CETAPS / TEALS
11th Advanced Research Seminar

Challenges and Breakthroughs in Language Teaching and Learning Studies

Date: 9 July 2025
Time: 09.15 to 16.15

Abstracts

Opening Keynote: 09.30 – 10.30

A blended MOOC to transform teachers' practices: The breakthroughs and challenges afforded by a virtual learning environment
Sandie Mourão & Carolyn Leslie (FCSH/NOVA & CETAPS)
Rúben Constantino Correia (CETAPS, Universidade do Algarve)

Age-appropriate assessment in early language learning (ELL) should primarily contemplate formative approaches with a focus on oral skill development. Nevertheless, assessment practices remain troublesome, often involving testing and literacy skills (Rixon & Prošić-Santovac, 2019). Assessment thus remains at odds with playful, oral-based approaches and is often influenced by general education which overlooks the specificities of ELL (Nikolov & Timpe-Laughlin 2020). In Portugal this incongruence between teaching and learning goals in ELL teachers' assessment practices was identified in a nationwide study (Moreira, et al. 2021) and a professional development intervention was planned in response. The aim is to transform primary English teachers' classroom-based assessment practices through participation in a blended MOOC (bMOOC) and understand the why and how of that change.

The intervention follows a design-based research approach which is relevant for authentic, real-world interventions in educational contexts (McKenney & Reeves, 2012) and this presentation reports on some of the breakthroughs and challenges of the first edition of the bMOOC which ended in January 2025. The research question which we attempt to answer here is 'How and why do the teachers' classroom-based assessment practices change through participation in the MOOC?'. Following a mixed-methods approach, data comes from teachers' pre-, during and post-intervention surveys, children's pre- and post- MOOC drawings, as well as teachers' e-portfolios. Despite results suggesting an overwhelming transformation of teachers' classroom-based practices, we will present selected data which outlines aspects of the bMOOC's learning environment that supported learning breakthroughs and others which were seen as challenging for teacher participants. Our presentation will conclude with a brief overview of the revisions made to the second edition of the MOOC to lessen the challenges and further foster the transformation of teachers' practices.

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Bionotes:
Sandie Mourão is a research fellow at CETAPS, FCSH, with nearly 40 years of experience as a teacher, teacher educator, researcher and materials developer in the field of ELT. She is passionate about all things related to the classroom, with a particular interest in early language learning, picturebooks in language education, assessment issues, intercultural education and classroom-based research. She coordinates the TAM-bMOOC project (2023 – 2027), https://www.tambmooc.com/

Carolyn Leslie has many years' experience of teaching English as a foreign language, and is an assistant professor at Nova University, where she teaches on various master's degree courses and coordinates the MA in teaching English in the first cycle of basic education. She is interested in peer oral interaction, engagement, assessment and materials development in the primary English classroom.

Rúben Constantino Correia is an Assistant Professor at University of the Algarve. He is a qualified English teacher for the 2nd Cycle of Portuguese Education and has experience as a teacher, teacher trainer, author, and researcher. He is a CETAPS integrated researcher, and his main research interest is on speaking proficiency and intelligibility. He holds a PhD in Foreign Language Teaching Methodology, which investigated oral proficiency in the EFL classroom.

<div align="center">Session 1: 11.00 – 11.30</div>

Bilingual picturebooks in Aotearoa New Zealand: Māori whānau responses to Māori-English bilingual picturebooks
Nicola Daly (University of Waikato, New Zealand)

Dual language picturebooks, featuring two languages presented in a variety of ways, are of considerable interest for the linguistic and cultural content that they bring into their readers' literacy experiences. Such books have been analysed in many ways in relation to picturebook design (Vanderschantz & Daly, 2023), and linguistic landscapes (Daly,

2019). However, there are few studies of how readers (children and/or adults) engage with bilingual texts where the story is told in two languages on each page (Daly, 2008;Brouwer & Daly, 2022;2023). In this research we explored the research question 'How do Māori-English bilingual families respond to Māori-English bilingual picturebooks?'. Sets of 8 bilingual picturebooks were left with 5 families with children under the age of 8 years over a 4 week period to incorporate into their everyday reading time. A parent/caregiver from each whānau was interviewed at the start and end of the 4 weeks, and they responded to a half-way email prompt to report on how their whānau were responding to the picturebooks. Findings indicate that whānau enjoyed sharing the bilingual picturebooks. They noted that their tamariki (children) enjoyed seeing familiar experiences reflected in the stories and the illustrations. They had preferences for the ways in which the languages were presented, and the language they read in appeared to depend upon several factors.

References:

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Vanderschantz, N., & Daly, N. (2023). The implications of typographic design in bilingual picturebooks for hierarchies. *Journal of Visual Literacy*, 42(1), 48-66.

Bionote:
Nicola Daly is a sociolinguist and Associate Professor in the Division of Education, University of Waikato, New Zealand where she teaches children's literature, and leads the Postgraduate Certificate in Children's and Young Adult Literature. She also co-directs the Waikato Picturebook Research Unit. Her research focus is multilingual picturebooks, and their role in perpetuating and challenging language attitudes. She was a Fulbright New Zealand Scholar at the University of Arizona, USA in 2019/2020

Session 2: 11.30 – 12.00

Improving morphosyntax in CLIL through noticing and form-focused tasks
María Nieva-Marroquín (University of the Basque Country)

Although Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is often linked to gains in overall language proficiency, recent studies have highlighted a lack of contextualised grammar instruction in CLIL classrooms (Martínez-Adrián & Nieva-Marroquín, 2023). Therefore, learners—especially L1 Spanish speakers—seem to struggle with

morphosyntactic features such as third person singular –s, subject omission and subject-verb inversion. These difficulties are not always resolved through exposure alone (Martínez-Adrián & Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015).

Recent research has called for the integration of form-focused instruction (FFI) into CLIL as a way to address this gap since it has been shown to support grammatical development across age groups (Norris & Ortega, 2000), and seems to be particularly effective for young learners (Tellier & Roehr-Brackin, 2017). However, tasks such as the dictogloss do not seemingly draw the learners' attention to the target forms (Calzada & García Mayo, 2021). Thus, this study explores whether other FFI tasks—text-editing and text-reconstruction—combined with a noticing, awareness and practice phase, can help improve accuracy in the three features mentioned. It also examines how learners

engage with form through Language-Related Episodes (LREs), the role of L1 in these episodes and the influence of three individual variables (language analytic ability, willingness to communicate and interaction mindset).

Sixty-two CLIL learners were divided into control and experimental groups. All completed a background questionnaire and the tests on individual variables. Learners were paired by proficiency using the Cambridge Movers test to carry out the tasks, and only the experimental groups received the noticing and awareness phase. A grammaticality judgement task (GJT) was used as a pre-, post-, and delayed post-test. GJT results show that those receiving the noticing phase seem to improve more overall, especially in subject-verb inversion and expletive pronouns, suggesting that this type of instruction can help with morphosyntactic development in CLIL contexts.

Bionote:
María Nieva-Marroquín is a PhD student at the University of the Basque Country (Spain), where she obtained a BA in English Studies and an MA in Language Acquisition in Multilingual Settings (LAMS). She also holds an MA in Teacher Training in Secondary Education from the International University of Valencia (VIU). She is supervised by Dr. María Martínez-Adrián and Dr. María Basterrechea. Her research interests include Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), young learners and cross-linguistic influence.

Session 3: 13.30 – 14.00

Critical Thinking Disposition and AI Use in Language Learning
Zhilin Zhao (CETAPS, FCSH/NOVA)

The rapid integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) into foreign language education is reshaping how learners engage with writing, reading, and communication. While previous studies have highlighted the advantages of GenAI—such as grammar support, enhanced writing quality, and personalized feedback (Yin et al., 2023)—less attention has been paid to how individual learner characteristics influence its use. Based

on this context, this study focuses on one important trait: critical thinking disposition (CTD), and explores how it shapes students' use of GenAI.

Grounded in the definition of critical thinking disposition (Facione et al., 1994) and informed by the 4T Perception Model (Jin et al., 2025), this study adopts a mixed-methods design. A total of 122 Chinese undergraduate students majoring in Portuguese participated in the research. They completed validated questionnaires assessing their critical thinking disposition and took part in writing tasks supported by GenAI tools. Learners' interaction behaviors—particularly in prompt formulation, text revision, and critical engagement with AI-generated content—were systematically observed and analyzed. Furthermore, participants reflected on their experiences using a simplified version of the 4T Model, encompassing four key dimensions: Technical support, Text development, Transformative potential, and Threat.

Correlation analyses revealed that several dimensions of critical thinking disposition were significantly and positively associated with more critical and autonomous patterns of GenAI use. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of learner–AI interaction and highlight the need for instructional strategies that align with learners' cognitive dispositions, fostering more responsible and empowering uses of AI in language education.

References:

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Jin, F., Sun, L., Pan, Y., & Lin, C.-H. (2025). High heels, compass, spider-man, or drug? Metaphor analysis of generative artificial intelligence in academic writing. *Computers & Education*, 228, 105248. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2025.105248

Yin, X., Saad, M. R. B. M., & Halim, H. B. A. (2023). A systematic review of critical thinking instructional pedagogies in EFL writing: What do we know from a decade of research. *Thinking Skills and Creativity,* 49, Article 101363. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2023.101363

Biodata:
Zhilin Zhao (Olívia) is a PhD student in Education at NOVA FCSH since 2022 (supervised by Professor Carlos Ceia and Dr. Catarina Castro). Zhilin holds a master's degree in Portuguese Language and Literature Studies from Shanghai International Studies University (SISU), China. Her professional experience as a foreign language teacher covers a range of education levels and contexts, including primary, higher, and adult education. Her research interests focus on Portuguese language education, intercultural studies and AI-assisted foreign language learning.

Session 4: 14.00 – 14.30

From Design to Impact Analysis: Developing a Personalised and Flexible App for

Teaching Technical English in Vocational Courses

Rebeca Garcia Tostes Palma (FCSH/NOVA)

This PhD project aims to enhance the learning experience of Technical English in Portuguese vocational education by developing a personalised and flexible digital application. In response to the growing demands of global communication and the historical undervaluation of vocational education, the study addresses significant gaps in current pedagogical resources, notably the lack of balanced and contextualised materials for specific professional areas.

The methodology is based on Dudley-Evans and St. John's (1998) needs analysis framework, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess students' linguistic needs and the pedagogical impact of the application. Data collection will include surveys, diagnostic tests, application usage data, and interviews. Data analysis will be conducted using SPSS and NVivo.

The application will offer adaptive content for four key vocational sectors (tourism, hospitality, metallurgy, and automation), focusing on technical vocabulary, listening comprehension, and oral production. AI tools will be integrated to personalise learning pathways, alongside interactive features such as gamification, scenario-based learning, and real-life simulations.

Expected outcomes include a significant improvement in learners' motivation and proficiency in Technical English, particularly among students participating in mobility programmes like Erasmus+. The project contributes to the scientific field of language teaching, offering scalable strategies for integrating educational technologies into vocational contexts.

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Bionote:

Rebeca Garcia Tostes Palma é doutoranda em Didática das Línguas na Universidade Aberta / NOVA FCSH, com especialização em Inglês para Fins Específicos no ensino profissional. A sua investigação, orientada pelo Professor Doutor António Chenoll (Universidade Aberta), foca-se no desenvolvimento de soluções digitais para o ensino de inglês técnico através de ferramentas móveis e com base em inteligência artificial. É docente no ensino secundário em Portugal.

Closing Keynote: 15.00-16.00

Real-World Connections: Fostering Language Use and Cultural Awareness through Mystery Skype
Rita Zurrapa (FCSH/NOVA & CETAPS)

In an increasingly interconnected world, creating meaningful and motivating opportunities for foreign language learners is both a challenge and a necessity. This two-cycle action research project investigated the use of the educational game Mystery Skype as a pedagogical tool to enhance communicative and intercultural competence among 7th- and 9th-grade students in a Portuguese TEIP (Priority Educational Intervention Territory) school cluster.

Although virtual exchange programs have been extensively studied in higher education, research involving younger learners remains limited. Little is known about the effects of such approaches in basic education, particularly how learners perceive and respond to real-world communicative challenges in virtual interactions. This study addresses that gap by examining how students engage with these real-world communicative challenges. Data were collected through questionnaires, focus groups, and teacher surveys, and analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Findings revealed that the authentic, real-time nature of the activity significantly increased students' willingness to communicate in English, reduced speaking anxiety, and enhanced cultural sensitivity. Teachers observed higher levels of engagement and reported noticeable shifts in learners' attitudes toward language learning and other cultures. Intercultural exchanges extended beyond the classroom via social media, further reinforcing the authenticity of the experience.

This study demonstrates how a simple, technology-supported intervention can foster deeper learner engagement and meaningful attitudinal change, even in challenging educational settings. It also highlights the need for ongoing teacher training and institutional support to effectively integrate virtual exchanges into diverse curricula.

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Bionote:

Rita Zurrapa is a Lower Secondary English teacher in Sintra with a degree in Modern Languages and Literature (English and German) and a Master's in American Studies. She holds a PhD in Language Teaching – Multilingualism and Education for Global Citizenship from Nova University of Lisbon. Rita was the national coordinator of the eTwinning project for eight years. She is an ICT teacher trainer, Erasmus evaluator, and has extensive experience in educational technologies and active teaching methodologies.