

Pair Work for Developing Speaking Skills

Mariana de Carvalho Cordeiro

Relatório

de Estágio de Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 1.º Ciclo do Ensino Básico

Mariana de Carvalho Cordeiro, Relatório de Estágio, 2017

Março, 2017

(Versão corrigida e melhorada após defesa pública)

Relatório de Estágio apresentado para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Ensino de Inglês no 1.º Ciclo do Ensino Básico realizado sob a orientação científica de Sandie Mourão.

AGRADECIMENTOS

I would like to thank my family and my friends, for helping me and supporting me along this Master's Degree and for helping me get through all the challenges I faced. A special thank you to my boyfriend, for being supportive and loving from day one.

I thank all my classmates from the bottom of my heart, for helping me and for teaching me with their knowledge and wisdom, and for not letting me quit ever.

I thank my supervisor Sandie Mourão, for providing me guidance and for teaching me how to be a better teacher, and I also thank all the other teachers and professors that I got to know through this course.

Another special thank you to the schools that allowed me to have my practicum there, and to my co-operating teachers, Vera Batista and Pedro Santos, and to all my students, who I will never forget.

Pair Work for Developing Speaking Skills

Mariana de Carvalho Cordeiro

Resumo

Este relatório foi baseado na questão “como podemos fazer os alunos entender a relevância do trabalho a pares na sala de aula de Inglês?”, e o propósito do mesmo é ver as relações entre as actividades a pares na sala de aula de Inglês, a importância destas actividades e o desenvolvimento das capacidades orais na aula de Inglês.

Os trabalhos a pares apresentam vários benefícios, especialmente com alunos no ensino primário, e este estudo irá analisar como os alunos reagem a actividades a pares, num período de três ciclos. Durante esse período de três ciclos, foram realizadas actividades a pares, seguidos por um questionário. De seguida, foram analisados esses questionários, que nos deram a informação da opinião dos alunos em relação a actividades a pares, assim como a opinião dos alunos sobre o seu propósito.

Os resultados indicam que os alunos têm uma reacção positiva face a trabalhos a pares, mas é necessária uma explicação do seu propósito. Também está provado que os alunos com melhores resultados não necessitam de uma explicação, pois o seu interesse é genuíno desde o primeiro questionário; e os alunos que têm resultados abaixo da média têm uma melhor prestação no uso da L2 e nos trabalhos a pares, após lhe ser dada uma explicação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Trabalho a Pares, Capacidades Orais, L1 e L2, Inglês no 1.º Ciclo do Ensino Básico.

Pair Work for Developing Speaking Skills

Mariana de Carvalho Cordeiro

Abstract

This report was written minding the question “How can we make students see the relevance of pair work in the English classroom?”, and the purpose of it is to investigate pair work activities and the development of speaking skills in the English classroom.

Pair work activities have got many benefits, especially with young learners and this study analyses how the students responded to those activities, throughout a period of three cycles. During these three cycles, students did pair work activities and answered questionnaires, which helped me see how students responded to pair work activities, as well as its purpose.

Results show that students respond well to pair work activities, but they need an explanation as to why they do it. It also appears that better students do not need an explanation, and students who are below average tend to respond better to pair work activities and L2 use after they were given an explanation.

KEYWORDS: Pair work, Speaking skills, L1 and L2, English and young learners.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	7
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1. ADVANTAGES OF PAIR WORK	8
2.2. DISADVANTAGES OF PAIR WORK	10
2.2. L1 USE IN PAIR WORK	11
2.3. CONCLUSION	11
3. ACTION RESEARCH	12
3.1. CONTEXT	12
3.2. METHODOLOGY	13
3.2.1 CONSENT	13
3.2.3 DATA COLLECTION	14
3.2.3.1. CYCLES	14
3.2.3.2. QUESTIONNAIRES	15
3.2.3.3. RECORDINGS	15
3.2.4. DATA ANALYSIS	15
3.3. RESULTS	16
3.3.1 INTRODUCTION	16
3.1.2. STEP 1 - QUESTIONNAIRE 1 ANALYSIS	16
3.2.2. STEP 2 - QUESTIONNAIRE 2 ANALYSIS	17
3.3.3. STEP 3 - QUESTIONNAIRE 3 ANALYSIS	19
3.3.4. ANALYSING INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONNAIRES	20
3.3.5. RECORDINGS	24
3.3.5.1. RECORDING 1	24
3.3.5.2. RECORDING 2	26
4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	28
4.1. WHAT I LEARNED	28
4.2. OTHER STUDIES AND THIS STUDY	29
4.2. FUTURE RESEARCHES	30
REFERENCE LIST	31
APPENDIX I	33
APPENDIX II	34
APPENDIX III	35
APPENDIX IV	36

1. Introduction

The idea of pair work in the English classroom has always puzzled me, since my experience in teaching young learners was practically none before beginning this Master's degree. I have done very little pair work activities in my short teaching experience, as I was afraid it would be a stirring activity.

I wanted to research how pair work worked in the primary classroom, what students thought of it and how beneficial it was for the students. The question I based my research on was “How can we make students see the relevance of pair work in the English classroom?”. I wanted the students to understand the benefits of having two students working together, if they understood the objectives, how they would use L2 and, inevitably, their L1 and if they enjoyed it or not.

2. Literature Review

Wu (2003) suggests there is a mistaken idea that children's skills of learning a foreign language are not intrinsic or natural, and because of that, L2 classes should be very formal, rather than fun. However, this theory was proved to be not correct in Wu's study, for as long as children are provided with a supportive learning environment and an effective intervene in their learning process, the intrinsic motivation of young learners can be supported from the beginning. This means classes should not be a dull task for learners, instead classes should be motivational and fun for learners, to stimulate their eagerness to learn and understand another language, rather than seeing it as a waste of time.

2.1. Advantages of pair work

According to Curtain & Dahlburg (2010), interaction is very important to language development for second-language learners and interactive language tasks are one of the most important activities. Sufficient opportunity for interaction and for building interpersonal communication should be given to learners, as both cognitive learning theory and second-language acquisition theory affirm that in order to acquire language, learners must express themselves orally. Partner activities and small-group work are a plus for the early language classroom, as when students learn to work in cooperation, their opportunities for language use are multiplied, and so are their opportunities for active participation in concrete and meaningful experiences.

"Small group and pair work activities (...) have numerous advantages for the language learner: many opportunities for language use, a chance for natural language practise, more student talk, a higher percentage of student talk in real communicative activities, a "safe" environment for communication, more like one-on-one conversation, two-way communication - a chance both to ask and to answer questions. In addition to the language benefits, partner activities specifically provide other benefits (Nerenz and Knop, 1982): variety in class routines and activities, an opportunity for students to practise social skills, students are "center stage" rather than the teacher and an on-task behaviour" (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010, p. 98).

McDonough (2004) claims that there are several theoretical approaches to L2 acquisition that indicate that pair and group work activities generate learning

opportunities through various interactional features that occur when learners engage in the communication of meaning. There are also many pedagogical reasons to use these activities, such as providing more time to speak using L2 than with teacher-centered classes, they promote learner autonomy and self-directed learning, and they provide the opportunity for teachers and instructors to work and observe individual learners. This study also states that learners may feel less anxious and more confident when working with peers in group or pair activities, than during whole-class discussions. Even when students can speak in L2, they were not good at interacting using that language in a natural way. By promoting pair work, students are more motivated to use L2 in those activities (Hawkey, 2006).

In a study conducted by Cao & Philp (2006), they reached the conclusion that the willingness to communicate (WTC) of students in an L2 classroom depends on various levels. The study suggests that the WTC behaviour of students was influenced by trait-level and state-level WTC. Trait-level WTC brings situations where communication is likely, whereas state-level WTC could influence whether communication actually happens. In pair work, the WTC is influenced by the familiarity with the other student and motivational disposition. Pair work is most likely to be successful if both learners are motivated to work, and if one learner talked more, the other may also produce more speech. The willingness to communicate may also vary in the classroom across interactional contexts, and that willingness is not necessarily predictive of the behaviour that will occur in the classroom. This WTC may be strengthened or weakened, according to many factors associated with a specific situation, whether it is related to the topic, the speaker or the confidence of the learner in relation to that task. The results of this study by Cao & Philp (2006) concluded that learners have different behaviours, according to the contexts, and preferences were different amongst students, as some were more willing to communicate in teacher-centered activities, and others were more into pair or group work. The participants of this study linked differential WTC behaviour to the size of the group, self-confidence in their abilities to communicate and familiarity with the speaker or interlocutor. Teachers may increase learners' participation by addressing such factors such as learner self-confidence and anxiety, and through the selection of materials and topics that are more appealing to learners, and that match their interests and needs.

2.2. Disadvantages of pair work

In a study conducted by Hyde (1993), where the main participants were young adults from Europe and the Far East, Hyde states that even though pair work has been considered beneficial, it obliges students who would rather remain silent, to speak. In his study, Hyde considers this an infringement of personal liberty and choice, and fails to see how pair work can fit in with any attempt to “humanise” the classroom. Students found pair work the least popular of all work done in a classroom (individual, pair, group and teacher with whole class) because one student might want to do all the work, whilst another student just pretends to work. Hyde also claims that students feel that the English spoken amongst students is mistake-ridden and not worth listening to. This means this specific group of students prefer teacher-centered classes. Hyde affirms that one consequence of working in pairs is that students are working directly with members of the opposite sex, and in many countries and cultures, this practise simply does not occur. Different personalities also influence pair work, both peers need to see eye to eye, and do equal work, rather than deciding to be bossy and do all the work, or not do anything.

Hyde concludes his article by writing that teachers need to be sceptical towards methodologies in general and that teachers should develop their own sensitivity by doing action research. Doing this action research will “enable teachers to avoid the pitfall of relying on a blanket methodology into which the students must fit and erroneously believing that the methodology is right irrespective of students’ opinions” (Hyde, 1993).

According to Shrestha (2013), young learners may also find pair and group work “mechanical” (p. 156). When students are asked to repeat the same question/answer multiple times in pairs, they might dislike the activity. However, in the same study, learners enjoyed pair and group work, some found it “interesting” and others enjoyed the fact that every person got to participate and express their views with others. The learners shared the same opinion when it comes to role-plays, not only do role-plays encourage creativity and enhance communicative fluency, the learners liked them because they felt they “learned by playing”.

2.2. L1 use in pair work

The use of L1 in pair work is inevitable; however, studies show that the use of L1 is mainly for task management and dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary (Lasito & Storch, 2013). In a study by Lasito & Storch (2013) that compared L1 use and functions in pairs compared to small groups, they noticed that even though the majority of students (with ages between 16 and 17) communicated in L2 during pair work, the pairs tended to use L1 to a greater extent than when working in small groups. They concluded that pair work provides more opportunities to engage in a task and encourages more deliberations about language, however, groups of three students are less likely to turn to L1 when they encounter a language problem, therefore, in Lasito and Storch's opinions, small groups have better results than pair work, but both help students learn and use L2.

According to Storch & Aldosari (2012), in a study about pair work in the English classroom at a university in Saudi Arabia, students are more likely to use L2 for functions normally done by the teacher, such as making suggestions, asking questions and providing feedback. Obviously, the amount and purpose of use of L2 and L1 varies according to age and proficiency of students. Storch & Aldosari mention a study conducted by Swain & Lapkin (2000) in which between 20% and 30% of turns were done in L1, but the amount of L1 used was related with L2 proficiency levels. Basically, pairs with a higher proficiency of L2 made less use of L1. Storch & Aldosari also point out the importance of pairing and L2 efficiency, they mention a study by Kowal and Swain (1994) that suggested that pairing students with different proficiencies could result in more domination by one student, usually the student with a higher proficiency, concluding that mixed pairing could be disadvantageous for the students with lower proficiency. However, Storch & Aldosari also mention other studies that state relationships in pair work may be of bigger importance than L2 proficiency. A study by Yule and Macdonald (1990) concluded that pairs in which the member with higher proficiency was given a dominant role engaged in fewer interactions than pairs in which the member with a higher proficiency was given a non-dominant role.

2.3. Conclusion

To summarize what has been said above, pair work activities stimulate students' abilities to work in cooperation, provide opportunities for language use, natural language practise, one-on-one conversation and a chance to ask and answer questions (two-way

communication) (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010). Students tend to feel less anxious and more confident during pair work activities (McDonough, 2004), and if teachers promote these activities, their use of L2 is higher (Hawkey, 2006). In order for pair work to be fruitful, both learners need to be motivated to work together, and if one student is using more L2, the other will also try to do so (Cao & Philp, 2006). Familiarization with their peers, size of group, self-confidence in their abilities to communicate are also influential to students' performance in a pair activity (Cao & Philp, 2006).

Although it has many benefits, pair work also has its disadvantages. Working in pairs forces students who would rather remain silent, to speak, one student might want to do all the work, whilst the other just pretends to work, and sometimes students feel that their pair's L2 is full of mistakes and not worth listening to (Hyde, 1993). If the pair activity is repetitive, students might find it mechanical and they might dislike doing it (Shrestha, 2013).

The use of L1 in pair work is inevitable, but it is mainly to deal with task management and unfamiliar vocabulary.

3. Action Research

3.1. Context

The school was located in a place where medium-low and low social class families lived. The majority of students were from African-Portuguese families and, generally speaking, had a big disinterest in learning and towards school, teachers and auxiliary teaching staff.

There were a total of 19 participants, with ages between 9 and 12. There were seven girls and 12 boys. Three students were noticeably older than the rest of the class and were very difficult to work with. The majority of the students had a difficult social background, were from a medium-low social class and some came from broken families. They were a very agitated group, not only during English classes, but with the classroom teacher as well.

The students had had English classes from Year 1, but their vocabulary was very basic and even though the majority of students were not interested in learning a new language, and faced English classes as something not official or not serious, all students were very eager to help me with this study. The book we used was *Start! 4* from publisher Gailivro. We had one hour classes two times a week and with the help of my co-operating teacher, I learned that I could use technology to get students' attention and get them focused.

3.2. Methodology

The methodology used to collect data for this research was action research. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), define this as an approach to improve teachers' teaching practise. The teacher finds a problem in their teaching practise, so they decide to investigate on that problem. Then they come up with a plan to investigate it, put that plan into action, and finally they observe the results. The tools I used to collect data for this report were questionnaires, students' recordings and teacher reflection notes.

3.2.1 Consent

Permission was asked from the school, parents and then students. I sent both consent forms to the students and to the legal guardians at the same time so they could think about it together.

Asking consent from the parents is crucial because students were underage, but it is also very important to ask consent from the students, so the students who participated in this study gave their consent before I began my study. I asked students if they wanted to help in my research study and handed them some consent forms, which had all the information in a child friendly mode; then they had to colour a smiley face that expressed their feelings about helping. Because their names would not be public, I asked for them to come up with a code name [Appendix I].

Even though all students agreed to participate in this study, some students failed to deliver their legal guardian's permissions and their answers have not been included in this study. Out of 19 students, I got only 17 permissions.

3.2.3 Data Collection

3.2.3.1. Cycles

The data was collected in a cycle of three phases, in which students were given a questionnaire after completing a pair work activity. Whilst the students were doing the pair work activity, they were also being recorded and observed. In the first cycle, students were assigned the pair work activity, and afterwards, they completed the questionnaire. In the second cycle, the teacher and the students had a small discussion about the importance of pair work, which included the advantages and disadvantages; after the discussion, students worked in pairs again, and then answered another questionnaire. In the third, and final cycle, students completed a pair work activity and answered a questionnaire once again. Two different pairs were recorded during the first and second pair work activities, and I also kept notes in a teacher's journal. Below we can find three diagrams that explain how the cycles went.

Table 1. Cycle 1

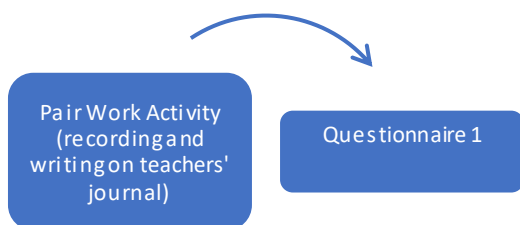


Table 2. Cycle 2

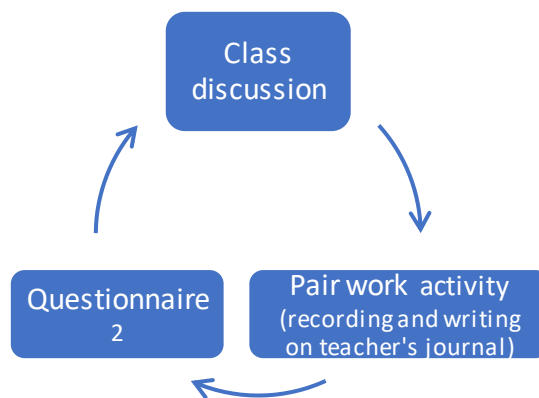
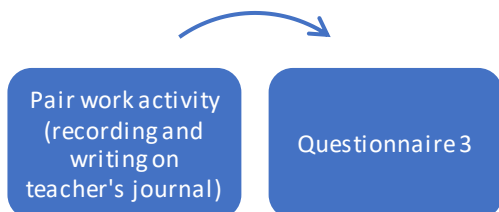


Table 3. Cycle 3



3.2.3.2. Questionnaires

The questionnaires had 11 questions and students had to opt between four possible responses on a four-point Likert scale (see Appendix II), and the questions were exactly the same in all three cycles. This was because I wanted to see if there were any notorious changes throughout the study, especially after the class discussion on pair work. The first three statements in the questionnaire was for me to understand what students thought of pair work activities and what languages students thought they used during pair work. The eight other statements were for students to think about why they did pair work activities.

3.2.3.3. Recordings

The students selected for the recordings were drawn at random. I put all students' names, whose permission from parents or guardian's names had been delivered to me, in a bag and I chose two names. Then I recorded the student and their respective pair, after making sure I had permission to include them in my study.

3.2.4. Data analysis

The data was analysed by doing a comparison of all questionnaires from the three cycles. Firstly, I analysed all questionnaires answered from each cycle, mentioning the trends from each question. Secondly, I analysed the changes between all three questionnaires, and lastly, I analysed differences from individual students that have notorious differences between their questionnaires. I selected five students' questionnaires to analyse based on their performance in class, two students were notoriously the best students in English class, two students were average, and the other student had a poor performance in class.

I analysed the recordings by transcribing what the students have said onto paper, and then what each student said individually.

3.3. Results

3.3.1 Introduction

The question to this research was how we could make students see the relevance of pair work in the English classroom, and they were asked to answer honestly to these questionnaires. I was hoping students would notice and understand the importance of pair work after they had an explanation about it, but I also wanted to see their opinions on pair work after that explanation. As we can see above, this was done in a period of three cycles. The first cycle was a pair work activity followed by a questionnaire; the second cycle was class discussion, followed by a pair work activity, followed by a questionnaire; and the third cycle was a pair work activity followed by a questionnaire.

3.1.2. Step 1 - Questionnaire 1 analysis

The students were assigned a pair work activity, and after that they had to fill in the first Questionnaire (Table 1). There were a total of 16 participants. Below we can see what students answered to each question, with trends in bold.

Table 1 - Questionnaire 1

	True	More or less true	More or less false	False
1. I like to do pair work in English classes.	10	6	0	0
2. When I do pair work activities I speak more English.	8	5	2	1
3. When I do pair work activities I speak more Portuguese.	4	3	4	5

I believe we do pair work activities ...	True	More or less true	More or less false	False
4. ... to let the English teacher rest.	5	2	1	8
5. ... to learn how to work better with the other students.	13	3	0	0
6. ... to speak more Portuguese.	0	1	3	12
7. ... to speak more English.	14	0	2	0
8. ... to practise what we have been learning in class.	15	1	0	0
9. ... to have more confidence to speak in English.	15	1	0	0

10. ... because it's fun.	7	4	0	0
11. ... because the main goal of English class is to learn how to talk to other people in English.	16			

We can see that 60% of students fully enjoy pair work, and believe they use more L2 than L1, although 25% of students also answered that their use of L1 is bigger in pair work activities.

The remaining questions focused on understanding why students think they do pair work activities in the English classroom. 81% of students understood that they work in pairs to improve their relations with other students and work better with them. Students did not seem to think that they did these activities to speak more L1 than L2, and 93% of students understood that pair work was used for them to practise what they were learning in class, and give them more confidence in using L2 in real-life situations. All students thought pair work activities were fun or more or less fun, even though the answers were distributed between “True” and “More or less true”; and lastly the majority thought the objectives of English class was to learn how to communicate in English, which is the purpose of English classes set by Ministério da Educação.

3.2.2. Step 2 - Questionnaire 2 analysis

To this questionnaire (Table 2), there was a total of 17 participants. Before this questionnaire was given to students, there was a class discussion in Portuguese on pair work activities, first about advantages of pair work activities, why students thought they did it, and how they could benefit from it. I started by asking the students why they thought they did pair work activities and I wrote down on the board answers students were giving. Then I asked if they enjoyed doing pair work and all class agreed to that. Some answers that all the students agreed on were that:

1. “pair work helps us understand new vocabulary”;
2. “pair work helps us learn how to work with our classmates”;
3. “pair work helps bring the classroom altogether”;
4. “we have fun whilst we learn”.

Table 2 - Questionnaire 2

	True	More or less true	More or less false	False
1. I like to do pair work in English classes.	14	0	0	3
2. When I do pair work activities I speak more English.	5	8	0	4
3. When I do pair work activities I speak more Portuguese.	6	2	3	6

I believe we do pair work activities ...	True	More or less true	More or less false	False
4. ... to let the English teacher rest.	7	0	0	10
5. ... to learn how to work better with the other students.	13	3	0	1
6. ... to speak more Portuguese.	2	0	4	11
7. ... to speak more English.	14	1	2	0
8. ... to practise what we have been learning in class.	15	1	0	1
9. ... to have more confidence to speak in English.	13	1	1	1
10. ... because it's fun.	7	5	2	3
11. ... because the main goal of English class is to learn how to talk to other people in English.	13	2	0	2

The results did not differ much between questionnaires 1 and 2. Students continued to agree that pair work activities were not meant for the teacher to rest for a bit, with statement four having 58% of students answering False, but to learn how to work with each other, with 76% of students answering True. Most students also answered that they needed to use more L2 than L1 (statement six having 11 students choosing False, and statement seven having 14 students answering True), and that pair work activities were for students to practice what they had been learning in class and to give them more confidence in day-to-day communication (statement 11 having 64% of students answering True). The same percentage of students think we do pair work activities because they are fun, although the percentage of students that think otherwise grew. And lastly, some students clearly changed their opinions on the objectives of the English class being learning how to communicate using L2, since in questionnaire 1 all students thought this was true, but in questionnaire 2, 76% of students thought it was True and two students answered More or less True, but two students also answered False. This is an interesting

result, to see that some students changed their opinions, especially after the class discussion, and after I explained that this was one of the reasons why they did pair work activities.

3.3.3. Step 3 - Questionnaire 3 analysis

To questionnaire 3 (Table 3), there were a total of 14 participants. There was not a class discussion on pair work, and the questionnaires were answered after doing the pair work activity. Even though the number of students answering to this questionnaire decreased, the results were not very different regarding answers. As we can observe below, the majority of students (78%) still enjoyed doing pair work activities; and eight students answered True, four answered More or less true, and only two answered More or less false when stating that they used more L2.

There was also a noticeable change between using more L1 than L2 during these types of activities, with 57% of students answering True to speaking more English (statement 2), and also 57% of students answering False to speaking more Portuguese (statement 3). However, on statement 2, 28% of students also answered More or less true and 14% of students answered More or less false.

This time, students did not seem to think pair work activities were meant for the teacher to rest, having six students answer False to that question, and four answering True. Students also unanimously answered that they worked in pairs to learn how to work better with fellow classmates.

On this questionnaire, we can observe some differences between the three questionnaires, we can observe that all students answered pair work activities were meant for students to speak more L2 than L1, pair work was to practice what they had been learning in class, pair work was meant to give them more confidence in using English and the point of English class is to learn how to communicate with other people in English.

Table 3 – Questionnaire 3

	True	More or less True	More or less False	False
1. I like to do pair work in English classes.	11	3	0	0
2. When I do pair work activities I speak more English.	8	4	2	0

3. When I do pair work activities I speak more Portuguese.	1	4	1	8
--	---	---	---	----------

I believe we do pair work activities ...	True	More or less True	More or less False	False
4. ... to let the English teacher rest.	4	2	1	6
5. ... to learn how to work better with the other students.	14	0	0	0
6. ... to speak more Portuguese.	0	0	1	13
7. ... to speak more English.	14	0	0	0
8. ... to practise what we have been learning in class.	14	0	0	0
9. ... to have more confidence to speak in English.	13	1	0	0
10. ... because it's fun.	4	5	2	3
11. ... because the main goal of English class is to learn how to talk to other people in English.	14	0	0	0

3.3.4. Analysing individual questionnaires

As I mentioned before, the students in this particular class had complicated social backgrounds and even though most of them had had English before, their vocabulary was poor. I analysed questionnaires answered by the best students in English class, by some average students, and lastly, I analysed the questionnaires answered by students who lacked interest in English classes, to overall see if or how their perception of pair work in English classes changed.

Students *Dragão* and *Coelho* were the best students in English and their questionnaires showed they had a genuine interest in English classes. It is very interesting to see how their answers differ very little, even though they were not sitting next to each other at the time the questionnaires were being answered, so they had no influence on each other. In table 4, we can observe their answers to questionnaire 1.

Table 4 – Analysing students *Dragão* and *Coelho*'s answers to Questionnaire 1

	True	More or less true	More or less false	False
1. I like to do pair work in English classes.	D, C			

2. When I do pair work activities I speak more English.	D, C			
3. When I do pair work activities I speak more Portuguese.				D, C

I believe we do pair work activities ...	True	More or less True	More or less false	False
4. ... to let the English teacher rest.				D, C
5. ... to learn how to work better with the other students.	D, C			
6. ... to speak more Portuguese.				D, C
7. ... to speak more English.	D, C			
8. ... to practise what we have been learning in class.	D, C			
9. ... to have more confidence to speak in English.	D, C			
10. ... because it's fun.		D, C		
11. ... because the main goal of English class is to learn how to talk to other people in English.	D, C			

Key: D = Dragão; C = Coelho

If we analyse the answers from both questionnaires, we can understand both students enjoyed pair work and tried to use more L2 than L1; both agreed these activities were not for the teacher to rest, but for them to learn how to work with each other, to practise and give them more confidence on what they had been learning, and because the point of having English class is to learn how to communicate in a real-life situation.

Questionnaires 2 and 3 were answered exactly in the same way, except for one answer from *Coelho*. I noticed student *Coelho* had a very shy personality and in the last pair work activity she was paired with a very outgoing student who was not interested, at all, in working with her, and that may have influenced her change on Questionnaire 3 on statement 10, where she switched from True to False. The answers from these two students show us that interested good students do not need a discussion on the importance of pair work activities, they seemed to realise that all approaches are important for them, and help them learn English.

Next, I analysed questionnaires answered by two average students (Table 5), who enjoyed participating in English class. Students *Rato* and *Macaco* were, however, sitting next to each other, so their answers might have been influenced by each other.

Table 5 – Analysing students *Rato* and *Macaco*'s answers to Questionnaires 1 and 2

	Verdadeiro	Mais ou menos verdadeiro	Mais ou menos falso	Falso
1. I like to do pair work in English classes.	R2, M2	R1, M1		
2. When I do pair work activities I speak more English.	R1, M1, R2	M2		
3. When I do pair work activities I speak more Portuguese.			M2	R1, M1, R2

I believe we do pair work activities ...	Verdadeiro	Mais ou menos verdadeiro	Mais ou menos falso	Falso
4. ... to let the English teacher rest.		M1		R1, R2, M2
5. ... to learn how to work better with the other students.	R1, R2, M2	M1		
6. ... to speak more Portuguese.				R1, M1, R2, M2
7. ... to speak more English.	R1, M1, R2, M2			
8. ... to practise what we have been learning in class.	R1, R2, M2	M1		
9. ... to have more confidence to speak in English.	R1, M1, M2		R2	
10. ... because it's fun.		M1		R1, R2, M2
11. ... because the main goal of English class is to learn how to talk to other people in English.	R1, M1, R2, M2			

Key: R= Rato; M = Macaco; M1 = *Macaco*'s answer on Questionnaire 1; M2 = *Macaco*'s answer on Questionnaire 2; R1 = *Rato*'s answer on Questionnaire 1; R2 = *Rato*'s answer on Questionnaire 2.

On statement 2, both students answered True to speaking more English during pair work activities, even though *Macaco* switched to More or less true on Questionnaire 2, after the class discussion. It is interesting to see how student *Rato* changed his answer on statement 9 from True to More or less false, after having the class discussion on pair work activities.

Student *Macaco* had a lot more changes between Questionnaires 1 and 2. After the class discussion, the student seemed to change his mind to the purpose of pair activities in class being for the teacher to rest, and changing the rest of the questions to a more definite answer. The aspect that was more on the negative side was that students did

not seem to think pair work activities were fun. *Macaco* answered More or less true in Questionnaire 1, but the following questionnaire he switched to False.

With these two students, it might be possible that the discussion we had in class helped them better understand the purpose of doing pair work activities in the ESL classroom. Even though there were not significant changes, it is interesting to see how one discussion could influence their perceptions of pair work activities. Their answers and the answers of the rest of the average students were very much the same.

Finally, I analysed student *Falcão*. This student was much older than the rest of the students, he had already failed two years, but throughout the term he managed to go from completely uninterested, to being eager to participate and help me with this study. Even though *Falcão*'s vocabulary was very poor, he tried hard to learn and I managed to get him to gain interest in the English language and the English classroom. Below on Table 7, we can see how his views of pair work activities in the English classroom changed.

Table 7 – Analysing student *Falcão*'s answers to all Questionnaires 1, 2 and 3

	True	More or less true	More or less false	False
1. I like to do pair work in English classes.	Q1, Q2, Q3			
2. When I do pair work activities I speak more English.	Q3	Q2	Q1	
3. When I do pair work activities I speak more Portuguese.		Q1, Q2	Q3	

I believe we do pair work activities ...	True	More or less true	More or less false	False
4. ... to let the English teacher rest.	Q1			Q2, Q3
5. ... to learn how to work better with the other students.	Q1, Q2, Q3			
6. ... to speak more Portuguese.			Q3	Q1, Q2
7. ... to speak more English.	Q1, Q2, Q3			
8. ... to practise what we have been learning in class.	Q1, Q2, Q3			
9. ... to have more confidence to speak in English.	Q1, Q2, Q3			
10. ... because it's fun.		Q2	Q1, Q3	
11. ... because the main goal of English class is to learn how to talk to other people in English.	Q1, Q2, Q3			

Key: Q = questionnaire

So, it seemed *Falcão* had enjoyed doing pair work activities, answering True to statement 1 in all Questionnaires, and it shows that he realised pair work helped him learn English, but he seemed to change his mind in some aspects between questionnaires. We can see that he progressively found himself speaking more L2 than L1 as we did more pair work, and also, he thought he used less L1 than when he answered the first questionnaire, even though he did not think he had stopped completely. After the class discussion on pair work, he also changed his mind when it came to the purpose of working in pairs, switching his answer to False in statement 4.

3.3.5. Recordings

3.3.5.1. Recording 1

This pair work activity was the first one being completed, and students had to fill in a grid where they had to ask personal questions about each other. We had been learning this vocabulary and this was for consolidation. Students had been asked to use L2 more than L1, and this pair succeeded in doing so. Whilst students were doing the pair work activities, I recorded two different students, during different activities. The first pair recorded were students *Rato* and *Macaco*.

Below we can find excerpts of both recordings, starting with *Rato* and *Macaco*. These students were average students, they were interested in English class but would also get distracted very easily.

Recording 1: Students *Rato* and *Macaco*

1. R: *Oh professora o que é que é seasons? Não me lembro o que quer dizer.*
2. T: Seasons?
3. R: Yes.
4. T: Summer, winter, autumn, spring. There are four seasons, R. Remember the four seasons?
5. R: *Ah sim.*
6. R: Hello, how are you?
7. M: Hello, I'm great [gret]
8. R: Great (correcting student M [grẽit]) What is your name?

9. M: My name is M... .
10. R: Where are you from?
11. M: I'm from is Portugal.
12. R: What is your favourite colour?
13. M: My favourite colour is red.
14. R: *Imitador*. What is your favourite season?
15. M: My favourite season is summer!
- (long pause)
16. M: *Posso perguntar?*
17. R: Sim.
18. M: Hello, how are you?
19. R: Great.
20. M: *O quê?*
21. R: *Estou* great.
22. M: What's your name?
23. R: My name is R... .
24. M: How are you?
25. R: I'm 9 years old.
26. M: Where are you from?
27. R: I'm from is Portugal.
28. M: What's your favourite colour?
29. R: My favourite colour is red.
30. M: What's your favourite season?
31. R: My favourite season is summer.
32. R: *Nós já acabámos*.
33. M: Teacher, *já está*. Finished.

Key= R = *Rato*; M = *Macaco*; T = Teacher.

There are seven statements in Portuguese in a total of 33, which is very positive. Inevitably L1 was used, but it was for clarification (line 1), and for management (line 16); but also mixed with L2 (lines 21 and 33).

Given that this pair work activity was done before doing the class discussion, it is very positive that the two students used very little L1. Their L1 use was for task management and asking for clarification, as Lasito & Storch conclude in their study.

3.3.5.2. Recording 2

Similarly to the first pair work activity, students were given a grid where they had to fill in their top five school activities. This activity was inspired by the coursebook they were using (*Start! 4*). I have mentioned that student *Dragão* was one of the best students in English class, and student *Joaninha* was an average-low student. This activity was recorded during cycle number two, so students had had the class discussion before doing the pair work activity. Below we can find the dialogue the two students had whilst doing the pair work activity.

Recording 2: Students *Dragão* and *Joaninha*

1. D: What are your favourite school activities?
2. J: Listen to music
3. D: *Podes perguntar.*
4. J: What are your favourite school activities?
5. D: My favourite school activity is playing hide and seek.
6. J: *Como é que se escreve?* (long pause)
7. D: What are favourite school activities?
8. J: Playing hopscotch.
9. D: *Podes perguntar.*
10. J: What are your favourite school activities?
11. D: My favourite school activity is running. What are your favourite school activities?
12. J: Raining.
13. D: Running. You. (pausa) *era para fazeres a pergunta.* What are your favourite school activities?
14. J: *Sou eu a dizer-te.* What are your favourite school activities? [wət wər ar fevərət skul æktivətiz]
15. D: What are your favourite school activities [wət ar jər fevərət skul æktivətiz]

16. D: My favourite school activity is writing.

17. J: *o quê?*

18. D: Writing. (pausa)

(...)

19. J: Teacher *já fizémos!*

20. D: Teacher, finished.

Key= D = Dragão; J = Joaquina.

It is interesting to see how both students use L1 seven times during their pair work activity, in a total of 20 sentences. L1 was used to ask the other how to spell a word (statement 6), to say it was the other person's turn to ask (statements 3, 9, 13) or to ask for clarification (statement 17). These two students did a good job using L2 mostly during this activity, even though the activity was very repetitive. It is also interesting to see how *Dragão* helped *Joaquina* with pronunciation on statement 12, where *Joaquina* clearly said "raining" and *Dragão* immediately corrected her and said "running". Student *Dragão* also tried using more L2 than L1, as we can see in statement 13 where she says "you", hoping the other student would understand it was her time to ask the question. When they finished, student *Joaquina* immediately says "Teacher, *já fizémos!*", mixing L1 and L2, whilst *Dragão* repeats, but using L2, as she usually did when she finished any task.

Once again, the use of L1 is as Lasito & Storch's study suggest, they use it for clarification, task management and dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study proved to be very interesting for a teacher with little experience in teaching. I thought pair work activities would be difficult with a group of challenging students, but this study helped me realise that it is possible. By explaining the benefits of pair work activities, the students realised the purpose of them, and that resulted in some opinions changing in the questionnaires, or switching to more L2 than L1. The most notorious change was with Questionnaire 2, that was filled in after having a class discussion on pair work activities, where students realised the importance and purpose of these types of activities.

4.1. What I learned

By observing the tables' results, we learn that in Questionnaire 1, all students enjoyed pair work activities and thought used more L2 than L1. Some students seemed to think that pair work was meant for the teacher to relax and not stand in front of the classroom, even though the majority did think that was not the purpose. In Questionnaire 2, some students switched their answers and were not enjoying doing pair work activities, and that can be due to many factors, such as switching partners, or not understanding the vocabulary they had to use in that activity, or even the activity itself might not have been appealing to those students.

It is also interesting to see how students changed their opinions throughout the Questionnaires, especially to the questions regarding the purpose of pair work activities being to let the teacher rest and using more Portuguese than English. In the first, a big number of students seemed to think that pair work activities were planned by the teacher in order to rest for a bit, but throughout the study, they seemed to realise that was not the case. In the second case, we can see that many students changed their answers to using more English than Portuguese during pair work activities, which was also very noticeable when I was walking around, taking notes and observing the students during pair work activities.

In Questionnaire 3, we can understand that students' answers were not so torn, like in the previous Questionnaires. They understood the whole point on having the class discussion before the pair work and their answers prove so. Students still enjoyed doing pair work activities and they definitely used more L2 than L1 during those activities. I

believe they also understood that the purpose of pair work is not for the teacher to rest, but for them to learn how to work with each other, how to use L2 in real life situations, to practise the vocabulary they had been learning in classes and to give them more confidence to use English.

I believe this study showed that having a class discussion does have an impact on students' opinions. By doing the class discussion, students understood the purpose of pair work and they took it more seriously and used more L2 than L1 during said activities. What I have learned with this study is that, students indeed enjoy doing pair work activities. But sometimes they are not aware of the purpose of doing them, and so the teacher should have a class discussion on why pair work activities are included in the planning, because they will then understand the purpose of it, they will become more motivated to use more L2 than L1, and they will also understand that pair work activities are meant to be fun and pedagogical. It was surprising to see that better students did not need an explanation to why they were doing pair work activities, and that their answers were practically the same. It was also very surprising to see how student *Falcão*, who started the year as a very agitated and problematic student, switched throughout the year, and how his answers also became different between questionnaires.

4.2. Other studies and this study

The results in this study appear to be connect with other studies that I read and are on my literature review, Curtain & Dahlberg (2010) concluded that pair work activities stimulate the ability to work in cooperation, provide opportunities for language use, natural language practise and two-way communication, which can be proven by observing the transcripts on those two pairs working together.

I observed that student *Coelho* was very unmotivated in the second pair work activity because she was paired with a student who was not motivated and did not want to work seriously with her, which relates to Cao & Philp (2006) and familiarization with peers, and Hyde (1993) and one student doing all the work, whilst the other pretends to work. This lead to *Coelho's* one and only change in her Questionnaire.

However, all three pair work activities used very repetitive chunks of language, but students were on-task and responded very well to it, which challenges Shrestha's (2013) study that believes repetitive pair work activities are thought to be mechanical and unpopular by students.

L1 use in all pairs recorded was to deal with clarification, task management and correcting their peers, so goes along Lasito & Storch's (2013) study that L1 use is superior to L2, and limited to task management, unfamiliar vocabulary and clarification.

4.2. Future researches

With difficult classes, like the one I had during this study, teachers definitely need to do an explanation before doing any kind of different activity that might be stirring for the classroom, because we want students to focus on doing the task they are assigned, instead of letting them talk freely to each other.

This study could be complemented with other studies, for example, observing how much L2 is used in pair activities; and use and purpose of L1 and L2 in pair work activities. It would be also interesting to see how, why and when students use L1 during pair work activities, as we know this is practically inevitable with young learners.

Reference list

Burns, A. (2010). *Doing Action Research in Language Teaching: A Guide for Practitioners*. NY: Routledge.

Brewster, J., Ellis, G., & Girard, D. (2002). *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Harlow: Pearson Education

Cao, Y., & Philp, J. (2006). Interactional context and willingness to communicate: A comparison of behaviour in whole class, group and dyadic interaction. *System*, 34(4),

Curtain, H., & Dahlburg, C. A. (2010). Focusing on interpersonal communication. In Curtain, H. & Dahlburg, C. A. (4th Edition), *Languages and Children: Making the Match. New languages for young learners, Grades K-8*. New York: Pearson Education

Gürbüz, N. (2010). Teaching speaking skills in the young learner classroom. In B. Haznedur, & H.H. Uysal. (eds.) *Handbook for Teaching Foreign Languages to Young Learners in Primary Schools*. Ankara: Ani Yanincilik

Hawkey, R. (2006). Teacher and learner perceptions of language learning activity. *ELT Journal*, 60(3), 242-252.

Hyde, M. (1993). Pair Work - A Blessing or a Curse?: An analysis of pair work from pedagogical, cultural, social and psychological perspectives. *System*, 21(3) (343-348).

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart R. (1988). Action research and the critical analysis of pedagogy. *The Action Research Planner*. Deakin University.

Lasito, L., & Storch, N. (2013). Comparing pair and small group interactions on oral tasks. *RELC Journal*, 44(3) (361-375).

McDonough, K. (2004). Learner-learner interaction during pair and small group activities in a Thai EFL context. *System*, 32 (207-224).

Shrestha, P. N. (2013). English language classroom practices: Bangladeshi primary school children's perceptions. *RELC Journal*, 44(2) (147-162).

Storch, N. & Aldosari, A. (2012). Pairing learners in pair work activity. *Language Teaching Research*, 17(1) (31-48).

Wu, X. (2003). Intrinsic motivation and young language learners: the impact of the classroom environment. *System*, 31 (501-517).

APPENDIX I

Pedido de autorização

Caro Diretor do Agrupamento de Escolas Aqualva Mira-Sintra,

O meu nome é Mariana de Carvalho Cordeiro e é com muito gosto que irei estar a estagiar na Escola Básica de Lopus durante o 1º período deste ano letivo.

Como sabe, estou a fazer um Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 1º Ciclo na Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas na Universidade Nova, Lisboa, e o mestrado implica que durante o estágio faça um pequeno projeto de investigação. Este projeto será incluído no meu relatório final. O meu trabalho intitula-se: *“Pair Work for Developing Speaking Skills” (Trabalho a pares e o desenvolvimento das capacidades orais)*.

Venho, por este meio, solicitar a sua autorização para poder recolher dados para este projeto que vai decorrer entre setembro e dezembro de 2016 durante o meu estágio na sua instituição.

A recolha de dados será efetuada mediante questionários, observações em sala de aula, por vezes com registo fotográfico, e excertos do meu diário de professor. As informações obtidas serão referidas no meu relatório final de mestrado e eventualmente em artigos académicos e conferências.

A instituição, todos os seus funcionários e as crianças permanecerão anónimas em qualquer circunstância.

Se tiver questões a colocar agradeço que me contacte pessoalmente.

Agradeço que dê autorização para que eu possa fazer o meu projeto de investigação na sua instituição completando o destacável em baixo para que posteriormente possa pedir a autorização dos pais.

Queijas, 23 de Setembro 2016
Mariana de Carvalho Cordeiro

Professora Doutora Sandie Mourão
Orientadora de Estágio
FCSH, Universidade Nova Lisboa



Eu,

diretor do agrupamento de escolas Aqualva Mira-Sintra, declaro que fui informado(a) dos objetivos do projeto intitulado: *“Pair Work for Developing Speaking Skills” (Trabalho a pares e o desenvolvimento das capacidades orais)* e autorizo a estagiária a fazer o seu projeto de investigação na Escola Básica de Lopus.

Data: _____

Assinatura: _____

APPENDIX II

Convite para o meu estudo!

Gostava de te fazer um convite! Sou aluna, como tu, num Mestrado para poder ser Professora de inglês, para ensinar muitos meninos. Para poder acabar o Mestrado, tenho de fazer um estudo que faz parte de um Relatório muito importante, e é aí que tu me ajudas!

Vou fazer o estudo sobre o trabalho a pares e se te ajuda a aprender e a falar inglês!

Nas nossas aulas, mesmo até ao Natal, vamos fazer trabalhos a pares. Vou tomar notas, gravar as vossas conversas, tirar algumas fotografias e pedir-vos para responder a alguns questionários sobre o trabalho a pares.

Depois, vou reunir toda a informação no meu Relatório, e talvez escrevo um artigo e falo num congresso sobre o meu projecto. Nunca vou referir o teu nome e até podes escolher o teu nome fictício!

Podes escolher participar ou não participar e se tiveres dúvidas e queres deixar de participar, podes fazer a qualquer momento, sem qualquer problema.

Todas as dúvidas que tiveres podes perguntar-me, sempre.

9 de outubro de 2016

Mariana Cordeiro

Usa um lápis de cor para pintar a cara que corresponde à tua resposta!

Quero participar no projeto de estudo



Não quero participar no projeto de estudo



Data: _____

Nome: _____

Nome fictício: _____

(O nome fictício deve ser de um animal, cujo nome comece com a mesma letra do teu.

APPENDIX III

Pedido de autorização aos Encarregados de Educação

Caros pais e encarregados de educação,

Chamo-me Mariana Cordeiro e é com muito gosto que irei estar com o seu educando a estagiar durante o 1º período deste ano letivo.

Estou a fazer um Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 1º Ciclo na Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas na Universidade Nova, Lisboa, e o mestrado implica que durante o estágio faça um pequeno projeto de investigação. Este projeto será incluído no meu relatório final. O meu trabalho intitula-se: *Pair Work for Developing Speaking Skills* (Trabalho a pares como desenvolvimento das capacidades orais).

Venho, por este meio, solicitar a vossa autorização para poder incluir o seu educando neste projeto que vai decorrer entre setembro e dezembro de 2016 durante o meu estágio.

Depois de pedir autorização ao seu educando para a/o incluir no meu estudo a recolha de informação será efectuada mediante questionários aos alunos, observação das actividades realizadas na aula e áudio-gravação alguns alunos e excertos do meu diário de professor. A qualquer momento o seu educando pode escolher não participar. As informações obtidas serão referidas no meu relatório final de mestrado e eventualmente em artigos académicos e conferências.

A instituição e todos os seus funcionários e as crianças permanecerão anónimas em qualquer circunstância.

Se tiver questões a colocar agradeço que me contactem pessoalmente através da Professora Susana.

Agradeço que dê autorização para que o seu educando possa participar no meu estudo. Peço que entreguem esta autorização assinada até ao dia 14 de outubro.

Queijas, 9 de outubro
Mariana Cordeiro

Prof. Doutora Sandie Mourão
Orientadora de Estágio
FCSH, Universidade Nova Lisboa



Eu,

encarregado de educação de _____

declaro que fui informado(a) dos objectivos do projeto intitulado *Pair Work for Developing Speaking Skills* (Trabalho a pares como desenvolvimento das capacidades orais) e **autorizo/não autorizo*** o meu educando a participar no estudo.

***É favor sublinhar a sua opção.**

Data: _____

Assinatura: _____

APPENDIX IV



A minha opinião sobre o trabalho a pares

Nome: _____

Data: _____

Lê as frases, decide se para ti são Verdadeiras, Mais ou menos Verdadeiras, Mais ou menos Falsas ou Falsas e coloca um X na resposta que achas certa.

	Verdadeiro	Mais ou menos verdadeiro	Mais ou menos falso	Falso
Eu gosto de trabalhar a pares nas aulas de inglês.				
Quando trabalho a pares eu falo mais inglês.				
Quando trabalho a pares eu falo mais português.				

Eu acho que trabalhamos a pares...	Verdadeiro	Mais ou menos verdadeiro	Mais ou menos falso	Falso
... para deixar o professor de inglês descansar.				
... para saber trabalhar melhor com os outros alunos.				
... para falar mais português.				
... para falar mais inglês.				
... para praticar o que estamos a aprender nas aulas.				
... para termos mais confiança para falar inglês.				
... porque é divertido.				
... porque os objectivos da aula de inglês são aprender a falar com outras pessoas em inglês.				