
PORTUGUESE AS A PRIMARY MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The teachers' perspectives

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Abstract: Recent reports accentuate that the UK needs a more robust Modern Foreign Language (MFL) policy. These developments have culminated in the introduction of MFL as a statutory subject at primary level, which has prompted foreign cultural institutes to promote the learning of foreign languages in primary schools. This paper sets out to depict the perspectives of the teachers involved in schemes of Portuguese as a MFL promoted by Instituto Camões in partnership with three London schools. An examination of the teachers' views suggests that the language spread initiatives would benefit from further sensitivity towards the established teaching/learning culture so as to create sustainable schemes of language provision.

Keywords: primary education, language policy in Europe, Portuguese as a foreign language, Portuguese as a heritage language

PORTUGUÊS COMO LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA NO ENSINO BÁSICO BRITÂNICO: A PERSPETIVA DOS PROFESSORES

Resumo: Vários relatórios têm alertado para a necessidade de se adotar uma política robusta de aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras no Reino Unido. Estes desenvolvimentos culminaram na introdução das línguas estrangeiras como disciplina obrigatória no ensino primário, o que justificou a promoção da aprendizagem de línguas por parte de institutos culturais estrangeiros. Este artigo traça um retrato das perceções dos professores envolvidos em experiências de português como língua estrangeira promovidas pelo Instituto Camões em parceria com três escolas londrinas. Da auscultação das perceções dos professores conclui-se que, para se criarem estruturas sustentáveis de ensino de português no Reino Unido, é necessária uma maior sensibilidade em relação à cultura local de ensino/aprendizagem.

Palavras-chave: ensino básico, políticas de língua na Europa, português como língua estrangeira, ensino de português no estrangeiro

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LE PORTUGAIS COMME LANGUE ÉTRANGÈRE DANS LES ÉCOLES PRIMAIRES BRITANNIQUES: LES PERSPECTIVES DES ENSEIGNANTS

Résumé: Des rapports récents ont souligné la nécessité d'adopter une politique solide de 'apprentissage de langues étrangères au Royaume-Uni. Ces développements ont mené à une intégration de 'apprentissage obligatoire de langues étrangères au niveau de la primaire et ont incité divers instituts culturels étrangers à développer l'apprentissage de langues dans les écoles primaires. Cet article présente les perspectives des enseignants qui participent à un programme de portugais comme langue étrangère soutenu par l'Instituto Camões en partenariat avec trois écoles anglaises. L'étude des perspectives des enseignants indique que, pour créer des structures viables d'apprentissage du portugais, la culture locale de 'enseignement/apprentissage requiert une plus grande la sensibilité.

Mots-clés: enseignement primaire, politiques linguistiques en Europe, portugais langue étrangère, portugais langue d'origine

Introduction

In November 2013, the *Languages for the Future* report (Tinsley & Board, 2013) highlighted the need to develop foreign language skills in the UK and identified those languages of strategic relevance in terms of economic, diplomatic and cultural import, a list that included Portuguese. A brief reference was made to Modern Foreign Language (MFL) learning in primary schools. The report informed that the most widely taught language was French with 74% of schools offering some kind of provision. However, the authors counterpointed this advancement with the finding that only 15% of the UK adult population reported being skilled enough to hold a conversation. The document drew on the findings of the 2012 Language Trends survey (Tinsley & Board, 2012), which looked closely at the situation of MFL in primary and secondary schools against a state of affairs of a deficit of language skills, despite the economic, intellectual and cultural benefits heralded to be inherent to MFL.

These developments and the introduction of primary MFL as a statutory subject (Department for Education, 2013) have prompted foreign cultural institutes – the Goethe-Institut, the Institut Français and the Instituto Camões – to introduce schemes to support MFL learning in primary schools. In order to understand the initiatives sponsored by the Instituto Camões, we shall survey the history of primary MFL in the UK in terms of regulatory frameworks and state-of-the-art reports and, at large, investigate the embedded reservations towards the very idea of language learning. Our aim is to focus on the perspectives of the teachers responsible for the provision supported by the Instituto Camões in partnership with three London schools. These shall be a key source in assessing the feasibility of the policy against local language policies, established

practices and institutional constraints. Arguably, the initiatives of primary MFL are an attempt to follow through the policy of language spread policy initiated in 2008 (Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, 2008), which aimed at strengthening the cultural, geostrategic, and economic profile of the Portuguese language. We set out to investigate the perspectives of the teachers involved in the initiatives of Portuguese as a foreign language in respect to how their practice, the model of implementation and their context (both at school and national level) relate to the broader policy of language spread.

Primary MFL from the 1980s to 2014

Though supportive of primary MFL and in line with governmental efforts, the sobering tone of Tinsley and Board (2013) mirrored earlier assessments of the situation. Following the Burstall report (1975), a pessimistic appraisal of the first experiences of primary MFL, education professionals raised their concerns about the soundness of teaching foreign languages to schoolchildren. A transcript of a conversation between two school headteachers (Pritchard, 1981) signalled the problems that would affect the introduction of primary MFL in England and general issues around early foreign language learning: the lack of coordination between primary and secondary schools; the problem of integrating MFL in the holistic experience of the pupils, in particular when the language is taught by a specialist; and the question of the age-appropriateness of the teaching approach, defined by one of the headteachers as inherently authoritarian and contrary to the principle of discovery and pupil-centred work. These concerns reflected a scepticism that would shape a «sporadic and patchy» development of primary MFL until the late 1990s (Hunt, Barnes, Powell, Lindsay, & Muijs, 2005: 377-378).

In 1999, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) launched the Early Language Learning (ELL) initiative, to be coordinated by the Centre for Information on Language Teaching (CILT), and published the National Curriculum for Key Stage 1 (ages 5 to 7) and Key Stage 2 (ages 7 to 11)¹, which included non-statutory guidelines for MFL. These initiatives carved up opportunities for the introduction of primary MFL, but they also suggested that schools should be allowed a degree of autonomy in devising solutions. By 2002, a database of information and resources was created, and models of good practice were disseminated. The 2002 report on the initiative was optimistic, but it also identified the need to fine-tune the model of provision. It disfavoured a top-down approach, advocating a degree of flexibility and differentiation across schools (CILT, 2002). The National Curriculum pinpointed another key requisite if primary MFL was

¹ Key Stage 1 (years 1 and 2); Key Stage 2 (years 3 to 6). Children begin formal schooling when they are five.

to succeed in a context of multilingualism. The emphasis was on the cross-curricular, social and cultural experience MFL could provide and on a multilingual and cultural awareness approach that could explore the differences and similarities between English and other languages (DfEE/Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [QCA], 1999).

In 2003, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published the *Languages for All: Languages for Life* white paper (DfES, 2003), which drew on CILT research and the ELL pilots to set out a strategy aimed at raising the profile of MFL and the number of people skilled in foreign languages. The main objective, the introduction of at least one of the working languages of the European Union by 2011, justified the emphasis on diversified models of provision based on a principle of cross-curricular delivery: at classroom level, by employing specialists, language assistants and primary teachers with a MFL training; and, at institutional level, by taking part in schemes supported by Local Education Authorities and working in partnership with language colleges or secondary schools.

The *Languages for All* strategy opened up opportunities to teach languages other than French, Spanish and German. This institutional thrust towards the entitlement to MFL propelled some institutions to rehearse the introduction of Portuguese as a structured subject in schools. In 2003, Stockwell Primary School extended their experience of support to Portuguese-speaking students into the realm of MFL learning. A team of teachers working with the Lambeth authority created a scheme of work for Portuguese to be delivered to all students as part of the Year 3 curriculum (Ribeiro & Farren, 2008). Between 2004 and 2008, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) joined efforts with Goldsmiths and Canterbury Christ Church colleges to train primary MFL specialists in Portuguese. However, the teacher training pathway did not prove sustainable. In 2008, the TDA withdrew funding for Portuguese due to the small number of trainees (most of which native speakers) and the lack of placement schools (Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills [Ofsted], 2008).

The initiatives of primary MFL sponsored by the Instituto Camões happened in 2013, during the build-up to the introduction of modern languages in the primary curriculum, which took place in September 2014. The new National Curriculum introduced the statutory entitlement to primary MFL under the principle of openness to other cultures. Pupils should be able to express themselves in another language with increasing confidence and to communicate in practical situations, so as to lay the foundations for the learning of further languages (Department for Education, 2013).

Background to the partnerships primary MFL sponsored by the Instituto Camões

The Camões, Instituto da Cooperação e da Língua (Camões Institute for Cooperation and Language) is an organisation operating under the Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros (Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in matters of cooperation, foreign aid, and external language policy (Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 2012a). One of its aims is to strengthen the international status of Portuguese by encouraging its adoption as a foreign language in curricula across the world, namely in diaspora countries.

In 2009, the Institute inherited the network of teachers working with the Portuguese-speaking communities in Europe, Africa, and North America, hitherto under the supervision of the Ministry of Education (Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 2009). The 2009 change can be traced back to a set of 2007/2008 resolutions, which laid out the groundwork for the restructuring of the Institute, bringing under one roof the supervision of heritage language² courses, and the support to higher education courses, the traditional area of activity of the Institute. The strategy of language promotion abroad was anchored on the promotion of the language as a curricular subject in countries with Portuguese-speaking migrant communities, particularly by means of local partnerships (Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 2007; Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, 2008). In practice, most of the initiatives had been in the realm of heritage language learning, but there was here an indication that MFL learning schemes such as the Ensino de Língua Viva Estrangeira (ELVE) courses in France were to be encouraged or even favoured over non-curricular heritage language courses (Sousa, 2013).

Accordingly, the picture emerging from the 2009 act is one of an international language, object of study at different levels of educational systems worldwide, and the expression of an underlying dynamics to its cultural, geostrategic, and economic importance (Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 2009). This conception of the Portuguese language was at odds with the community-orientated network inherited from the Ministry of Education. Silva (2005) is an example of the criticism aimed at the network, which allegedly circumscribes the language to the initiated, that is, to closed communities of migrants, and discourages its adoption as an international lingua franca. However, while in Portugal the network was being perceived as an obstacle to the emergence of a relevant global language, in the UK, researchers and practitioners were working towards a positive rationale. Barradas (2004) drew on her study of the academic achievement of Portuguese-speaking pupils in the UK to suggest an outward potentiality in her-

² We use *heritage* and *complementary* interchangeably to designate provision in languages of migrant groups. *Foreign language* designates non-official languages not usually used by the members of a community. *Second language* designates languages with currency in a community but not the native language of a speaker living in that same community.

itage language learning. In her view, bilingual education can foster better academic results and opportunities to increase social capital through the promotion of higher expectations and the transference of cognitive skills.

The administrative change corresponded to a shift towards the former perspective as the objective was now to use the network as a policy instrument to enhance the broader cultural, economic, and geostrategic importance of the language (Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 2009). This amounted to a repositioning of the network from its original mission as a support of diaspora communities to an instrument of global policy subject to the principles of accountability and efficiency (Keating, Solovova, & Barradas, 2013).

The need to secure benchmarked outcomes in line with international standards led to the adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) as the basis for a degree of standardisation oversight over different contexts (Ministério da Educação, 2009). While the first pedagogical guidelines were influenced by the Portuguese national curriculum, 2009 saw the introduction of a statutory instrument, the *Quadro de Referência para o Ensino Português no Estrangeiro* (QuaREPE). The QuaREPE was created as an offshoot of the CEFRL and it was meant to encompass community language courses, MFL classes, and bilingual education contexts (Grosso, Soares, Sousa, & Pascoal, 2011). Here, the organising principle was not the set of competences of heritage language learners, but a principle of language skills development from the current level of ability of a learner, irrespective of any educational system or context (Grosso et al., 2011). Moreover, the adoption of the CEFRL/QuaREPE standard enabled comparisons across languages under a markedly MFL umbrella. The new regulatory apparatus stripped language learning from the specific emotional and cultural values pertaining to migrant communities and expected learners to slot in on a generic CEFRL-inspired framework. The support to the new policy took shape with the creation of a qualification scheme for children and teenagers, and with the release of learning materials for young learners. At a local level the Institute sponsored experiences of primary Portuguese MFL education.

The qualifications scheme (Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 2012b) was part of a strategy to align the operations of the Institute with international quality benchmarking as evidenced by membership of The Association of Language Testers in Europe (Filipe, 2013). The specifications underpinning the scheme aimed at encompassing a diverse audience of, at one end, heritage language and first language pupils, and, at the other end of the spectrum, pupils learning it as a second or foreign language (Instituto Camões, 2012a). The unifying thread to all these contexts was the QuaREPE/CEFRL and the claim that the specification focused on relevant tasks to everyday communication (Instituto Camões, 2014).

Salpicos, the first textbook endorsed by the Institute aimed at primary pupils (Jonet & Vian, 2009a, 2009b), and *ABC em Português* (Albino & Mascarenhas, 2012) were aimed at children learn-

ing Portuguese as a «non-native language», a broad designation comprehending MFL learning, the traditional target population of complementary courses, and immigrants studying Portuguese as an additional language in Portugal.

These resources have been seen as instrumental in the repositioning of the complementary courses, where, allegedly, Portuguese is increasingly being learned as a foreign language by young heritage speakers (Filipe, 2013). Hence the introduction of the QuaREPE, a modified version of the CEFRL, which in turn amounts to an understated acknowledgement that a pure foreign language approach would not account for the characteristics of the target audience inherited by the Instituto Camões in 2009.

Configuration of the partnerships

In 2013/2014, the UK branch of the Instituto Camões partnered with three London-based schools to provide Portuguese as a MFL for their primary pupils. The enactment of the 2009 policy is typical of external language spread policies in that it is mediated by a governmental-funded institution with the broader mission of managing international relations and cultural diffusion (Liddicoat, 2013). As Liddicoat points out, direct intervention in foreign educational policy is difficult and independent institutions might be best equipped to develop localised forms of intervention, especially in the UK, which has historically focused on local governance, diversity of provision, and a culture of partnerships (Woods & Simkins, 2014).

Other foreign cultural institutes attempted to obviate the difficulty to intervene in a decentralised system by partnering with established networking organisations experienced in liaising with schools. In partnership with the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust, the German institute launched *Deutsch mit Felix und Franzi*, a scheme of work with lesson plans designed to be run by non-specialist teachers (Goethe-Institut, 2014). The aim was to familiarise students with language snippets rather than to achieve an eventual fluency in the language (Holmes, 2015). The Primary French Project, commissioned by the Institut Français with support from the Network for Languages and the Association for Language Learning, aimed at providing a template syllabus for Key Stage 2 with free teaching materials and training opportunities for non-specialists (Institut Français, 2012).

In the case of the Instituto Camões, the partnerships were established at school level, which suggests an adherence to the traditional modes of operation of both the network of heritage language classes and university lectureships, with the direct organisation of courses and funding of posts. The memorandum of understanding between the schools and the Institute reads that the main objective of the partnership was the «improvement of the quality and extent of the

teaching of Portuguese language and culture» and to «support the efforts of The School to provide students with increasingly effective education in languages consistent with the standards as set out in the English (...) curriculum framework» (Instituto Camões, 2012b: 1). According to the document, the Institute was responsible for the allocation of teachers, who reported to the Attaché for Educational Affairs in the first instance and to the head of the school. In the cases where Portuguese was offered as part of the curriculum, the teachers could be «subject to performance management, including the observation of lessons» (Instituto Camões, 2012b: 3).

The agreements tried to bring together Portuguese language spread policy and the implementation of the new English National Curriculum by using the strength of the Institute as a centre of subject specialism. The responsibility for the provision was assigned to Teachers A and B, which were the only teachers working in the context of the partnerships sponsored by the Instituto Camões in 2013/2014. Both Teacher A (assigned to School A) and Teacher B (assigned to Schools B and C) are primary education specialists with an initial training geared towards the teaching of Portuguese as a native language. Teacher A reported separately to the school and the Institute (in the case of the curricular model of School A), and Teacher B reported primarily to the Institute (Schools B and C). However, contrary to the provision at Stockwell Primary School (with the publication of teaching materials) and the TDA-sponsored teacher training project, these partnerships did not include a scheme to scale up the experience.

In addition to the provision of Portuguese as a foreign language, there was an element of compromise relative to the policy initiated in 2008/2009. The agreement for Schools A and B contemplated the provision of in-class support for recently arrived Portuguese speakers; in return, the premises were used for complementary heritage language courses. In School A, the classes were a curricular activity taking place within school hours, whereas in School B classes were an extracurricular activity (weekly two-hour sessions). Teacher A worked full-time at School A, providing the aforementioned in-class support and the teaching of Portuguese to all students in two-hour weekly lessons (ages 4-10). In the case of School B, the teacher provided in-class support and taught MFL Portuguese to mixed groups of children that spoke Portuguese as a native/heritage language and children with no previous knowledge of the language (ages 6-11). The provision in School C was an extracurricular one-hour after-school weekly activity for pupils aged 6 to 13 and was part of an agreement that comprised Portuguese classes for pupils and staff in exchange for the use of the premises for the complementary courses.

School A is a South London mixed community school for 3 to 11-year olds (more than 300 pupils) with a higher than average proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. School B is a mixed voluntary aided primary for 3 to 11-year-olds in West London. The school had on its roll under 400 pupils, half of which spoke English as an additional language. School C is a mixed independent day school in West London supported by a foreign

government and at the time it catered for a bilingual/multilingual population of more than 500, from ages 4 to 19.

The configuration of the partnerships and the way the line management of the teachers was handled suggests that the relation between the schools and the institute was mainly administrative, and that the negotiation of many of the dimensions of language policy (see Liddicoat, 2013) was to be mediated by the teachers, namely in what concerns the rationale for MFL learning (why Portuguese), the fine tuning of the provision models, and the choices of curriculum, methods and assessment of outcomes. The role of teachers within language policy has been theorised as that of agents that are at the centre of policy implementation (Menken & García, 2010) and interpret and appropriate policy, thus creating a further layer of policy (Hornberger & Johnson, 2011; Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009). Furthermore, when teachers consider the *what*, the *how*, and *why* of their work, they are considering issues of language policy (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). In the case of the partnerships sponsored by the Instituto Camões, they were at the forefront of two distinct policies, one emanating from an attempt to take advantage of multilingual policies to advance a lingua franca agenda, and another that aimed at overcoming a perceived state of permanent crisis in terms of language skills.

Methodology

This exploratory study is part of a wider effort to bring together existing data (regulatory documents, accounts of initiatives) to depict the state of play of Portuguese language education in primary, secondary, post-16 and higher education. Our aim is to examine the level of articulation between the different levels, and the adequacy of Portuguese language spread policy to the British context.

The present study aims at probing into the attitudes of the teachers towards early foreign language, their context, and their own professional practice, relative to the aforementioned language policies. The teachers taking part in the study were assigned the responsibility for the teaching of the first three initiatives of early foreign language learning sponsored by the Instituto Camões.

Qualitative data was collected using a questionnaire with a mix of closed and open response items. The aims of the questionnaire were explained to the teachers as well as the scope of the study. Previous to the data collection, the questionnaire was sent to the respondents so that they could provide feedback on the clarity of the questionnaire. Both Teacher A and Teacher B filled in an online form with partially closed questions (inventories and Likert scales) and a request for further comments. The questionnaire was followed up by a semi-structured interview with

open questions focusing on specific points raised by the answers. In the case of Teacher B, data was collected by means of a face-to-face interview. In case of Teacher A, the follow-up interview was done by e-mail.

The questionnaire was constructed around four areas of debate on primary MFL. These were then further operationalised in relation to the provision of MFL as a whole and in relation to the teaching/learning of Portuguese within the context of the partnerships. These areas are (1) principles, which has to do with rationale for the introduction of primary MFL and choice of foreign language; (2) implementation, which relates to the model of MFL provision; (3) teaching/learning approach, which relates to the teaching approach and classroom activities; and (4) assessment/progression, which deals with assessment and progression into further learning.

Results

The analysis of the responses replicates the structure of the questionnaire/interview – *principles, implementation, teaching/learning approach* and *assessment/progression*.

Principles

Both teachers agree that primary pupils should learn foreign languages. However, there is disagreement in terms of the rationale that should underpin MFL. Teacher A sees it as a way to take advantage of young learners' predisposition to absorb a language – «when it comes to languages the sooner the better» – and as an integral part of the National Curriculum. Teacher B puts the question in terms of a basic educational entitlement in a multilingual society: «it should be a granted right to learn different languages because we live in a multicultural society (...) where most people speak more than one language; therefore, the situation where children learn more than one language should be seen as normal». Teacher B adds that the educational right to MFL should be accompanied by pedagogical considerations in terms of content – «the amount of learning in terms of grammar or vocabulary [might be] limited for lack of literacy» – and curricular design – «it should permeate all or most learning areas».

Both teachers support the introduction of primary MFL in an English-speaking country. For Teacher A, English is a «language spoken worldwide», but MFL can create further «communication links». For Teacher B, the question is not exclusive to English-speaking countries. To frame the problem just in relation to English-speaking countries, Teacher B argues, is to «view English as more important than the other languages». Accordingly, Teacher B does not single out any particular language: «I don't see why these should be the only languages to be considered (...) I can

see a political, financial, and Eurocentric view of the world here». Teacher A does not hold such reservations and justifies their choice (French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Mandarin) on the basis that «these are the most spoken languages in the world».

Despite the criticism of the choice of languages, Teacher B views Portuguese as an «interesting language in terms of political and financial weight, it is one of the most used languages over the web and it is one of the most spoken languages in the world». Teacher B also mentions the existence of a Portuguese-speaking community in the UK. Teacher A refers to the large number of speakers worldwide, and to the fact that, paired with English, it enables communication with «half of the world». However, the perceived «weight» of Portuguese does not equate to a sustainable support for its inclusion in curricula. Teacher B, referring to their experience in School B, says: «Historically the focus is on the Portuguese-speaking community. However, the regulatory basis in legislation is non-specific. Nevertheless, policies and general guidance seems to focus on Portuguese as a foreign language».

The disagreement between Teacher A and B can be explained by a different understanding of how a rationale for primary MFL and Portuguese as a MFL could be construed. Teacher A makes a straightforward connection between the number of Portuguese language speakers worldwide and it being an obvious choice in the UK. Teacher B does not deny that a case could be made for the learning of Portuguese but their views suggest that it should be filtered by an attention to the multilingual and institutional context of the UK and the history of their professional setting.

Implementation

Teachers A and B diverge on instructor provision. The former favours a native speaker school-based specialist; the latter a mixed approach depending on the context: «Ideally, the classroom teacher, supported by specialist teachers, would deliver MFL teaching. In practice, the classroom teachers' knowledge may not allow him or her to do it and the choice of language also poses limitations». Teacher B also comments on the limitations of pre-packaged schemes of work: «The availability of pre-prepared materials may tempt into certain languages but that limits the amount of differentiation that can be done». Teacher A claims that introducing Portuguese at primary level might be fairly straightforward: «Having a specialist teacher is always an advantage but if not, class teachers could have training as they are having for other languages». Teacher A is here referring to the fact that provision is secured at School A only for the duration of the agreement with Instituto Camões.

Teacher A teaches two-hour classes as a curricular activity, which is, in their opinion, the best option for beginners. In Teacher B's context, Portuguese is an extracurricular activity (weekly two-hour lessons). As to instruction time, Teacher B adopts a flexible take: «It depends on whether

it is cross-curricular or an isolated activity. It should be daily and regular (...), ideally a ten to 15-minute daily slot».

According to Teacher A, primary MFL should be a curricular activity, whereas Teacher B advocates an embedded approach: «It should be a cross-curricular activity with curricular support. Language permeates all areas of language and living and that should be reflected in school activity». However, this should not prevent a curricular focus in the case of language points that «might need special attention». Teacher B points out that «there is no link between the mainstream teacher and myself (...); my contact with the classroom teachers is in the context of learning support, not as a MFL specialist». Similarly, and in spite of being based at the school, Teacher A claims to «work individually». However, when asked about the extent of their involvement in school life, Teacher A says there are class observations every term: «I get to know what's the expectation for MFL lessons and any issues with my lessons. They are quite useful as I go through the same observation process as the class teachers».

Despite Teacher A's claim that they «work individually», they benefit from an immersion in the culture of their school. The fact that the connection to the school is a normal (even appreciated) feature of their work explains why Teacher A does not see any disadvantages in the specialist teacher model with separate curricular contact time. However, Teacher A is aware of the consequences of running separate lessons run by a specialist. Their comments suggest that the present solution is not part of the long term plans of the school, which is training teachers in other languages to ensure access to the subject. As to Teacher B, the lack of links to mainstream schooling and the need for a bigger picture of the students' learning leads to a learning model centred on the class teacher.

Teaching/learning approach

While Teachers A and B do not diverge substantially regarding their teaching approach, their differing overall views do affect how they assess the sustainability of Portuguese in the primary curriculum.

Teacher A is confident about the age-appropriateness of the teaching approach, whereas Teacher B's claims to be partially confident. When asked to select activities they have engaged pupils with, Teacher A selected listening and repeating spoken language, speaking in basic sentences, and developing accurate pronunciation (for example, repetition and guessing games, rhymes and role plays). Teacher B, having selected all of the options (and suggested others: for example, work on the etymological roots of words) is of the opinion that it is difficult to balance the teaching approach to take into the account the range of ages and competence levels: «compromises have to be done although I do try and differentiate as much as possible». Teachers A and

B are confident or partially confident about the appropriateness of the learning resources. Again, Teacher B selected a larger number of options but both claim to have used puppets, flashcards, sound recordings, drama, arts and crafts activities, songs, games, and books. Teacher B also mentioned having had guest visitors in the classroom but complained about practical issues, such as not having storage facilities and limited access to computer resources. Both teachers feel confident about the age-appropriateness of the topics and claim they have covered most of the suggested topics. Teacher B commented that the range of topics to be covered meant that learning might be «limited to a few vocabulary items [which might prevent] the development of communicative competence».

Assessment/progression

The concerns of teacher B about the contents of primary MFL touch upon the question of what the expected outcomes should be. In the case of Teacher A/School C, there seems to be a «no assessment» policy, not even against the objectives set by the National Curriculum. Teacher A claims that there is no requirement to formal report on the progress of students to school management. This stance towards assessment, and the fact that the school is looking for other solutions suggests that the partnership is a temporary formal response to the National Curriculum.

Teacher B elaborates on what assessing primary students in MFL means but their answer suggest a similar lack of institutional objectives. Significantly, Teacher B feels confident about informal but not about formal assessment as «pupils of this age show a lot more competence when they are involved in social activities» and because it is not clear «whether what is being assessed is their language knowledge or their literacy competence in any language». Despite the uncertainty in terms of aims, Teacher B claims to have some oversight over students' progress as they have used every form of assessment suggested, including the two stars and a wish system for presentations, and formal mini-tests as these «are important as evidence for others, including parents». However, assessment does not go beyond the information given to parents. It is not being used as a means to improve and reformulate provision.

When asked whether students have opportunities for further learning, Teacher A says they are not sure such opportunities exist and Teacher B states that, while there are some opportunities outside mainstream schooling, the limited range of language choice available does not guarantee scope for progress in Portuguese as a curricular option. The teachers' perspectives on whether there is scope for further learning reflect a lack of an evaluation of the different dimensions of the partnerships with a view to creating a viable form of language spread policy.

Conclusion

In the introduction, we have set out the objective of investigating how the teachers' practice, the model of implementation and their school and national context could be articulated with the broader policy of language spread. The number of teachers involved in Instituto Camões's initiatives is indicative of the embryonic dimension of early language learning in Portuguese in the UK. However, an assessment of such initiatives might provide clues to a viable and sustainable form of provision and a better understanding of Portuguese language education in the UK.

The recent introduction of primary language education as a statutory entitlement is a cornerstone in a strategy to reverse a history of hesitant MFL policy and the perceived lack of language skills necessary to support the UK as an economic and cultural powerhouse. Arguably, there is here an opportunity to introduce languages other than those already established at primary level: French, German, and Spanish. The 30-year-long history of early language learning in the UK suggests that any attempt to introduce a foreign language in the curriculum must include in-depth knowledge of and sensitivity towards the established teaching/learning culture: it must respect the holistic experience and the discovery teaching approach seen as essential to primary education, where MFL has been historically seen as an intrusion in a cluttered curriculum.

It might be relevant to have these embedded reservations in mind despite a track record of more definite steps towards a sustainable provision from the late 1990s onwards and, reportedly, a more positive attitude towards its implementation (DCSF, 2008). The aforementioned sensitivity might translate into modes of localised intervention tied to the needs and the teaching culture of any given school, and sustainable and replicable frameworks of practice. If we examine the initiatives of foreign culture institutes, they evidence some key characteristics: (1) they are flexible and adaptable to any school, often taking the form of a scheme of work; (2) they are conservative in terms of contact time required; (3) they are not dependent on MFL specialists but offer training opportunities for teachers and extension awareness activities for pupils; and (4) they imply an awareness of a diverse linguistic context, and a multilingual and cross-curricular take on language learning, in that the focus language might have to coexist with concurrent languages and curricular subjects.

The initiatives of the Instituto Camões emerge in a context of redefinition from a body associated with the sponsoring of language and culture lectureships in foreign universities to a widened scope of actuation which includes the network of complementary education. This amounted to a shift in policy that would refocus the network from its traditional target population of Portuguese-speaking pupils in diaspora communities to the teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language to enhance its status as an international language. Arguably, the Institute emphasised

a trend that dates back to the publication of the QuaREPE, a document that attempts to frame the profiles of a student population of heritage language users within the decidedly MFL ethos of the CEFRL. More recent initiatives, such the scheme of qualifications, and the *Salpicos* and *ABC* textbook series, continue this ambivalence – on the one hand, these teaching materials try to cater to a diverse audience, ranging from complementary education students to migrants in an immersion L2 context in Portugal; on the other, they target MFL pupils and are hailed as instruments for the aforementioned shift in policy. Furthermore, these materials, irrespective of their merit and age-appropriateness, falter against the criteria of flexibility and replicability. On the one hand, they require a specialist teacher, thus not qualifying as a scheme of work; on the other, they demand an intensive monolingual approach that might not fit in with the saturated primary curriculum.

As specialists with a background in heritage language education, Teachers A and B's stance is marked by a general positive attitude towards foreign language learning, which is inextricably linked to their professional history (initial training in primary education and posterior experience in the education of bilingual pupils). Therefore, they do not share the concerns of some primary teachers about an eventual negative impact on first language learning (Legg, 2013), or the pressing issues around continuing professional development (Cable et al., 2012). However, the perspectives of teachers A and B reflect the instability of the status of Portuguese in a territory like the UK. While the nature of the provision in School A (where the teacher is subject to lesson observations and has to take into account the National Curriculum) entails a higher degree of immersion in the organics of the school, Teacher A adheres more completely to the international language as pictured in official documents (equating it to other most spoken languages) and to the monolingual ethos of the Portuguese policy. Conversely, partly motivated by the context of School C, Teacher B's more politically-nuanced view allows for the realisation that Portuguese might be one of a number of options in a multilingual setting, albeit an «interesting» one.

Despite their differing views, both teachers are acutely aware of the difficulties preventing a broader adoption of Portuguese as a MFL. The partnerships of MFL education reflect the ambivalence of actuation and objectives as they comprehend both the support of Portuguese-speaking pupils and the provision of MFL, or indeed, in the case of School B, mixed MFL-heritage language classes. This suggests that there is a need to extend the available resources into the realm of MFL education; however, this may prevent an effective strategy for the introduction of Portuguese MFL learning.

While models of implementation dependent on specialist teachers or classroom teachers can prove equally successful (Cable et al., 2012), the specialist teacher model is the least sustainable because of uncertainty in terms of funding and staffing (McLachlan, 2009). Indeed, Teacher A suggests that their school is actively looking into solutions/languages other than the special-

ist-based provision facilitated by the partnership with the Instituto Camões. However, Teacher A singles out the specialist teacher model with separate contact time as the best options to ensure access to MFL provision. Given Teacher A's adherence to the tentative picture of the language as constructed in the Portuguese policy documents, their view on the implementation model seems to be influenced by the traditional curricular approach supported by the policy. Teacher B's answers suggest a higher degree of responsiveness to the holistic approach to primary learning favoured by the UK's system as a whole. While Teacher A advocates that specialist and classroom teacher should cooperate in terms of content (thus maintaining a monolingual ethos), Teacher B extends the need for cooperative work into the realms of methodology, differentiation, and cross-curricular integration. For Teacher A, these issues are to be dealt within their discipline, thus overcoming problems relating to the breadth and depth of the provision that are part of Teacher B's concerns.

Teacher B's concerns extend into the ill-defined role of the MFL experience in the education of pupils, as it is not clear whether the expected outcome is to progress in language knowledge or language learning skills. The fact that Teacher A informs that no assessment is required might also signal a lack of clear objectives in their context. On the one hand, the issue is part of an ongoing discussion around primary MFL teaching and, in that respect, Teachers A and B concur with mainstream schooling professionals (Cable et al., 2012; McLachlan, 2009) on the lack of clear aims; on the other, it suggests that their practice is affected by a mismatch between an international policy of *language* spread, and a localised policy of *languages* promotion. Moreover, whether or not learners are benefiting from an MFL education in Portuguese from a language awareness perspective (both teachers feel rather confident about the age-appropriateness of their approach), according to Teacher B and from a language spread perspective, there are not opportunities to further the study of the language within the scope of mainstream schooling.

Implications

The teachers' answers, though positive in terms of a rationale for early language learning, suggest that this wealth of experience is not being recycled into schemes of actuation that might encourage other schools to adopt Portuguese as a foreign language. Their experiences highlight an opposition between a monolingual and a multilingual approach to MFL learning. The former sees the Portuguese language and its perceived values as self-sufficient in creating a rationale for its teaching. The latter suggests that an effective promotion of MFL learning has to take into consideration local teaching/learning cultures and the multilingual context of the UK. The expe-

riences of the participants in the partnerships and the realisation that the Portuguese language might have to share an articulated space with other languages could chart the way to a robust scheme of work and teacher training opportunities that might create the conditions for the dissemination of Portuguese MFL at primary level.

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