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**CURSO SUPERIOR DE LICENCIATURA EM LETRAS-INGLÊS**

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**EXPERIENCE REPORT: FIRST-TIME AS AN ENGLISH TEACHER IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL IN FORTALEZA/CE**

**FORTALEZA**

**2024**

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado ao Curso Superior de Licenciatura em Letras-Inglês, da Universidade Federal do Ceará, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Licenciado em Letras.

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**RESUMO**

O que é preciso para uma boa aula de inglês? Quando se fala sobre ensino-aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras, existem diversas teorias, abordagens e técnicas a serem utilizadas. Apesar de toda a teoria durante seu período de formação, um professor novato muitas vezes se depara com o dilema de quais abordagens, métodos ou técnicas utilizar em sala de aula. Neste trabalho, apresento o relato da minha primeira experiência de docência em um curso de inglês numa escola pública municipal de Fortaleza/CE, enfocando nas minhas impressões como professor de inglês e nas dificuldades que os estudantes tiveram durante as aulas. Essa experiência se fundamentou na abordagem comunicativa, a qual se demonstrou bastante eficaz para as aulas.

**Palavras-chave:** Inglês como língua estrangeira. Relato de experiência. Abordagem comunicativa.

**ABSTRACT**

What is needed for a good English class? When it comes to teaching and learning foreign languages, there are several theories, approaches and techniques to be used. Despite all the theory during their training period, a novice teacher is often faced with the dilemma of which approaches, methods or techniques to use in the classroom. In this paper, I present an account of my first teaching experience in an English course at a municipal public school in Fortaleza/CE, focusing on my impressions as an English teacher and the difficulties that students had during classes. This experience was based on the communicative language teaching, which proved to be very effective for those classes.

**Keywords**: English as a foreign language. Experience report. Communicative Language Teaching.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1 INTRODUCTION**....................................................................................................... | 08 |
| **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**................................................................................ | 09 |
| **3 EXPERIENCE REPORT**................................................................................... | 11 |
| **4 FINAL REMARKS**.................................................................................................... | 13 |
| **REFERENCES**............................................................................................................ | 15 |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**1 INTRODUCTION**

This report resolves around on my personal experience in teaching English classes to high school students in a principal school in the city of Fortaleza, Ceará, for the first time. This experience took place as part of the activities I was expected to carry out for the Estágio IV: Ensino da Língua Inglesa em Escolas de Nível Fundamental e Médio (96h) subject from August 2023 to December 2023.

Before that experience, I had only taught bodyboarding in a community project at the Iracema Beach as well as one-on-one private English classes. Teaching English for the first time in a formal setting, however, was something extraordinary, but also very challenging. For this reason, the focus of this report will be on the main difficulties I faced as an English teacher and on the main difficulties the students had during my classes.

For this experience, I taught three different groups: 1) the first one was composed of seven teenage students and their classes took place from 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM on Wednesdays; 2) the second one was composed of eight teenage students and their classes took place from 2:30 PM to 4:30 PM on Thursdays; and 2) the third one was composed of fifteen students, both teenagers and adults (EJA), and their classes took place from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM on Wednesdays.

**2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The classes I taught were grounded on the principles of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which I had come across during my classes at the University.

Brown (2007) says that CLT is a set of principles and ideas based on the nature of language and the language of learning and teaching, which precisely and broadly determines communication and communicative skills. Language as communication is the theory behind the communicative approach to language teaching.

According to Hymes (1972), the CLT objective is to develop communicative skills that concern the knowledge that speakers and listeners have to carry out adequate communication in different situations. In other words, language learners should be able to know:

1. Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible;
2. Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available;
3. Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) about a context in which it is used and evaluated;
4. Whether (and to what degree) something is done, actually performance, and what is doing entails.

As a teaching approach, Brown (2007, p. 40) states that the CLT should not be regarded merely as a list of principles but a strategy to be applied in the classroom. According to Brown (2007, p. 40), the CLT is “[…] a dynamic composite of energies within you that change with your experiences in your language and teaching" because "it is inspired by the interconnection of all your reading and observing and discussing and teaching and that interconnection underlies everything that you do in the classroom".

As several definitions of CLT have been established since the beginning of its development, here is a list of six main characteristics that make up its essence. The following list provided by Brown (2007, p. 43):

1. Classroom goals are focused on all of the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, socio-linguistic, and strategies) of the communicative competence. Goals therefore must intertwine the organizational aspects of language with the pragmatic.
2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful proposes, organizational language forms are not the control that enables the learner to accomplish those purposes.
3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
4. Students in communicative classes ultimately have to use the language, productively in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.
5. Students are given opportunities to focus on their learning process through an understanding of their styles of learning and the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.
6. The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to constituent meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others (BROWN, 2007, p.43).

These six interconnection characteristics summarize the definition attributed to this teaching approach.

**3 EXPERIENCE REPORT**

In this section, I will firstly present an overall account of the experience I had and then I will discuss the main difficulties I faced as a first-time teacher and the main difficulties I noticed the students struggled with during the classes.

**3.1 Overall account**

Overall, I have planned and applied a wide range of activities that covered all four communicative skills (i.e., writing, reading, listening, and speaking) during the classes. In some classes, I had a specific learning objective for a given skill and, thus, that would be the focus of the class.

During speaking-oriented classes, for example, I encouraged students to talk in English with each other as much as they could by fostering conversations between them. I usually divided the students into groups of four to practice some English conversation skills.

In the course of the classes, I often asked the students if they understood what I was explaining or if they had a difficult time understanding it. I was very glad when they said they understood everything I was saying. That was a fantastic feeling.

**3.2 Main teacher’s difficulties**

For me, the first problem emerged when I had to choose the textbook and materials for this course. The students were a mix of both teenagers and adults, and the material needed to be accessible for both groups. At first, I chose to use simpler material, which was an exercise and grammar booklet, but then I decided to use the textbook Interchange by Jack C. Richards with Jonathan and Susan Proctor, which I already used for my private English classes.

Some other problem I faced was the lack of technological resources. This was a big problem encountered in the classroom, but it was soon resolved. As I did not have a TV to present some slides, I had to improvise and follow the old-fashioned way by writing the topics and activities on the board. This I consider a factor of great difficulty during this first-time experience as an English teacher in a public-school classroom.

The last difficulty encountered was the noise during the afternoon classes (from 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM), which overlapped with the school break. I had to improvise during this time, using this time to carry out grammatical exercises. This was the way I found to overcome the noise. There was nothing you could do to stop the noise.

**3.3 Main students’ difficulties**

As mentioned before, the groups of students were a mix of teenagers and adults. Teenage students had a basic level of English while adult students did not know any English. This is probably due to the fact that the adult students did not have access to English classes during their school years. For this reason, adult students had to pay more attention.

In the classroom, I tried to group the students according to their proficiency level so I could have better control of the situation. During the explanation and passages of content on the board, the exercises were divided. Division of the class in the same room separated by imaginary lines between chairs did not generate disunity, especially when speaking in English, when contracting, it generated encouragement for veteran students. The good thing about this was that everyone was on the same line of thought, and it brought everyone together in the process of learning. Because of that, the class during this period was always harmonious.

The greatest difficulty encountered with the group was speaking in English, which was not common due to the level of English they were presented with during elementary and high school. But, at the same time, the students realized that they could speak in English and this difficulty was overcome through willpower. Some students were able to speak with each other while some other were able to pronounce and follow the class well.

**4 FINAL REMARKS**

It is possible to conclude that CLT is very efficient in the English language course. Its procedures are efficient for teaching language learning and greatly facilitate student interaction during classes, allowing them to express themselves and ask questions freely, in addition to using prior knowledge to carry out activities, since CLT is focused on learning.

The fact that English classes target the language causes a certain curiosity in the students to understand what the teacher is saying during class and in this way the students maintain the focus on listening while the teacher is speaking. However, it is important to remember that there are students without any prior knowledge and therefore conducting the class in the target language could become another obstacle in the learning process.

Within CLT we can conduct and make them meaningful for those who participated in the classes. As the classes were divided, the classes aimed to speak the language as the main target, with Portuguese being our mother tongue, I consider everyone's performance during the process of learning English as a second language to be satisfactory.

Teaching this English course in such an innovative project within a public school made me grow a lot as a human being. All the problems faced during classes, such as the lack of basic material and the lack of an eraser, often recur, and I often have to improvise by erasing the board with a paper towel. However, with a lot of professions, I always took my professionalism and passion for teaching to the students into the classroom despite all these difficulties. Being able to prove to these students all the knowledge acquired at college meant that they could believe in their ability to learn the English language.

Within the context of preparing the material and using the ideal methodology to teach the English language to these students has always been the biggest challenge. Searching for the ideal material that could fit them, as many of them had never had contact with the English language, was challenging for me. However, this challenge made me grow like never before in my entire life. I was facing my biggest challenge in life. Finding a method to hold these students for two hours in the classroom was the key to success. Using behaviorism as a stimulus was the key to making the success acquired during this project work well.

At the end of the course, I realized that the methodology is extremely important for the best performance of the class. The detail involved in assembling each class is extremely important for future teachers who want to pursue a career as a teacher. Second language acquisition is extremely important. It delves into the topic of second language acquisition theory which involves the second language learning process.

Knowledge was very important and influential in my career as a teacher in the classroom, applying methodologies became more interesting and fascinated me. Analyzing the methodologies to choose the appropriate one for the classes was very interesting. However, putting them into practice, was the essence of teaching.

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