Rethinking speaking in ELT: Where does intelligibility stand in the EFL classroom?[1]

ABSTRACT

Learning a Foreign Language (FL) is, as a rule, seen by experts as a major asset for global understanding and the mobility of people. English is found at the top of the pyramid as the number one language to achieve these goals. Nowadays, being able to express oneself intelligibly in English is decisive for students who want to thrive both academically and professionally. Indeed, the concept of intelligibility is now firmly established in the field of Applied Linguistics as one of the key factors in explaining success or otherwise in communication between interlocutors from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Accordingly, the essence of this article lies in the analysis of the communicative teaching practices of EFL teachers in Portugal and how they reflect on the learners' speaking proficiency and intelligibility. Findings show that English continues to be taught with little regard to its real-world use, creating a gap between the learners' needs/expectations and their true learning. Overall, the article focuses on the need for a reconceptualisation of speaking within an intelligibility frame of mind. Thus, it poses a challenge to traditional approaches to language teaching and learning practices by claiming a need to rethink approaches to learners' oral proficiency grounded in the intelligibility principle.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The spread of English as the default language amongst speakers of different linguistic backgrounds calls for a reflection upon oral language usage and the standards it relies on. In a globalised world, where Non-Native Speakers (NNS) clearly surpass their native counterparts in number (Eberhard et al., 2022) and thus account for most of all spoken interactions in English (Timmis (2002) suggests 80%), the hegemony of native-like models seems is called into question.

The Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) classroom should aim to prepare students for spoken interaction between NNS-NNS and NNS-Native Speakers (NS). Regardless of the interaction, these learner-users do not necessarily have to conform to norm-providing models. Instead, they need

to be mutually intelligible, as speaker and listener share responsibilities in (mis)communication. Concerns about intelligibility can be traced back to as early as 1949 to pronunciation experts, such as Abercrombie, for whom language learners needed "no more than a comfortably intelligible pronunciation" (p. 120). More recently, in line with Abercrombie, Kenworthy (1987) also advocates comfortable intelligibility as a far more realistic aim for most language learners than native speaker proficiency. The predicament may lie in the mismatch between research on intelligibility as the barometer for successful spoken interaction (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 2015; Isaacs & Trofimovich, 2017; Levis, 2018; Newbold, 2021) and current approaches to English teaching and learning, particularly in FL environments, that may deny the demand for intelligibility goals and perpetuate the implicit normativity of traditional teaching practices, such as Audiolingualism, which aimed at achieving native-like accuracy. In a fairly similar English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context (Greece) to the Portuguese, Sifakis and Sougari's (2005) study vis-à-vis pronunciation beliefs and teaching practices of Greek practitioners showed that "[a]lthough the spread of English implies a deemphasis of NS norms, […] NS norms are still dominant in Greek teachers' beliefs about their own pronunciation and teaching" (pp. 483-484).

With this rationale in mind, this article focuses on the importance of intelligibility and the role it is being given in the Portuguese EFL classroom, by offering an analysis of the communicative teaching practices of EFL teachers in Portugal and how they reflect on the learners' speaking proficiency and intelligibility, whilst advocating a need to rethink approaches to learners' oral proficiency grounded in an intelligibility principle. Indeed, intelligibility should be the aim for learners of a FL, as it may determine higher or lower proficiency and be a potential hazard for communication between NNS-NNS and NNS-NS if not consistently addressed in the classroom. De Jong et al. 's study (2012) on the componential structure of L2 speaking proficiency revealed two significant aspects that confirm such a claim: a) pronunciation was the subset to contribute the most to the overall ability for low proficiency scores (p. 8); and b) pronunciation, along with vocabulary, represented the lion's share (75%) of the speakers' speaking variance (p. 26). Our study, on which the article is based, was carried out between September 2019 and January 2021, in a southern lower-secondary Portuguese state school, with the aim of gaining insight into common communicative teaching practices of EFL teachers in Portugal and their knock-on effect on the learners' speaking proficiency and intelligibility. For a better framing of our aim, two central research questions were designed:

1. RQ1: How are speaking and intelligibility being addressed in Portugal's EFL classrooms?
2. RQ2: Are speaking and intelligibility truly a neglected party in the Portuguese EFL classroom?

A further aim of the article is to contribute to redressing the imbalance both in speaking and intelligibility research by targeting younger learners. While it is commonplace to see intelligibility-related research on learners in their late teens and early adulthood at higher education levels (e.g., Smith and Nelson, 1985; Derwing and Munro, 2005; Levis, 2006; De Jong

et al., 2012; Isaacs & Trofimovich, 2017), the focus of our research is 9th grade students (around 14 years old) from Portuguese state schools.

As the first of its kind in the Portuguese context, this study represents a step towards filling the gap in this research area.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 THE CEFR AND ITS COMPANION VOLUME

Research in applied language settings commonly uses intelligibility as a measure to determine the oral proficiency of any given individual in English, as well as emphasizing its importance in cross-cultural communication. Newer pedagogical stances should reflect such a view, complying with the need to prepare learners to communicate with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It could, then, be argued that intelligibility is key to being communicatively competent in intercultural spoken interaction. Surprisingly, it took almost two decades for the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to reflect the research advances in this field of Applied Linguistics. As the reference document for all of Europe's FL syllabi, guidelines, assessment scales and materials, especially textbooks, for years it downplayed the role of NNS in verbal exchanges with NS. It claimed to describe "in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 1), but it did so in compliance to NS standards. Negative judgements on NNS proficiency can be found in several descriptors (e.g., unintentionally amusing and/or irritating the NS – conversation level B2 (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 76)), resonating closely with the concern over native-speakerism. Despite its unifying intentions, the CEFR is not a neutral document, failing to reflect the spread of English worldwide and, thus, conceding equal language use rights for all its speakers. This implicit view of the NNS in the CEFR is no trivial matter since the Common Reference Levels are the core of the framework and its best-known trademark.

The new Common European Framework of Reference – Companion Volume (CEFR – CV) was launched at the beginning of 2018[2] (Council of Europe) and with it the much-needed changes to the 2001 descriptors (see Appendix A). The 2018 descriptors' nomenclature replaces NS for speakers only, speakers of the target language, proficient speakers, or even interlocutors. The two examples offered above are amongst those which have been updated to accommodate the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) context we currently live in. ELF refers, "in a nutshell, to the world's most extensive contemporary use of English, in essence, English when it is used as a contact language between people from different first languages (including native English speakers)" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 2). Yet, it must be said that the CEFR – CV is not language-specific. "Rather, it is an attempt to provide descriptions of language – any language – in functional terms, generalizable to a range

2. This is the preliminary version of the CEFR's update. The definitive version appeared in 2020.

of teaching and learning contexts and objectives, and classified by level of proficiency" (Newbold, 2021, pp. 405-406). Another specific change in terminology is the shift from non-standard accents to less familiar accents in the growing context of plurilingualism and thus not seen "as a marker of poor phonological control" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 133). Additionally, a particularly significant aspect for this article has been developed in the CEFR – CV, that of phonology. Indeed, the phonological dimension of spoken language:

> Had been the least successful scale developed in the research behind the original descriptors. The phonology scale was the only CEFR illustrative descriptor scale for which a native speaker norm, albeit implicit, had been adopted. In an update, it appeared more appropriate to focus on intelligibility as the primary construct in phonological control, in line with current research, especially in the context of providing descriptors for building on plurilingual/pluricultural repertoires. (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 47)

The phonological control depicted in the CEFR (2001) based on an idealised NS norm, whose focus is on accuracy and accent instead of on intelligibility, is evident in the B2 level descriptor: "Has acquired a clear, natural, pronunciation and intonation" (p. 117). One could ask "clear" and "natural" to whom? Clear and natural, in accordance with whose standards? For years, phonology remained a grey area, untouched by the development of research and the spread of English itself. In the words of the authors (Council of Europe, 2020), it is now recognised that the "focus on accent and on accuracy instead of on intelligibility has been detrimental to the development of the teaching of pronunciation" (p. 133).

In the new CEFR – CV, phonology has a descriptor scale in its own right under the heading Phonological Control. This scale is subdivided into three categories – overall phonological control, sound articulation and prosodic features (stress, intonation, and rhythm). Overall phonological control comprises intelligibility, influence of other languages spoken (particularly the speaker's L1), sound control and prosody control; sound articulation refers to the range of sounds available in the speaker's inventory clearly and precisely articulated; prosodic features focus on the speaker's ability to effectively use prosody to convey different shades of meaning. Despite recognising the added value of this new Phonological Control scale, wariness about the definition offered for intelligibility – "how much effort is required from the interlocutor to decode the speaker's message" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 133) – is advisable. There seems to be a conflation of two well-known dimensions of general intelligibility throughout literature, that of intelligibility in the narrow sense and comprehensibility. Piccardo (2016) claims to have decided "not to apply the academic distinction between intelligibility and comprehensibility in the scales, since this might confuse teachers" (p. 16). However, the application of ill-defined key concepts for spoken language, such as intelligibility, may have an undesirable effect. By mixing different criteria into one sole concept, are we truly assisting

teachers, or are we just adding to the confusion instead? If we believe that a vast majority of lower and upper-secondary school teachers are still hesitant to teach pronunciation, thus failing to help their students become more intelligible, we must feed them with concrete terminology that offers reassurance, not more shaky ground to move on. Notwithstanding, the rise of ELF, with intelligibility at its core, has been significantly captured by Piccardo's (2016) updated rationale for the original phonology scale:

> A new sensibility has been emerging in the applied linguists' scholarly community when it comes to reevaluating the traditional idea of the 'native speaker' as a model or perception of the norm in pronunciation. This is especially visible in English considering the movement towards 'global Englishes' or 'English as a Lingua Franca', but similar considerations have been applied to all languages. (p. 6)

Intelligibility is now one of, if not the most, identifiable ELF-related feature of the CEFR companion volume, supporting the claim made throughout this article in favour of a move from nativeness to intelligibility in mainstream English language teaching and learning.

2.1 INTELLIGIBILITY'S BLURRED BOUNDARIES

Among educational scholars, the value of intelligibility for spoken interaction seems unquestionable. However, the terminologies and definitions of intelligibility are not as undisputed – "there is as yet no broad agreement on a definition of the term 'intelligibility': it can mean different things to different people" (Jenkins, 2000, p. 69). In a review by Cruz (2007, p. 155), the author reveals a host of ten alternative terms to address intelligibility, ranging from intelligibility to interpretability or even communicativity. However, this does not necessarily imply ten different definitions. For instance, Smith and Nelson's interpretability (1985), described as "the meaning behind the word/utterance" (p. 334), parallels Kenworthy's communication (1987, p. 16) and James's communicativity (1998, pp. 216-217).

But what exactly is meant by intelligibility? In its broadest sense, intelligibility can be simply defined as the felicitous decoding of sounds in a word and/or utterance. Yet such a superficial description of the paradigm may be misleading, as well as veil its intricacies. A more thorough review of the literature on intelligibility and its role in spoken interaction shows that the most influential definitions of this construct are those presented by Smith and Nelson (1985), and Derwing and Munro (2005). The former conceptualise general intelligibility as a tripartite system comprising intelligibility – recognition of individual words and utterances –; comprehensibility – understanding of the meaning of individual words and utterances –; and interpretability – understanding of the speaker's intentions behind words and utterances (p. 334). Bearing in mind the difficulty in measuring the speaker's intent, Levis (2006) claims that this last layer of Smith and Nelson's definition "has fallen by the wayside" (p. 254). For Derwing and Munro (2005), intelligible speech has three different

dimensions to be taken into account: intelligibility – "the extent to which a listener actually understands an utterance"; comprehensibility – "a listener's perception of how difficult it is to understand an utterance"; and accentedness – "a listener's perception of how different a speaker's accent is from that of the L1 community" (p. 385). Derwing and Munro go on to state that the three dimensions are related but partially independent (p. 386). Their findings suggest that strong accents do not necessarily result in poor intelligibility. Notwithstanding the differences highlighted here, it must be stressed that the two definitions are not mutually exclusive. Intelligibility, in the narrowest sense of both definitions, is identical, comprising those distinctive characteristics of phonetics and phonology one needs to recognise the language we hear. Although Derwing and Munro's use of the verb understand may seem to conflate what Smith and Nelson address separately as intelligibility and comprehensibility, the procedure used by the former to measure intelligibility was a transcription into standard orthography of words heard in different utterances, which is the same kind of procedure supported and practised by the latter.

Intelligibility, then, seems an evasive paradigm, despite its widespread use and recognition as an appropriate goal for most language learners. The polysemy of intelligibility makes it difficult to discern what is exactly meant by its use. For present purposes, like Derwing and Munro (2005), I too view intelligibility as the amount of utterance understood by the listener. Nevertheless, to avoid the terminological misguidance mentioned above, a more precise verb is used – the amount of utterance identified by the listener. In light of such a definition, speaker and listener, together with the spoken interactional context of the situation (the utterance itself and the attitudes of the participants), are both involved and share responsibilities when interacting with one another. Indeed, "intelligibility may be as much in the mind of the listener as in the mouth of the speaker" (Morley, 1991, p. 499). Simon et al.'s recent study (2022) on the role of the listener in the perception of non-native speech further reiterates such a view. In addition, my interest in intelligibility in the narrow sense is based on my conviction that it is determining for communicative success or failure. If one cannot map productive and receptive words and/or utterances onto one's phonological inventories, how can we attach any meaning to what is being said or heard, let alone grasp intentions, or perceive difficulties of understanding and differences in accent. Although Derwing and Munro's definition of intelligibility (2005) in the narrow sense is followed, I steer slightly away from their overall construct, building on it with an emic perspective of my research context, firstly with regard to the definition provided for comprehensibility. If this dimension refers to difficulty in processing what is heard, perhaps, as suggested by Nelson (2011, p. 72), a phrase like Perceived Intelligibility Difficulty would be more appropriate. Secondly, regarding the accentedness dimension, L1, not just L2, speakers display different accents in accordance with their English variety. Our perception of accent is influenced by a variety of exposure and experience. It seems rather difficult to measure this dimension in ever-increasing speaking situations between individuals who do not belong to any particular L1

community where frames of reference for linguistic description are absent, as the result of ELF encounters. These encounters do not develop continuously during an extended period of time within a given society or speech community. Instead, they arise when necessary, in unplanned situations for immediate communication (chiefly oral), either face to face or in technology-mediated interaction – (cell)phone to (cell)phone, computer to computer.

All in all, a hybrid version of the paradigms offered by Derwing and Munro (2005) and Smith and Nelson (1985), tweaked to accommodate today's ELF phenomenon, would possibly be more appropriate. For the reasons presented by Levis (2006) and my own research, I would discard Derwing and Munro's accentedness dimension and Smith and Nelson's interpretability layer. General intelligibility would then comprise three interrelated components: intelligibility (stricto sensu) – the amount of utterance identified by the listener; difficulty – the listener's perceived estimate of how hard it is to identify an utterance; and comprehensibility – the understanding of meaning attached to utterances by the listener.

The factors that are deemed to affect intelligibility the most deserve careful attention. However, like intelligibility itself, there is a lack of common ground about the contributory variables of intelligibility (negatively or otherwise). There is an extensive body of research available, but the studies and their results reveal several discrepancies. For instance, Anderson-Hsieh and Koehler (1988, p. 585) suggest that suprasegmental features (stress, rhythm and intonation, also referred to collec-tively as prosody) contribute the most to intelligibility, while on the opposite end, Fayer and Krasinski (1987, p. 322) suggest that the greatest contribution to intelligibility is made by segmental features (phonemes). Adding to the confusion, Zielinski, in her 2006 study on interaction between speaker and listener, states that if "we were to consider only the listener ingredients we might conclude that the syllable stress pattern is of greater importance than the segments to intelligibility [...] if we were to consider only the speaker ingredients we might conclude that segments are of greater importance than the syllable stress pattern" (p. 40). Again, firm conclusions seem impossible to draw. In our current scenario, it could be considered pointless to try to establish a hierarchy between phonology and phonetics, as both (regardless of the extent) may impair intelligibility and, therefore, spoken interaction. The situational context, along with the interlocutors, will determine the factors affecting intelligibility the most in any given communicative situation. Despite these inconsistencies, the role played by both speaker and listener in reducing or enhancing intelligibility emerges throughout the literature as crucial. Bradlow and Pisoni (1999) assert that speakers tend to "modify their articulatory patterns to accommodate situational demands" (p. 2074), i.e., the speaker adjusts to the challenges of the context by adapting style, volume and speed of speech, as well as articulatory precision. However, the communication strategies employed by ELF speakers to achieve mutual intelligibility do not stop at that. Examples of these strategies can be found in different ELF studies: self-repair/repetition (Björkman, 2014); requests (repetition, clarification,

confirmation) (Kennedy, 2017); use of fillers (House, 2022); paraphrasing (Kirkpatrick, 2010); use of extralinguistic cues (Cogo & Dewey, 2012); code-switching (Cogo & House, 2018). On the other hand, speakers with heavy accents and/or non-standard features in the speech signal, either suprasegmental or segmental, may lead to miscommunication. In addition, speaking anxiety may also affect a speaker's intelligibility. As already previously advocated elsewhere (Correia, 2015), low self-confidence and self--efficacy have a clear bearing on speaking. Some speakers' frequent pauses and hesitations, resulting in reduced intelligibility, may positively correlate with speaking anxiety.

Amongst the listener-related factors affecting intelligibility, the lion's share goes to the effect of familiarity. Indeed, topic familiarity, speaker familiarity, and particularly phonological familiarity influence the listener's ability to process the speaker's intended message. Bent and Bradlow (2003) found that familiarity of phonological forms (shared L1) between listener and speaker heightens intelligibility, giving rise to what they termed matched interlanguage speech intelligibility benefit (p. 1606). Their findings suggest an increase in intelligibility when non-native listeners listen to non-native speakers with whom they share the same native language. In a similar vein, these researchers also found that the interlanguage benefit may be extended to non-native listeners listening to non-native speakers with whom they do not share the same native language, giving rise to what they termed mismatched interlanguage speech intelligibility benefit (p. 1606). Presumably, even if listener and speaker have different native language backgrounds, the shared knowledge of the Target Language (TL) phonology facilitates intelligibility. Here, too, communication strategies can come into play, such as supportive listening (e.g., backchanneling). Listeners' attitudes (irritation and/or prejudice) towards the speaker influence intelligibility too. If the listener "expects to understand a speaker, he/she is much more likely to find the speaker intelligible than if he/she does not expect to understand him" (Smith & Nelson, 1985, p. 333). This claim is supported by a set of recently published studies (Babel & Russell, 2015; Sheppard et al., 2017; Reid et al., 2019). This is especially evident in spoken interactions where the listener is native, and the speaker is non-native, despite the speaker's level of proficiency. Notwithstanding the fact that NS of English are increasingly fewer when compared to the growing numbers of NNS, their sense of ownership over the language still seems to run deep.

The spread of English has opened the gateway for the decline of a nativeness principle in favour of an intelligibility principle. NS are no longer the sole custodians of English. Although the definition of intelligibility may be the subject of disagreement, the acceptance of this notion as a fundamental requirement for spoken interaction is uncontested. In fact, without intelligibility, communication is most likely to fail.

3. THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1 METHODOLOGY

The research took place in two consecutive school years – 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 in a lower-secondary state school in the south of Portugal. It followed a mixed methods approach, thus avoiding a rather clear-cut dichotomy found throughout the literature between qualitative and quantitative research. The rationale for conducting mixed methods research in this study was threefold. Mixed methods were chosen because of the potential they offer to achieve a fuller understanding of how speaking and intelligibility are being addressed in Portugal's EFL classrooms. They draw on qualitative and quantitative strengths whilst minimising their limitations and the danger of one-sided representation and, thus, better legitimise the findings than would qualitative or quantitative methods on their own. The core of the research methodology was qualitatively driven, involving multiple sources of information, observation, interviews, and audio recordings embedded in a case study approach but supplemented by a quantitative component, a survey questionnaire. Following the notation for mixed methods research design, this study is represented as QUAL + quan, reflecting the weight assigned to the contribution of each of the data collection methods.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS AND CONTEXT

The lower-secondary state school that was visited is part of a school cluster made up of several different schools, ranging from a nursery school to an upper-secondary school.

Three 9th grade classes were observed. Class A comprised 21 students in total, 13 boys and eight girls. Nineteen of them were Portuguese, one was Chinese, and another was Romanian. Class B comprised 22 students in total, five boys and 17 girls. Twenty-one of them were Portuguese, and 1 was English. Class C comprised 19 students in total, seven boys and 12 girls. Sixteen of them were Portuguese, one was Chinese, one was Cape Verdean, and another was South African. The average age was 14, and all the Portuguese students had had English for five school years, starting in the 5th grade.

Teachers A (teacher of class A) and B (teacher of classes B and C) have extensive English teaching experience, 20 years or more. Both have enrolled in numerous continuous professional development (CPD) courses, none on the topic of this study though. The profile of the remaining participants, the 420 teachers from mainland Portugal and the islands of Madeira and Azores who answered the questionnaire (Google Forms), was naturally more diverse. Teaching experience ranges from up to five to more than 30 years of experience in accordance with the age span of the respondents. Thirty-eight teachers were above 60 years old, 151 were between 50 and 60 years old, 202 were between 40 and 50 years old, 28 were between 30

and 40 years old, and one teacher was under 30 years old. As for qualifications, 292 teachers were licentiates, 42 had a Certificate of Graduate Study, 76 had MAs (49 pre-Bologna and 17 post-Bologna), and 10 held PhDs.

3.3 INSTRUMENTS

The instruments chosen to develop the research were questionnaires, interviews, observation, and audio recordings, falling under the scope of the mixed methods data collection strategies. Questionnaires represent the quantitative strand, whilst interviews, observation, and audio recordings represent the qualitative strand. Besides taking advantage of each method's strengths while compensating for limitations, data gathered using this combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allows for methodological triangulation.

It was the possibility for breadth offered by questionnaires that shaped the decision to use them. If not included, the research would run the risk of being underrepresented and the range of the study too narrow to account for a wider understanding of the problem. The questionnaire used did not force either-or responses and focused the respondents on the concepts addressed, speaking and intelligibility, thus providing a richer set of data to draw from. Qualitative interviews are the most common partner of questionnaires in mixed methods research. Here, interviews with teachers A and B served a supplementary role since they covered the same aspects as the questionnaire (teaching practices on speaking and pronunciation and attitudes towards intelligibility), allowing an intended side-by-side comparison and thus providing more reliable meta-inferences about the research questions. The purpose of the interviews was to gain insight into the teachers' perspectives (ideas, thoughts, and opinions) and gather meaningful data about the phenomenon studied in their own words rather than the researcher's. As for observation, participation in the setting moved back and forth along the continuum between complete observer and observer as a participant, starting with the latter and then moving back as much as possible to the former. Observation's unique trait, that of providing a direct source of information, plus the focus of the study on a specific phenomenon (speaking and intelligibility) dictated the choice to apply it. To capture the phenomenon under study first-hand, an adapted version of the Communication Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) observation scheme was used. Bearing in mind its limitations for capturing some of the features of speaking (e.g., paralinguistics), COLT was supplemented by descriptive field notes. Audio recordings were saved for last on account of their twofold nature. They served the primary purpose of capturing speaking and intelligibility patterns during spoken interactions between students and the secondary purpose of backing up interviews and observations. While questionnaires and interviews involved teachers only, classroom observations and audio recordings involved both teachers and students, yet with a particular interest in the latter.

3.4 PROCEDURE

First and foremost, the challenge of negotiating access to the research site had to be tackled. The project had to be detailed to the headmistress and the potential benefits for all the participants were highlighted. The second step taken was reaching out to teachers. Out of the available pool of 9th grade English teachers, two gave me their written informed consent to observe their lessons and granted me an interview at the end of the school year. One final step was to obtain the parents' written informed consent.

Observations started in September 2019 and finished in March 2020. Each class was observed weekly, with one lesson per week. The system used had a twofold nature, bearing in mind the goals of the study, a category system and a descriptive system. The former was an observation scheme adapted from Spada and Fröhlich (1995) original COLT – Part A and Part B, thus named COLT PT – Part A (see Appendix B) and COLT PT – Part B (see Appendix C). Part A fulfilled the function of coding events as they occurred to have a clearer gist of how speaking and intelligibility were being addressed and if speaking and intelligibility were truly a neglected party in the Portuguese EFL classroom. The low-inference side of COLT's scale was complemented by its high-inference Part B counterpart, which provided a detailed analysis of student-teacher and student-student interaction with a particular interest in three categories – discourse initiation, TL use, and speech (accounting for length and intelligibility of the learners' speech). Besides the scheme, I always took blank sheets of paper to each lesson, allowing abundant space to make several entries about the events taking place inside the classroom. Audio recordings were used to supplement observations and interviews, but they partially failed in their purpose. No more than one recorder was allowed, and the researcher had to sit at the rear left-hand side of the classrooms to disturb the lessons as little as possible, which led to lengthy sequences of inaudible recordings. As it happens, insufficient quality of audio recordings while in class and possible uncharacteristic learner behaviour turned out to be the most significant limitation of this work. The interviews with teachers A and B were conducted in late July 2020. A list of twelve questions was put together, all of which derived from the study's aims (see Appendix D).

The quantitative strand of the research hinged on a questionnaire, approved by the Portuguese Education Directorate-General. A list of twenty-two questions was put together for the questionnaire. All the questions were derived from the study's aims. The questionnaire encompassed closed-ended checklists, multiple-choice items and two true-false items (see appendix E). To extend its reach, a web-based platform was used – Google Forms. It was sent to 811 Portuguese state schools across mainland Portugal and the islands of Madeira and Azores in October 2020 and remained open till January 2021. Four hundred and twenty answers were validated.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. RQ 1: HOW ARE SPEAKING AND INTELLIGIBILITY BEING ADDRESSED IN PORTUGAL'S EFL CLASSROOMS?

Forty-two and thirty-eight per cent (N = 178) of respondents consider integrating pronunciation in their teaching practice important, whilst 38.81% (N = 163) of teachers state that integrating pronunciation is very important, and 13.81% (N = 58) assert it is imperative. However, despite the perceived importance attributed to pronunciation by most teachers, regular pronunciation practice approach is dismissed. Ninety-three and one per cent (N = 391) of teachers' self-reported pronunciation activities go to listening and repeating. But in truth, if matched against the qualitative strand of the study, this was limited to the occasional correction and feed-back, done on the spur of the moment and not on a regular basis to address potential intelligibility problems. A strong emphasis continues to be attributed to other subsets, especially grammar. In fact, when coding for the content category (COLT PT – Part A), whose major aim is to understand whether the primary focus of the teaching-learning process is on meaning or form, pronunciation was coded in five lessons, three of which during speaking assessments, while grammar was coded in 31 lessons.

Speaking is not much better than intelligibility. Notwithstanding the perceived importance attributed to speaking, 69.05% (N = 290) of teachers find it imperative, 26.67% (N = 112) very important and 4.29% (N = 18) important, it is the least practised student skill, lagging behind listening, reading, and writing in the number of lessons allocated to its development on its own and/or in combination. Separately, listening was coded 15 times, reading 32 times, speaking 14 times, and writing 31 times. Speaking, closely followed by listening, falls to the bottom of the ranking, far behind reading and writing. Furthermore, the reading/writing combination was the most recurrent throughout, coded for eight times, seven with a primary focus on writing and one with a primary focus on reading. Apart from the odd exception (the listening/speaking combination, coded on two occasions, both with a primary focus on listening), all the combinations coded include writing and/or reading, either with a primary or secondary focus: listening/speaking/reading (primary focus on listening), coded once; listening/reading (primary focus on listening), coded three times; listening/writing/reading (primary focus on listening), coded six times; speaking/writing/reading (primary focus on reading and writing), coded twice; speaking/reading (primary focus on reading), coded twice; listening/writing (primary focus on listening), coded once; listening/writing (primary focus on writing), coded once; speaking/writing/reading (primary focus on reading), coded once; listening/speaking/writing (primary focus on writing), coded once. The justification for this situation, in the words of teachers A and B, is heterogeneity. Teacher A illustrates how the problem affects her teaching practice as follows: "the hardest thing is to make them er .., speak. Create a balance, make the shy ones, the ones that have no fluency be able to start speaking and prevent the ones that feel comfortable from speaking all the

time". Presumably, it is easier and less laborious to focus on the other skills. Thirteen questionnaire respondents bluntly highlight this claim: "these activities are more difficult to manage" and "pair/group work cause too many distractions/problems". This set of circumstances positively correlates with how speaking is being addressed in Portugal's EFL classrooms. Routinely, teachers opt for oral presentations, role-plays, and description tasks with an assessment frame of mind. Often, these take after the printed word. Learners think and/or discuss amongst themselves, if it involves pairs, in Portuguese and write down their sentences/text in English. This uncharacteristic planning in advance for speaking is followed by plenty of memorisation and rehearsal. As a result of such procedures, functions, and structures regularly arise with atypical frequency, utterances are exceedingly short and exaggeratedly well-formed; backchannel responses, discourse markers and colloquial expressions are seldom used, and shared knowledge of context is not assumed. In this vein, learners' speech sounds unnatural, bookish, and too formal.

Bearing in mind this rationale, it is about time to think of FL teaching from a different perspective. It seems far more fitting to conceive the teaching and learning of English, and any foreign language for that matter, in terms of proficiency levels. Instead of traditional classes, learners ought to be grouped in accordance with their language proficiency, for their own good. Weaker and stronger students would benefit from this measure. The former would not feel ashamed of their lower proficiency when compared to that of their peers, thus encouraging them to take risks and speak, whilst the latter would feel prompted to push their limits even further. Although with different requirements and learning rhythms, both would have better chances to improve their current spoken language proficiency and intelligibility. This could prove an interesting avenue for all the stakeholders involved.

4.2. RQ 2: ARE SPEAKING AND INTELLIGIBILITY TRULY A NEGLECTED PARTY IN THE PORTUGUESE EFL CLASSROOM?

Half of the questionnaire's respondents (N = 210) said that they are not familiar with the new CEFR – CV and thus with the changes to the 2001 descriptors and the phonological dimension of spoken language. Based on the figures and the comments of teachers A and B, who showed surprise during the interviews at the existence of the companion volume whilst claiming they were only familiar with the CEFR, it is plausible to think that the original version still resonates amongst Portuguese teachers the most. A clear-cut answer to why behind these results is virtually impossible. Conceivably, the age factor (151 respondents were in their mid-fifties and 38 were above 60 years old) may impact the teachers' awareness of the new CEFR – CV, tipping the side of the scales to the nativeness side (emphasis on form and accuracy) whilst disregarding its intelligibility opposite. Another possibility may simply be they do not need to be familiar with the companion volume because it does not figure in any official document. A final, but perhaps likely, answer is lack of time. Teachers' tight schedules and busy professional lives may

have an unduly negative influence on their openness to more unrecognised work and unpaid extra hours. Unsurprisingly, teachers with a profound knowledge of the volume's phonology descriptors and the concept of intelligibility are not as many as we would hope for. Almost 40% of respondents (N = 166) are either unfamiliar or only vaguely familiar with intelligibility.

Intelligibility is, then, still a marginalised concept whose positive correlation with the learner-user's spoken proficiency is yet to be fully understood. The question should not be about the correctness of the learner-user's enunciation but its appropriateness to achieving meaning in contexts of use. Intelligibility must be the yardstick against which the learner-user's mastery is to be measured either in real-life or classroom settings. The aim of putting the focus on intelligibility as the primary construct in phonological control seems to lie far down the road, and with it, the much-needed awareness that intelligibility in its narrow sense is decisive to map productive and receptive words and/or utterances onto the learner-user's phonological inventory. Otherwise, it is impossible to attach any meaning whatsoever to what is being said or heard. The growing use of ELF internationally, including NNS and NS alike, is not being reflected inside the classroom, just widening the gap between how the language is used and the way it is taught in the classroom. What stood out the most from the data was the number of teachers who find pronunciation either important, very important or imperative, 33% (N = 138), but assign it 1-5 minutes per speaking class. At best, learners practise pronunciation in a class or two every school year. When correlating Q17 (On average, how many classes per term do you focus on speaking? – 3-5 classes interval) with Q18 (During your speaking classes, can you estimate how much time you allot to pronunciation? – 1-5 minutes interval), at best Portuguese EFL learners can improve their intelligibility for 25 minutes every term, five classes of five minutes practice each. In total, it represents a class and a half (75 minutes) per school year. This is startlingly insufficient if we are to help our learner-user's pronunciation, and thus, their spoken language proficiency. For the time being, intelligibility, and thus pronunciation, is given little attention, if not completely overlooked, by teachers in many classrooms.

With very few exceptions, opportunities for the learner-users to speak and interact extensively in English were limited to assessment events, making speaking practice deficient in number and fragmented in method. Then again, one may wonder how students are supposed to provide extensive chunks of spoken language for assessment purposes if oral practice is not part of normal lessons. Furthermore, I found a slight discrepancy between the teachers' self-reported use of English orally by their learners and classroom observations. Teachers tend to overrate the learners' use of English, both in teacher-learner and learner-learner situations. Classroom observations display a rather different communicational pattern. Amongst themselves learners use their L1 for most of their interactions. Learners do not speak in English as much as they could because they feel they do not need to; their interlocutor shares a common L1 with them. Drawing on my field notes, in 39 lessons out of a possible 46, comments were written about the learners' consistent use of the L1 to interact amongst themselves,

even the stronger ones. Elaborating on the importance of speaking, it is Swain (2000) who claims that:

> The importance of output could be that output pushes learners to process language more deeply - with more mental effort - than does input. With output, the learner is in control. In speaking or writing, learners can 'stretch' their interlanguage to meet communicative goals. To produce, learners need to do something. They need to create linguistic form and meaning, and in so doing, discover what they can or cannot do. [...] Students' meaningful production of language output would thus seem to have a potentially significant role in language development. (p. 99)

On the other hand, learners use English with the teacher but in an extremely limited fashion. L2 use was coded in 41 lessons whilst L1 use was coded in 14. But in truth, on this specific item, coding alone veils the reality of the learners' communicative behaviour. Although the number of lessons ticked for L2 use is far greater than the one ticked for L1 use, the former happens with extremely limited words (ultraminimal – one or to two words, or minimal – three or more words), usually in response to the teacher, whilst the latter often happens and extensively within the same lesson. Learners moved back and forth between ultraminimal speech, coded in 26 lessons, and minimal speech, coded in 25 lessons. Sometimes, the difference in coding is truly little, and minimal speech could easily become ultraminimal (e.g., "Yes teacher" vs. "I don't know"). Many learners do not go beyond five word stretches of spoken language. Adding to the challenge, sustained speech stemming from speaking assessments is very prepared and memorised, making it sound unnatural. Thus, learners struggle with their speaking when they forget their lines. In this fashion, speaking is far from authentic. Just twice did learners engage in unplanned sustained speech.

Speaking is clearly overlooked in the Portuguese EFL classrooms studied, holding a subordinate role in the world of ELT in this context. In the same way as speaking, pronunciation practice is not systematic throughout. So, as far as pronunciation, and thus intelligibility, is concerned, our findings indicate that the practice of this subset is either null or done haphazardly. The combination of the pressure to achieve success rates projected by school boards and some of the challenges felt every day in the field – lack of guidelines, lack of training, difficulty in integrating speaking and pronunciation, and heterogeneous classes – clearly has a negative influence on how speaking and intelligibility are being addressed in Portugal's EFL classrooms. Notwithstanding the importance ascribed to speaking and pronunciation, the type of input practised in many Portuguese classrooms does not generate sufficient oral proficiency skills for the learner-user's future needs.

4.3. THE INTELLIGIBILITY DIMENSION

Given the considerations presented thus far, the coding of the intelligibility dimension proved rather difficult. Again, coding in itself conceals an intricate matter. In fact, learners were deemed intelligible in 34 lessons against three in which they were considered unintelligible. Yet all three were coded when the learners engaged in sustained speech. Thus, a positive correlation between being highly intelligible and the high number of coding for being intelligible should not be made. It is easy to be intelligible in short stretches of one to five words. On the other hand, it is impossible to determine if the learners would be deemed intelligible as many times if they were to engage in sustained speech more often. Nonetheless, a few remarks about the observed learners' intelligibility are appropriate.

Some learners have intelligibility problems not because of poor pronunciation but speaking anxiety. At times, students speak with a rather creaky, trembling voice. On other occasions, students speak in an exceptionally low voice (sometimes barely audible), causing intelligibility problems. Bearing in mind the construct of general intelligibility adopted in this study, when this happens, it is exceedingly difficult for the listener to identify the speaker's utterance. Perhaps learners would be more relaxed if they had the chance to use extended chunks of language more often and thus heighten their intelligibility.

Word stress changes occur consistently, yet they do not impair intelligibility, which matches Jenkins' (2002) Lingua Franca Core (LFC) non-core features for mutual intelligibility. The most noticeable example of this pattern is regular verbs when used in the past simple: cover'ed instead of 'covered; experience'ed instead of ex'perienced; and so forth. But it also happens with different word classes like adjectives (ma'jor instead of 'major) or nouns (diffi'culties instead of 'difficulties).

In the same vein, the use of Portuguese influenced words is regular, but it does not pose intelligibility problems among students: e.g., "lose time" instead of "waste time", "I have 14 years old" instead of "I am 14 years old" or "look TV" instead of "watch TV". It accords with Bent and Bradlow's (2003) matched interlanguage speech intelligibility benefit. It is difficult to say if intelligibility would be impaired with non-Portuguese listeners, either NNS or NS, but here speaker familiarity and particularly phonological familiarity influenced the listeners' ability to identify and process the speakers' utterances.

Mispronunciations occur on occasion, but most are quickly solved, usually through self-repair, as in the word photo initially pronounced/ˈpəʊtəʊ/ and promptly corrected to /ˈfəʊtəʊ/ because the learner noticed that her partner frowned or resorting to kinesics as in the word bone pronounced /bɒn/ instead of /bəʊn/ by using the learner's own body. However, occasionally, a few mispronunciations impair intelligibility, as is the case with bought pronounced /bəʊt/ instead of /bɔːt/, despite the context being provided.

Learners hesitate and even stop speaking when they are not sure of how to pronounce the words. These hesitations and/or stops are condu-

cive to an uneven rhythm of speech, which causes intelligibility problems and, thus, communication breakdowns because they disrupt the flow of speech and limit interaction.

　　　Many learners experience difficulties in pronouncing consonant digraphs. The digraph /th/ when either silent or voiced: e.g., breath-taking and though. Usually, learners substitute /t/, /s/, /f/ for voiceless /θ/ and /d/, /z/, /v/ for voiced /ð/. Also, the digraph /ch/ when producing the sounds /tʃ/ and /k/: e.g., the word exchange pronounced /ɛksˈʃeɪndʒ/ instead of /ɛksˈtʃeɪndʒ/ and the word chemistry /ˈʃɛmɪstri/ instead of /ˈkɛmɪstri/. Finally, the digraph /gh/, when producing the /f/ sound and when it is silent. Learners struggle to distinguish between the two. In words like cough or laugh, where the /f/ phoneme at the end of the word must be pronounced, speaking simply comes to a halt because learners do not know how to pronounce the words properly, whereas with silent /gh/, learners either follow the same pattern or insert different phonemes as in daughter pronounced /ˈdɔktə/ instead of /ˈdɔːtə/. In truth, there are few reliable spelling patterns that teachers can provide their learners with that indicate which sound, if any, is to be pronounced. This snippet of data correlates positively with the difficulty posed to learners by the gap in English between its pronunciation and spelling. It also endorses my claim that these digraphs are essential for intelligibility too amidst many NNS learner-users, not just the Portuguese, unlike what is suggested by Jenkins (2002), who considers the /th/ not critical for intelligibility and leaves out both /ch/ and /gh/.

　　　Besides style and vocabulary, more (spoken) proficient learners adapt their intonation, rhythm, stress, and articulatory precision, considering the language proficiency of their less proficient peers.

　　　The listing provided showcases some of the features deemed as idiosyncratic of the Portuguese learners' intelligibility patterns.

4.4. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Ultimately, the balance between traditional and ELF-like language teaching approaches is determined by the teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and convictions of what is needed for their learners, according to the importance attached to speaking and its subsets when compared to writing, grammar, and accuracy. As might be expected, there is a fair amount of proficiency variation amongst learners, but the need to approach speaking and pronunciation in class is unquestionable. Both must be addressed in a planned, systematic fashion, especially if we think of the increasing gap in English between grapheme-phoneme correspondence due to the language's spread. Such a non-phonemic language requires a threshold of intelligibility, unattainable if not practised. Whether as an EFL learner or ELF user, if one cannot map productive and receptive words and/or utterances onto one's phonological inventories, attaching any meaning to what is being said or heard, grasping intentions, or managing communicative dysfunctions will be virtually impossible. If left to chance inside the classroom, only a small minority of learners will develop the ability to speak and pronounce the language

intelligibly. This means that at the opposite end of the scale, a large majority of learners run the risk of not being able to do so. Tellingly, the following example taken from my classroom observations illustrates the impact of intelligibility on the learner-user's spoken proficiency:

> T: Read the sentence, please.
> S: I don't know. I can't do it (said in Portuguese).
> T: So, repeat after me: Mr Spencer ...
> S: Mr Spencer (in an extremely low voice).
> T: Louder, please!
> S: Louder, please!

Like a mockingbird, this student did nothing but mimic her teacher, failing to attach any meaning to the words she said and heard. Again, intelligibility in its narrow sense proves itself vital for communicative success or failure in and outside the classroom. I would say that a consensus about the importance of speaking and pronunciation is not enough, and a consensus on how learners develop their ability to speak and pronounce English is not needed. First, because perceiving the significance of oral skills but stopping at that does not suffice to generate practical communicative empowerment. Second, because there are varied learning styles and, therefore, possibilities to achieve such a goal, some of which are mentioned by the teachers themselves.

The consensus must revolve around effective oral practice as part of normal lessons. If we genuinely want learners to develop their ability to speak and pronounce the language, we ought to let them speak. The aim should be less teacher talk while boosting the learners' willingness to initiate sustained discourse and interact in the TL beyond narrow-range topics by taking advantage of their integrative oriented-motivation. Otherwise, most learners will not be able to develop their ability to speak and pronounce the language intelligibly as future ELF users in situational speaking communities.

5. CONCLUSION

By and large, pronunciation practice, and thus intelligibility, is limited to the occasional correction and feedback in the form of listening and repeating, while underlying speaking practice is a written-based orthodoxy reminiscent of a long writing tradition in teaching and learning a foreign/second language which continues to fall into the trap of considering spoken writing as speech. Teachers are letting themselves be negatively guided by the impact of washback and not by learning. Hence, most activities carried out reflect assessment demands instead of catering to the learners' needs. Evidence substantiates the claim that intelligibility is still a disregarded concept whose added value for the learner-user's spoken proficiency is yet to be grasped. Many teachers are unaware of the CEFR – CV or the volume's phonology descriptors, turning intelligibility, and thus pronun-

ciation, into a linguistic sightseer who pays the occasional visit, never being allowed to stay long. By the same token, speaking plays second fiddle to the rest of the skills, especially writing. There is a considerable mismatch between the perceived value of speaking and how it is put into practice. Speaking is not approached systematically in the Portuguese EFL classroom. Complications arise from the preference for accuracy over fluency, form over meaning, and grammar rules over language in use. Opportunities for the learner-users to speak and interact in English become scarce, making speaking practice insufficient and fragmented. The tendency should be, naturally enough, to make things simple: provide learners with sufficient speaking and pronunciation practice, enabling them to become intelligible and, thus, likely to be successful ELF users.

Perhaps the first step towards raising awareness amongst teachers is to start with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that teachers (will) need to tackle the challenges posed by an unprecedented rise of ELF. The premises are offered in this article: a) speaking and pronunciation must be an effective part of the lessons; b) anchored in the working definition put forward above, intelligibility must be part of the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs); and c) a move from reminiscent traits of audiolingualism (translation, memorisation, and scripted talk) to CLT principles (relevant communicative tasks that promote intelligibility-like pronunciation) is of the essence. Some other suggestions can be put forward. On a more theoretical basis, reading Jenkin's The Phonology of English as an International Language: New Models, New Norms, New Goals (2000), Derwing & Munro's Pronunciation Fundamentals: Evidence-Based Perspectives for L2 Teaching and Research (2015), and Levis's Intelligibility, Oral Communication, and the Teaching of Pronunciation (2018) could be a good starting point. On a more practical level, the English as a Lingua Franca Practices for Inclusive Multilingual Classrooms (ENRICH) project (available at http://enrichproject.eu/pt/) is a high priority tool to enhance competencies which are necessary for responding to and building upon the diversity found in current multilingual classrooms. It offers a CPD course, completely free, that contextualises and exploits the benefits of ELF-related language proficiency. Any real advance in mainstream English language teaching is only possible if informed by a clear understanding of intelligibility and its role for ELF.

Future research on this topic should include a bigger sample of classroom observation, both in the number of school clusters across the country and learners' speech samples. It would provide not only more reliable information but also a sounder database to answer the research questions and, thus, better understand the added value of intelligibility for the learner-user's spoken proficiency.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

AUTHORSHIP OF THE ARTICLE

The author is solely responsible for the elaboration of the entire article.

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Repensando a oralidade em ELI: Qual o lugar da inteligibilidade na sala de aula de ILE?

RESUMO

A aprendizagem de uma Língua Estrangeira (LE) é, em regra, vista pelos especialistas como um ativo importante para a compreensão global e a mobilidade das pessoas. O inglês encontra-se no topo da pirâmide como o idioma número um para atingir esses objetivos. Atualmente, ser capaz de se expressar de forma inteligível em inglês é decisivo para os estudantes que desejam prosperar tanto académica quanto profissionalmente. De facto, o conceito de inteligibilidade está agora firmemente estabelecido no campo da linguística aplicada como um dos fatores-chave para explicar o sucesso ou não na comunicação entre interlocutores de origens culturais e linguísticas diversas. Assim, a essência deste artigo reside na análise das práticas de ensino comunicativas de professores de inglês como língua estrangeira e como elas se refletem na proficiência e inteligibilidade da oralidade dos alunos. Os resultados mostram que o inglês continua a ser ensinado com pouca atenção ao seu uso no mundo real, criando uma lacuna entre as necessidades/expectativas dos alunos e a sua verdadeira aprendizagem. No geral, o artigo foca a necessidade de uma reconceptualização da oralidade, tendo por base o papel da inteligibilidade no mundo coevo em que vivemos. O artigo funciona como um desafio às visões tradicionais sobre práticas de ensino/aprendizagem ao reivindicar a necessidade de repensar as abordagens para a proficiência oral dos alunos com base no princípio da inteligibilidade.

Palavras-chave: Inglês como Língua Estrangeira; Oralidade; Inteligibilidade; Sala de aula; Práticas de ensino.

Repensando la oralidad en ELI: ¿Cuál es el lugar de la inteligibilidad en el aula de ILE?

RESUMEN

Por lo general, los especialistas consideran que aprender una Lengua Extranjera (LE) es un activo importante para la comprensión global y la movilidad de las personas. El inglés se encuentra en la parte superior de la pirámide como el idioma número uno para lograr estos objetivos. Hoy en día, ser capaz de expresarse de manera inteligible en inglés es fundamental para los estudiantes que desean prosperar tanto académica como profesionalmente. De hecho, el concepto de inteligibilidad está ahora firmemente establecido en el campo de la lingüística aplicada como uno de los factores clave para explicar el éxito o el fracaso de la comunicación entre interlocutores de diversos orígenes culturales y lingüísticos. Así, la esencia de este artículo reside en el análisis de las prácticas docentes comunicativas de los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera y cómo se reflejan en la competencia e inteligibilidad del habla de los estudiantes. Los resultados muestran que el inglés continúa siendo enseñado con poca atención a su uso en el mundo real, creando una brecha entre las necesidades/expectativas de los estudiantes y su aprendizaje real. En general, el artículo se centra en la necesidad de una reconceptualización de la oralidad, basada en el papel de la inteligibilidad en el mundo contemporáneo en el que vivimos. El artículo funciona como un desafío a los puntos de vista tradicionales sobre las prácticas de enseñanza/aprendizaje al reclamar la necesidad de repensar los enfoques de la competencia oral de los estudiantes basados en el principio de inteligibilidad.

Palabras clave: Inglés como Lengua Extranjera; Oralidad; Inteligibilidad; Aula; Prácticas docentes.

Appendix A

List of Changes to Specific 2001 CEFR Descriptors

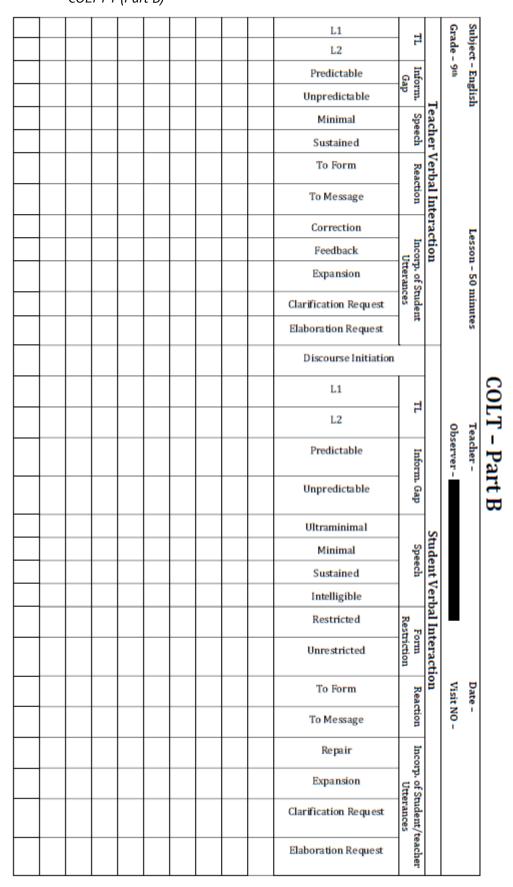|	
OVERALL LISTENING COMPREHENSION	
C2	Can understand with ease virtually ~~Has no difficulty with~~ any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, delivered at fast ~~native~~ natural speed.
UNDERSTANDING CONVERSATION BETWEEN OTHER ~~NATIVE~~ SPEAKERS	
B2+	Can keep up with an animated conversation between ~~native~~ speakers of the target language.
B2	Can with some effort catch much of what is said around him/her, but may find it difficult to participate effectively in discussion with several ~~native~~ speakers of the target language who do not modify their ~~language~~ speech in any way.
LISTENING AS A MEMBER OF A LIVE AUDIENCE	
C2	Can follow specialised lectures and presentations employing ~~a high degree of~~ colloquialism, regional usage or unfamiliar terminology.
OVERALL READING COMPREHENSION	
C2	Can understand ~~and interpret critically~~ virtually all forms of the written language including abstract, structurally complex, or highly colloquial literary and non-literary writings.
OVERALL SPOKEN INTERACTION	
B2	Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction, and sustained relationships with speakers of the target language ~~native speakers~~ quite possible without imposing strain on either party. Can highlight the personal significance of events and experiences, account for and sustain views clearly by providing relevant explanations and arguments.
UNDERSTANDING ~~A NATIVE SPEAKER~~ AN INTERLOCUTOR	
C2	Can understand any ~~native speaker~~ interlocutor, even on abstract and complex topics of a specialist nature beyond his/her own field, given an opportunity to adjust to a ~~non-standard~~ less familiar accent ~~or dialect~~.
CONVERSATION	
B2	Can sustain relationships with speakers of the target language ~~native speakers~~ without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with another ~~native~~ proficient speaker.
INFORMAL DISCUSSION (WITH FRIENDS)	
B2+	Can keep up with an animated discussion between ~~native~~ speakers of the target language.
B2	Can with some effort catch much of what is said around him/her in discussion, but may find it difficult to participate effectively in discussion with several ~~native~~ speakers of the target language who do not modify their ~~language~~ speech in any way.
FORMAL DISCUSSION (MEETINGS)	
C2	Can hold his/her own in formal discussion of complex issues, putting an articulate and persuasive argument, at no disadvantage to ~~native~~ other speakers.
INTERVIEWING AND BEING INTERVIEWED	
C2	Can keep up his/her side of the dialogue extremely well, structuring the talk and interacting authoritatively with ~~complete~~ effortless fluency as interviewer or interviewee, at no disadvantage to ~~native~~ other speakers.
SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROPRIATENESS	
C2	Can mediate effectively and naturally between speakers of the target language and of his/her own community ~~of origin~~, taking account of sociocultural and sociolinguistic differences.
C2	Appreciates virtually all the sociolinguistic and sociocultural implications of language used by ~~native~~ proficient speakers of the target language and can react accordingly.
B2	Can sustain relationships with speakers of the target language ~~native speakers~~ without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with another ~~native~~ proficient speaker.
SPOKEN FLUENCY	
B2	Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with speakers of the target language ~~native speakers~~ quite possible without imposing strain on either party.

Appendix B
COLT PT (Part A)

COLT PT – Part A

Subject – English
Year – 9th
Lesson – 50 minutes
Class –
Teacher –
Observer –
Date –
Visit NO –

Time	Activities	Participant Organization							Content									Student Modality					Materials							
		Class			Group		Indiv.		Language				O. Topics		Content Control								Type				Source			
		T↔S/C	S↔S/C	Choral	Same Task	Different Task	Same Task	Different Task	Form	Function	Discourse	Interculturality	Narrow	Broad	Teacher/Text	Teach./Text/St.	Student	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Other	Minimal Text	Extended Text	Audio	Visual	L2 – NNS	L2 – NS	L2 – NSA	Student – made

Appendix C
COLT PT (Part B)

COLT – Part B

Subject – English
Grade – 9th

Lesson – 50 minutes

Teacher –
Observer –

Date –
Visit NO –

Teacher Verbal Interaction

Category	Subcategory									
TL	L1									
	L2									
Inform. Gap	Predictable									
	Unpredictable									
Speech	Minimal									
	Sustained									
Reaction	To Form									
	To Message									
Incorp. of Student Utterances	Correction									
	Feedback									
	Expansion									
	Clarification Request									
	Elaboration Request									
	Discourse Initiation									

Student Verbal Interaction

Category	Subcategory									
TL	L1									
	L2									
Inform. Gap	Predictable									
	Unpredictable									
Speech	Ultraminimal									
	Minimal									
	Sustained									
	Intelligible									
Form Restriction	Restricted									
	Unrestricted									
Reaction	To Form									
	To Message									
Incorp. of Student/teacher Utterances	Repair									
	Expansion									
	Clarification Request									
	Elaboration Request									

Appendix D
Teachers' Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Are you familiar with the new CEFR (2018)?
2. (If so) Are you familiar with its phonology descriptors?
3. How do you feel about intelligibility?
4. In your opinion, is it important to promote speaking in class? And within it pronunciation? Why?
5. On average, how many classes per term do you focus on speaking? Do you include pronunciation?
6. Is there an English variety you tend to follow in class? And is it the same you use outside the classroom?
7. Is the variety you follow in class the one you expect your students to follow?
8. What made you choose this one? Do you think it is the one they will need the most in their future lives?
9. Tell me about your students' use of English in class. Do you think it is adequate?
10. Could you tell me which materials you usually use for your speaking activities, including pronunciation?
11. Could you describe some of the activities you use?
12. In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge to approach speaking and pronunciation in the classroom?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix E
Teachers' Questionnaire

TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND DATA

- Gender: ☐ Feminine
           ☐ Masculine

- Age: ☐ Up to 30
       ☐ In-between 30 and 40
       ☐ In-between 40 and 50
       ☐ In-between 50 and 60
       ☐ More than 60

- Level of Schooling: ☐ Licentiate
                      ☐ Certificate of Graduate Study
                      ☐ Master's (pre-Bologna)
                      ☐ Master's (post-Bologna)
                      ☐ PhD

- Teaching Location: ☐ North
                      ☐ Centre
                      ☐ Lisbon
                      ☐ Alentejo
                      ☐ Algarve
                      ☐ Azores
                      ☐ Madeira

- Type of Affiliation: ☐ Docente Quadro de Agrupamento / Escola
                        ☐ Docente Quadro de Zona Pedagógica
                        ☐ Docente Contratado/a

- Recruitment group: ☐ 220
                     ☐ 330

SECTION 2 – TEACHING PRACTICE

- Are you familiar with the new volume of the CEFR (2018)?
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

- If so, how familiar are you with the new phonological descriptors?
  OBS: If not, move to the next question.
    - ☐ Unfamiliar
    - ☐ Little familiar
    - ☐ Familiar
    - ☐ Very familiar
    - ☐ Completely familiar

- How familiar are you with intelligibility?
    - ☐ Unfamiliar
    - ☐ Little familiar
    - ☐ Familiar
    - ☐ Very familiar
    - ☐ Completely familiar

- In your opinion, how important is it to approach speaking in your teaching?
    - ☐ Not important
    - ☐ Little important
    - ☐ Important
    - ☐ Very important
    - ☐ Imperative

- Thinking of speaking, how important is it to integrate pronunciation in your teaching?
    - ☐ Not important
    - ☐ Little important
    - ☐ Important
    - ☐ Very important
    - ☐ Imperative

- Which variety of English do you use while teaching?
    - ☐ British "RP"
    - ☐ General American
    - ☐ Canadian English
    - ☐ Australian English
    - ☐ South African English
    - ☐ Other

- Which variety of English do you use when you are not teaching?
    - ☐ British "RP"
    - ☐ General American
    - ☐ Canadian English
    - ☐ Australian English
    - ☐ South African English
    - ☐ Other

- Which variety of English do you want your students to use while in class?
  - ☐ British "RP"
  - ☐ General American
  - ☐ Canadian English
  - ☐ Australian English
  - ☐ South African English
  - ☐ Other

- Do you think that the variety you want your students to use while in class is the one they will need for their academic and professional future?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

- Roughly, can you estimate the percentage of English used during class time by your students:
  - ☐ 1 - 10%
  - ☐ 11 - 20%
  - ☐ 21 - 40%
  - ☐ 41 - 60%
  - ☐ 61 - 80%
  - ☐ 81 - 100%

- On average, how many classes per term do you focus on speaking?
  - ☐ 0
  - ☐ 1 - 2 classes
  - ☐ 3 - 5 classes
  - ☐ 6 - 8 classes
  - ☐ 9 - 10 classes
  - ☐ More than 10 classes

- On your speaking classes, can you estimate how much time do you allot to pronunciation:
  - ☐ 0
  - ☐ 1 - 5 minutes
  - ☐ 6 - 15 minutes
  - ☐ 16 - 30 minutes
  - ☐ 31 - 50 minutes

- Which materials do you usually fall back on to approach speaking and pronunciation with your students:
  - ☐ Textbook
  - ☐ Textbook's additional resources
  - ☐ Other textbooks
  - ☐ Flashcards
  - ☐ Digital resources
  - ☐ Language learning websites (e.g.: BBC Learning English)
  - ☐ Other

- Which activities do you usually employ to practice speaking with your students:
    - ☐ Pair / group work
    - ☐ Oral presentations
    - ☐ Role-plays
    - ☐ Description tasks (e.g.: description of objects, places, etc.)
    - ☐ Debates
    - ☐ Fun activities (e.g.: guessing games)
    - ☐ Other

- Which activities do you usually employ to practice pronunciation with your students:
    - ☐ Oral input (explanation on how to position lips, tongue and jaw to pronounce words)
    - ☐ Minimal pairs
    - ☐ Tongue-twisters
    - ☐ Listen and repeat
    - ☐ Dictation
    - ☐ Fun activities (e.g.: Chinese whispers)
    - ☐ Other

- For you, what are the biggest constraints to approach speaking and pronunciation:
    - ☐ Lack of preparation / training on this domain
    - ☐ Lack of proper resources
    - ☐ Lack of time
    - ☐ Lack of precise guidelines on official documents

- Difficulty in integrating speaking and pronunciation with the remaining skills
    - ☐ There are not any
    - ☐ Other