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MESTRADO EM ENSINO DE INGLÊS NO 1º CICLO DO ENSINO BÁSICO

Pictorial representations of learning as a means of making distracted students reflect and maintain focus in Primary English Language lessons

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Declaração de honra

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Abstract

Supporting the numerous views that state that the development of metacognitive strategies in young learners of English as a foreign language should be encouraged, this project aims to promote the use of self-assessment in the primary classroom. Moreover, it intends to relate this practise with the role of interest in the classroom, specifically on how to make distracted students pay attention during the lesson. One way of achieving this is by offering students several ways of representing their learning in order to make it more meaningful. Selecting pictorial representations as depictions of their learning and using them as a springboard to get young learners to reflect, this study hopes to show that by reflecting, children are capable of realising that in order to learn better, they should pay attention during English lessons. This strategy was employed with a group of four students. Interviews, observation grids and the children's drawings were selected as the tools for gathering data, and analysed in order to draw conclusions. The present study was not able to offer any definite conclusions regarding the students' ability to develop their metacognitive skills, but it offers an innocuous strategy to employ in young learners' lessons in order to help them start developing their metacognitive awareness.

Key-words: [self-assessment; pictorial representations; interest; young learners; English as a foreign language]

Resumo

Aliando-se às numerosas vozes que apoiam o desenvolvimento de estratégias metacognitivas em jovens estudantes da língua inglesa, este projeto ambiciona promover o uso da auto-avaliação na sala de aula primária. Simultaneamente, pretende relacionar esta prática com o interesse na sala de aula, especificamente, em como tornar alunos distraídos focados na aula. Uma forma de alcançar este objetivo é, ao oferecer-lhes oportunidades de representarem a sua aprendizagem de diversas formas. Selecionando representações pictóricas como o método escolhido, e utilizando-as como um veículo para a auto-avaliação dos alunos, este estudo ambiciona demonstrar que através da reflexão os jovens são capazes de depreender que, para aprenderem melhor têm de estar atentos durante as aulas. Quatro alunos foram selecionados para este estudo. Adicionalmente, entrevistas, grelhas de observação e os seus desenhos foram selecionados como os métodos de recolha de dados e posteriormente analisados. Apesar de este estudo não conseguir oferecer conclusões definitivas acerca da capacidade dos estudantes de desenvolver as suas capacidades metacognitivas, oferece uma opção inócua para introduzir nas aulas primárias de Inglês como língua estrangeira, em que se pretende que os estudantes desenvolvam as suas capacidades metacognitivas.

Palavras-chave: [auto-avaliação, representações pictóricas, interesse, jovens, Inglês como língua estrangeira]

List of acronyms and abbreviations

AECATIVIDADE DE ENRIQUECIMENTO CURRICULAR

EB1/JI..... ESCOLA BÁSICA/ JARDIM DE INFÂNCIA

CEFR COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES

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Introduction

“Once children learn how to learn, nothing is going to narrow their mind”.

(Collins, 1990)

The development of metacognitive strategies, and on teaching students how to think is something that many scholars support. The benefits of such practice result in more academically successful learners and offer them skills that are useful for their future. However, the idea of developing metacognitive thinking strategies with young learners was met with resistance at first, since many believed children were not capable of metacognitively thinking yet. As time went on, scholars such as Flavell (1979) brought attention to how this could be explored with children. Although authors such as Pinter (2006) advised teachers of how this introduction to become self-aware and self-reflect should be done slowly and without high expectations, they confirmed that children are capable of developing these skills with their teacher's help. This belief has since been encouraged and it is present in the guiding documents for education in Portugal, such as *Aprendizagens Essenciais (Ministério da Educação, 2017)*, which stipulates that children should be able to self-access on their performance during lessons.

In addition, some teachers struggle to maintain their students' interest in class, and as such, several scholars sought to find answers as to how teachers could improve their lessons to keep students interested, and not distracted. The combination of these two issues (the use of self-assessment and how to prevent young learners from getting distracted), culminated in the idea for this action research project, with a focus on pictorial representations of learning. This emphasis on pictorials representations emerged from my observations during the teaching practice, by noting the young learners' enjoyment of drawing. They will be used as a vehicle for conducting interview with the students and getting them to reflect.

In Chapter I, a brief contextualization for this report will be provided. I will describe the school and the class that was involved in the report. Furthermore, I will also reflect on my observations throughout my teaching practice and on my first taught units, including the problem identified as the focus for this action research project as well as the research question and strategy presented.

In Chapter II, a theoretical background with scholars' perspectives relevant to this action research project will be provided. I will focus on the role of interest in a young learners' classroom, how it can be stimulated by offering children opportunities to represent their learning in different ways, and how pictorial representation is a valued option for children. Moreover, I will discuss assessment in the primary classroom, and the role of self-assessment in it. Following this, I will focus on metacognitive development and how we should encourage and assist children in developing it. Lastly, I will highlight the advantages of using "Plan, Do, Review", a strategy by Ellis & Ibrahim (2015), which features metacognitive strategies, giving children opportunities to self-reflect and on learning how to learn, and how to think.

In Chapter III, the action research process will be discussed. I will explain the methodology provided, the first cycle of the action research project, and the results obtained and then proceed to interpret them.

Finally, I will draw some conclusions about this study and discuss some limitations I encountered.

I. Rationale

This chapter depicts the start of this action research project. In it, a brief description of the school and of the students that were part of it will be presented. Furthermore, the problem that led to the development of this project will be discussed, as well as the research question that stemmed from it.

1.1. School Context

The school cluster António Nobre was created in July of 2012, after merging two other school clusters from the area. It consists of seven schools, three for students between the fifth and twelfth years, and four for preschool and primary students. The António Nobre cluster encompasses schools from both Campanhã and Paranhos, as well as students from other adjacent parishes. As a result, its student body is multicultural and varied. It follows the guidelines from the Portuguese Constitution as well as the *Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo* and *Aprendizagens Essenciais*. Its beliefs are in the responsibility and integrity of all, excellence and rigour, politeness, participation, and liberty.

This action research project took place in Escola Básica/Jardim de Infância das Antas (EB1/JI das Antas). This school has modern facilities and is equipped with several technological resources in each classroom. It has three classrooms destined for preschool students, and eight more for primary students. There are two classes per year, each with an average of twenty students. It also has a canteen, a library and several outdoor and indoor spaces intended for the students. EB1/JI das Antas attempts to involve their students in didactic and creative activities and projects throughout the year. Therefore, they participate in thematic activities related to different holidays from around the world and healthy eating, among others. Additionally, the school has also been involved in different projects promoted by Câmara Municipal do Porto, such as “Porto das Crianças” and “Porto de Atividades”. Furthermore, it is one of the schools of the cluster in which “Projecto Ensino Bilingue Precoce (EBP) no 1ºCEB/Bilingual Schools Project” was implemented. This project aimed to encourage biliteracy at younger stages.

The cluster also has a “Projeto Educativo”, a document that illustrates their missions, values, programmes, activities, and aspects that need improvement, among others. In this document, some of the prioritised areas of concern are related to promoting the parents’

involvement in their child's education and preventing/taking action when faced with bad or concerning behaviour. In EB1/JI das Antas, most parents are involved and concerned with their children's education and come from middle to upper class contexts which is not the reality in other schools of the cluster.

The students from António Nobre also have the opportunity to participate in Atividades de Enriquecimento Curricular (AEC) if they wish to do so. In EB1/JI das Antas they are offered AEC's in music, sports, and English (during their 1st and 2nd years). Since these are optional, some students start English in the 1st year, while others only do so in the 3rd year, when it becomes mandatory. This is a challenge for the 3rd year English language teacher since they are faced with a very heterogenous class. Another challenge is the time allotted to English lessons. Students have one-hour classes twice a week, usually without a break from their previous lesson. This results in losing some of that time to transitioning between lessons, which can hinder the lesson plan the teacher prepared. They need to take this time into consideration, and that implies less time for activities and less time to teach overall. Regarding the English subject, it is taught by two teachers distributed between the four primary schools. In EB1/ JI das Antas the only English teacher was Dr^a Cláudia Belmonte. She taught both third and fourth-year classes, which included the ones I taught during my teaching practice.

1.2. Class Profile

At the beginning of my teaching practice last year, I observed a fourth-year and a third-year class, which is the one I focused my action research project on when they moved on to the fourth-year (4^ºB) and I started teaching them. They had lessons every Monday and Thursday during the afternoon. I started teaching them at the end of September and continued to do so until the end of November. I taught them a total of eight lessons, two per week, every other week. I shared this class with another teacher-student, and after discussing it with our mentor, we decided it would be best if we taught one week each, so that the students would not get too accustomed to one of us and then have trouble transitioning to the other.

This class has a total of twenty-four students, twelve boys and twelve girls, with ages ranging between eight and ten years old. The students all came from monolingual Portuguese families, except for one student that lived in Ireland as an infant and another

one that had recently moved to Portugal from Brazil. Overall, they are very interested and participative students that enjoy learning. They are very eager to do activities and to complete assignments and homework.

The class is fairly heterogenous due to some of the students having had English in AEC's in their first years, two students attending English institutes after school and the rest only starting English in the third year. This is felt particularly in terms of spontaneous participation during class and their use of English throughout the lesson. The ones who are not as comfortable with the language tend to speak in Portuguese at first when asking questions or making comments, and only try to use English after the teacher requests it.

1.2.1 Focus group profile

All of the four students in the focus group of this study shared some characteristics, such as their assessment marks in English, their nationality, and their linguistic background. All four students had reasonable marks in their English tests, were portuguese, and had only started English in their third year of primary education, without participating in any extracurricular activities, or language institutes.

Student A was nine years old and was not a fan of participating in class. He was shy and was distracted throughout the lessons but was not disruptive. He played with his school objects, doodled, among others. He did not share his desk with anyone, which probably the reason he did not talk to other students during the lesson.

Student B was also nine years old, and was very participative, when she was paying attention. She was very talkative and usually was distracted due to speaking with the desk mate, Student X.

Student C was also shy and did not participate much. Similarly to Student A, he mostly doodled and played by himself during the lessons.

Student D was also very talkative, and liked to participate during the lessons, when he thought the activities were fun. He liked to make jokes and comments, but nothing harmful or rude.

1.3. Zero Cycle of Action Research: Identifying the Problem

1.3.1. Lesson Observations

I observed lessons last year during the month of February with the third-year class, and then started teaching them in September this year. I learned a lot through my observations, not only about the class, but also about the profession and about what type of teacher I aspire to be in the future. I was able to gather plenty of information about the classes' strengths, weaknesses, and overall characteristics and ultimately the problem for my action research project. My observations were recorded in my journal, and later corroborated when I discussed them in seminars with my mentor.

The lessons mainly followed a pattern, in which the teacher introduced the content, which usually consisted of vocabulary and a grammatical structure associated to it, did repetition drills and then the students wrote the vocabulary in their notebooks. Then they would practise speaking with each other about said content. They focused on developing the four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) with an emphasis on speaking and writing. Assessment was also a big part of every lesson, particularly their written tests, hence the emphasis on writing. They focused on writing the vocabulary because they would have to know how to write it in the tests they did. They had two tests per term, which contained a listening exercise and several written exercises about the vocabulary and structures they learned up until that point. Moreover, the teacher had to introduce new vocabulary and structures almost every lesson, since it would have to be present in the next test. This put pressure not only on the students, who were expected to learn fast, but also on the teacher, who had the responsibility to teach a lot of content in a short period of time. This left little time for the other skills, and made giving attention to each individual student difficult, due to the high number of students in the class. My mentor took measures by mainly following a communicative approach, making them ask each other questions to practise speaking, while making it meaningful, since they shared details about themselves and their preferences. This way, she was able to give more attention to each one and make small corrections when necessary. This worked well, but it was one of the situations in which I could see that four students were distracted. I took note of their names and noticed that over the course of the following lessons, these four students were constantly distracted during class, and as result struggled during it. After mentioning

it to my mentor, she confirmed that these students were distracted frequently, but they did well in their tests, since they studied and memorised the content at home. I did notice that the students responded well to dynamic activities, particularly ones that involved drawing. On several occasions, they were asked to do a drawing activity to consolidate vocabulary, in which they had to draw a picture related to the vocabulary and then write about it and were very excited and interested in completing it.

Throughout my observations I also took note that self-assessment was not a part of their lessons. The use of self-assessment is an advantage. The Common Framework of Reference for Language Learning states how self-assessment can be used to motivate students and highlight their strengths and weaknesses (Council of Europe, 2001) and how students are expected to think critically at this stage, although people tend to underestimate their metacognitive skills and how well they can be explored (Ellis & Ibrahim, 2015). Similarly, the *Parecer sobre Perfil dos Alunos para o Século XXI*, a guiding document created by Conselho Nacional de Educação, in regards to promoting certain skills in the curriculum, states that “parece haver consenso entre os diferentes referenciais construídos, quanto a algumas dessas competências (e. g. P21, ATC21S, UE, UNESCO, OCDE), nomeadamente (..) nas áreas da criatividade, do pensamento crítico, da resolução de problemas e da iniciativa”(p.10742). One of the guiding documents in Portugal, *Aprendizagens Essenciais (Ministério da Educação, 2017)*, also points out that in the fourth-year, lessons should “promover estratégias que impliquem por parte do aluno (..) auto-avaliação do conhecimento”(p.7), “promover estratégias envolvendo tarefas em que, com base em critérios, se oriente o aluno para (...) a identificação de pontos fracos e fortes das suas aprendizagens”(p.8) and “refletir criticamente sobre o que foi dito”(p.9). Pinter (2017) recognises that if children are younger, it is difficult for them to critically think and reflect. However, she also guarantees that activities that help them learning to learn can be incorporated into their lessons, and eventually lead them to become more aware. Therefore, the need for a strategy in which they used self-assessment would be of added value to develop these skills during their learning process. In that context and considering that self-assessment is an important part of any learning process, even in a primary setting, I started thinking of how to introduce self-assessment and relate it to those four students and their distraction in class. Moreover, I wanted students to

become comfortable with self-assessment and develop the ability to critically reflect about what they learned and on how they could learn more if they paid attention in class.

1.3.2. First Taught Units

The sum of my observations led to different assumptions, the most important one being that students would have trouble completing self- assessment tasks. Given that they had not had to think critically before, this would be a challenge. Furthermore, the use of self-assessment could be a way for them to improve their behaviour in class.

I decided to adopt “Plan, Do, Review” as the methodology for my lesson plans. The “Plan, Do, Review” cycle stipulates that students learn better by being informed of the goals of the lesson. They know the plan of the lesson, then learn, and finally, practice and review what they learned (Ellis & Ibrahim, 2015). In their book “*Teaching children how to learn*”, Ellis and Ibrahim present several pedagogical principles that, when taken into consideration while teaching, can help children develop skills in order to become more self-aware, which that they can later use in other aspects of their education. It also values children’s opinions and involves them in the learning process, more than other methodologies that are teacher-centred. It has the advantage of having a self-assessment part at the end of each lesson, which allows students to reflect upon what they learned and how they learned it.

1.3.3. Zero Cycle of the Action Project

This cycle was the starting point of my action research project. It was the culmination of my observations and a way for me to confirm that a problem was present in the class. It only had the duration of one lesson, but it was enough for me to confirm the presence of a problem.

To prepare for this lesson I mostly had to look up information on self-assessment, seeing as I had never done one before. According to Cameron (2001), as mentioned in section 2.3.1., it helps to use simple and familiar language the students are familiar with. I also used the self-assessments present in their Students’ Book, Stars 4 (Appendix 1), to model my own, so that it followed the guidelines in *Aprendizagens Essenciais* (Ministério da Educação, 2017) as well as the ones proposed in the adopted coursebook. In order to introduce my students to self-assessment, I used a simple self-assessment at the end of

the first lesson (Appendix 2). The students had to read the sentences and circle the option that applied to them. As I had predicted, this generated some confusion and students had trouble understanding the task. I was forced to use portuguese to explain the activity since they did not understand what they had to do. As I explained each point, most gave me the answers they thought I wanted to hear or copied what their peers said. I concluded that doing this activity by explaining each point to the whole class did not work since students did not actually reflect on what they had learned.

I also wanted to think of an activity that tested the vocabulary, but included drawing, so I could confirm that they loved activities in which they drew. Taking that into consideration, I came up with an activity (Appendix 3) in which they had to associate the vocabulary and draw it. Afterwards, I did the self-assessment with them, which did not go too well, as mentioned above.

In terms of data gathering data, I relied on my field notes for this cycle. I concluded that the students were in fact very excited to do drawing related activities and needed to work on developing their metacognitive strategies.

Additionally, in Didactics of English for Young Learners, one of the course units of this Master's Degree, I was introduced to "A Picture of Achievement" (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2003, p.110-112), a self-assessment activity that used a picture as a tool for students to self-assess. This activity was then suggested to me by my supervisor in one of our seminars. The goal was for the student to add a new part of the picture (Appendix 4) whenever they felt that they had learned something new, which meant that at the end of the unit they would have a visual representation of what they had learned during that time. I thought this was worth exploring. However, I felt that I would have to adapt the idea greatly, due to the time period I had to do my project.

Considering this, and after discussing it with my mentor and supervisor, I decided to use the picture as a springboard to get students thinking about what they did/ did not learn in that lesson and how they could improve by paying attention in class. I adapted the idea, not focusing so much on the picture as the tool for self-assessment, but rather to get students to represent what they had been taught in that lesson, and then think about what they learned while talking to me during an interview. The purpose of the drawing was for the students to draw something that complemented the picture, related to what they had

been taught that day. Afterwards, I would check their drawings and make comments about them, following with questions related to the lesson and how they did that day: if they remembered the content, if they enjoyed the lesson, how was their behaviour, if they paid attention, among others. These initial comments and questions were made with the intent of making them comfortable, and the following ones to make them think about what they did during the lesson. The goal was for the students to reflect on their behaviour and see that they were distracted and understand that they would learn a lot more if they focused and made an effort during the lesson. Using this strategy, I hoped students would be able to do an activity that they enjoyed while being challenged mentally and reflecting about their behaviour.

In the context of this action research project and the consequent problem I hoped to solve, the following research question sought to be answered:

“Can primary students of English as a foreign language become more focused by reflecting and representing what they learned in pictorial form?”

II. Theoretical background

This chapter focuses on bringing to light different theoretical perspectives pertinent to this project. Based on the ideas of several authors, I will focus on themes such as interest and its role in young learners' classroom and different ways of representing learning. I will also explore assessment in primary English lessons, the development of metacognitive strategies and use of self-assessment in young learners' classroom setting, as well as its importance. Finally, I will highlight some key aspects of the methodology I chose to employ in my lessons, "Plan, Do, Review", given its emphasis on the use of self-assessment as part of the lesson.

2.1. Interest and its role in the young learners' classroom

Dealing with uninterested students and trying to find ways to motivate them and keep them interested is a challenge that many teachers face. As such, many scholars have conducted studies and developed theories as to why these students have trouble keeping interested, and consequently focused, and on how they could improve this.

"Interest" as a concept has captured researchers' attention and has been investigated throughout the most recent decades. Interest itself may not appear as the concept studied, but rather as other concepts such as "attention, curiosity, engagement" (Bergin, 1999, p. 87), culminating in several interpretations and nuances of the meaning of the word, depending on what it was applied to. It also meant that there is not an agreement on the precise definition of interest, or even an explanation as to why certain activities motivate students and others do not. There is a clear distinction that needs to be made between the concepts of "interest" and "motivation", since these two are commonly used as synonyms (Shiefele, 2009, p. 197). Pintrich and Schunk (2002), as cited in Anderman and Dawson (2011), describe motivation as "the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained" (p.5). Anderman and Dawson (2013) explain how this reflects a social-cognitive perspective to motivation (p.245). The aspects that determine the intensity of a certain motivation have been identified by several approaches, mostly related to the personal motivational characteristics of someone, such as their goals and objectives (Ainley, 2017). Despite their various perspectives, most authors attributed interest to an interaction between a person and their environment. Schiefele (2009) describes its unique feature as "its strong emphasis on the content of learning. Unlike many other motivational

constructs, such as motives, needs, self-concepts or goal-orientations, interest is related to a *specific* object, activity or subject area” (p.197). However, different emphasis was given to their role, and as such, two areas of focus of this concept emerged, *Individual interest* and *Situational interest* (Krapp, Hiddi, & Renninger, 1992, pp. 13-16).

Individual interest focuses on the preferences of each individual. It asks “Given knowledge about a person’s background knowledge and current interests, what content areas and activities would be most interesting for the person?” (Bergin, 1999, p. 87). It is a long-term psychological state, in which, according to Renninger and Hidi (2011), cited in Ainley (2017) , the relation between a person and the object is “characterized by positive affect, value and knowledge components”, which can develop a motivation. Furthermore, some authors that study this concept take into consideration positive feelings. Schiefele (1996;2009;2012) in particular explains that individual interest focuses on a set of *valence beliefs*, which are attributes related to a certain subject. These can either be feelings or values based, given that the values based imply that the subject is important to achieve certain goals or objectives the person has set while the feelings based one, relates to feelings that are associated with that certain subject or object. For instance, let’s assume that someone is interested in dolphins, and that interest is activated by watching an advertisement about a book that depicts facts and curiosities about them. That interest might motivate the person to act and buy the book. In this case, dolphins could evoke happiness or excitement in that person, or the book could be beneficial for a goal they might have, motivating them to buy it. In a classroom context, for example, the same can be said.

Situational Interest, on the other hand, seeks to find the best solution for the biggest number of people involved. It analyses situations and tries to predict which of them will hold the biggest interest for the biggest number of people. It asks, “Can one predict what will be interesting to most people?” (Bergin, 1999, p. 87). It is a temporary psychological state created by certain aspects of an object or task which, when experienced, might enable motivations to act. An example of this is how teachers can temporarily interest students by doing hands-on activities (Renninger & Hidi, 2016). This situational interest has two stages, according to Hidi (2000), who proposed a model in which triggered situational interest was the first stage and maintained situational interest was the second. Triggered situational interest is the category in which the example above falls in. A

temporary situation in which interest is triggered for a short period time. In a primary English lesson, this could be achieved by doing games or doing pair/ group work. Renninger and Hidi (2016) describe maintained situational interest as the awareness of the materials' importance and its meaningfulness (p.22). Scheifele (2009) concludes that maintained situational interest can lead to individual interest, as proposed by Hidi (2000). However, whereas Hidi (2000) stated that it was related to the time period (maintained situational interest had a longer duration that triggered interest), Schiefele (2009) argues that may not be the case, and instead, it could be related to the fact that students can link the meaningfulness of the task, and why it is important to them, to valence beliefs, leading to a potential individual interest (p.200). For young learners, this can mean that contextualising the content and by relating it to their reality can help to trigger individual interest. For instance, when teaching food, if the teacher focuses on their students' favourite food, and their family members'/friends/pets favourite food, among others, it can make the student interested enough to look up how to say certain words at home later, in order to share with their family.

Although both individual and situational interest are important to teachers, situational interest is the only one manipulable by them, especially in short timeframes (Bergin, 1999, p.87). Considering the duration of time assigned to English lessons for young learners in Portugal, it is essential that teachers trigger their interest so that they may learn the content quickly by paying attention. A good option is to find activities, tasks, and other ways to present the content that trigger situational interest, and explain the meaningfulness of the content, so that students can potentially develop an individual interest and want to learn more autonomously. By meaningfulness of the content, I am referring to relating it to their reality and offering a context for learning (for instance, their favourite animal or food), and not explaining to them why learning about certain vocabulary is important. Young learners differ from older learners because most of them do not have a reason for learning a language, whereas older learners have reasons, such as using the internet, finding jobs, among others. Young learners learn English because they like the teacher or are interested in the activities (Moon, 2005, pp.30-31). These tasks may range from stories, to songs, to games, to drawing, among others, that appeal to their students, while at the same time, providing a "meaningful context which requires pupils to do something with the language" (Ellis & Brewster, 2015, p.50).

Some authors suggest that, when planning lessons, the level of complexity of tasks should be taken into consideration, and a certain level of it is necessary to make the task interesting. Bergin (1999) further advises that a delicate balance is needed, however, as to not discourage students instead of interesting them. Additionally, Pressley et al. (2003), confirm how in the study they conducted, several classes with uninterested students featured them completing unchallenging worksheets which they finished quickly and without much thinking. This balance can be a challenge, given the fact that many young learner's classes have a variety of students with different levels of knowledge of the English language, like the ones I taught, which means that what is challenging for some might not be for others. Teachers also need to be careful in their pursuit of doing interesting activities, since these can sometimes interest students, but lack in instructional content and their students learning what they were supposed to (Bergin, 1999). Once more, this can be a challenge for primary teachers, seeing as there is a tendency to use a variety of fun and eye-catching activities to entertain and engage them. It is important that when doing this, the teacher takes into consideration what are the outcomes of the lesson and have those in mind when designing the activities.

A final point to be taken into consideration about "interest" is made by Renninger & Hidi (2016) and it is that interest is not something that someone is born with and can/should be nurtured and developed. Additionally, when that interest has taken root, it should not be disregarded or unsupported. Teachers and educators should encourage and develop their students' interests since "when interest is supported to deepen and develop, motivation and engagement are most likely to effectively cultivated" (Hidi & Renninger, 2016, p.13). When it comes to young learners, teachers should give opportunities for students to discover possible interests, since they are at an age where they are beginning to be more aware of what surrounds them, and what they like. Whenever possible, the teacher should explore these interests and relate them to the content. Speaking as an English language learner myself, my peers and I always became more motivated when topics of interest were used to explain content, or when we had the liberty of representing how we learned creatively, and according to our preferences. One way to try and interest learners, especially young learners, is to give them different opportunities to show what they learned, and to represent how they learned it.

2.2. Different ways of representing learning

As mentioned above, each student is an individual and as such, has different interests. One way to try and cultivate them, is to give them opportunities to represent their learning.

A good way to do it is to use a portfolio. A portfolio is a compilation of students' work, which they can personalise and then later keep. It can be a compilation of drawings, written tasks, oral presentations, and any other work they select to put in it. Ellis and Ibrahim (2015) discuss the use of a portfolio and its positive influence on young learners since they become more motivated and grow a sense of responsibility. Furthermore, it allows them to organise what they learned as they wish and “give shape and coherence to their experience of learning and using languages other than their first language” according to their citation of the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe (p.25). Portfolios are a record of their progress and an expression of their individuality, as well as a vehicle for the development of metacognitive skills, such as reflection on their learning and cognitive skills as well, such as comparing, listing and organising their work (Ellis & Ibrahim, 2015). Pinter (2006) advises teachers of the importance of establishing criteria with their students, otherwise, they will want to put everything in their portfolio, and that defeats its metacognitive purpose, which involves children in reflecting on their work and deciding which of their work they should put in. The author does mention some disadvantages of having portfolios, especially with young learners. It can take a lot of time to be with each individual student and help them select what to put in, since young learners need more support, specifically when they are not used to it. Additionally, they take a lot of room and add to the teacher's workload if they hope to give their students feedback, which is expected.

The students in this study had a portfolio, and had already established its rules with their teacher, so the drawings they did during the time I conducted the action research project were kept there and can be used at a later time as a record of what they learned in that unit.

Portfolios are not the only way to represent learning, however. Politano and Paquin (2000) state that

if one side of the learning coin is “presenting”, the other side must be “representing”. Just as we vary the ways we teach, we also provide students with

a variety of ways to represent their learnings so that they can construct their own meaning and understandings. (p.23)

They further suggest that a good way to start is by exploring writing and various ways of representing their learning, such as by writing poems, newspaper articles or mind maps. When students are comfortable with those, the teacher can start diversifying by including drawings, songs, web sites, skits, models, whatever option best suits their needs. Drawings, songs, and other manual activities are probably the best option for young learners learning English as a foreign language, given that the children's' difficulty with writing due to their lack of knowledge of the language would make poems and articles too difficult. Either way, it is important that teachers encourage this by offering students time to think, support, resources, and most importantly, "opportunities to share, discuss, reflect and celebrate their representations" (p.23).

2.2.1. Pictorial representations as depictions of learning

The use of drawings, art, and pictures (pictorial representations) young learners' classrooms is not new. Children have always been encouraged to draw and be creative from an early age. When it comes to learning, however, these representations were considered mainly from a cognitive point of view in order to assess cognitive abilities, such as intelligence or memory (Trautner & Milbrath, 2008). Nonetheless, these drawings always convey meaning, even if it appears abstract. Hope (2008) states that

as infants develop their ability to process their perceptions and observations of the world around them, so they begin to also look for ways in which they can communicate their thoughts and ideas visually as well as through language. They learn gestures (waving bye-bye) as well as the words that go with them. It is not surprising, therefore, that they expect gestures that leave marks (drawing) to hold and communicate meaning too. (p.45)

Hope (2008) further states that drawings can also serve as a *representation of thought* and as a *process of thought*. "The first brings closure to the activity of the completion of the act; the second describes a way of recording thoughts in action" (p.6). Drawing can then serve as a record of an act or as a supplement to help people think. Rathet (1994), as cited in Brier & Lebbin (2014), also believes drawing makes for more active and memorable learning experiences (p.22). Additionally, Cox (2005), affirms that "a more

recent and promising use of children's drawing is as a facilitator for their memory of past events" (p.262). With that in mind, it stands to reason that drawing should be explored in young learner's classrooms as a way of representing learning, with the added benefit of helping them recall past events, or in this case, past activities and consequently vocabulary taught. If a drawing can help students recall previously taught content, then it can be used when it comes to their assessment. Pinter (2006), for instance, states that a portfolio is an excellent form of assessment since it displays concretely what a learner can do, which can include drawings related to the content taught in their lessons.

2.3. Assessment in the young learners' classroom

Assessment has much importance in a young learner's classroom. Davies & Pearse (2000) claimed that, "no important enterprise should just go on and on without some kind of evaluation. Teaching and learning are no exception" (p.169). Evaluation is a broader term than assessment, though. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001), there are many forms of assessment, such as language tests, checklists, informal teacher observation, among others. Assessment is part of evaluation, but this broader term encompasses more than learner proficiency. Matters such as "the effectiveness of particular methods or materials, the kind and quality of discourse actually produced in the programme, learner/teacher satisfaction, teaching effectiveness" (p.177) are evaluated as well in language programs. In the context of this action research project, however, only assessment is being explored.

Assessment can take many forms, as stated above. In the Portuguese context, assessment can be divided into external and internal assessment. The external assessment is composed of: "Provas de aferição", "provas finais de ciclo" and "exames finais nacionais". These are done periodically throughout the students' academic path, at the end of specific school years. "Provas de aferição" are conducted in the second, fifth and eight years of basic education. They are corrected but are not considered in terms of the students' overall mark in that specific subject. Its aim is to highlight the students' strengths and weaknesses so that they can work on it, hence the reason why they are not considered in the final grade of the term. "Provas de Final de Ciclo", however, account for thirty percent of the students' final mark. They occur at the end of the ninth year, signal the end of basic education and are made with the purpose of testing the students'

knowledge. Similarly, “Exames Finais Nacionais”, which occur at the end of the eleventh and twelfth years, signal the end of secondary education, and are a requirement for students that intend to continue their studies in university.

Internal assessment, the one done by the school and its teachers, has three components: diagnostic, summative and formative. It is up to the higher organs of each school cluster to specify the assessment criteria, which then the teachers should follow. These criteria should be defined according to the guiding documents and other guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education. According to *Despacho Normativo n.º 1-F/2016*, diagnostic assessment “responde à necessidade de obtenção de elementos para a fundamentação do processo de ensino e de aprendizagem e visa a facilitação da integração escolar e a orientação escolar e vocacional” (p.11040- (5)). Formative assessment is constant and adjustable. “Assegura que os processos se vão adequando às características dos alunos, permitindo a adaptação do ensino às diferenças individuais” (Pais &Monteiro, 1996, p.44). The teacher should think of the methods and strategies they can use to teach and adapt them, according to their students’ needs, preferences and what works best for them. According to *Decreto-Lei n.º 17/2016*, teachers should consider that assessment is a continuous process and should be adapted depending on the context it ensues. Moreover, they should employ various forms of assessment techniques, and reflect on which one works best in each situation.

Since it is flexible, assessment can have several components, such as periodic self-assessments, teacher observations, assessment of writing, reading, or spoken activities done throughout the term, among others. However, one that is essentially mandatory is the written test. The frequency of these tests is up to the decisions of each school cluster, but the norm is two written tests per term, even in primary education. These tests contain exercises about the content (vocabulary, grammatical structures) that has been taught up until that point and are a determinant factor of the final component of the internal assessment, summative assessment. This is less flexible than the formative one. According to *Despacho Normativo n.º 1-F/2016* “consubstancia um juízo global sobre as aprendizagens desenvolvidas pelos alunos (...) traduz a necessidade de, no final de cada período escolar, informar alunos e encarregados de educação sobre o estado de desenvolvimento das aprendizagens” (p.1140(5)). It determines if the young learners move on to the next school year or have to repeat the same one. Cameron (2001) lists

some disadvantages associated with this type of assessment, that favours tests above all else, such as

“stress is placed on children by the demands of assessment; individual children’s learning needs are downgraded in the push to cover the syllabus or course book before the next assessment; classroom activity is restricted to test preparation; educational change is limited by the power of the assessment machinery”(p.216)

These were, almost all, a reality with the class featured in this action research project, especially the push to cover the syllabus and the preparation for tests, which can make other forms of formative assessment, such as self-assessment, complicated due to the pressure the teacher and the students suffer in order to cover the syllabus quickly.

2.3.1 Self-assessment in the young learners’ classroom

Self-assessment, generally, means assessing ourselves and reflecting on our actions. CEFR (Council of Europe,2001) states that it is more accurate when

assessment is in relation to clear descriptors defining standards of proficiency and/or (b) when assessment is related to a specific experience. This experience may itself even be a test activity. It is also probably made more accurate when learners receive some training. Such structured self-assessment can achieve correlations to teachers’ assessments and tests equal to the correlation (level of concurrent validation) commonly reported between teachers themselves, between tests and between teacher assessment and tests. (p.191)

This form of assessment needs to be taken into consideration and adjusted before being used with young learners. As Cameron (2001) states, children have their cognitive limits, but can learn to reflect. It is important to use simple structures which they are familiar with such as “I like/I don’t like” in the beginning. “With these simple phrases, learners can evaluate how much they enjoy different types of activity or to pick out the good points of a story” (p.236). She also states how important it is to set realistic goals for their learning, which younger children can do as well with the teacher’s help. Over time, children will start setting their own goals and challenging themselves. This will make them more autonomous learners and be an advantage for their future learning.

The use of self-assessment is encouraged by *Aprendizagens Essenciais* (Ministério da Educação, 2017) and other guiding documents, as mentioned in section 1.3.1, and as such some teachers use it as part of their formative assessment. However, in order to properly self-assess, young learner's need to develop the ability to critically reflect on what they did. For them to be able to do this, they need to develop their metacognitive skills.

2.4 Developing metacognitive awareness to self-assess

Researching and studying metacognition can be difficult to do due to the variety of related concepts attributed to it, such as metacognitive awareness, learner beliefs, awareness-raising (Cardenas, 2009). Schraw, as cited in Cardenas (2009), specifies that metacognition is a multidimensional phenomenon. It can be divided into two categories: metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive regulation (Young & Fry, 2008). Ormrod (2004), as cited in Fry and Young (2008), defines metacognition as the awareness and understanding of our cognitive processes and how to use them to learn and remember. Hacker (2009) differentiates metacognitive thinking from regular thinking by asserting that the source of such thinking is not related to someone's reality but rather, their internal interpretation of that reality, which can comprise of "what one knows about that internal representation, how it works, and how one feels about it" (Hacker, 2009, p.14). Therefore, metacognition can be defined as "knowledge and cognition about cognitive phenomena" according to Flavell (1979, p.906) or "the knowledge about learning that learners of different ages and learning proficiency hold, and which influences how they face the language learning process and the expectations they have about the results of their efforts", according to Wenden (1998), cited in Cardenas (2009, p.25).

This Metacognitive school of Psychology was not always accepted as a reliable source of information on human behaviour and the inner workings of someone's mind, however, and is relatively recent. As Dunlosky and Metcalfe (2009) explain in their book, some scholars such as Lieberman, Nisbett and Wilson disregarded this notion by claiming it was unreliable since people could not observe their cognitive process, and on the off chance their reports were accurate, they were the result of an educated guess (p.39). Nevertheless, Erickson and Simon (1980), cited in Dunlosky and Metcalfe (2009), offered a theory that allowed oppositional opinions to merge. Their theory related the veracity of people's reports with their memory. Essentially, people are able to reflect if the event is

in their *short-term* store, i.e., happened recently. If that is not the case, then people cannot accurately reflect, since the information they seek is not in their reach, and they could have forgotten some of it. This theory was the first step to the birth of this school, with several other authors supporting and offering essential information on the importance of metacognition. Applying this theory to the context of young learners of English, the teacher should do the self-assessment activities shortly after teaching new content (vocabulary, grammatical structure), or completing an activity, so that they have in mind how they performed during said activity, or what they actually learned.

Flavell is one of the most prominent contributors to the development of metacognition. He was the first to utilise the term *metamemory* and imply that it involves deliberate and conscious information retrieving and storage and that metacognitive thoughts are planful and goal-oriented and can be used to perform cognitive tasks (Hacker, 2009). Flavell (1979) also introduced a model of cognitive monitoring, which included the actions and interactions between four phenomena: 1) *metacognitive knowledge*, 2) *metacognitive experiences*, 3) *goals (or tasks)* and 4) *actions (or strategies)*. *Metacognitive knowledge* signifies the beliefs or theories one might have about their cognition, which includes what they know, and what they do not know (Tauber & Dunlosky, 2016). Metacognitive experiences are the conscious cognitive or affective experiences that accompany or influence any cognitive enterprise. Flavell (1979) also declares that they (metacognitive knowledge and experiences) only differ from the rest in their function, and not in their form or quality. Goals (or tasks) are the objectives of a cognitive enterprise and the actions (or strategies) relate to the cognitions or behaviours employed to achieve said goal or task (Flavell, 1979, pp.906-907). Hacker (2009) further clarifies this model by saying how metacognitive knowledge

consists of one's knowledge or beliefs about three general factors: his or her own nature or the nature of another as a cognitive processor; a task, its demands, and how those demands can be met under varying conditions; and strategies for accomplishing those tasks (i.e. cognitive strategies that are invoked to make progress toward goals, and metacognitive strategies that are invoked to monitor the progress of cognitive strategies). (p.15)

For young learners this can be tricky for them to understand, but the teacher can assist them by guiding them towards these steps, which eventually will lead to the young learners doing it on their own. By asking the children questions, doing simple exercises, and testing different strategies in order to determine the best way they learn, i.e. making them understand their cognitive nature, the teacher starts the process. Then, by discussing the different tasks with the students and what they have to do, as well as various strategies for accomplishing them, the teacher is able to start developing the students' metacognitive knowledge.

Schraw and Moshman (1995), cited in Young and Fry (2008), state that metacognitive knowledge is “what we know about how we learn; what we know about the procedures and strategies that are the most effective for us; and, what we know about the conditions under which various cognitive activities are most effective”, whereas metacognitive regulation is “the actual activities in which we engage in order to facilitate learning and memory” (p.2). It can be divided into three processes: planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Planning the activity is the first step, in which students, in this context, children, need to think of the task and several strategies and cognitive resources to employ. Monitoring signifies being aware of their progress during the task and their ability to determine their performance. The final process, evaluating, means analysing and reflecting on the outcome, comparing it to their goal, and on the effectiveness of the strategies used. Additionally, Reynolds, Wade, Trathen and Lapan (1989), as cited in Wade and Reynolds (1989), explain that in order to be metacognitively aware students need to be aware of three aspects: “what to study (*task awareness*), how best to learn it (*strategy awareness*) and whether and to what extent did they learn (*performance awareness*)”. Wade and Reynolds (1989) further highlight that these three aspects function together, and frequently simultaneously, for example, when students highlight or underline content as they decide if they already know it or if it has any importance, as mentioned by Reynolds, Wade, Trathen and Schraw. As such, if students are able to develop their metacognitive knowledge and regulation, and use them well, academic success is expected (Young & Fry, 2008).

Brown (1975), cited in Desautel (2006), first brought to attention the educational benefit of the mind being able to reflect on its own process. Since then, various scholars have investigated this matter and its relation to self-reflection and self-assessment. Flavell

(1979) conducted some of the first research with children and corroborated this benefit by saying that

lack of hard evidence notwithstanding, however, I am absolutely convinced that there is, overall, far too little rather than enough or too much cognitive monitoring in this world. This is true for adults as well as for children, but it is especially true for children. For example, I find it hard to believe that children who do more cognitive monitoring would not learn better both in and out of school than children who do less. (p.910)

Most of his studies paved the way for other scholars to explore metacognitive monitoring and metamemory with children and conclude that children as young as kindergarteners were able to understand some of the general principles of memory.

Metacognitive awareness has proven to be an advantage to a positive foreign language learning experience (Cardenas, 2009), although some have trouble in exploring this with young learners, as mentioned above in section 1.3.1, due to doubting their students' metacognitive skills (Ellis & Ibrahim, 2015). Littlejohn (2016), as cited in Parker & Valente (2019), strongly encourages teachers to explore mainstream approaches, other than the traditional ones, in order to better align the content with children's ability to reflect on how they learn. That includes thinking about Bloom's Taxonomy higher thinking skills, such as creating and evaluating. Ellis and Ibrahim (2015) affirm that these skills are something that they possess, and that should be explored. Pinter (2006) adds that the younger the students are, the less they are able to reflect on what they learned and how they learned it, but she also states that it is possible to gradually develop these skills with them as time goes on. Therefore, teachers should encourage *learning to learn*.

2.4.1. Learning to learn

This term is defined by Ellis and Ibrahim (2015) as an “umbrella term” that includes a wide variety of activities that help develop metacognitive awareness. The overall aim is to “begin to raise awareness of the various factors that influence their language learning and to give them some time to start thinking for themselves” (Pinter, 2006, p.99). Implementing *learning to learn* implies relating metacognitive strategies, such as planning and evaluating, with cognitive strategies which involve children doing task specific activities and with the language they learned (Parker & Valente, 2019). Ellis and

Ibrahim (2015), as cited by Parker and Valente (2019), further explain how learning to learn enables teachers to understand their students and to plan their next steps in learning better. It is a continuously reflective process which is one of the characteristics in a *learning to learn* classroom.

One of the ways to encourage this reflective classroom, is to instil self-assessment as part of the students' tasks. Pinter (2006) cautions the reader to the limitations encountered with younger children, which probably will need to be explained how to do it in their mother tongue first, and only then encouraged to do so in English. Furthermore, she emphasizes how careful and gradual training is necessary, and how it should be restricted to similar tasks and types of questions. This allows children, especially younger students, to feel more confident and with a sense of security. Several studies mentioned by the author show the positive results in using this with children, especially with students over 8 years old. Allowing children to constantly reflect on their progress develops their metacognitive skills and helps their learning overall, since this regular reflective practice enables the teacher to review their lessons and adjust accordingly. One way to introduce this is to use Ellis and Ibrahim's model "Plan Do Review".

2.4.1.1 Plan-Do-Review

In their book, Ellis and Ibrahim (2015) describe ten key principles that are essential if the teacher wants to design activities for children to think and recognise how they learn and to develop metacognitive skills useful not only in the classroom but in their future academic path as well. The first principle is "Mode of Input and type of response" and with it, they require the teacher to think about the means of input and language they use to convey meaning during their lessons. They suggest combining a variety of verbal and non-verbal resources, in order to provide more opportunities for children to think. The second principle is "English Language Portfolio", which suggests having a portfolio in which they are able to express how they learn, as discussed above in point 2.3 of this chapter. The third principle is "Assessment for Learning". This is a holistic approach to assessment, related to *learning to learn* and other approaches that believe the child learns best when knowing what they are learning and when given more autonomy. The fourth principle "Children's Voices" connects to the previous one and gives priority to the students' preferences and makes them active learners and not just "empty vessels to be

filled with knowledge” (p.25). The fifth principle “Informed Activities” states that children should be informed of why they are doing a certain activity, thus developing their metacognitive awareness. It explains how, although many children are given activities to test their cognitive abilities, they are not informed of why they are doing it, are not aware of their relevance, and do not develop those metacognitive skills. “The idea, then, is that the children are involved in a cycle of reflection and experimentation on their learning, in order to combine both metacognitive and cognitive strategy training” (p.26).

With this idea in mind, principle six, “Routines”, explains the value of using “Plan, Do, Review”. Routines are a fundamental part of primary language teaching. It offers a sense of security and familiarity that helps in the students’ learning. It gives them a sense of timing and also facilitates classroom management. The “Plan, Do, Review” cycle allows just that. Children get comfortable and recognise the next step in the lesson easily. It has three stages, which correspond to the beginning, middle and end and can be adapted to different types of activities, and to the lesson as a whole as well. The three stages allow students to combine metacognitive and cognitive strategy training, by reflecting, experimenting, and further reflecting, and become aware of their preferences when learning. In the first stage, Plan (reflection), children are told what they are expected to learn and encouraged to think about what they already know and how to prepare for the activity. The goal is for the children to become involved in the process and after knowing the success criteria for the activity, eventually discuss the criteria with the teacher and make their own. The second stage, Do (Experimentation), develops the cognitive strategies. Children are given instructions for the activity and experiment with the language. To this stage, an additional and optional stage was added, Do More, in which children have opportunities to consolidate and personalise their work. The final stage, Review (Further Reflection), encourages students to think about what they learned and how they learned. Furthermore, a self-assessment task is included, which the students should then discuss with their teacher. This helps them develop their self-confidence and accounting for their learning. The final part of the Review intends for students to reflect on the success criteria they discussed at the beginning and understand what they need to work on in the future. With this, children develop their metacognitive skills and eventually, start doing this by themselves, without needing to be guided.

The remaining four principles are:” Home Involvement”, which adds to the sixth principle a final stage, Share. Students are encouraged to share what they did in class at home, in order to build their confidence. Their portfolio also plays an important part at this stage, since it is a recorded of what they learned, and a physical representation they can show their family; The next principle “Values” endorses valuing themselves, others, and their environment. The teacher should be guided by these values, which the students will then learn and become more aware of what and who surrounds them; The following principle “Cross Curricular Links” suggests connecting what they are learning with other parts of the curriculum and other subjects, making learning more real and meaningful; The final principle “Main Aim” defends that each activity should have a main aim, which the students are aware of, again, to make learning meaningful (p.29).

To conclude, these principles aim to develop students’ metacognitive skills and make them an active part of their education. As mentioned above, the “Plan, Do, Review” model was created with the purpose of having regular and systematic reflective reviewing (Parker &Valente,2019) and allowing students to become more active learners. Williams (2009) mentions several authors that state that plan-do-review has been shown to reduce frequency of challenging behaviours and increase the amount of work completed. It also has been known to increase creativity, independence, self-confidence, and problem-solving skills, among other positive skills (Williams, 2009, p.132).

III. Design of the study

This action research project emerged after careful reflection on my observations during my teaching practice. That reflection, combined with its discussion with my mentor, led to a problem which served as the focus of this study. I proceeded with a literature review (see chapter II) to research theoretical theories and perspectives relevant to this study. In this Chapter, I will describe the plan of action, as well as the data collection methods I employed to gather information for this project. Furthermore, I will present the results of this project, analyse them, and draw conclusions in order to answer the research question posed.

3.1. Plan of Action

This action research project took place after reflecting on my observations throughout my teaching practice. As mentioned in sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2 of this report, I noted that four students were constantly distracted during English lessons. I also noted how self-assessment was not something they practised. As such, the following research question emerged: “Can primary students of English as a foreign language become more focused by reflecting and representing what they learned in pictorial form?”. I first assumed that students would have trouble completing self-assessment tasks, given that it was something they had never done before. This was later confirmed during my 0 Cycle, in which I created a simple self-assessment exercise and employed it at the end of my first taught unit, which resulted in confusion and the children’s inability to complete it by themselves. I had to explain it to the class, and they ended up copying each other’s answers, and saying they understood everything, even when that was not the case, and so defeated its purpose. I had decided to focus on self-assessment, considering the fact that this was important to develop their autonomy. Additionally, it was suggested as a goal in the school’s guiding documents. These students also showed great enthusiasm when they had to do activities that involved drawing, and taking that into consideration, I decided to engage children in drawing as a representation of their learning, and as a springboard for them to self-assess.

I had the opportunity to observe how students responded well to drawings activities, as mentioned above. I had also been introduced to “A Picture of Achievement” (Ioannou-

Georgiou & Pavlou, 2003, p.110-112) (see Appendix 4) by my mentor. Taking that into consideration, I decided to adapt it to fit the needs of this study.

I thought this activity was an excellent self-assessment resource. The students had the opportunity to reflect on their learning, without any pressure, and at the end of the unit/term, depending on what the teacher defined, they had clear representations of their learning during that time period. It also allowed every student to have a completed picture, whether they had learned a lot or not. However, given the time I had to conduct this study, and its aims, I found that adapting it would be a better option. The aim of “A Picture of Achievement” is that students have that time period to add pictures whenever they feel like they learned. Since my action research project would only have the duration of three lessons, and students were not used to this type of activity, I was afraid that they would not engage and participate. Furthermore, since I had a focus group to interview, it would be difficult to make them reflect in this time period using “A Picture of Achievement”. I also thought that by adapting this idea, the other students would not feel left out. Each student did their drawing and I commented on each of them as I watched them draw, and they appreciated the praise. If I had used “A Picture of Achievement”, I was afraid of not being able to address each student, because there could have been lessons in which only two or three children drew, and others in which the whole class did something, making giving feedback harder. This way, I could look at their pictures at the end of the lesson, as they were drawing, and the activity was more controlled.

In this context, the students would not add something to the picture whenever they felt it best, but instead do so at the end of every lesson. I would then look at their pictures and comment, and interview the four students, guiding them towards self-reflection. By guiding, I do not mean telling them what conclusions I expected them to reach, but instead, asking questions that got them thinking about what they did and made them reflect on their behaviour. The picture would serve not only as the representation of what they learned but would hopefully help them recall previous lessons as Cox (2005) claims. At the end of each lesson, after reflecting on the current lesson, they would be asked to think if they remembered any vocabulary they did not know in the previous lesson. I took notes of the ones they said in each lesson, to see if they had anything to add. The content was reviewed at the beginning of each lesson, so if students were paying attention, they should remember more.

The young learners had the liberty to draw what they wanted, as long as it fit the content taught in the lesson, allowing them to make their own meaning of the lesson. What I intended was not to have four copies of the same drawing, in which they drew the same object for each lesson, but instead to have four personalized drawings that reflected what they wanted, and what they had learned. For instance, when we talked about school subjects, I introduced nine vocabulary words. The students had the choice of drawing whatever they wanted related to these nine vocabulary words. They could draw students studying, doing maths, playing football in Physical Education (PE), among others. This personalisation would hopefully, help them recall the vocabulary and the lesson overall. During the interview, I asked them about the pictures, and about each lesson and they would reflect. This reflection would lead them to consider how much more they learned when they paid attention and focused during the lesson.

For students to be able to do this, they would need to start developing their metacognitive skills, which is why I started doing self-assessment tasks at the end of every lesson in order to get them accustomed to thinking and reflecting before starting to implement the project. This became easier for them the more they did it, which was constant, given the fact that another student-teacher, sharing the class with me, also employed self-assessment tasks at the end of her taught units. Her self-assessment tasks were similar to mine, and those in their Students' Book, Star 4. After discussing it with our mentor, we thought it would be best if students knew what to expect, in order to feel comfortable and familiarised with what was asked of them. So, her self-assessment tasks also featured sentences about the lessons, and three symbols that signified "I got it!", "Almost there", "I need help", which the children had to circle the one that applied to them.

Furthermore, the young learners needed to be able to think without pressure and without disrupting the lesson, so in order to achieve this, students completed the drawing at the end of the lesson, and after being dismissed, I would comment on the students' drawings and interview the focus group while they were waiting for their next teacher, during a twenty-minute break. Since they had to stay inside their classroom, none of them minded and the other students were being entertained by a school employee, so they did not disrupt the interview.

Additionally, although “A Picture of Achievement” (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2003, p.110-112) had templates of drawings, I decided to use a different one as the background for their additions, since I thought it fit the course unit I was teaching better. Since the Unit was related to school, I chose a picture from *thelearningsite.info* (Appendix 5) with a school and playground, which they could colour if they so wished, and gave them options to be creative and draw.

Finally, given the time I had to complete my project, I decided to do only one cycle of investigation. This would mean less information, and less evidence but as Bell (2005) stated,

the extent of your data will be influenced by the amount of time you have. This may seem a rather negative approach, but there is no point in producing a grandiose scheme that requires a year and a team of researchers if you are on your own. (p.116)

For that reason, and although I find the idea of a second cycle very interesting, and would certainly provide some more answers, I did not find it doable in the timeframe I had.

3.2 Methodology

After identifying the problem in the class I observed, I had to plan my project with a methodology in mind. This of course, should be well thought out, since “the method has direct influence on the whole process of the research from the theoretical framework, population and sample, data collection, and analysis process to interpretation of findings” (Bilgin, 2017, p.1). A qualitative methodology quickly became the chosen one for my project, since I intended to do an interview with open-ended answers that allowed students the freedom to express their thoughts (Blackstone, 2012). The assessment of these answers would then be subjective since qualitative methods are interpretive (Glaser & Strauss, 2012). The results of the interviews would then be about how well they were able to reflect on their behaviour.

However, and taking into consideration that children at this stage can make the mistake of saying whatever they think will please the teacher (Pinter, 2006), which had happened already with the first self-assessment activity I conducted, I felt the need to add another

data gathering tool that allowed me to compare its results to the ones I gathered from the interviews. Thinking on the problem I had, I decided to use observation grids that allowed me to see if the students were distracted in class. This way, I could concretely see if they paid more attention during the lessons over time. This, however, was a quantitative data-gathering tool, since it allowed me to get precise results (Glaser & Strauss, 2012). Using and combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies is not easy. Each methodology has its advantages, but the use of two implies the effective use and combination of both into the study (Morgan, 2014). Nonetheless, I felt this was justified seeing as I wanted to see more clearly their progress (or not) over time. Regarding paying attention in class, I thought observation grids were the best form of collecting evidence. As such, I used two different techniques for collecting data, through triangulation. It is defined, according to Cohen et al. (2000), as “two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour” (p.2), and I used it to give some validity to my study, as it shows the same conclusions from varied perspectives. Furthermore, the pictures of each of the four students allowed me to see what they chose to draw, and how they represented each lesson (Appendices 11,12,13,14). The criteria set for these drawings was based on their direct relation to the content of that lesson, seeing as I gave students the liberty to draw what they wanted, and children can be unpredictable. I also focused on the their ability to remember content by looking at the drawing after the first lesson.

3.2.1 Data Collection Tools

Regarding the data collection tools I chose to use, I decided to use the interview, observation grids, and my journal where I took field notes, wrote about my reflections and the different stages of the project.

3.2.1.1 Observation grids

The observation grids (Appendix 6) allowed me to keep track of the behavioural aspects I intended to analyse, and I found pertinent to my study. The observation grids had three components I intended to register (Participation, Focus, and Interest) which were adaptable to each lesson. I devised a set of criteria and a key that helped quickly and efficiently fill out the observation grid. For each of the three components, I chose to number their performance from 1-4, where 1 was the worst behaviour and the 4 was the best. This helped me to fill in the grid quickly, and it also clearly stated how the students’

behaviour was in each lesson. The three parameters were related, so it was expected that students that had 2 in Focus (Student was constantly distracted), would have a low number in Participation and in Interest as well. However, this was not a rule. Students who were focused, could be shy and not participate much, culminating in a high number in Focus and Interest, and a low one in Participation.

In each of the lessons, I wanted to see if students participated voluntarily, and pertinently, throughout the lesson and if they were focused during it. Finally, I also wanted to see if students were interested throughout my lessons. This last component also allowed me to reflect and adapt my lessons, and try different activities and ways of teaching, to see which interested them more. This was not exactly the focus of the study, but it helped me gain some perspective as to what worked with these particular students and what did not and is useful for my future as a professional.

3.2.1.2 Interviews

The interviews were an instrumental part of my action research project. They offered an advantage. As Bell (2005) stated, the best part of using an interview is

“its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings (...) The way which a response is made (the tone of voice, facial expression, hesitation, etc.) can provide information that a written response would conceal”. (p.157)

Furthermore, given the fact that these were children, I found that this would work better than a questionnaire or other tools that could possibly confuse them. It also saved me time, since children are slow writers and might have trouble understanding the questions. This way, if they did not understand I could reformulate the question, and by writing myself the answers, the process was much quicker.

To record the answers, I decided to transcribe them to my notes. I chose to do it like that because I was doing individual interviews and it was not hard to write what the students were saying. The interviews were conducted in English at first, but then students had trouble answering the more complicated questions, so they would often answer in Portuguese, and I would repeat it in English.

The interviews were composed of four main questions. The first question focused on what they had drawn, and how it related to the content of the lesson. The second on what they remembered from the content. The third was focused on why they did not remember the remaining content from the lesson, and I hoped that they could relate it to their behaviour. The final question was about the content from the previous lesson, and it aimed to see if they remembered content that they did not know during the previous lesson. If they remembered, it was due to either paying attention to the revision portion at the beginning of each lesson, or by studying at home and doing homework. They also had access to their drawings from the previous lessons, which helped them remember in some cases. I followed the interview guidelines I prepared (Appendix 7), but these were not always strictly followed. As Bell (2005) stated above, sometimes I had to change questions, ask follow-ups, and even not question further if I noticed students were getting uncomfortable.

To analyse the interviews, I focused on how well they reached the aims I had set for each question. This meant that the perfect interview would have students reaching the conclusion that by paying attention in class they would learn more during their lessons. They would be able to recall plenty of the vocabulary because they paid attention. The opposite would also be considered, their lack of knowledge of the vocabulary, and their reflection on how that happened, because they were distracted during the lesson. In order to improve, they would have to pay attention in the following lessons. This was all subjective, as is characteristic of qualitative data-gathering tools, as mentioned in section 3.2.

3.2.1.3 Field Notes Journal

This tool was the most constant throughout the different stages of the project. I relied on it for recording my first observations to write my reflections of taught units. I also used a section of it to transcribe the interviews and to record thoughts, advice, constructive criticism, and tips from my seminars with my mentor and my supervisor.

3.3 First Cycle of Action Research Project

The first cycle of this action research project had a duration of three lessons, in three weeks. These lessons had an irregular, and unplanned, timeframe. The first two lessons happened in the same week, and the last lesson happened two weeks later, due to students

having to go home and staying in isolation, and not having English lessons in the meantime.

These lessons followed the same pattern. I would teach the lesson as planned, and at the end of each, the students would draw a figure related to the content I had taught during that lesson. Then, the class would be dismissed, and I would talk to the four students and interview each one.

The students had freedom to draw whatever they wished, as long as it related to the content. In the first lesson, in which they learned about warm up activities, I asked them to draw children doing warm up activities. I also asked them to write the ones they remembered learning at the bottom of the drawing, so that I could ask them about it during the interview, but immediately realised that it would not work and just asked them to tell me after. Students got extremely confused and did not know how to write the warm up activities, for which I did not have any support on the whiteboard, so it is understandable. I originally asked them to write it because I intended for them to pay attention in the following lesson and be able to complete it with more words. Since writing was not a focus of my action research project, hence why I had not anticipated the problems of asking them to write without any support, I immediately dismissed that idea and just asked them to tell me during the interview. I took note of the ones they said, and in the following lesson, I asked them if they had learned some more. Since we did a recalling of the previous lesson vocabulary at the beginning of every lesson, if they were not distracted, they should be able to add more vocabulary. This recalling of the previous lesson did not happen at the beginning of the second lesson, since there was a delay in starting the lesson, due to the students having to listen to some information from one of the school employees, responsible for an activity about the food pyramid they were doing in the following day. The following two lessons went better in terms of students understanding what they had to do, and they were asked to draw something they did in the playground, and in the third lesson, to draw something they did in Physical Education (PE).

The observation grids were filled in immediately after the lesson by me, and then I consulted and asked the other student-teacher present in my lessons for feedback, after telling her the specific criteria. I found this the best option since it would be very difficult to teach the lesson and stop in the middle to fill in the grid without disrupting its flow.

This interaction was essential and made this project much easier to accomplish, given the support we gave each other when it was needed.

In order to properly analyse and discuss each lesson and its results, I will divide the following section as follows: Description of the lesson; Results and its interpretation; Interview transcription. In the results, I will present and analyse them, including the interpretation of the observation grid and of their drawings. This will be followed by a table that contains the transcription of the interview. These transcriptions contain answers in English and in Portuguese, according to what the students said. The process is repeated with each student, for each lesson, in a total of twelve interviews. I chose to do it like this, so that I can also reflect on their behaviour and progress from one lesson to the next. Subsequently, I will conclude with the general results and its link to the research question posed.

3.4.1. First lesson of the First Cycle

In this lesson, the children learned about warm up activities (Appendix 8). The warm up activities they had to learn were the following: nod your head, shake your head, stretch your arms, stretch your legs, bend your knees, wiggle your nose, touch your toes, blink your eyes, open your mouth, shake your hand. This was a lot of vocabulary for one lesson so, in order to introduce the vocabulary, I used flashcards and gestures. The students responded well and enjoyed doing the gestures. Then, the students and I sang a song I made up, with a familiar rhythm, and the same gestures they used with the flashcards. Finally, students practiced the structure I introduced with the song, and did the self-assessment task.

3.4.1.1 Results from the first lesson

As mentioned above, in order to present the results from the first lesson, I will transcribe the interview between me (T), and the different students (A, B, C, D) after analysing them individually. Each of the following tables represents one of the interviews. Table 1 presents the interview between the teacher (T) and Student A (SA); Table 2 is the transcription of the interview from Student B (SB); Table 3 presents Student's C (SC) interview and Table 4 shows Student's D (SD) interview for the first lesson. Each of the interviews follow the guidelines I prepared (see Attachment 4), although some deviate from them as stated in section 3.2.1.2.

Throughout the lesson, Student A did not seem too comfortable. He appeared sad and, during the interview (Table 1), showed some reluctance to answer questions. He seemed interested in doing the drawing (Appendix 11) and chose to draw a boy stretching, which was one of the warm up activities discussed in class. However, when questioned he could not name what it was. In fact, he could not name most of the vocabulary during the interview and offered no answers as to why. Since he did not seem very well, I did not insist during this part and accepted his answers. I did talk to the student after, but he did not share if there was something troubling him. This inability to understand why he could not remember the vocabulary and relate it to his behaviour is expected, since the students are not used to self-reflecting.

The observation grid showed the student constantly distracted, participating only when prompted, and engaging in activities, again, when prompted. This was once again, expected, and normal for him.

T: What's this?

SA: It's a boy.

T: What is he doing?

SA: (no answer)

T: Is he stretching?

SA: Yes! Stretching.

T: Oh okay, and what is stretching? Do you remember?

SA: It's a warm up activity.

T: Good! Can you remember more?

SA: Humm, open your mouth.

T: Good! Do you remember any more? Maybe with your arms or your legs?

SA: Bend your legs?

T: Stretch your legs, almost! Do you know more?
SA: No.
T: Why do you think you can't remember more?
SA: (No answer)
T: Okay, how were you today during class? Did you like it?
SA: Yes, I liked it.
T: Was the lesson hard?
SA: I don't know.
T: Okay, so why do you think you can't remember more?
SA: I don't know.

Table 1- Student A's Interview

Student B was very talkative during the interview and eager to share. She admitted to being distracted during the lesson, and to talking with her desk mate, Student X. In her drawing (Appendix 12) she drew two girls stretching and complained of not being able to draw them better, which is why she wrote what the drawing meant. This drawing was also acceptable, since it was one of the warm up activities discussed. In terms of the language, she did remember some of the vocabulary, and how to say it, probably due to the song that she seemed to enjoy. Once again, I did not feel the need to use Portuguese during the interview (Table 2), and neither did the student. When it comes to metacognitive abilities, Student B also reached the conclusion that in the next lesson she should not play with her friend, which was a very good step for the first lesson.

The observation grid showed Student B active and engaged during the lesson, but occasionally distracted, which supports her claims of talking with her desk mate. Since she was aware of this as the cause for not knowing more of the vocabulary, I expected her to pay more attention during the following lesson.

T: What's this?
SB: It's girls stretching.
T: Oh okay, and what is stretching? Do you remember?
SB: It's a warm up activity.
T: Good! Can you remember more?
SB: Humm, bend your knees, wiggle your nose, stretch your arms, stretch your legs
T: Very good! Why do you think you can't remember more?
SB: I don't know.
T: Okay, how were you today during class? Did you like it?
SB: Yes, I liked the song.
T: Was the lesson hard?
SB: No.
T: Okay, so why do you think you can't remember more?
SB: I play with Student X.
T: Oh! So, you were distracted?
SB: Yes, a little bit.
T: So, what do you think you need to do in the next lesson?
SB: Not play with Student X.

Table 2 – Student B's Interview

Student C, similarly to Student B, seemed engaged during the lesson, but seemed to struggle. When asked about it, he said that there was a lot of vocabulary to learn. During the interview (Table 3), he did not seem to draw any conclusions as to why he did not remember more, and was not too excited to talk, since he is a little bit shy. He showed

some reluctance in talking and did not develop is answers much. I was not expecting him to be able to determine why he did not know more vocabulary in this first lesson, given that this is one of the first opportunities to self-reflect he has. His drawing (Appendix 13) was of a boy opening his mouth, which was the most varied of the four so far. In regard to the observation grid, Student C seemed engaged and focused for most of the lesson but did not participate much.

T : What's this ?

SC: It's a boy.

T: What is he doing?

SC: Open your mouth.

T: Oh, he's opening his mouth! What is open your mouth?

SC: It's a warm up activity.

T: Good! Can you remember more?

SC: Humm, wiggle your nose, stretch your legs.

T: Good! Do you remember any more? Maybe with your arms?

SC: Stretch your arms!

T: Why do you think you can't remember more?

SC: (No answer)

T: Was the lesson hard?

SC: A little bit.

(...)

T: Okay, so why do you think you can't remember more?

SC: I don't know.

T: It's okay. Think about it okay?

Table 3 – Student C's Interview

Equally to Student C, Student D found the lesson hard, due to the amount of vocabulary, and struggled during it. He drew (Appendix 14) someone bending their knees but struggled with the correct grammatical structure during the interview (Table 4), which is normal, since he learned the verb in the present, and memorised the structure he was taught. I had to repeat some of the questions in Portuguese since he could not understand them in English but was able to answer once he understood them. When asked about why he could not remember more, he opened up about the difficulty of the lesson, and did not reach any conclusions about being distracted during the lesson.

Analysis of the observation grid showed the student only engaging when prompted, and not participating much throughout the lesson. This was normal for him and anticipated.

T: What's this?

SD: It's a boy.

T: What is he doing?

SD: Bend your knees.

T: Oh, he's bending his knees, and what is that?

SD: (Demonstrates)

T: Yes, you're right! But is that a body part? No?
What is it?

SD: Warm up routine.

T: Good! Do you remember any more? Do you remember the song?

SD: Stretch your legs, stretch your arms, nod your head.

(...)

T: Why do you think you can't remember more?
(Porque é que não te lembras de mais?)

SD: It's hard.

T: Was the lesson hard?

SD: Yes.

Table 4- Student D's interview

3.4.1.1 Interpretation of the results

The results at the end of this first lesson were what I expected. All four students demonstrated difficulties in expressing why they could not remember more content, although Student B got there with some prompting. Student A really struggled to answer the questions, even in Portuguese. Student C and Student D struggled with the lesson, according to them, because there was a lot of vocabulary, which is true. These results support the theoretical perspectives discussed by Pinter (2006), that explain that the development of metacognitive abilities takes time and needs to be developed overtime.

The observation grid showed all students engaging in most of the activities, especially the song, but being distracted and not interested in participating, which is common behaviour for them.

Their drawings seemed to interest them and were a good way of getting them to talk about the vocabulary. I hoped that in the following lessons, when adding the next drawings to their picture, they would be able to remember vocabulary from this lesson by associating the drawings with the lesson.

3.4.2. Second lesson of the First Cycle

This lesson's aim was to teach the parts of school (Appendix 9). I introduced eight parts of school: classroom; gym; library; music room; teacher's room; canteen; toilet; computer room; corridor; playground. To introduce this vocabulary, I decided to use a PowerPoint. By using this, students first saw the picture that represented the part of school, repeated the word and then I showed the written form. In order to get them to practice writing, one of the slides contained a girl talking about their school, and they were asked to write a few sentences about theirs'. Afterwards to practice writing and engaging the students, they played a game in which they had to write the part of school I was describing. The self-assessment followed this activity and ended the lesson.

3.4.2.1 Results from second lesson

Similarly to the first lesson's results, I will transcribe the interviews I (T) conducted with each of the four students: Student A (SA), Student B (SB), Student C (SC) and Student D (SD). I will only transcribe the parts that are relevant to this study since the rest of the conversation is about other matters not relevant to this study. After interpreting the results from each student, I will do a global conclusion from the second lesson.

In this lesson, Student A seemed better than in the last one, and more willing to talk during the interview (Table 5). For this lesson, he decided to add to his picture a drawing of a boy playing in the playground (see Appendix 11) but could not remember the name of the part of the school, which was the content covered in this lesson. He was able to remember a few parts of school, and with some prompting even reached the conclusion that he was not listening and needed to pay attention. Portuguese was used once during the interview, but the student learned how to say it in English, after I repeated it. When I mentioned his drawing from the last lesson and asked him about the vocabulary from the previous lesson, he was not able to name any warm up activities he had not already said. The analysis of the observation grid showed him still distracted, unfocused and uninterested for most of the lesson, responding and interacting when prompted.

T: What's this?

SA: A boy playing.

T: Oh okay, and where is he playing? Do you remember?

SA: No.

T: It's the playground. Do you remember more parts of school? Look at the picture.

SA: Classroom, music room, teachers' room.

T: Good! Do you remember any more?

SA: No.

T: Why do you think you can't remember more? Did you think about it since last lesson?

SA: No

T: Okay, did you listen to me explain?

SA: Sometimes.

T: Okay, so why do you think you can't remember more?

SA: Não estava a ouvir e a prestar atenção.

T: Okay, you weren't paying attention. What do you think you need to do next lesson?

SA: Pay attention.

T: Okay, and what about warm up activities? Look at the picture. Do you remember more?

SA: Humm, no.

Table 5 – Student A's Interview

In this lesson, Student B was focused and interested throughout it, but mostly due to not having Student X next to her. During her interview (Table 6), she was able to remember a lot of the content and relate it to the fact that she was paying attention, which was great progress. The student also talked a lot in English and I did not feel the need to

use Portuguese. In her drawing (see Appendix 12), she drew two girls practicing English in the playground, once again, writing what the drawing meant. Finally, regarding her previous drawings, she could not also remember any other warm up activities that she had not already said. Through the analysis of the observation grid, I can conclude that she was in fact interested during the lesson, and somewhat participative.

T: What's this?
SB: Girls speaking English.
T: Oh okay, and where are they?
SB: The playground.
T: Good! Can you remember more parts of school?
SB: Classroom, music room, teachers' room, gym, canteen, library.
T: You remembered a lot! Why do you think you can remember more today?
SB: I don't play with Student X.
T: Student X wasn't here, but yes, you paid attention.
T: What about the warm up activities? Do you remember more?
SB: I don't know.

Table 6 – Student B's Interview

Although Student C was able to name some of the parts of school, when asked why he could not remember more, he was not able to give an answer. I tried to guide him towards an answer, but he did not reach any. I noticed that he was getting frustrated at this point, so I did not insist more. In his drawing (see Appendix 13) he drew a girl jumping in the playground, which was an interesting choice, and showed some knowledge of the

language, seeing as he had not been introduced to this action in past lessons. According to the observation grid, Student C was relatively interested and focused, but did not participate voluntarily throughout the lesson.

T: What's this? SC: It's a girl. T: What is she doing ? SC: Jumping. T: Oh okay, and where is she? SC: She is in the playground. T: Good! Do you know more parts of school? SC: Classroom, music room, gym, library. T: Why do you think you can't remember more? SC: (No answer) T: Was the lesson hard today? SC: No. T: Why do you think you can't remember more? SC: I don't know. T: Okay, did you listen to me explain? SC: Yes. T: It's okay. What about your pictures? Do you remember more warm up activities? SC: No.

Table 7 – Student C's Interview

Student D was able to reach the conclusion that he did not pay attention during the PowerPoint, and that was why he did not remember more parts of school. He seemed to show enthusiasm to show his drawing (see Appendix 14) and drew a girl playing. He was able to remember one more warm up activity, but he said he had already studied them at home, so it was easier to remember.

Throughout the lesson, according to the observation grid, he was distracted for most of the lesson and did not participate without prompting

T : What's this ?
SD: It's a girl playing.
T: Oh okay, and where is she playing?
SD: In the playground.
T: Good! Can you remember more parts of school?
SD: Music room, classroom, library, canteen.
T: Why do you think you can't remember more?
SD: Não estava a ouvir durante PowerPoint.
T: Okay, you did not pay attention. So what do you think you need to do next lesson?
SD: Pay attention.
T: Okay, what about the warm up activities?
SD: humm, wiggle your nose?
T: Good!

Table 8 – Student D's Interview

3.4.2.2 Interpretation of the results

This lesson saw some minor changes but nothing significant, which is expected, since so little time had passed since the first lesson. The observation grid shows Student A still struggling in the different components, Focus, Participation and Interest, and students C

and D maintaining average results. The exception is Student B, who showed an improvement in interest and was completely engaged in the lesson.

I altered the final question for student B because I wanted to see if she was able to answer it and reach any conclusions, and I was pleased with her response. Similarly, I altered the questions to see if Student C could get there when prompted, which was not the case. Student A and Student D showed some understanding of the relation between being distracted and not knowing the vocabulary. These results do not differ much from the first lesson overall, but the students started to show some awareness of their behaviour and some

3.4.3. Third lesson from the First Cycle

In this final lesson (Attachment 10), students were expected to learn about school subjects. They had to learn nine school subjects: English, Maths, Portuguese, Physical Education (PE), Music, Arts and Crafts, Science, History and Information and Communications Technology (ICT). They also had to know three question words, “When...?, Where...? and What...?” and relate it to parts of school and school subjects. To introduce this vocabulary, I once again decided to use a Power Point, given its option of showing first some parts of the slide and then the rest. Following the PowerPoint and the repetition drills, students did a listening activity to practice the vocabulary, and then a writing exercise to finish the lesson, about their favourite school subjects.

3.4.3.1 Results from third lesson

As mentioned previously, in this section I will transcribe the results from the interview from the third and final lesson of the first cycle of this action research project. The transcriptions will be in tables, each table representing one student’s interview. Table 9 refers to Student A’s (SA) interview. Table 10 is the transcription of Student B’s (SB) interview. This is followed by Table 11 representing Student C’s (SC) Interview and finally, Table 12, showing Student D’s (SD) interview. I will proceed to analyse the results from each student, and then, globally.

Student A once again acknowledged that he was not paying attention, but he did not know why. He seemed more comfortable this time, but still could not remember any content from the previous lessons, or from the current one. In his drawing (see Appendix

11), he drew children playing football and seemed happy with it. He also said he would try to pay attention in the following lesson.

In the observation grid analysis, the student still maintained his previous behaviour, with constant distraction and lack of participation and interest.

T: What's this?

SA: It's a boy and a girl playing.

T: What are they playing?

SA: Football.

T: Oh okay. Do you play football in PE?

SA: Yes.

T: What else do you play?

SA: Volleyball.

T: Okay, do you remember any more school subjects?

SA: Science, History.

T: Why do you think you can't remember more?

SA: Not pay attention.

T: Why? Do you like the lesson?

SA: Yes, I like it.

T: Was the lesson hard?

SA: I don't know.

T: Okay, so why do you think you are not paying attention?

SA: I don't know.

T: It's okay. Think about it and we will talk next lesson okay?

SA: Okay.

T: Okay, good! What about the parts of school and the warm up activities? Do you know more?

SA: No.

Table 9 – Student A's Interview

Student B showed more progress in this lesson, by relating paying attention to knowing the vocabulary, but stated that it helped her to learn during the lesson, because she studied at home and learned there. Furthermore, she once again seemed very talkative during the interview, and eager to share. She drew (see Appendix 12) children playing volleyball and seemed excited about it. In regard to the observation grid, she was very interested in the lesson, very participative without prompting and engaged in the activities.

T: What are they doing?

SB: Playing volleyball.

T: In Maths?

SB: No, PE.

T: Oh okay, and what other school subjects do you have?

SB: Maths, Portuguese, English, Arts.....

T: Arts and Crafts, yes.

SB: Humm, music is my favourite.

(...)

T: Did you like the lesson today?

SB: Yes, I pay attention.

T: I can see that!

T: Okay, so do you think paying attention helps you learn?

SB: Yes. Aqui, eu depois estudo mais em casa.

T: Right, okay.

Table 10 – Student B’s Interview

Student C seemed to be more eager to please me than to think about the answers to my questions. He answered uncertainly and posed them as questions, which led me to believe he was saying what I hoped to hear. He said he needed to pay attention in the following lesson as well and struggled to remember the school subjects. He was able to remember one more part of school, which was the playground. His drawing (see Appendix 13) featured children playing football, and he seemed happy to show it and explain it to me.

According to the observation grid, he was still in the middle of the spectrum. He did not participate much without prompting, did not engage fully in the activities without prompting as well, and was frequently distracted.

T: What are they doing?

SC: Playing football

T: Where?

SC: In the playground, PE.

T: Oh okay! Do you know other school subjects?

SC: Music, English.

T: Why do you think you can’t remember more?

SC: I don’t know. Não estava a ouvir?

T: You weren’t?

SC: Sometimes.

T: Okay, so what do you think you can do next lesson?

SC: Pay attention more.

T: Okay, do you know anymore parts of school?

SC: Playground.

T: Okay, great.

Table 11 – Student C's Interview

Student D also seemed insecure in his answers, which was not normal, and led me to question them back to him to try and get more assertive answers. He drew (see Appendix 14) two boys playing football, like Student C, and seemed as excited as ever to show them to me. He stated that by paying attention he knew more vocabulary, which showed some development of his metacognitive skills.

The observation grid analysis showed student D with his regular behaviour, participating more when prompted, but appeared more focused during the lesson.

T: What are they doing?

SD: Playing football.

T: Where?

SD: PE

T: Oh okay, do you know more school subjects?

SD: Maths, Portuguese, Music, Science, English

T: Why do you think you can remember so many?

SD: Humm...

T: Okay, how were you today during class? Did you like it?

SD: Yes, I like it. I pay attention.

T: Why do you think you can remember so many?

SD: Porque prestei atenção? T: I don't know. Do you think it's because you paid attention? SD: Yes. T: And what are going to do in the next lesson? SD: Pay attention.

Table 12 – Student D's Interview

3.4.3.2 Interpretation of the results

Once again I changed the final questions for Student B and also for Student D, to try and develop their metacognitive skills. Student A and Student C struggled more than the other two. Student C seemed insecure and seemed to be trying to please me by saying the right things, and Student D did not show assertiveness in his questions at first as well.

In regard to the observation grid, overall, Student A, C and D still maintained the same numbers as in the previous lessons, with Student D appearing to be more focused. The exception is Student B, who excelled in Focus, Interest and Participation.

Regarding their metacognitive development, I think the differences were more visible in this lesson. Although there were not significant changes, there was some progress.

3.5 Discussion of the results

The possibility of conducting such a study had never crossed my mind, so the opportunity to do it opened my horizons to a different side to teachers, one that wants their students to learn as much as they can, and who is willing to investigate and research in order to make it happen for them.

That said, I would have liked to have more time to conduct it. The short time I had available did not allow me to draw positive conclusions about the influence of this study in their learning. Student B seemed to respond well to it and with only a little encouragement started paying attention. Whether this resulted in improved academic success, as stated by Young and Fry (2008), I do not know, since I did not continue to teach the class for much long after. The remaining three students, however, did not

improve. Although they had slight changes from one lesson to the next, and some even responded with answers that suggested a start in their metacognitive development, it is not possible to determine if this was due to them actually self-reflecting, or only because they knew what I hoped to hear, as Pinter (2016) cautioned might happen.

One aspect that worked well was the use of “Plan, Do, Review” (see section 2.4.1.1). I felt as if children were excited to know what they were learning ahead of time. Following Cameron (2001) and her advice, I used simple sentences and similar questions in every lesson to get the children comfortable. Unfortunately, their metacognitive development was not evident at this time, but it should have been expected, since, as Pinter (2006) explained, this development requires gradual and continuous training in order to show results. Even by conducting those routine self-assessment tasks before implementing this project, it was not enough time to show effective results. However, I believe if the study had continued the results would be much more evident, as we can see by Student’s B improvement.

I tried using different types of activities, as suggested by Bergin (1999), in order to increase the students’ interest, and also make those activities and the vocabulary meaningful, as Renninger and Hidi (2016) implied would work best. This focus on the children’s favourite part of school or favourite school subject did not seem to captivate most of the focus group, although the remaining class was interested. Furthermore, I also took Bergin (1999) into consideration, when planning the lesson, by mixing activities with different degrees of difficulty to stimulate interest, but these did not produce the expected results either.

In regard to pictures as representations of learning, I can support Cox (2005) in affirming that they are a good tool for representing learning, and students enjoy them. Additionally, I can also suggest that they do make for a memorable and active learning experience, although its use as a facilitator for memory recalling could not be determined precisely. Furthermore, the theory that Erickson and Simon (1980), cited in Dunlosky and Metcalfe (2009) suggested, of people recalling only what was in their short-term store, could be confirmed by the young learners not remembering the content from the previous lesson, given the fact that it was no longer there, and doing so when it was revised at the beginning of the lesson. The drawings and subsequent interview also served as a good

vehicle for the students to learn new words and remember it later. This could be seen in a few interview, where students began by expressing themselves in Portuguese at first, and in later lessons, being able to use the same words in English.

Concerning the research question this report planned to answer: “Can primary students of English as a foreign language become more focused by reflecting and representing what they learned in pictorial form?”, I would say a yes, if it could have been done in a bigger timeframe, given that this study did show some improvements with student B and her behaviour. Despite not having worked with the other three students, we do not know if the time constraint is not the culprit at this stage.

Conclusion

Although this study could not offer a definitive positive conclusion about the impact of pictorial representations as means of keeping distracted students focused, I would like to believe it is a good beginning for a deeper research and for further studies. As mentioned above, I would have liked to do a Second Cycle in this study, in order to continue to see if their ability to self-reflect improved over time. It would have been interesting as well to see if, when continuing this study, the young learners' academic paths became more successful, as many authors imply. It would also be interesting to see this study being done on a bigger scale, by observing and trying to develop these skills with a whole class, and simultaneously using other representations of learning instead of drawings, according to the children's preferences.

Additionally, even if pictorial representations are not the chosen tool for self-assessment, I believe that other forms of assessment should be encouraged and explored. This pressure put not only on the teacher, but also on the students, takes away some of the fun in learning, and most of time it comes down to children's ability to remember what they learned and reproducing it in the written tests, not producing actually show they learned. However, as a result of this teaching practice and subsequent report, I am more aware of the realities of teaching English in the Portuguese context, and I understand the pressure the teacher has to complete the syllabus and prepare their students for the test, making this type of assessment a wish, but not a viable possibility in most cases, at least for now. It is important for teachers to fight to try to change this, so that both teachers and students can teach and learn more efficiently.

Limitations and future lines of study

One of the most notorious limitations in this study was definitely the time frame. A few more lessons could have made a big difference in the results here presented. It would have been interesting to accompany the students for a while longer and observe their metacognitive skills developing and being put to use. As mentioned above I would have liked to do a Second Cycle, where I would have tried to stimulate their metacognitive strategies during lessons. I would like to help young learners to use Flavell's (1979) theory of metacognitive knowledge, by when assigning a task, discussing its aims with

the students, strategies to complete them and which of these strategies worked best for each one. I believe this would make their learning much more meaningful and lasting.

Another limitation encountered was the global pandemic situation. Besides compromising the normal functioning of lessons, it also caused my planned lessons to change dates, it led to students being confined at home and my teaching practice being postponed for weeks, my mentor having to observe lessons online due to being in isolation, among others.

When it comes to self-assessment in the primary classroom, it would be interesting to explore other tools and techniques and see how they worked with a specific class. There are multiple representations of learning, such as writing or painting, and it would be fascinating to observe how each worked with different students. Another idea is, with the same focus group, experiment with multiple representations of learning and delimit which one resulted in better metacognitive development. This is something that interests me greatly and that I plan on putting it into practice in the future. Afterall, as Langeveld (1965), cited in Bell (2005) said, educators “want to know and understand in order to be able to act and act “better” than before” (p.28). The need to teach better and make every single student understand and learn is what drives teachers to research and to investigate alternative methods, techniques, and approaches.

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Appendices

Appendix 1- Self assessment activity from Students’ Book “Stars 4”, p.20

4

 Think and colour.







I can...	identify and name parts of a school.			
	say and write the names of the school subjects.			
	ask and answer about what I am or I am not good at.			
	write about what I am or I am not good at.			

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Appendix 2- Self assessment activity.

1. Think and circle.

I know numbers from 1-10.	  
I know numbers from 10-20.	  
I know the Alphabet.	  
I know the days of the week.	  

Appendix 3- Zero Cycle Activity

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Read the boxes and draw.

My friend _____

She is wearing a
pink **hat**.

She is not wearing
boots.

She is wearing a
purple **skirt**.

She is not wearing
a **dress**.

She is wearing an
orange **T-shirt**.

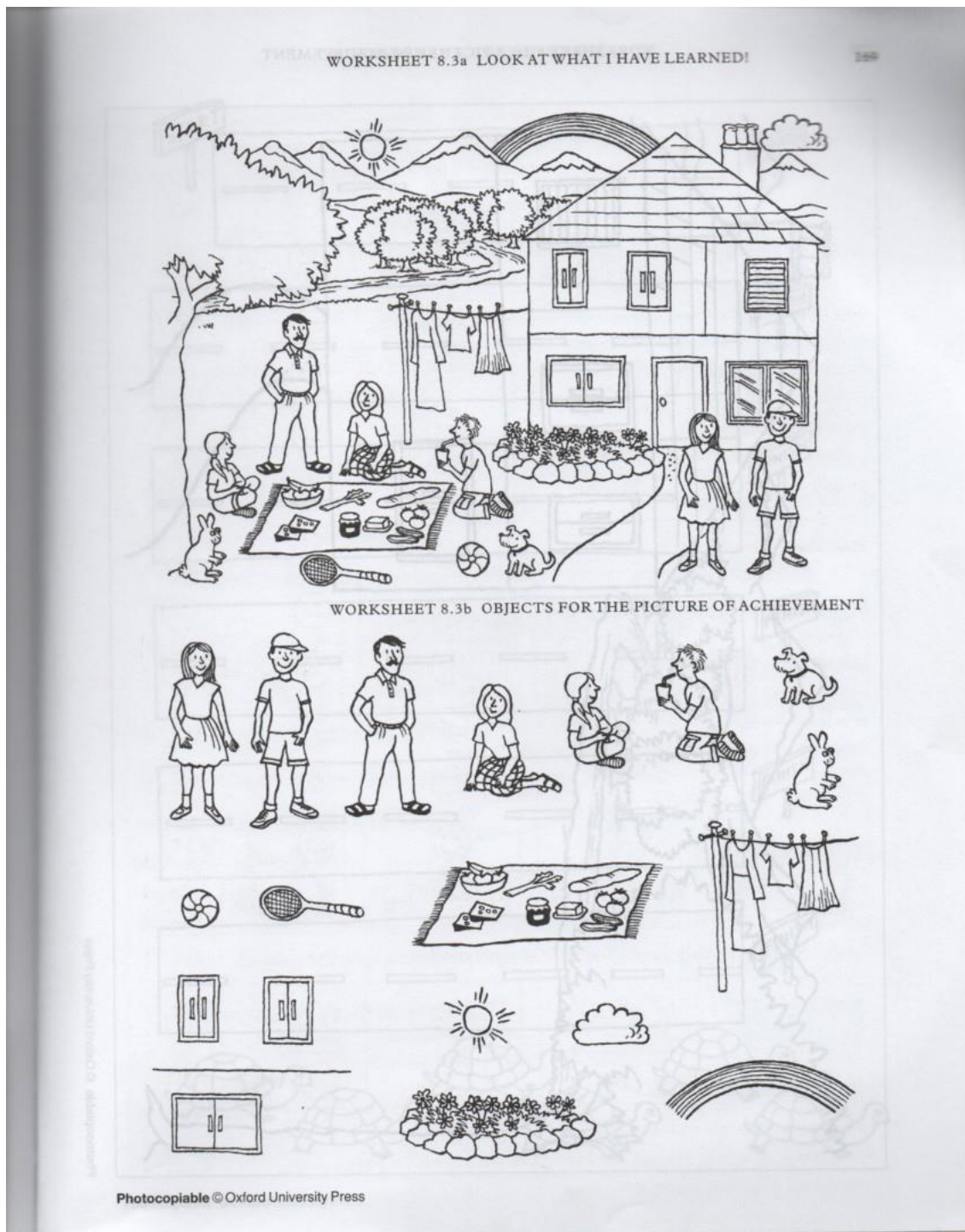
She is not wearing
trousers.

She is wearing a
blue **jacket**.

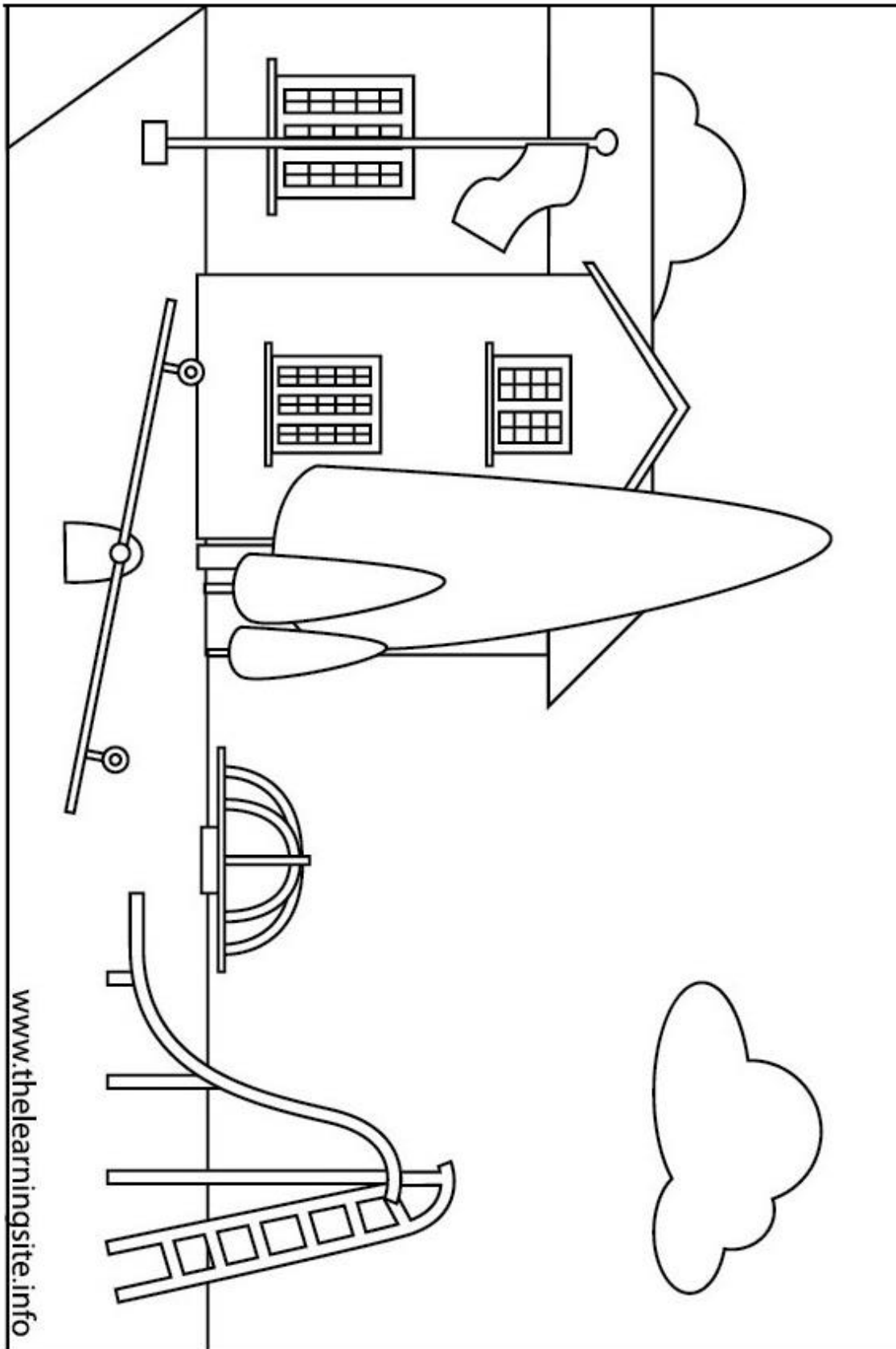
She is wearing
purple **sandals**.

She is wearing yellow
sunglasses.

Appendix 4- “A Picture of Achievement “: example of picture



Appendix 5 – Template of picture for students' drawings



Appendix 6- Observation Grid

Observation Grid (Lesson _____)

	Participation	Focus	Interest
Student A			
Student B			
Student C			
Student D			

Criteria:

Participation:

- 1-Student did not participate.
- 2- Student did not participate voluntarily (when asked to participate, did so).
- 3- Student participated voluntarily 1-2 times.
- 4- Student participated voluntarily frequently.

Focus:

- 1- Student was constantly distracted and disruptive.
- 2-Student was constantly distracted.
- 3- Student was mostly focused.
- 4- Student was fully focused for the whole lesson.

Interest:

- 1- Student did not engage in any activities.
- 2- Student engaged in some activities, when prompted.
- 3- Student engaged in some of the activities
- 4- Student was fully engaged in all of the activities

Appendix 7 – Interview Guidelines

Interview Guidelines

(Teacher goes up to each of the four students' desk)

Teacher: Oh, I like your drawing!

(T comments on drawing to make students comfortable)

(...)

Teacher: So, what is this?

Student: _____

Teacher: Do you know more vocabulary? (replaced by the content of each lesson)

Student: _____

Teacher: Why do you think you can't remember more?

Student: _____

Teacher: What about the vocabulary from the previous lesson? Do you remember any more? (Teacher takes note of the ones the student says)

Student: _____

Appendix 8- Lesson Plan: Warm up Activities

Stage Time Interaction	Procedure	Aims	Scaffolding Strategies
Routine 10 min	1. T starts the lesson. "Hello class. Let's start our lesson." T opens the lesson on the board and writes the date and weather and Ss copy it in their notebooks. T checks if Ss did their Homework.	1. Routines. Practice everyday language.	1. Whiteboard. Gestures. .
PLAN 5 min	1. T introduces the topic. "Okay, so do you remember what you learned last lesson? "If needed, T will do the gestures for "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, which they listened to. "Yes, the body parts! Can you tell me some body parts? Okay, good." "So, there are things that we can do with our body, and things we can't do. I can shake my hands for example." T demonstrates. "Can you shake your hands? Okay good! When we have PE, before we start running, we do a warm up. Do you know what that is? "T does gestures to simulate the warm up. "But we can't do everything. There are things that we can do, and things we can't do. We are going to learn some more activities we and can't do, with our body."	1. Introduce content.	1. Gestures.

DO Activity 1 15 min	1. T puts flashcards on the board with the vocabulary and drills the Ss. T introduces the structure: “Okay, so I can shake my hands, X can you shake your hands?” “Yes.” T explains the structure “Yes, I can.” T repeats this with other Ss. T introduces the negative and interrogative structures and asks Ss to copy it in their notebooks.	1. Introduce and drill content. Practice pronunciation. Practice writing.	1. Flashcards.
Activity 2 10 min	1. “Okay, so we can all do a lot of things. I think we should sing a song about it to celebrate!” T sings the song to the Ss and they do it a few times with the gestures. “Very good everyone!”	1. Drill vocabulary. Practice pronunciation.	1. Flashcards. Gestures.
REVIEW 15 min	1. T says “I can bend my knees, X, can you bend your knees?” S answers, and then demonstrates. S asks another Ss and so on. 2. T hands out self-assessment task and asks Ss to complete it. “Okay, so now, I want you to think about what you learned today. Every lesson, we are going to draw something new. Today, I want you to draw one child playing, a boy or a girl, if you think you learned 1-4 warm up activities. I want you to draw 2 children playing if you think you learned 5-7 activities, and I want you to draw 3 children playing if you think you know every warm up activity. Be honest, you will not be graded on this, I just want	1. Review vocabulary and structure. 2. Promote critical thinking.	1. Gestures. 2. Self-Assessment task.

	you to think. “T asks Ss to put the drawing away and finishes the lesson.		
Ending the lesson 5 min	1. T dismisses class and they clean up. “Goodbye class, let’s clean up!”	1. Maintaining routines. Practicing everyday language.	1. Gestures.

Appendix 9 - Lesson Plan: Parts of School

Stage Time Interaction	Procedure	Aims	Scaffolding Strategies
Routine 5 min	1. T greets Ss “Hello everyone!”, Hello Teacher”; “Let’s start our lesson!” T writes the number of the lesson, the date and the weather on the board and prompts Ss to answer. “Okay, today is lesson number...?” “And the weather is...?” T asks Ss to copy it to their notebooks.	1.To practice everyday language.	1. Whiteboard.
PLAN 10 min	1. T explains to Ss that they will be starting a new unit. T explores the unit with the children. “So, what can you see in this picture?”	1.Promote speaking. Introduce content.	1. Gestures. Computer.
DO Activity 1 25 min	1. T shows PPT with a picture of a school and elicits responses from Ss about parts of the school. T introduces all the vocabulary. “Okay, so what parts of school do you know?” T explains “the” to the Ss and does some drilling. T asks Ss to	1. To introduce vocabulary. To promote speaking and participation. To practice pronunciation. To practice writing.	1. PowerPoint. Computer.

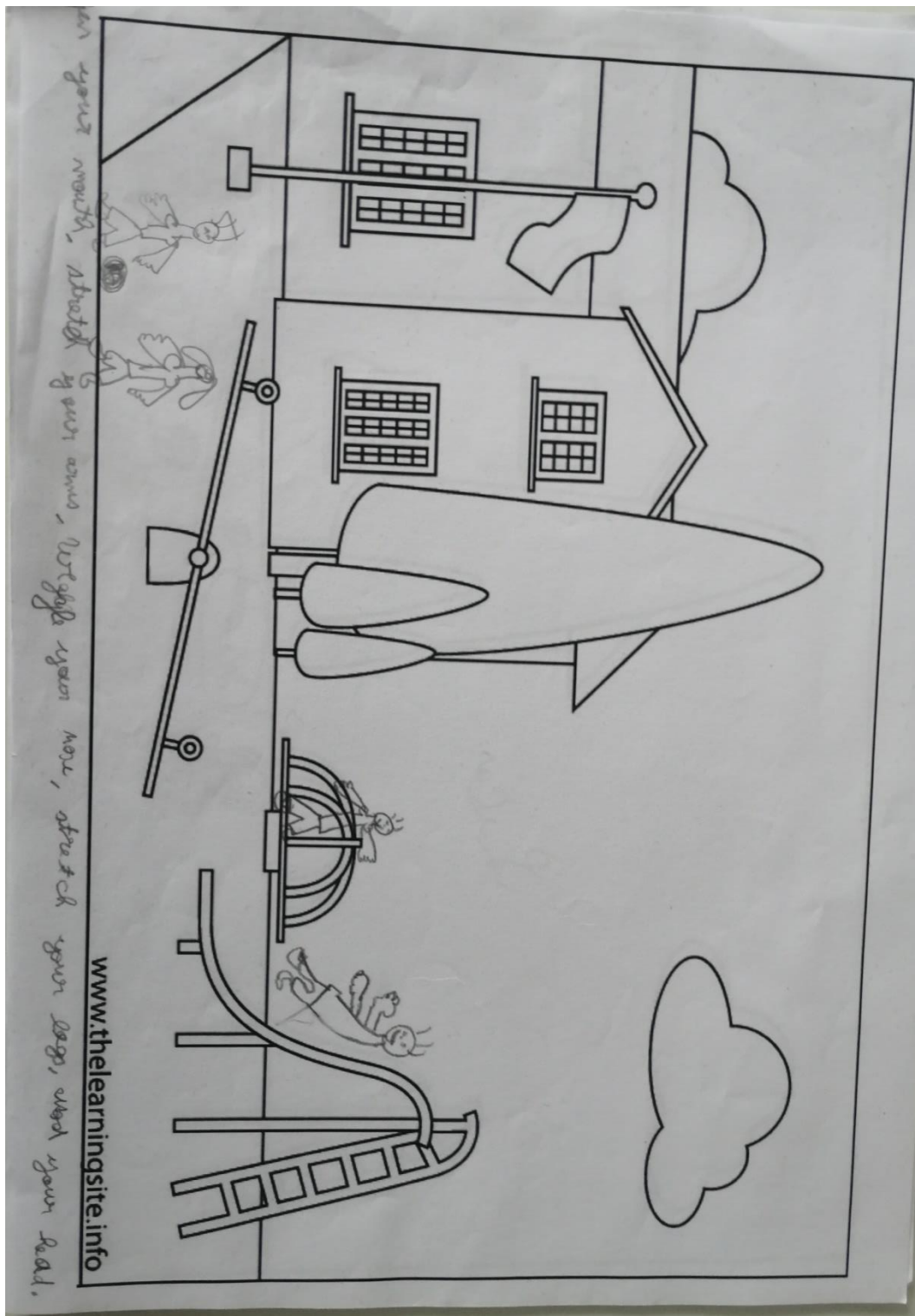
	write the vocabulary in their notebooks. 2. T shows a slide and describes her school. "So this is my school. It has got 6 classrooms...". T asks Ss to write about their school.		
REVIEW Activity 2 15 min	1. T tells Ss they will play a game and explains it." Okay, now we are going to play a game. We will have teams like last time, and you need to write the name of the part of the school I am describing in your whiteboard. The whole team needs to write it for you to get a point". T reads sentences for Ss to guess. (Example: Where do you eat?) T completes self-assessment task.	1. Practice vocabulary. Practice speaking. Practice writing.	1. Whiteboard.
Ending the lesson 5 min	1. "Okay everyone, class is almost over, it's time to say goodbye!" T and Ss tidy up.	1. Practice language everyday	1. Gestures. Speakers and computer

Appendix 10- Lesson Plan: School Subjects

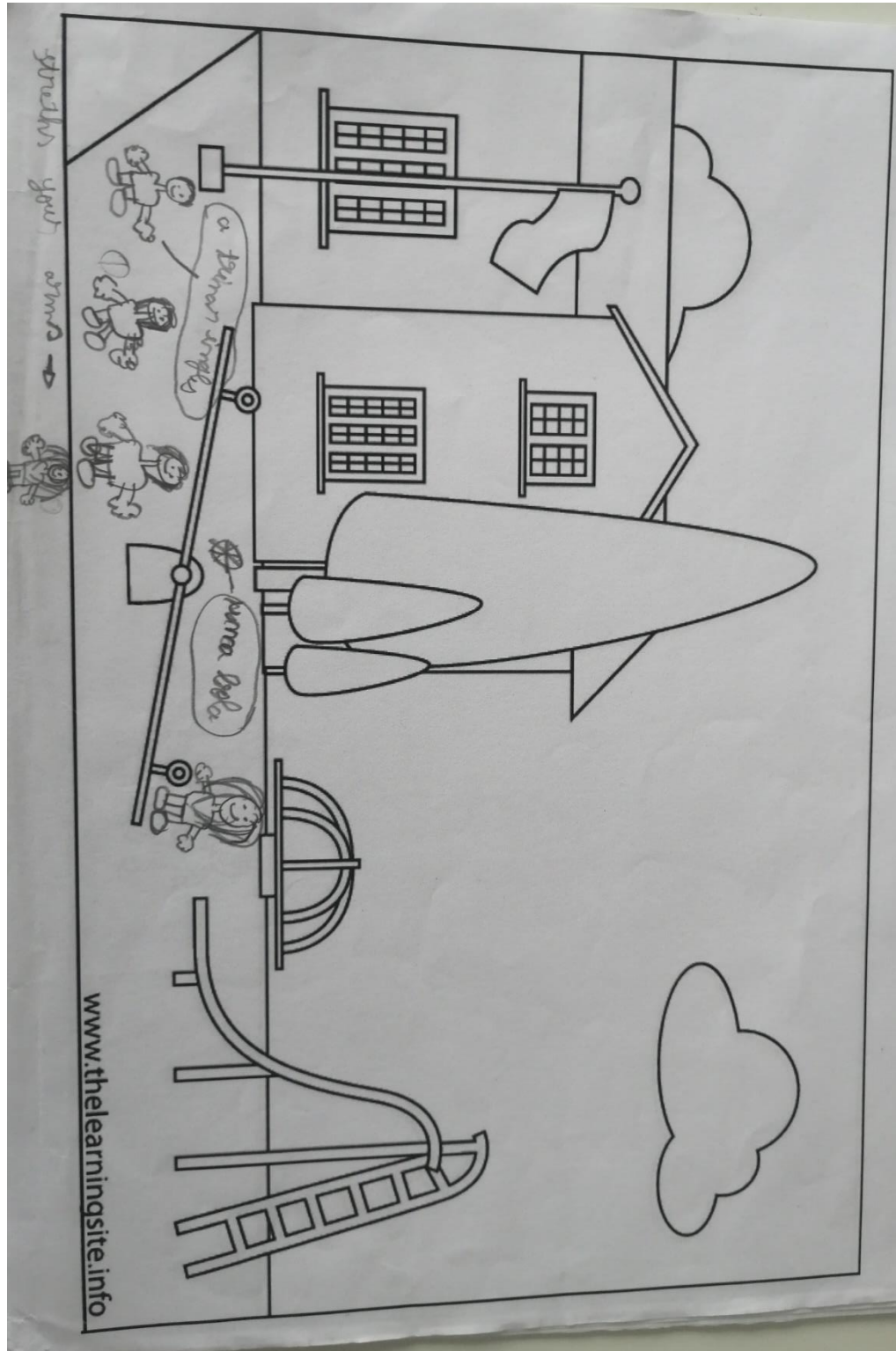
Stage Time Interaction	Procedure	Aims	Scaffolding Strategies
Routine 5 min	1. T greets Ss “Hello everyone!”; “ Hello Teacher”; “Let’s start our lesson!” T writes the number of the lesson, the date and the weather on the board and prompts Ss to answer. “Okay, today is lesson number...?” “And the weather is...?” T asks Ss to copy it to their notebooks.	1.To practice everyday language.	1. Whiteboard.
PLAN 5 min	1. T asks Ss if they remember what they talked about the previous lesson. T uses the word “classroom” to introduce the school subjects.	1. Promote speaking.	1. Gestures.
DO Activity 1 15 min	1. T shows a Ppt with the school subjects and drills the Ss. T shows a slide with a small text and questions to introduce the question words. “These are words that we use for questions. “When” is about time, examples, “Where” is about places, and “What” is about things.” T asks ss to copy the vocabulary in their notebooks. 2. T shows another slide with a timetable and uses it to remember days of the week and to consolidate the vocabulary.	1. To introduce vocabulary. To promote speaking and participation. To practice pronunciation.	1. PowerPoint.
Activity 2	1. T hands out little cards with pictures on them and asks Ss to write the name of	1. Practice vocabulary.	1. Flashcards. Game cards.

15 min	the school subject and cut them. T then hands out a timetable and reads a small text to them regarding a child's timetable. "Okay, so now you have to listen, and put the right school subject in the right place." T asks Ss to glue the cards on the timetable.	Practice writing. Practice fine motor skills.	
REVIEW 15 min	1. T asks Ss to complete exercise 2 and write three sentences about their school subjects. T gives example on the board. T listens to some examples. T completes self-assessment task.	1. Review vocabulary. Practice writing.	1. Worksheet.
Ending the lesson 5 min	1. "Okay everyone, the lesson is almost over, it's time to say goodbye!".	1. Practice everyday language	1. Gestures. Speakers and computer

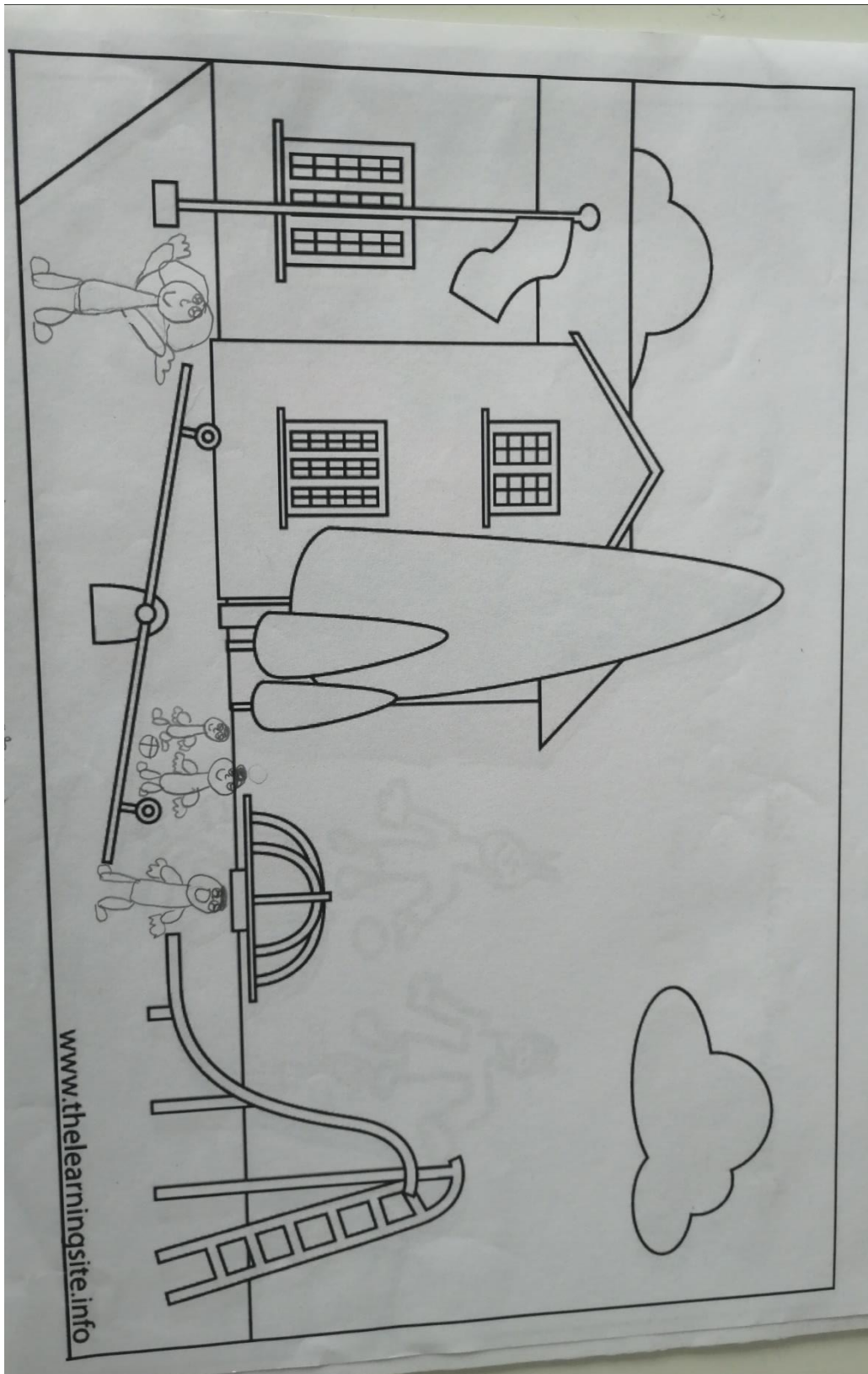
Appendix 11 - Student A's drawing



Appendix 12 - Student B's drawing



Appendix 13 - Student C's drawing



Appendix 14 – Student D' s drawing

