



APPInep E-Newsletter no. 11—July 2018—Spring/Summer

From the editor's desk...

In this Spring/Summer issue of the e-Newsletter we decided to join both Spring and Summer issues as Assessment takes a special interest. We do hope that both articles on assessment and the reflection article will help teachers to take advantage of these ideas on the next school year.

We also have classroom activities and ideas to implement in our classrooms and turn them more thrilling.

You are very welcomed to join us, share your wonderful ideas and good practices!

Have a wonderful holiday!

Carla Rocha

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School Cluster Assessment Criteria: The implications for primary English education in Portugal

Introduction

This is a short write up based on the session given at the APPInep event in Porto, 'Bridging and Assessing EFL in 1st and 2nd Cycles' in January 2018. The session disseminated the results of the first stage of a nationwide study 'Assessment in Primary English Education in Portugal: Perceptions and practices'.

Motivations for the study

The objectives of primary English education in Portugal privilege the development of orality and also include a focus on the intercultural domain. However, no national policy on assessment of primary English education exists at present. After the first two years of curriculum implementation, it has become apparent, through observations and informal conversations with practitioners, that teachers of English are struggling to align with the national standards and employ assessment approaches recognized as being appropriate for children in primary education, namely collecting evidence of progress using tools that support a formative, integrated assessment process, e.g. systematic observation, structured assessment tasks, and pupil self-assessment.

Methodology and data collection

In an attempt to understand the how and why

of this phenomenon, a two-stage research project was designed. The first stage involved the systematic analysis of school cluster assessment criteria documents, focusing on the skills/competencies assessed, their relative weight in the children's final mark, the type of assessment instruments used and the main assessment criteria. The second stage (still under way) involves teacher surveys, follow-up interviews and analysis of classroom-based assessment tools, the objective being to gain a greater understanding of how teachers actually put assessment into practice, which tools they use, and what they do with the results.

Results

In our session we presented the results of the analysis of the school cluster assessment criteria documents only. Here we summarise these results, focusing on scope, instruments and procedures and assessment criteria.



School Cluster Assessment Criteria:

The implications for primary English education in Portugal (cont.)

Scope

A total of 210 school cluster documents were analysed, 80% of which referred to the four skill areas of reading, writing, listening and spoken production, with spoken interaction and the intercultural domain appearing less frequently (63% and 32% respectively). A wide variety of percentage weightings were attributed to different skill areas and domains, and examples for four school clusters, A, B, C and D can be seen in Table 1. Although just over half the documents analysed showed an 80% to 20% weighting of knowledge and capabilities to attitudes, this varied from 60% to 40% in some school clusters and 95% to 5% in others.

Instruments and procedures

The most commonly mentioned assessment instruments or procedures were written tests (82%), followed by classroom tasks (65%) and observation grids (53%), with only 22% of documents mentioning self-assessment and a mere 4% mentioning peer assessment. Although a minority of clusters listed an appropriate range of assessment tools, some of which (for example project work) lend themselves to formative assessment, 31% of documents listed three or fewer assessment instruments, and 12% lacked any mention of assessment instruments or procedures whatsoever. In addition, there was also confusion in the documents between the terms 'instrument', 'procedure', 'skill' and 'activity'.



Skill / Domain	School Cluster A	School Cluster B	School Cluster C	School Cluster D
Reading	15%	5%	25%	-
Listening	15%	10%	25%	8%
Spoken production	20%	5%	12.5%	-
Spoken interaction	20%	5%	12.5%	-
Writing	5%	5%	25%	-
Intercultural	-	5%	-	-
Lexis and grammar			-	-
Other	Reading aloud (5%)	Tests (40%)	-	TIC (2%), Língua Portuguesa (2%) Compreensão e produção escrita (56%)

Table 1: Example of range of percentages attributed to skill areas and domains

School Cluster Assessment Criteria: The implications for primary English education in Portugal (cont.)

Assessment criteria

Two thirds of the assessment documents made no reference to assessment criteria, and consequently provided the teacher with very little support on how assessment should be conducted. Of those with criteria, approximately three quarters listed more than nine criteria taken directly from the 'Metas curriculares' (Cravo, Bravo & Duarte, 2015). In these cases, there was often little to no difference between grade 3 and grade 4 criteria. Although some schools listed alternative criteria, these weren't always helpful in assessment, for example 'Compreender o que lê, compreender o que ouve, saber escrever'. Indeed in some documents, criteria were more detailed with regard to attitudes and values than for knowledge and capabilities.

Conclusions

Analysis of the school cluster documentation indicates a disarray of assessment approaches and this stage of the study confirmed anecdotal evidence that assessment in primary English education in Portugal is misaligned with the recommendations of international research and the national standards. Assessment seems to be highly formal, paper-and-pencil based, teacher-centred, and summative in orientation. The fact that so far analysis has been based solely on school cluster documents prevents generalizations regarding assessment practices and how

they actually take place in Portuguese schools. However, if this panorama is shown to mirror actual practices, success and motivation for English language learning as children progress through schooling may be compromised, thus perpetuating the current academic failure of 2nd and 3rd cycle students in English (second only to mathematics) (DGEEC, 2017; Pereira & Batista, 2017).

References

Cravo, A., Bravo, C., & Duarte, E. (2015). *Metas curriculares de Inglês ensino básico: 1º, 2º e 3º ciclos*. Retrieved from https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Basico/Metas/ING/eb_metas_curriculares_ingles.pdf

DGEEC (2017). Resultados escolares por disciplina, 2.º ciclo - ensino público, 2014/2015. Lisboa: DGEEC. Retrieved from: <http://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/369/>

Pereira, P. & Batista, J. O. (2017). Resultados escolares por disciplina, 3.º ciclo do ensino público, 2014/2015. Lisboa: DGEEC. Retrieved from: <http://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/399/>

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English Language Area

The challenge

The English Language Area, or the English “corner” in the classroom is an important space for a second language to flourish and specially to practice the oral language in kindergarten. Together, the Educator and the children enjoy that area and exploit it according to their learning and acquisitions.

As it is known in Kindergarten, spaces are essentially characterized by their areas division. The English area should be just another area of free and child-oriented exploration. It is believed that it should be established with the group, at the beginning of the school year, that this space is sacred and that it should be a space where only English is spoken, whether the Educator is there or not. The Educator must make available several materials related to the English Language, even those related to other areas, such as writing, reading, mathematics or science. Those materials, such as games or books, are initially explored in circle time and are then chosen by the children and by the Educator to remain there. It is incredible how children easily and democratically choose the games and books that they know that they will later play with or read.

Some challenges such as the “Counting Words”, which is a game where children circle the similar words and then count them, the “Math Challenge”, where children play with the games related to math contents (like a Bingo with shapes, or a monkey eating

bananas - addition and subtraction), or the “Word List”, in which children find a word that starts with one specific letter and add that word to the list (illustrating it if they want to), are permanently available. It is imperative to stress that this area, like any other area of the classroom, is always subject to change. As children develop their projects, they must be integrated into the area through games or stories, therefore forcing the Educator and the children to define strategies and materials for it. It is important that children feel this space as their own and that they feel free to play in it, with or without the presence of an adult. Thus, the use of the English Language becomes more and more natural and pleasurable this way.

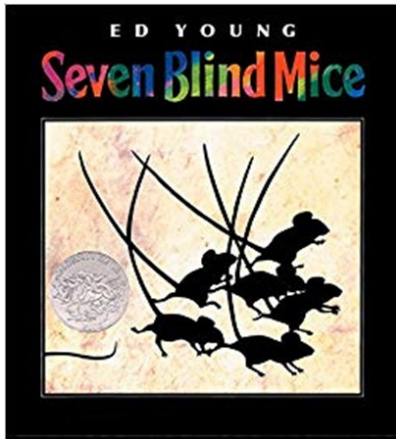
Children understand that this is a place where they must use all their language skills and to do so, they often call their friends to help and play. English is fun!



Maria Teolinda Braga | APPI member B 7201 | Park International School

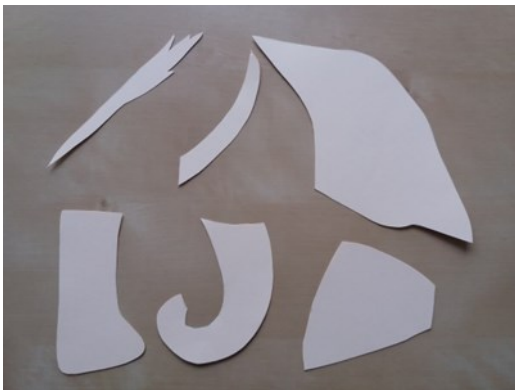
Storytelling corner

Seven Blind Mice, by Ed Young



This is a wonderful story that encourages us to go past first impressions, raises awareness of different perspectives/opinions on the same topic, at the same time as it promotes teamwork. It also develops 21st century skills, namely critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication.

Pre-reading tasks

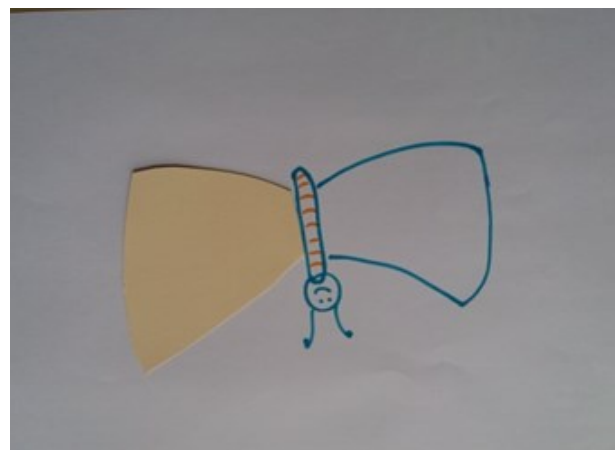


Materials:

- Cut outs of the different parts of the elephant as they appear in the book (leg, trunk, tusk, head, ear, and tail as shown below).
- White paper, glue and markers.

1. Show students one part of the elephant and ask them what it could be – whole group.
2. Assign one part per pair/group of students and ask them to guess what the part could be. Feedback to the whole group.
3. Tell students that the part you first showed them is part of a bigger thing. Ask students to guess what that could be. Glue it on a piece of paper and draw around it.

Examples:

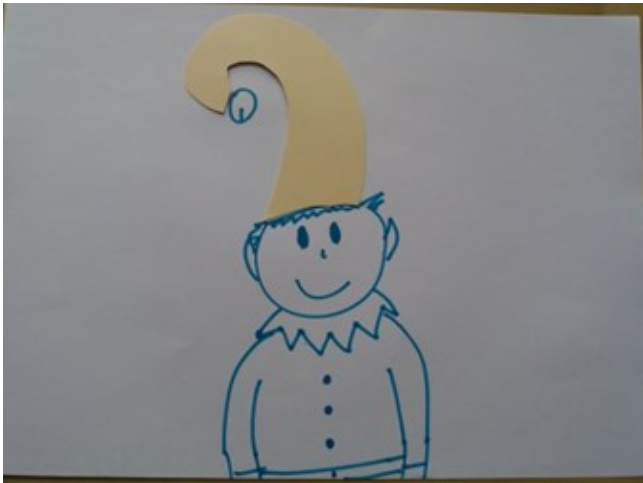




4. Students do the same in pairs/groups with the parts they were assigned. Feedback to the whole group.

While-reading tasks

1. As you read the story, students check their predictions. Also ask them to identify reasons for each mouse's perspective.
2. In the end discuss the moral of the story.



Post-reading tasks

There are a number of activities you can do with this story depending on what area you want to focus on. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Focusing on comparatives of equality, and using the examples in the book (as sturdy as a pillar...), students can write their own sentences about their initial guesses.
2. Students can research expressions using "as... as...", "as tough as old boots" for example, and present them to the class.
3. Students can draw animals from different perspectives, for example an ant looking up at a giraffe. (Art)
4. Students can research about the origins of the story and find similarities and differences – "The blind men and the elephant". (History)
5. Students can experiment identifying objects by using only one sense (touch, hearing, taste, sight or smell).



Dila Gaspar | APPI member B 6144 | APPInep

Where there's a will, there's a way

More and more we find demotivated learners in our classrooms. As teachers we tend to forget that the learners' well-being and learning itself must be maintained and that their learning process can be affected by the social, emotional and physiological changes that can negatively impact on it.

Learning is successful when learners feel that they belong and are positively connected to the school community. Their teachers know them, their strengths, interests and learning needs, and show they are interested in them. Successful learning also means that pupils feel that they are not only understood but also valued and they not only find a sense of purpose but also have an understanding and commitment to their learning pathway. Mostly, pupils enjoy learning because it is interesting, relevant and fun and they have opportunities to try new, exciting things and/or extend their particular skills/interests.

How can we achieve this? By bringing videos into the classroom!

When teaching a new topic, a video might spice up learners' interest. A common practice of mine, for example, is to implement this when teaching "Animals". A couple of years ago, I was shown a video named "*Polar bears hunt for seals in the Arctic*" by BBC Wildlife and I became a fan. Here's how I use it in the classroom.

Before watching activities

Before we watch the video I have my pupils engage in a variety of prediction activities to spark their interest and give them a reason to watch. Keep in mind I had already taught them some of the language in the story – this definitely helps students keep up with the video.

1) Firstly, provide the pupils with some words that they will hear. They predict what happens in the video based on these words.

Alternatively give the pupils the title of the video and a list of words. The pupils pick out the words they think appear in the video, explaining why.

Polar bear	Hole
Seal	Hunter
Penguin	Food
Ice	Sad
Predator	Prey
Hungry	North pole

The list of words can be as big or as small as you would like but here are some ideas:

Keep in mind that these prediction activities include some sort of categorization. We can build in movement here by putting words or sentences on cards and having pupils put the ones they think will appear on one wall and the ones they think will not on another wall, for example.

While watching activities

Depending on the age of your pupils and your objectives you can show the video at once or pause it to build up their curiosity.

2) What happened? After finishing watching have the pupils share what happened and how much they can remember.

3) What happens next? We can explore how the animals are feeling – to see if they can start making cause and effect links.

Post-watching activities

Post-watching activities can have a variety of different goals. We will want to check the pupils' comprehension of the story. This obviously can relate to being able to remember what happened in the story, but also to higher order skills like critical thinking (having students analyse and evaluate the story).

Where there's a will, there's a way (cont.)

We'll want to exploit some of the vocabulary and structures but we should also allow our pupils the chance to express what they thought about the story and to be creative – perhaps having them retell or change the ending.

4) Afterwards, we can check predictions. Have students go through the video once more to see if they were right and compare their predictions to what actually happened.

5) Ordering the different moments. Give pupils a list/strips of paper of things that happen in the story and have pupils put them in the right order. This can be a collaborative activity.

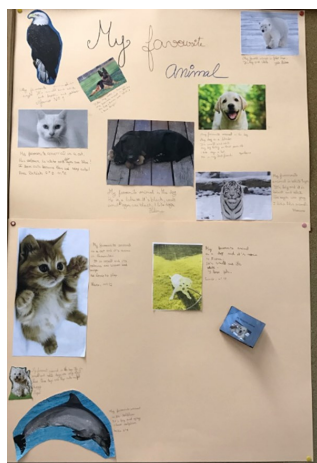
6) Find out who wants the polar bear to catch the seal and who wants the seal to escape. Ask students to give reasons for their answers.

7) Ask follow up questions to develop higher order skills. E.g. What would you do differently if you were the bear?

8) Have pupils retell the story. There are many ways to do this. We could get pupils to draw pictures of what happens in the story as an aid for them to retell it, perhaps even drawn around the first letter in the story's name. Or we could have pupils act out the story. As a way to add interest and take the pressure off shy learners. These are fantastic ways of spicing up pupils' language acquisition.

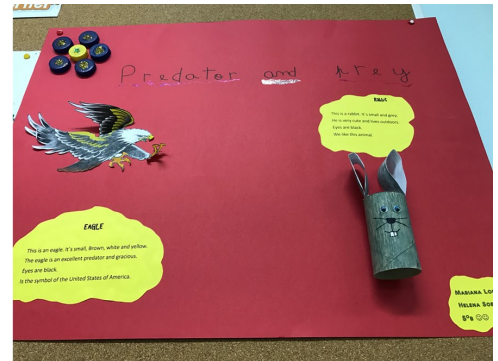
Follow up 1

You can ask your students to start by telling about their favourite animal.



Follow up 2

Pupils think of as many predator-prey relationships as they can and make a list. In order to give this a competitive edge, set a time limit and see which team can think of the most. Afterwards, have learners write about the animals in the predator-prey relationship and set a show and tell. You'll be amazed with the learners' engagement.

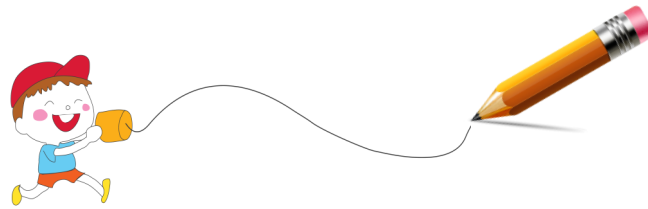


Follow up 3

Introduce a project on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list of threatened species. It divides threatened species into categories according to their risk of extinction. You can also develop collaborative work with the science teacher and raise learners' awareness.

To sum up, children love videos! Videos appeal to their vivid sense of imagination and appetite for fantasy. They help children understand and accept their own feelings and are a vehicle to teach values and about other cultures. From a language perspective, they are a rich source of vocabulary and structures in context and lend themselves to both serious and enjoyable learning for our pupils.

Filipa Daniela Duarte | APPI member B 6067



Revision dice

This is a craft that can be used by the end of the term/year as a revision activity.

Remember to have your example ready to show students the end product, and do one at the same time as the class, so that students understand and visualise what they are supposed to do. Give clear and simple instructions, one step at a time. And don't forget to encourage students to use classroom language throughout the activity, and praise them when they do so.

Material:

- Template of the dice
- Scissors
- Glue

Procedure:

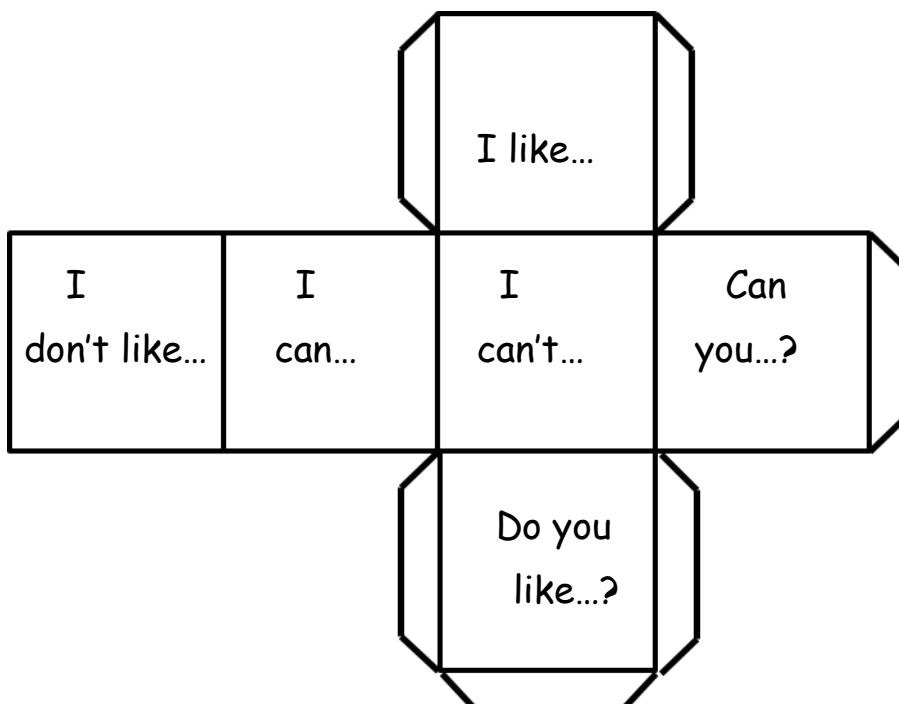
- Students cut up and assemble the dice.

Demonstrate with a student how to use it: roll the dice, say something about yourself or ask your partner a question (encourage the rest of the students to give examples of how they could complete the sentences/other questions they could ask). Swap roles and say as many things about yourself/ask as many questions as you can in one minute. Then tell the class something you have learnt about your partner.

- Students carry out the activity in pairs. After a minute they swap partners. After three rounds they report back to the class something they have learnt about their colleagues. (Maria can't ski/ João likes pineapples...).

I chose to revise *I like* and *I can* with this activity, but you can adapt it to revise other structures.

Dila Gaspar | APPI member B 6144 | APPInep



Reflection time...

At the end of the APPInep's Young Learners and Very Young Learners Conference "Bridging and Assessing EFL in the 1st and 2nd cycles" that took place in January (Porto), our colleague Sofia Moreira, shared her thoughts and reflections about the conference.

"Tell me how you assess and I'll tell you how you teach." (Carolyn Leslie)

As a newly arrived teacher of English in 1º CEB (recruitment group 120), I am very thankful for the fact that APPInep organized this event in Porto. The Conference addressed two of the most crucial issues in primary schools today: assessment and bridging the 1st and 2nd cycles in Portugal. The need to think about assessment practices in today's primary schools was emphasized by many speakers throughout the event, and it soon became clear that the traditional view of assessment, which places a great emphasis on testing and summative evaluation, may not be the most suitable for young learners. What's more, it may not be the most effective if we want to help our students to develop the 21st century skills. So, we should support and develop systematic classroom formative assessment that is integrated in the everyday classroom activities, emphasizing useful feedback on student performance and enhancing the learners' ability to reflect upon and lead their own learning processes. In this sense, the symposium "School cluster assessment criteria and implications for primary English education in Portugal" led by Carolyn Leslie, Maria Alfredo Moreira and Sandie Mourão was to me the highlight of the conference. Their research is of utmost importance and seems to underline the urgent need to carry on debating the issues of assessment in 1ºCEB and sharing good practices that can be implemented throughout the country in primary schools and - why not? - in the other cycles too.

Sofia Lopes Moreira | APPI member B 1118|

Teacher Training

APPIforma Primary accredited courses

APPIforma has a list of accredited courses aimed to develop the Young Learners and Very Young Learners teachers' skills:

APPIforma courses

[Free Web Resources in the EFL classroom](#)

(25h - 1 u.c |online accredited course)

Trainer - Susana Oliveira

Teachers of English (recruitment groups: 120, 220 and 330)

Date: 25 Sept. - 26 Nov.

2018 Venue: APPI Moodle

Platform

[APPI Tavira Seminar](#)

Teachers of English (recruitment groups: 120, 220 and 330)

Date: 28 – 29 September 2018

Venue: Escola Básica D. Manuel I - Tavira

For more information about these courses please access APPI's website: <http://www.appi.pt/appiforma/cursos-appiforma/>



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