c) some work on Portuguese grammar, usually including exercises with sentences referring to subjects detached from the topic of the texts previously read by the students, d) and, finally, some time devoted to writing a short text. Neither the reading nor

the writing activities seemed to be developed within a process oriented approach. Although the teachers always reminded students of the work done in previous classes, language learning activities did not seem to be developed as part of a sequenced and contextualized teaching plan, aiming at the completion of a determined task...

Conversations with the teachers right after the observed lessons, confirmed that they overtly preferred to teach on a product oriented rather than a process oriented model. Most of the teachers with whom we chatted blamed the large number of students in class and the long list of content prescribed by the national syllabus for not allowing them time to be more student centered.

After the interviews, the four foreign students told us their reasons for not participating much in PNL classes. The reasons they gave for their behavior indicated that they did not feel at ease with their Portuguese language competence. They resented the other students' mockery of their accent, they were uncomfortable with their teacher's constant corrections, they doubted their Portuguese language comprehension abilities, they found compulsory literature reading tasks difficult and boring, they knew that they did not master the Portuguese language perfectly enough to write good papers.

The transcripts of the observed lessons seemed to confirm their negative feelings. There were few occurrences of them speaking in the

Portuguese language classes. They usually seat quietly at the back of the classroom. When asked a question by the teacher, they frequently seemed to hesitate before answering...They gave shorter than expected answers ...They avoided volunteering for reading or for board demonstrations of any kind.

EFL classes were described by the students as more interesting and challenging. They mentioned their appreciation of grammar games and role-plays, in which they fully participated and which surely helped them to maintain their attention and to promote their involvement in the language learning activities... One of the students complained that his teacher spent too much time speaking Portuguese due to the other students' low level of English knowledge.

However, the 8 English language classes observed were not indeed rather different from the Portuguese language classes. The EFL teachers did not seem to make any effort to vary strategies and materials in order to try to involve the whole group of students in class work.

In general, classes still followed the traditional sequence of the Presentation, Practice, and Production routine. Only one teacher made attempts to negotiate materials, activities, and working patterns with the students. Of the total eight lessons observed only two included sequences of tasks that indicated that the teachers were following a communicative task-based learning approach.

In these lessons the students clearly showed their enthusiasm and involvement in the learning activities.

One common trait nevertheless emerged from field notes. Particularly in teacher-centered language classes, foreign students were often left out of the moments of teacher–student dialogue. In these kind of classes they were frequently asked to participate after all the others and when they spoke, their arguments were usually directed to the teacher, not to the other students. When teachers asked their opinions they spoke without the natural interruptions observed in other teacher-student verbal interactions. Sometimes they seemed to be invited speakers in the English language classroom... Some of them seemed anxious to finish their participation in class. When asked to read their written texts they either read it too quickly or they spoke in a lower than expected voice.

Concluding remarks

Bilingual students have the right to develop their language competence (oral and written) in their native language (which for most of them is English) as well as in their second language (which is Portuguese). However, when they are included in monolingual large classes (25 or more students) it is difficult for the teacher to be able to provide for the different language needs and

multicultural interests of all the students in the class, particularly when lessons are planned on a traditional basis -- that is, teacher-centered and product-learning oriented. As Nunan (1996) has reminded us, larger classes make it more difficult for the teacher to work on the basis of a learner-centered approach. In a large class it is virtually impossible for the teacher to take the time to negotiate content and activities with the students as well as to provide every learner with the assistance, encouragement and support the student might need in order to set his/her own objectives and to develop his/her preferred learning strategies.

In this study, it seems that the attitudes and motivation of the foreign students were higher in EFL classes than in PNL classes. Students were more involved in tasks that required pair and group work, which gave them the opportunity to use the language they knew better. Language awareness activities, although boring for some of them, still gave them a further opportunity to demonstrate their greater than their peers EFL competence.

The students' positive attitude towards EFL classes, demonstrated in this study, seemed to be largely associated with these foreign students' high English language competence as well as with their high English cultural knowledge (Nunan, 1985). It seems quite natural that their greater knowledge of English than of Portuguese provided them with the self-confidence that

helped their higher involvement in English class work, whenever the tasks were challenging enough. Such claims are also supported by recent studies (e.g.; Arnold & Brown, 1999; Norris-Holt, 2001), which indicate that positive attitudes and higher motivation are associated with higher task involvement, higher language production, and higher language proficiency in language classes.

In this study we focused on dimensions of the attitudes and motivation towards PNL and EFL classes of Ann, Andrew, Bob and Jimmy, English speaking students in Portuguese public schools. Their words and their teachers' opinions revealed that they were able to cope with a school system that still did not provide them with the most adequate learning contexts, because it was monolingual and monocultural. For them Portuguese was a second language; nevertheless they were supposed to learn it during the same time and in the same way that the native Portuguese language students do. In addition, those who had English as their native language were not able to develop knowledge of their mother tongue properly because English is only taught as a foreign language. That is, they did not fully belong to the PNL students' group because their level of Portuguese knowledge was lower than expected by PNL teachers, but they also did not belong to the EFL students' group because they knew too

much English, and therefore they were not challenged to work more, and to learn more. Where do bilingual students stand in a monolingual school system?

Many other foreign students are still exposed to the same or similar language learning experiences in Portuguese public schools. Their language needs and their cultural interests have to be respected and attended to if we want them to succeed in school and in life. Teachers are strongly implicated in the necessary changes that will provide foreign students with better and more appropriate learning contexts. I am certain that some have already started this challenging task. Afterwards, we all know that

“The infinite episodes, positive and negative, that students experience in many hours spent in school, can greatly impact their lives. (...) Fortunately, teachers can reverse the tide from content students find meaningless and boring to material that motivates, interests and contributes to their growth.” (Moskowitz, 1999:177).

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