

A PATH TO STUDENT EMPOWERMENT: THE USE OF EVALUATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

UM CAMINHO PARA O EMPODERAMENTO DO ALUNO: A UTILIZAÇÃO DE FERRAMENTAS AVALIATIVAS E TECNOLÓGICAS NO ENSINO E APRENDIZAGEM DE LÍNGUA INGLESA

UN CAMINO HACIA EL EMPODERAMIENTO ESTUDIANTIL: EL USO DE HERRAMIENTAS EVALUATIVAS Y TECNOLÓGICAS EN LA ENSEÑANZA Y EL APRENDIZAJE DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS



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How to reference this paper:

ZAMPIERI, L. B.; ARCANJO, S. C.; MORAES-CARUZZO, V. N. R. de. A path to student empowerment: The use of evaluation and technological tools in English language teaching and learning. *Rev. EntreLinguas*, Araraquara, v. 10, n. esp. 1, e024007, 2024. e-ISSN: 2447-3529. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29051/el.v10iesp.1.19020>



| Submitted: 09/02/2024

| Revisions required: 14/03/2024

| Approved: 22/04/2024

| Published: 28/05/2024

Editor: Prof. PhD. Rosangela Sanches da Silveira Gileno

Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. PhD. José Anderson Santos Cruz

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ABSTRACT: The constant social changes indicate the need for revisions regarding the educational context, which, among other aspects, implies rethinking the evaluative issue and the technological resources used in the classroom in the context of teaching and learning a foreign language (FL). Based on this, this article aimed to investigate two evaluative tools, seminar and audio recording, adopted by a teacher when using technology for the empowerment of university students of the "Letras" course at a public Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the countryside of São Paulo State. Our qualitative case study demonstrated that by uniting different elements, such as active methodologies, feedback, and technology in assessment moments, we can, as language teachers, move towards greater self-reflection and, consequently, towards the empowerment of learners.

KEYWORDS: Language teaching and learning. Assessment. Technologies. Empowerment.

RESUMO: *As constantes mudanças sociais indicam a necessidade de revisões quanto ao contexto educacional, o que, dentre outros aspectos, implica repensar a questão avaliativa e os recursos tecnológicos utilizados em sala de aula no contexto de ensino e aprendizagem de uma língua estrangeira (LE). Com base nisso, este artigo objetivou investigar duas ferramentas avaliativas, seminário e gravação de áudio, adotadas por uma professora, ao utilizar a tecnologia para o empoderamento de estudantes universitários do curso de Letras de uma Instituição de Ensino Superior (IES) pública no interior paulista. Nosso estudo de caso qualitativo demonstrou que ao unir diversos elementos, como metodologias ativas, feedback e tecnologia em momentos de avaliação, podemos, enquanto professores de línguas, caminhar para uma maior autorreflexão e, conseqüentemente, para o empoderamento dos aprendizes.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Ensino e aprendizagem de línguas. Avaliação. Tecnologias. Empoderamento.*

RESUMEN: *Los constantes cambios sociales indican la necesidad de revisiones respecto al contexto educativo, lo que, entre otros aspectos, implica repensar el tema evaluativo y los recursos tecnológicos utilizados en aula en el contexto de la enseñanza y aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera (LE). Basado en eso, este artículo tuvo como objetivo investigar dos herramientas evaluativas, seminario y grabación de audio, adoptadas por una profesora, al utilizar la tecnología para el empoderamiento de estudiantes universitarios del curso de "Letras" en una Institución de Educación Superior (IES) pública en el interior del estado de São Paulo. Nuestro estudio de caso cualitativo demostró que, al unir diferentes elementos, como metodologías activas, feedback y tecnología en momentos de evaluación, podemos, como profesores de idiomas, avanzar hacia una mayor autorreflexión y, en consecuencia, hacia el empoderamiento de los alumnos.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Enseñanza y aprendizaje de idiomas. Evaluación. Tecnologías. Empoderamiento.*

Introduction

The use of analog technologies in the teaching and learning of foreign languages (FL) has been a topic of research and discussion over the years. In the 21st century, particularly with the global popularization of the internet and the exponential creation of interconnected tools and devices (Leffa, 2020), digital technologies have gained prominence, not only in FL classrooms but also in investigations within the field of Applied Linguistics (AL). Various perspectives have been adopted by national researchers in different contexts and with diverse target audiences, exemplified by works such as Soto *et al.* (2009), Fontana and Fialho (2011), Garcia, Carvalho, and Kondo (2015), Mayrink and Albuquerque-Costa (2017), Marques-Schäfer and Rozenfeld (2018), Moraes-Caruzzo (2018), Paiva (2019), and Leffa *et al.* (2020)⁴.

One perspective on the active and collaborative use of these resources between FL teachers and students is discussed by Mayrink (2021) in a process of re-signification and transformation, culminating in what the author termed as Technologies for Learning and Knowledge (TACs) and Technologies for Empowerment and Participation (TEPs). Based on Mayrink's (2021) premises, and understanding that the learner's autonomy is linked to collaborative work and reciprocal attitudes (Zampieri, 2019), we aim to reflect on our practices in using evaluative and technological tools in teaching English in a university context.

Therefore, in this article, we aim to discuss the adoption of these resources for student empowerment, based on the account of a master's and PhD candidate who provides teaching assistance in the Language and Literature program at a Higher Education Institution (HEI). Our qualitative case study will first theorize elements that we believe can guide students toward empowerment, such as active methodologies and the use of TEPs. We will then describe the classroom context and the methodological plan of a course, bringing a discussion from the theoretical perspective of the previous sections. Finally, we will offer our final considerations on the use of evaluative and technological tools that enable student self-reflection, collaborative work, and, consequently, their empowerment.

⁴ Para mais exemplos de trabalhos que discutem o uso de tecnologias no ensino de LE, recomendamos o seguinte artigo: CARVALHO, P. M.; SATAKA, M. M.; ROZENFELD, C. C. F. As tecnologias da informação e comunicação no ensino de línguas estrangeiras: Estado da arte. **Revista EntreLínguas**, Araraquara, v. 9, n. 00.

Technologies in Foreign Language Teaching: A Brief Historical Retrospective

Contrary to what one might assume, technologies have been present in our daily lives since the early days of human knowledge construction and exchange, being intertwined with the history of individuals and society (Kenski, 2013). When considering the broad sense of the term as skills, knowledge, means, and procedures (Bertoldo & Mill, 2018), but also as instruments and devices created and/or mastered by humans to perform everyday tasks and to record and disseminate information, we should include in our understanding of technologies in education, manuscripts, books, and audio and video equipment that precede virtuality and the internet.

Over the centuries, the presence of these old technologies, as we now refer to such analog tools, and new technologies, commonly referenced as ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) or DICTs (Digital Information and Communication Technologies) to better encompass the digital aspect of technological advancements (Bertoldo, Salto & Mill, 2018), has enabled significant changes in the relationships between teachers and learners in the FL teaching and learning process, which is the focus of our study.

In an important text on the history of language teaching technologies, Paiva (2015) explains how writing technology could already be accessed through the volumen (papyrus) and, later, the codex, whose characteristics enabled note-taking and facilitated the user's reading. Later, around 1430, the German inventor Johannes Gutenberg created the printing press, an important milestone considered positive for humanity's history regarding access to and sharing of information.

From another perspective, Burke (2002) reflects on the possible drawbacks that Gutenberg's creation brought to different societal groups. According to the author, professionals whose livelihoods would be affected by the printing press, such as copyists, storytellers, and papermakers, as well as members of the Church concerned about the public's access to religious texts, feared the German inventor's creation. Moreover, rulers also worried about the possibility of citizens informing themselves about laws and their rights, allowing them, through knowledge, a certain freedom of judgment.

The author also reflects on the negative effects of the press concerning the multiplication of printed books and its consequences for the work of librarians and the need for funding for the construction and administration of libraries for the storage of the growing number of

productions (Burke, 2002). Undoubtedly, however, knowledge became more accessible to the general population, as books of various genres began to circulate more easily.

Regarding the educational context, according to Santaella (2014), the combination of printed materials, such as books and workbooks, with the role of teachers, marked the 20th century significantly, pointing to a scenario where knowledge would be guaranteed through the interaction of learners with these two elements. Still in the 16th century, however, grammar books, the first to be adopted in the foreign language classroom, were exclusively owned by the teacher (Paiva, 2015).

Methods and approaches in FL teaching influenced and were influenced by books and materials produced for that purpose. Thus, when we turn our attention to the use of grammars, we notice how the method known as Classical, or Grammar-Translation, privileged the learning of structural aspects of the language. With the incorporation of modern languages into school curricula in Europe in the 18th century, it was possible to see how Traditional Grammar influenced the procedures and techniques in FL teaching, resembling those used in language studies such as Greek and Latin (Brown, 1994). Even today, books that focus on the structuralism of language are found, although many of the materials developed today focus on communicative aspects of FL, due to the rise and strength of the Communicative Approach since the 1970s.

Beyond books and printed materials, Paiva (2015) acknowledges the use of other analog technologies that allowed for audio recording and playback and had great significance in language learning spaces. Examples of these tools and equipment include the phonograph, patented by Thomas Edison in 1878, and the gramophone, created by the German inventor Emil Berliner in 1887 (Cascaes, 2016). With the development of the Audiolingual Method, which focused on the teaching and learning oral language through mimicry repetition of pre-established phrases (Leffa, 2012), such sound technologies were adopted.

In the early 1930s, with the creation of cartoons by Walt Disney, short animated films began to be used in FL teaching, so that contact with the language, predominantly English, seemed more real and natural (Paiva, 2015). In the following decades, speech recordings and assessments emerged in the 1940s, and the first recording laboratories in the 1950s. Technologies such as radio and television, also in the mid-20th century, had a significant impact on Distance Education (DE) and autonomous learning, according to authors like Nunes (2009) and Carvalho (2015). Through audiovisual productions transmitted in cinema, radio, and television, there was greater socialization of language teaching, especially in contexts

considered informal, attributing to the learner's interaction with printed materials associated with images and sounds, a richer and less artificial learning experience.

The computer, developed in the United States and disseminated, like the book, to the rest of the world, constitutes another essential tool for humanity and, equally, for language teaching and learning. In 1970, the Project Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations, known by the acronym PLATO, used the machine for mediating learning through programming, execution, and automatic correction of grammar and vocabulary exercises (Levy, 2007). In the following decade, in 1980, this system began to allow interaction and integration of its users, while in the Brazilian context, the first personal computers (PCs) began to emerge. Although at that time, the Communicative Approach, which advocated learning the language through its use in communication situations (Vieira-Abrahão, 2015), was in vogue, tools for text modification predominantly based on grammar and vocabulary, such as Storyboard and Adam and Eve, were created and adopted in FL teaching and learning (Zampieri, 2019).

In 1991, the prominent Brazilian organization, Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq), created the Rede Nacional de Pesquisa (RNP), which allowed for interconnection among the country's universities, although it was only with the creation of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1997 that such integration could begin to operate less artificially, through communication via emails, forums, and discussion lists (Paiva, 2015). With the advances of the internet and the creation of social networks, we are moving towards new types of interactions and roles in virtuality, with the Web 2.0 user, a term coined by Tim O'Reilly (Ziviani; Silva, 2023), for example, becoming not only a consumer but also a producer and disseminator of content(s).

Thus, the study of the use of tools in language teaching and learning is of great importance for understanding the evolution of the educational context itself. Changes in society, in general, lead us to think about necessary transformations also in the teaching and learning scenario. An important example of this is the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which globally led us to urgently adopt a remote mode of teaching, with its respective distances and approximations to DE (Moraes-Caruzzo, 2023), based on the use of digital technologies and the internet.

However, as already mentioned, the use of these resources is not a recent practice or phenomenon, and in today's technologically marked society, it is necessary to have studies and strategies regarding these tools in Education. In the next section, we will present and discuss issues related to active methodologies aimed at empowering the student.

In pursuit of empowerment: active methodologies

As society undergoes changes, the educational context is revisited. Consequently, some elements that are part of it, such as the teacher, the student, the school, technology, teaching materials, and assessment tools, among others, also undergo constant change. Based on this growing need to rethink teaching, active methodologies gain significant momentum, as working with these methodologies stems from social unrest and demand for a more horizontal, democratic, and global education.

According to Moran (2015), active methodologies support learning based on problems and real-life situations, aiming to simulate moments that students will experience throughout their lives. Its foundation is experimentation and the subversion of roles in the teaching-learning relationship, meaning that to learn, one must try to teach. Thus, the student becomes the teacher and, by experiencing this role, discovers their potential, reflecting, and questioning.

Furthermore, the teacher, as the holder of knowledge and predominantly expositional classes, no longer fits into modern society and the educational model it demands. Moran (2015) states that by using active methodologies, we can achieve more advanced processes of reflection, which, in our understanding, is a basic foundation for empowerment. In view of this, we can believe that these models are essential to achieve a state where the student assumes a role as a thinking, critical, and autonomous individual.

The transformation of students from a passive stance to a more active one raises questions about the methods used by teachers to assess these thinking individuals. Traditional assessments focused on content memorization prove to be incongruent in a society that values reflection and critical thinking. Moran (2015, p. 16, our translation) draws our attention to the fact that a school based on traditional and standardized methodologies, in addition to teaching, evaluates equally, ignoring that "[...] the knowledge society is based on cognitive, personal, and social competencies, which are not acquired in the conventional way and require proactivity, collaboration, personalization, and entrepreneurial vision."

Thus, we perceive a succession of essential changes to adapt the educational context to the requirements of contemporary society. This demand aligns with the objective of this study, which is to investigate the use of evaluative and technological tools for the empowerment of students in the language studies course at a higher education institution (HEI). In the following section, we will discuss another theoretical element, the Technologies for Empowerment and Participation (TEPs), which also supports the purpose of our discussion.

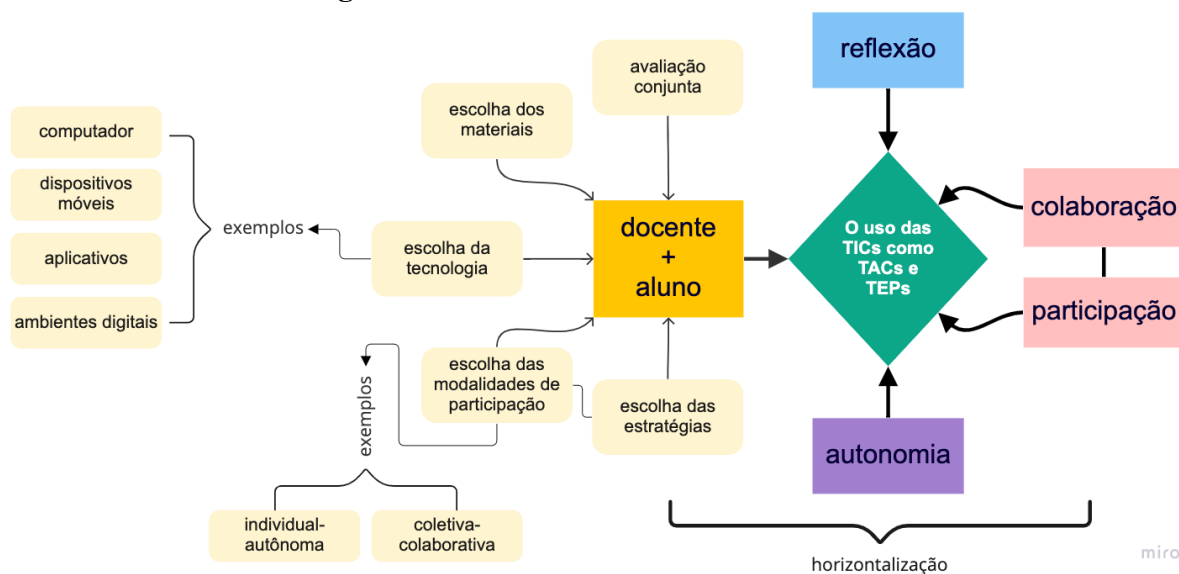
In pursuit of empowerment: the path from Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICTs) to Technologies for Empowerment and Participation (TEPs)

With the aim of reframing the use of technologies, Mayrink (2021) reflects on the transformational path from Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to Technologies for Learning and Knowledge (TLKs), and also to Technologies for Empowerment and Participation (TEPs) in her Spanish language classroom at the University of São Paulo (USP). According to the author, this path is based on reflection, meaning that technology is used not only as a support for classes, but as a "mediating instrument of the teaching and learning process" (Mayrink, 2021, p. 47, our translation). Therefore, using technology for the sake of technology would not be sufficient for students to achieve empowerment and participation.

The author emphasizes that reflection is more than just the process of thinking about something. For her, critical reflection "involves awareness, questioning, analysis, and consequently, decision-making and transformations" (Mayrink, 2007, p. 20, our translation). Furthermore, other steps are necessary in this path to empowerment and participation. One of them is based on collaboration, more broadly, on participation; that is, students working in partnership with each other to grow in the reflective process. Moreover, according to the researcher, the process should also involve pursuing autonomy. Zampieri (2019) states that collaboration goes hand in hand with autonomy, as helping others and being helped allows people to develop the ability to act as independent beings.

The development of this process also relies on a non-traditional teacher, that is, an educator who "adopts a differentiated stance that allows the development of didactic strategies that favor student empowerment" (Mayrink, 2021, p. 50, our translation). Below, we present a visual organizer that exemplifies this path based on the author's considerations.

Diagram 1 - The Use of ICTs as TACs and TEPs



Source: Authors' elaboration, based on Mayrink (2021)⁵.

This diagram shows us that the transformational path of ICTs into TACs and TEPs involves, and is influenced by, reflection from both teachers and students; collaboration of all involved and community participation; creation of autonomy by students; and finally, joint work between the teacher and the students in defining and choosing technology, materials to be used, modalities and participation strategies, and the evaluation model. Thus, we see that this process goes beyond the use of technology just for technology's sake, involving many other elements and methodological layers.

The methodology of our study

The methodological assumptions circumscribed in this investigation are based on a qualitative approach, using the case study method, within an exploratory and descriptive perspective of scientific research.

As mentioned earlier, our goal in this study is to bring to light a discussion about the use of evaluative and technological tools for the empowerment of university students. The qualitative nature aligns with the objective as it is based on the openness of the research process, which can transform and evolve (D rnyei, 2007). Thus, authors like Richards (2003) and Flick

⁵ This diagram was created with the Miro tool, which is free to use. Available at: <https://miro.com/>. Accessed on: May 31, 2023.

(2018) emphasize that research of this approach aims at understanding, describing, and sometimes explaining social phenomena, focusing on individual(s) and context(s). In this investigation, we have a teacher participating in teaching the English language to students in a Language Studies course. Therefore, in investigating the teacher's work, an exploratory and descriptive analysis of the collected data was necessary.

As Gil (2002) points out, exploratory and descriptive studies allow us to better understand the phenomenon being investigated. Thus, within the studied universe, the researcher seeks to treat the data in a work of analysis and reanalysis, in which, based on the research problem, relationships are established. More specifically, based on our objective, we use the case study as the method for this investigation.

The case study, according to Yin (2001, p. 35, our translation), focuses on a real-life context and "represents a way of investigating an empirical topic, following a set of pre-specified procedures." This investigation fits into the proposed definitions, as it seeks to analyze the work of a teacher related to the impact of evaluative activities on the promotion of empowerment in a given scenario: a Language Studies class at a HEI in the interior of São Paulo state. Having brought the methodological classification in which this study fits, we present, in the next section, our research context.

The context of our study

The Language Studies program at the HEI, the context of this investigation, aims to train academic degree teachers and researchers (bachelor's and licentiate degrees). Over a minimum period of four years, and a maximum of six years, students are provided with exposure to various areas, such as Linguistics, Portuguese Language, Literary Theory, Portuguese and Brazilian Literature, Romance Philology, Foreign Languages, and Literature: English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Greek, and Latin. In addition to providing pathways to scientific research, this Language Studies program offers training for professionals in teaching, literary fields, bilingual secretariat, and translation⁶.

The study in question focuses on a discipline called "Comprehension and Oral Production in English Language," under the responsibility of the Department of Modern

⁶ This information was taken from the website of the Faculty of Sciences and Letters - Araraquara Campus. Available at: <https://www.fclar.unesp.br/#!/graduacao/cursos-de-graduacao/letras/>. Available at: 10 ago. 2022.

Languages of this program. With a total workload of 30 hours and two credits assigned, undergraduate students are recommended to take it during the first semester of the third year, although there are no specific prerequisites or co-requisites.

According to the course syllabus⁷, upon completion, students should be able to "identify, analyze, understand, and orally produce different discursive genres (academic, professional, personal)," aiming at the development of "skills and strategies for oral production and comprehension of the target language through topics related, among others, to the processes of teaching and learning the English language."

From these objectives, we can see that this discipline focuses on the development of oral comprehension (listening) and oral production (speaking), which aligns with the programmatic content also presented in the syllabus. This content consists of: "reflection and analysis of characteristics of oral language in English," "comprehension strategies in English," and "oral production strategies in English." Moreover, the document presents a continuous assessment method of the four skills, which may involve presentations of written and/or oral work, in-class activities, out-of-class tasks, and written and oral assessments conducted throughout the course.

Based on English for Specific Purposes teaching, this syllabus guides the work of university professors, leaving them open to work with different topics related to the context of English language teaching and learning, as well as the possibility of choosing between different assessment models, as long as they develop oral comprehension and production in the same language.

Our study, in addition to being contextualized in this discipline of the Language Studies program, took place during the first semester of 2022, during which a doctoral student, with teaching assistance, taught approximately forty undergraduate students. As a data collection instrument, the professor of the discipline provided us with a written report, accompanied by materials used in the classes. There were fifteen two-hour classes, which took place on Mondays in the morning and evening. The classes focused on the development of the student/teacher in training and their oral comprehension and production skills in English, based on a variety of activities, such as group discussions, presentations, exposure to theories in language teaching and learning, videos, and listening to lectures, among others.

⁷ The teaching program for the subject LEM5144 - Comprehension and Oral Production in the English Language of the Literature course at the Faculty of Sciences and Letters of Araraquara is available at: <https://www.fclar.unesp.br/#!/graduacao/cursos-de-graduacao/letras/programas-de-ensino/ingressantes-2015/>
Accessed on: 10 Aug. 2022.

After evaluating the students' expectations, the professor noticed the emerging demand to work with strategies that would better develop the student's oral comprehension and production skills and, at the same time, the need to address theoretical texts on methodologies in language teaching and learning (including the use of technologies in this context) to contribute to the training of those future teachers. This demand, combined with the objectives of the discipline, led the professor to follow a metalinguistic path throughout the classes. In this sense, initially, the teacher continuously emphasized methodological issues while working on the skills outlined in the curriculum component's syllabus. Additionally, the students were able to take on the role of the teacher at the end of the discipline, simulating what they would do professionally.

The classes were supported by various topics relevant to the Language Studies program, such as "What is Linguistics," "Language Acquisition and Learning," "Language and Society," "Assessment in Language Learning," "Translation and Interpretation,"⁸ which served as the basis for discussions, classroom activities, and student evaluation.

These discussions took place in different configurations, such as pairs, small/large groups, and the whole class. Furthermore, as the discipline progressed and a harmonious relationship among everyone was established, the teacher led the discussions and gave students the opportunity to choose how they wished to proceed: in plenary, in pairs, in small groups (typically trios), or in larger groups (usually four to six people).

In addition to the topics, several technologies were used to support the discussions, including:

- *QR-code*;
- Online dictionary;
- YouTube and TikTok videos;
- PDF-format texts;
- Instagram posts and pages;
- Online quizzes;
- *Google Slides* and *Classroom*;
- Netflix series.

⁸ These themes were taken from the book *English for Language and Linguistics in Higher Education Studies*, by Anthony Manning. Cf. MANNING, A. *English for Language and Linguistics in Higher Education Studies*. Reading: Garnet Education, 2008.

In addition to these new technologies, analog technologies were also used, such as notebooks, books, printed texts, and images. Therefore, students had contact with various technological tools that could be used in the classroom, including methodological procedures. This work during the discussions and activities in the classroom was designed to develop reflection, autonomy, and collaboration among the students, as well as to assist them during assessment.

After situating our research context, we discuss in detail the results regarding the use of evaluative and technological tools in English language teaching and learning, aiming at student empowerment. During the analysis, which followed the parameters of qualitative research (Patton, 2002; Richards, 2003), two evaluative and technological tools strongly and positively marked this empowerment: the seminar and audio recording.

The use of evaluative and technological tools for the empowerment of university students: the seminar

One of the evaluative tools in the "Oral Comprehension and Production in the English Language" course was the students' presentation of a seminar on the topics covered during the semester, which was in line with the objectives of developing listening and speaking skills. Thus, the teacher asked them to give an oral presentation, in groups of three or four people, about a lesson plan focusing on English language oral comprehension and/or production skills.

Some guidelines were given to the students, such as: (1) the presentation format (group); (2) the number of participants (three or four); (3) the time (30-40 minutes); and (4) the objective (to present a lesson plan focusing on oral comprehension and/or production). Despite Mayrink's considerations (2007, 2018, 2021) about the path to student empowerment, the teacher believed it was necessary to provide these parameters, deviating from the development of autonomy, as the students demonstrated the need for guidance to understand the proposal. We think this may have occurred because it was the teacher's first contact with this group, and thus, the learners felt insecure and confused about an evaluative process different from the one they were traditionally familiar with.

In addition to these guidelines, some reflective questions and reference materials were provided to the students with the aim of promoting critical thinking regarding the development of the lesson plan. The questions are described in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 - Slide with reflective questions and reference materials

TIPS FOR THE LESSON PLAN:

- What's the level of the students?
- How much time do you have?
- Is it online or face-to-face?
- Is it at a regular school / language school / other?
- What's the main goal of the lesson?
- What are the steps of the lesson?
- Are you giving homework or further practice?
- What's the material?

MORE DETAILS ABOUT HOW TO PLAN A LESSON: read chapter 2 (p. 14-27) - Ur, Penny. *A Course in English Language Teaching*. 2. Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Source: Teacher's slide presentation.

After defining these guidelines, during a face-to-face class held one month before the presentations, the students engaged in dialogue with the teacher, raising doubts about the process and questioning possible changes to the seminar format. Some of the questions raised included: the feasibility of working in larger groups, permission to use the slide projector and other technological tools, and the possibility of conducting collaborative activities with the guidance of the teacher and other classmates.

Thus, although the students received guidelines for the preparation of the seminars, they also had the autonomy to consider other possibilities and inquire whether these alternatives would be plausible. One of the most surprising moments that could reflect this autonomy and reflection of the students was when everyone had moments of speaking during the presentation, even though this had not been previously determined by the teacher. This suggests that they understood the importance of speaking and taking turns during an English language seminar.

Furthermore, a variety of technological tools was chosen by the students in their lesson planning, such as YouTube videos, English language exercise websites, Kahoot, clips from television series, animated memes, Quizur (a website for creating and customizing quizzes), among others, even though the teacher had not established this as a requirement.

All these technologies were applied with a predetermined pedagogical purpose and devised by the student-teachers, which shows that this use went beyond merely using technology as a support to make the class more innovative and enjoyable, thus lending

legitimacy to the tools as authentic pedagogical resources, which, in turn, may constitute a use of technology for learning and knowledge (Mayrink, 2018). Thus, the initiative of the student-teachers to use technologies is an effective part of the teaching and learning process.

Although the students initially needed guidance in developing their projects, in the end, they demonstrated that they could make decisions on their own. This entire process leads us to believe that it was possible to move towards empowering the students and assisting in their professional development.

The use of evaluative and technological tools for the empowerment of university students: audio recording

All these technologies were applied with a predetermined pedagogical purpose and devised by the student-teachers, which shows that this use went beyond merely using technology as a support to make the class more innovative and enjoyable, thus lending legitimacy to the tools as authentic pedagogical resources, which, in turn, may constitute a use of technology for learning and knowledge (Mayrink, 2018). Thus, the initiative of the student-teachers to use technology is an effective part of the teaching and learning process.

According to the analysis of the data, the first step of this moment was to provide students with the theoretical basis for the exposition of their arguments during the recording. This was done through reading and discussing (in the form of brainstorming⁹) a written text entitled "Education is mediated through language," by Weideman & Van Dyk, found in the language proficiency test of the Graduate Program in Linguistics and Portuguese Language, from the year 2018. The choice of this text was motivated by the need for students to know an example of a proficiency test, as many of them intend to expand their studies to the postgraduate level.

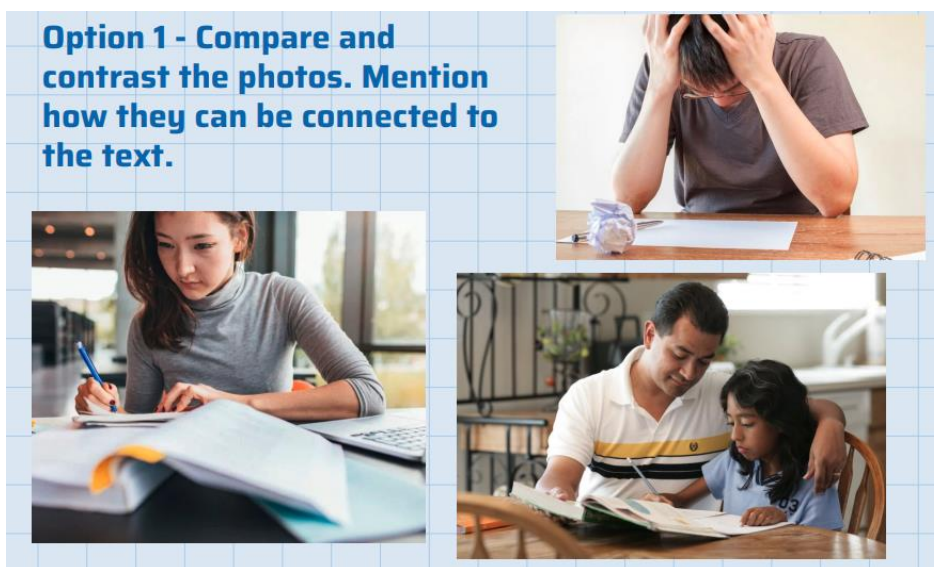
A second moment was the exposition of grammatical and vocabulary elements that would elevate the linguistic level and register of the students' text. Thus, the teacher presented various chunks¹⁰ that are part of the syntax and lexicon of academic English, which the students could use in their recordings.

⁹ *Brainstorm*, or brainstorm, is a technique that explores the creative potential of a group, in which people write about their perceptions regarding a main topic.

¹⁰ *Chunks* are pieces of sentences that frequently appear together in the English *language* (Baranhuke Júnior, 2021).

After these two moments, some guidelines were established for the elaboration of the text that would be later recorded in audio. The students could choose between two options: (1) compare and contrast images or (2) answer personal questions. Figures 2 and 3 below show these two possibilities.

Figure 2 - Slide with the first option

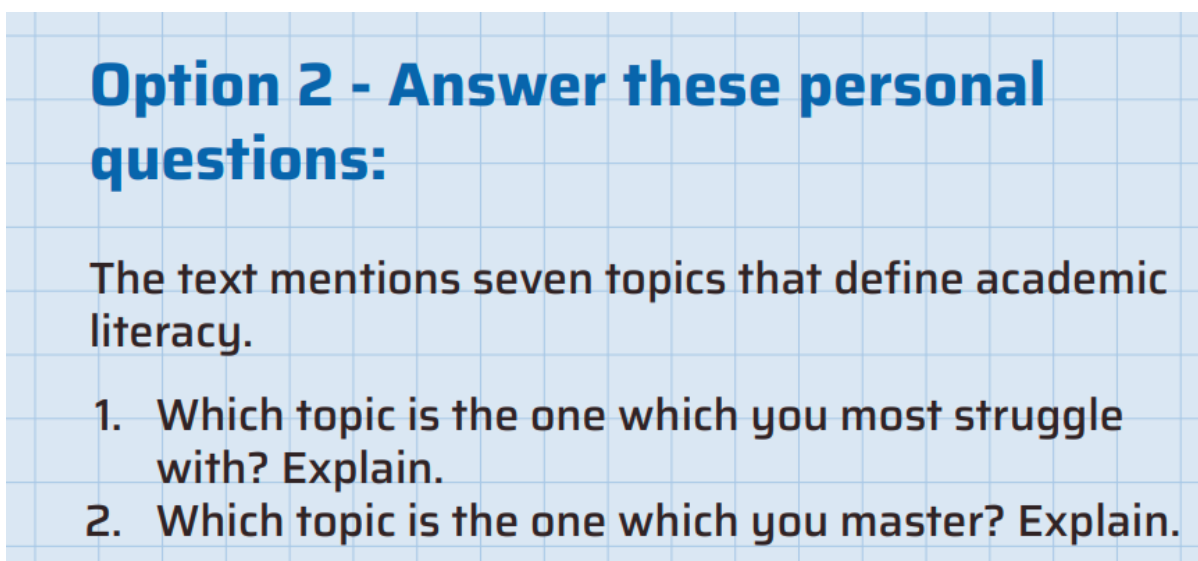


Source: Teacher's slide presentation.

The first option was to compare and contrast these three images and argue how they would be connected to the text previously read. The images represent moments when writing is used by different people: we potentially see a student struggling to perform a task, a student doing a task, and a father assisting his daughter in her studies. The text "Education is mediated through language" addresses the topic of academic literacy, emphasizing the fact that it is closely linked to the primary, secondary, and tertiary education of students, as represented by the images in FIG. 2.

Following the same reasoning of providing students with a task that could elucidate argumentation based on the previously read and discussed text, the teacher created a second option, presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3 - Slide with the second option



Option 2 - Answer these personal questions:

The text mentions seven topics that define academic literacy.

1. Which topic is the one which you most struggle with? Explain.
2. Which topic is the one which you master? Explain.

Source: Teacher's slide presentation.

We can observe that the students should discuss the seven topics that define academic literacy, exposing what they found most difficult and what they found easiest. Thus, in addition to bringing theoretical elements to the fore with the exposition of the text, the students were able to practice self-reflection on the topic and critical thinking by creating justifications for their choices.

After presenting the evaluation guidelines, the teacher requested that students record and post an English audio recording (the Virtual Learning Environment used in the course) on Google Classroom, lasting one to two minutes. Students were allowed to choose the tool with which they would make the recording, encouraging autonomous exploration for the best way to accomplish the task. Furthermore, it was not established whether students should speak and/or read the produced text, so some drafted the text beforehand and then read it, while others spoke without prior practice, as in any case, the activity would address aspects of oral production, such as proper pronunciation, intonation, etc.

Thus, we can perceive students' participation in the decision-making processes of the course, whether in choosing activities or executing them, indicating a significant decrease in verticality between teacher and learners. Such horizontalization is one of the key aspects of student empowerment, as it involves their participation in learning construction, aligning with a culture focused on autonomy (Mayrink, 2018).

At the end of the evaluation process, all students were able to submit the audio recording on the required platform (Google Classroom); some chose the first option, and others chose the second possibility. Additionally, one student presented a sound mix in her recording with background music, demonstrating knowledge of audio editing tools and commitment. This evaluation format also arose from the fact that it allows for individualized feedback and saves all recordings separately in the virtual classroom of the class. Furthermore, students did not have access to their classmates' recordings, only the teacher did, which served as a positive aspect for those who do not enjoy speaking in front of others.

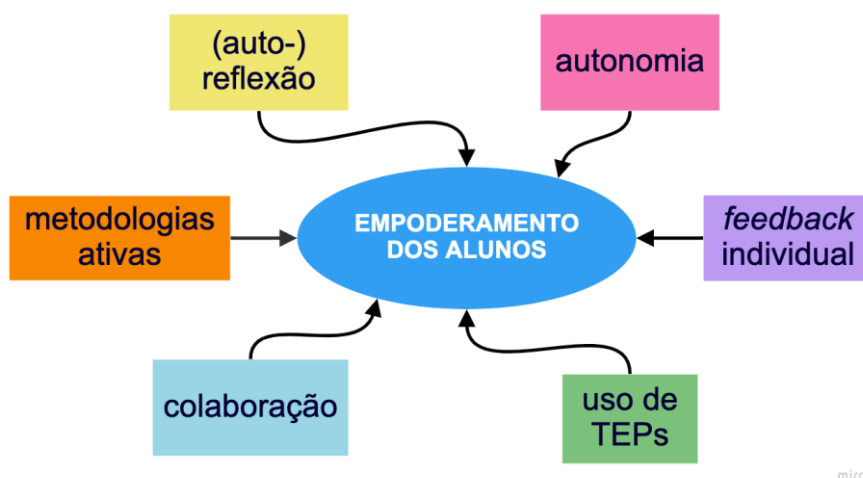
After describing these two evaluative tools, the seminar and the audio recording, which involved technological elements, autonomy, self-reflection, individual feedback, active methodologies, and collaboration, we will present, in the next section, our final considerations regarding this work.

Final considerations

In this study, we sought to exemplify a possible method to strengthen the empowerment of English Language and Literature students at a Higher Education Institution located in the interior of São Paulo state, through the implementation of evaluative and technological tools. We recognize that simply adopting technology without a clear educational purpose that promotes students' reflection is not sufficient to achieve empowerment.

Similarly, activities without educational purpose or discussions without a defined objective do not promote this state on their own. The detailed teacher-scientific approach outlined in this article involved a harmonious combination of various elements. In Diagram 2, presented below, we visualize the relationship between these elements and the state of student empowerment.

Diagram 2 – Student Empowerment



Source: Prepared by the authors.

As we can observe from Diagram 2, during the teaching experience of the participant in this study and the conduct of this investigation, student empowerment was built through their (self)reflection, as well as the development of their autonomy in carrying out the evaluative activities proposed in the course. Furthermore, we recognize and consider essential the collaborative work among students, with pertinent attitudes of reciprocity, for a student-centered learning, based on active methodologies that flatten the relationships of the individuals involved in such a process.

Individual feedback on the productions made by the learners also contributed, in our understanding, to their self-reflection, without exposing them to performance comparison with other students, so that the parameters for their evaluation could be (co)constructed with the teacher and their previous experiences in using the English language and teacher training. We cannot fail to recognize the fundamental importance of the use of Educational Technologies (ETs) in our context. Its theoretical foundation proved sustainable in our practice, as we aligned the choices of technological resources with our pedagogical objectives related to the development of oral skills in Foreign Language and teacher training. This aims to encourage students (and future teachers) to critically analyze and reflect on their learning, recognizing their role as active participants in this process.

We must acknowledge that during the investigation, we encountered some limitations, especially regarding the high workload on the part of the teacher in preparing individual feedback, managing a large classroom, and dealing with technical difficulties. However, such

limitations did not prevent the completion of this study, and their mention is necessary to assess the scope of our proposal and possibly guide researchers interested in the topic to develop investigations that complement and/or expand the discussions brought in this article.

In conclusion, based on the reflections we have made, teaching discipline to a group of students goes far beyond content exposure. University professors need to pay attention to other aspects, which are often not as clear, such as the needs of learners (including their expectations and fears regarding the discipline); and the methodology used in the classroom, as this can serve as an example for these future teachers, in the case of teacher training courses; and the evaluation method. Moreover, having clear and consistent objectives is also of utmost importance. Not only what is done but how and why it is done should also be taken into consideration when teaching, especially regarding the integration of ETs in FL classrooms.

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CRediT Author Statement

Acknowledgements: We thank the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* (CAPES).

Funding: Not applicable.

Conflicts of interest: There are no conflicts of interest.

Ethical approval: Not applicable.

Data and material availability: The data used in the work are not available for access.

Author's contributions: Laura Braghini Zampieri: data collection and analysis, writing, and revision. Simôni Cristina Arcanjo: data analysis, writing, and revision. Vivian Nádía Ribeiro de Moraes-Caruzzo: writing and revision.

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.

