



TEACHING ENGLISH IN PUBLIC REGULAR SCHOOL: avoiding the traditional approach

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Abstract: Based on the current context of the globalized world, it is crucial to analyze the importance of English as a foreign language in different cultural, professional or social contexts. Understanding these different contexts, discussing the use of a common language for all purposes has an extreme importance. Being aware of the growing popularity of the language that has been developed, it is possible to observe that while the number of people who want to learn the language increases, the need for people willing to teach the language in different contexts of teaching is also rising. The aim of the current research is to check if we can avoid the Grammar Translation Method in public schools to have a more meaningful and communicative context to teach English so the students can really make use of the target language. In order to achieve this aim, some practical research was done, in which it was possible to apply methods and approaches analyzed in the research, thus enabling a comparison of teaching aids. From the results, the main objective was to obtain a resolution of which methods were effective or not, during the learning process.

Keywords: English as a second language. Methods and approaches. Public school context.

Resumo: Com base no contexto atual do mundo globalizado, é crucial analisar a importância do inglês como língua estrangeira em diferentes contextos culturais, profissionais ou sociais. Compreender esses diferentes contextos, discutir o uso de uma linguagem comum para todos os fins tem uma importância extrema. Estando ciente da crescente popularidade do idioma que está sendo desenvolvido, é possível observar que, embora o número de pessoas que desejam aprender a linguagem aumenta, a necessidade de pessoas dispostas a ensinar o idioma em diferentes contextos de ensino também está aumentando. O objetivo da pesquisa atual é verificar se podemos evitar o Método da gramática e tradução nas escolas públicas para ter um contexto mais significativo e comunicativo para ensinar inglês para que os alunos realmente possam usar a língua alvo. Para atingir esse objetivo, foi realizada uma pesquisa prática, na qual foi possível aplicar métodos e abordagens analisados na pesquisa, permitindo assim uma comparação de auxiliares didáticos. A partir dos resultados, o objetivo principal era obter uma resolução de quais métodos eram efetivos ou não, durante o processo de aprendizagem.

Palavras chave: Inglês como segunda língua. Métodos e abordagens. Contexto escolar público.

1 Introduction

English has been increasingly used by all the people around the world, as it is the most widely spoken and understood language in many contexts, therefore it is considered a Lingua Franca, which is the language that all people could have in common.

From the moment that there are speakers of the language, it is possible to observe an increasing number of people who also wish to learn such language. There are people who are willing to learn to teach English. Besides having people who really want to learn English as a foreign language it is also part of the school curriculum and it is in regular public schools where teachers and students face difficulties while teaching and learning English.

Hence, the aim of this paper is to check if we can avoid the Grammar Translation Method in public schools to have a more meaningful and communicative context to teach English so the students can really make use of the target language. Thus, we conducted some bibliographical research based on authors such as Harmer (2005), Ur (1996), Brown (2002) Venâncio-Faleiros (2004), Gardner (1993) and Wright, Betteridge and Bucky (1991), who gave us support to analyze the activities we applied in the classroom in a public-school.

In our second chapter, we highlight how the use of English is important nowadays in the globalized world. We considered the use of the foreign language in different school contexts analyzing how its use is developed and how methods, approaches and techniques can guide teachers during the time they are teaching.

The third chapter deals with the classroom structure, the students learning level and how it can interfere in the teaching-learning process. Finally, in the fourth chapter we discussed about communicative activity, using texts as models and it was possible to develop a practical research in a public school, making possible to have concrete results of everything that was researched before.

2 Teaching English nowadays

The expansion of English in the world has positioned it as a language with different characteristics of the other foreign languages. Throughout history, the

English language has been portrayed as a mediator of inter-cultural interests. It is the basis for communication among countries and a way of exchanging knowledge. This makes the English language extremely important for people, both culturally and economically, being treated as a Lingua Franca.

In its original meaning Lingua Franca was simply an intermediary language used by speakers of Arabic with travelers from Western Europe. The definition of this term was later extended to describe a language of commerce, it was an easy way to establish communication between people. Besides it, due to today's global English, its major characteristics are its functional flexibility and its spread across many different domains.

Therefore, in recent years, the term 'English as a lingua franca' (ELF) has emerged as a way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages. Since roughly only one out of every four users of English in the world is a native speaker of the language, most ELF interactions take place among non-native speakers of English (CRYSTAL, 2003). Firth (1996) corroborates this idea when he says that it is a contact language between people who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication.

In order to communicate to the whole world, people are trying to find a way to connect their own interests to rest of the people, and by using English, it was possible to create this bridge between every single person and the rest of the world. Consequently, from the moment that there are people searching and in need of a mediator between languages, it is possible that they find people able to perform this type of service, by teaching, helping and molding those who want to develop the use of English. Being English a Lingua Franca is one of the reasons why people all over the world learn it, and if people want to learn the teachers have to facilitate this learning.

Teachers may face many types of adversities while they are willing to teach a new language in an educational context. The educational context may vary. In Brazil there are many private English schools that teach languages but we cannot

forget that the subject is also part of our national school curriculum in private, regular and public schools. Thus, it is our job, as teachers, to make students benefit from it.

2.1 Interaction in the English language classroom as foreign language

One of the biggest challenges in public schools is to make students feel motivated to learn a second language. Consequently, it is necessary for students to learn how to interact in this new language, to exchange experiences that enable new understanding and growth. That is, the students need suitable conditions where everyone's participation happens. Interaction is one of the factors that will enable learning in the classroom.

According to Barbirato (2005), interaction is a complex term that transcends the exchange of messages in a process of receiving messages and interpreting them within a context. The author interprets interaction as a process of negotiation of meanings, to achieve communicative purposes. In this process of seeking to interact, the learner can develop his linguistic abilities in a deeper and more lasting way once he is engaged in a process of construction of meanings.

Interaction is considered an integral part of the classroom. Learning a foreign language has to be through a space within an interactional context. For this reason, the involvement of all the participants, students and teachers, is to achieve the goal which is negotiation of meaning. The teacher should always seek to reflect and carry out various learning tasks in order to increase the opportunities and interests of the students to interact with each other in the classroom.

Thus, Signorini (1998) also says that the foreign language, is at the same time, close and radically heterogeneous in relation to the first language. The encounter with the foreign language brings to consciousness something of the very specific bond that we keep with our first language. This confrontation between first and second language is never insignificant for the subject and for the diversity of learning (or non-learning) strategies of a second language, which can be observed when teaching a language and it is undoubtedly explained in great parts in the modalities of this confrontation.

As we can see, teaching English as a foreign language is a challenge and it is difficult to handle in the classroom environment. To reach the social interaction we, teachers, have to overcome some obstacles.

As stated by Signorini (1998) the foreign language is usually learned later and it has as reference the learner first language. We can see that students somehow feel dependent on their first language, even if they still show some learning difficulties using their mother tongue.

Signorini (1998) says that to start learning a second language learners should place themselves in a situation of absolute non-knowing, to return to the childhood stage, of the baby who does not speak yet. Reexperience the impotence of being understood. Consequently, some students feel demotivated to start studying a second language. Moreover, they do not feel confident doing their tasks in classes: they demonstrate lack of autonomy during some activities.

Knowing the issues above, the teacher should take the opportunity to work on these aspects related to demotivation, difficulties and beliefs regarding the learning of English as a foreign language in the classroom. While developing students' autonomy the teacher develops positive feelings towards the teaching-learning process.

2.2 Autonomy

When teachers have the opportunity to get into a classroom to teach, besides being responsible for preparing activities that suits students' needs, they also have to guide them to a more responsible way of learning.

Autonomy is related to self-regulation, motivation, a deep process of responsibility and free choice. In other words, teaching can not be forced, it should encourage and guide learning. This impulse to learn should come from the student and it is about something they are interested in learning and not about the material that is going to be used.

The autonomy is only possible to be practiced as the learner must have a will to act autonomously, although the teacher and the school setting should provide the real conditions and opportunities to practice it.

This aspect is closely linked to factors such as motivation and confidence so that the learners are really certain that they will be able to accomplish some proposed tasks. Therefore, the methods and approaches used in the language classroom play an important role in the teaching-learning process. This will be better discussed on the next topic

2.3 Methods and approaches that influences the current English teaching

In more recent times, globalization and the rise of the internet have prompted a reassessment of language teaching policies and practices. It is possible to observe that English is present in many contexts.

The need for changes in the methods and approaches of language teaching is generally a response to the increased demand of speakers of second and foreign languages.

According to Richards and Rogers (1986), by the beginning of the twentieth century, language teaching was emerging as an active area of educational debate and innovation. Although teaching has a very long story, the foundations of contemporary approaches to language teaching were developed during the early part of the twentieth century, applying linguists and others to develop principles and procedures for the design of teaching methods and materials.

Brown (2002) states that, teaching a language was a search. This search was for an ideal method that successfully taught all kinds of students a foreign language in the classroom. Ironically, then, the whole concept of methods changed throughout the years.

A method allows teachers to follow a good way to share knowledge with the students. Some years ago, Anthony (1963) created a good definition of method, and in his conception, the method is the second of three important elements of teaching, called approach, method, and technique.

Anthony's (1963) concept of *approach* was of a set of principles or ideas about the nature of language learning which would be consistent over time. The *method* was more procedural: an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the

selected approach. Finally, the concept of *techniques* referred to the actual implementation in the language classroom: a particular trick used to accomplish an immediate objective. He saw techniques as being consistent with a given method and by extension, with a given approach.

When in front of a classroom, teachers have already learned some deep lessons from their past, and also learned our possible teaching practices choices, and the way to lead the classes is the chance to captivate students to learn a foreign language, then, adapting an approach is indispensable.

As reported by Anthony (1963), the key to a dynamic teaching is the interaction between an approach and the classroom practice, and a good teacher's job is to be able to calculate risks in the classroom. New techniques need to be introduced to the classroom and adapted to those who learn with difficulties.

Teachers, nowadays, need to have a cumulative body of knowledge and principles that enables them to diagnose the needs of students, to treat students with successful techniques that really make them understand, communicate and learn the language.

In agreement with Richards and Renandya (2002) in the twentieth century, the biggest concern for the language teaching was to find a method that really worked. However, there is not a perfect method. On the other hand, Harmer (2005) mentions the ones that still influences the English teaching: The grammar translation method; the audiolingual method; PPP (presentation, practice, production); Task based learning and CLT (communicative language teaching). On the following topics we will discuss them in more details.

2.3.1 The grammar translation method

As stated by this method, the translation is what provides the learning. The teacher explains the target language rules in the native language, that later, will be practiced with the students through translation exercises. These activities help the students to emphasize the grammar rules and they are focused on the morphology and syntax. According to Venâncio-Faleiros¹ (2004) the native language is the

¹ The translation of this paper was made by the authors.

reference during the learning process, when the sentences are translated to the target language or from the target language.

Richards and Renandya (2002) says that in this method much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words and students read difficult classical texts since the beginning of the learning. Due to this, teachers pay little attention to the content of the texts, which are treated just as grammatical analysis.

Through this method, by comparing the grammar of the mother tongue and of the target language students will be able to understand how the second language works.

Therefore, the abilities used are writing and reading, and almost no attention was given to speaking and listening abilities. Due to this, students read, however they have problems with the communication.

According to Zhou and Niu (2015, p. 799):

Students are used to wanting to see language 'black-and-white', and seeking 'correct' answers to any language exercise items. Teachers judge students' performance either 'right' or 'wrong'. This method discourages honest enquiry: facing the ambiguity and discrepancies of language with tolerance as well as the conformity of language. Decontextualized, discrete and purposeless 'parsing' and surface-structure analysis are conspicuous features of the traditional grammar-translation method. It ignores contextualized learning and fails to expose learners to 'authentic varieties in a 'functional context', which usually results in students 'knowing' something about the language (competence) but not being able to 'do' anything with that knowledge (performance). And more often, this knowing is decontextualized.

By using this method, as we can see above, teachers do not use the language contextualized. Therefore, GTM fails to expose students to the real context. Due to that, most of theorists say that this method teaches students *about* language and not *the* language.

2.3.2 The audiolingual method

Venâncio-Faleiros (2004) says that this method is based on the behaviorism theory and it was developed as a reaction to the Grammar Translation Method. It shows that the learning process is the creation of habits by conditioning, therefore, teachers should teach *the* language and not *about* it. In this method, it is

TEACHING ENGLISH IN PUBLIC REGULAR SCHOOL: avoiding the traditional approach

emphasized the teaching of the four abilities, in the following order: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is believed that the second language learning should be totally based on the native language.

Richards and Renandya (2002) states that in this method, the new material is presented in dialogue form, and, the vocabulary is limited and learned in context. The grammar is taught by inductive analogy rather than by deductive explanation. Classes are given based on the repetition of sentences and only after having acquired good pronunciation and understanding of the language students read and write in the target language.

This intensive repetition process guides students to develop native accent as it is focused on the oral abilities most of the time.

2.3.3 PPP (presentation, practice and production)

Harmer (2005, p. 80) mentions that “in this procedure, the teacher introduces a situation which contextualizes the language to be taught. The language, too, is then presented.” While using PPP, the teacher shows the content explaining the usage and form of the second language, which is the presentation phase. Then, students practice by making sentences with the new structure, this is the practice step, and, finally, learners go to the production part in which they make examples related to the real life without basing on the models used before in the explanation.

Venâncio-Faleiros (2004) utters that PPP is an effective model in the elementary levels, in which the structures that are taught are simple and the second language knowledge is incipient. This method becomes less appropriate, when the student does not need to be guided step by step by the teacher. So, when the students’ knowledge is increased, PPP should be replaced by another method that improves the learning in the second language.

2.3.4 Task-Based Learning

Venâncio-Faleiros (2004) declares that this method is more focused on the task than on the language. The students are encouraged to accomplish determinate task without studying the grammar structure or the language function needed. These characteristics will be just taught if necessary and when the students finish their tasks with the purpose of clarifying some of the problems the students may have found during the activity. The sentences and the necessary structure to the accomplishment of these exercises are presented by the teacher through reading or listening before starting the task.

According to Harmer (2005, p. 86):

Instead of language structure, in other words, students are presented with a task they have to perform or a problem they have to solve. For example, after a class performs some pre-task activities which involve questions and vocabulary checking (e.g. *What is this? It's a timetable. What does 'arrival' mean?*), they ask and answer questions to solve a problem such as finding train-timetable information. (...) Although the present simple may frequently be used in such an activity, the focus of the lesson is the task, not the structure.

The goal of this method is the activation of the language and not its construction. Students can use any structure that is appropriate for a determinate context. If students need the explanation of the rules, it will be done, by the teacher.

2.3.5 Communicative language teaching

According to Venâncio-Faleiros (2004) in the CLT (communicative language teaching) students learn a language with the purpose of communicating and not having knowledge of the language. In this method, there are two conceptions related to language teaching: one says that the language is more than just grammar pieces; it involves the language functions like agreeing and disagreeing, how to write a formal and an informal letter or how to invite someone, for example. And the other one shows that allied to the motivation, it is necessary to expose students to the second language and give them opportunities to use it to make learning happen.

This method main characteristic is learning to use the language and not just dominate all its structures or its vocabulary. The communicative competence and the dependence of the four abilities are the purpose of the methodology. Mistakes

TEACHING ENGLISH IN PUBLIC REGULAR SCHOOL: avoiding the traditional approach

are seeing as a natural learning process and the native language can be used if it is necessary.

According to Harmer (2005) this method made us stop using the PPP methodology too much. These method contributions for the second language teaching process are based on many things: the idea that, it is focused on the student and not on the teacher anymore; the teacher is only a helper for the learning process. The method is based on the idea that learning a language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the language.

As we could see, there are the methods and approaches that still influences the teaching practice, nevertheless, it is worth to mention that:

It has been realized that there never was and probably never will be a method for all, and the focus in recent years has been on the development of classroom tasks and activities which are consonant with what we know about second language acquisition, and which are also in keeping with the dynamics of the classroom itself (NUNAN, 1991, p. 228).

Brown (2002) corroborates this idea saying that, there is not a perfect method, each student is different and each of them has a particular difficulty, even the teacher-student relationship is dissimilar. Therefore, there is not a perfect method, but once the teacher is committed to identifying how each student acquires knowledge of the language, it is possible to create activities that can be adapted to the type of goal to be achieved.

As we can see, there are different methods to be used to teach a second language, however, teachers have to consider many other characteristics inside the language classroom and one of them is the size of the classroom.

Large classrooms are not easy to be taught, consequently, we will go over its feature in the following chapter.

3 Teaching large classes

There are many characteristics around the world related to the development of schools, classrooms, and the school context in general. Many of these points are established by factors directly coming from the economic, social and financial context, and among these factors, large and multilevel classrooms are found.

These classes can be found in many places, most of them are established because of geographic context, or number of students. These kinds of classes are very challenging and it may bring many disadvantages either for the teachers or students, if teacher do not consider the strategies and ways that can be used to cope in this kind of environment.

When dealing with large classes we, teachers, also deal with multilevel ones, multiple intelligences and motivation.

3.2 Large and multilevel classes

There is not a standard definition about large class, because the perception of a large/small class depends a lot on the context, Ur (1996, p.19) says that "Large is of course, a relative term and a "Large class" will vary from place to place". Ur (1996) adds that the most relevant aspect to a class be considered as large, is the way in which the teacher perceives the class size, regardless of the exact number of the students in it. On the other hand, she suggests that 40-50 students constitute a large class.

Alternatively, teaching such classes requires a lot of strategies from the teacher, who may have to deal with all the challenges that can arise during the teaching-learning process.

Ur (1996, p.302) explains her view about the multilevel classes issue in the following way: "There is no such thing as a 'homogenous' class, since no two learners are really similar; and therefore all classes of more than one learner are in fact heterogeneous."

Ur (1996, p.302-303) gives more details about not only on how to call this classroom but also on what they imply:

However, the implications of the term 'ability' include not just the observable 'ability to perform' of the learners, but also their 'potential learning ability'; and the former is not likely to be a simple one-to-one result of the latter. Learners' present proficiency may have been influenced by various other factors such as different previous

TEACHING ENGLISH IN PUBLIC REGULAR SCHOOL: avoiding the traditional approach

opportunities for learning, better or worse previous teaching, higher or lower motivation. Even if we rephrase the term 'mixed-ability' and say 'mixed proficiency', this still does not cover all aspects of heterogeneity as applied to a class of language learners. Learners are different from one another in all sorts of other ways that affect how they learn and need to be taught.

Multilevel or heterogeneous classes are almost every class that is being taught by the teacher. As every person is completely different, the foreign language classes also have non-homogenous students. Besides it, teachers should be aware of the fact that not everyone is able to learn as hard or as quickly as the other one.

3.3 Multiple intelligences

It is well known that teachers need to reflect on how each student acquires knowledge. Each human being has a distinct ability to absorb knowledge according to what is being taught. Therefore, multiple intelligences play an important role in the teaching-learning process.

According to Gardner (1993) intelligence is the ability to solve problems, or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings. Gardner (1993) noted the traditional IQ tests unfairly measured only logic and language and disregarded other intelligences of the brain. He also added that all humans have these intelligences, but people differ in the strengths and combinations of intelligences. Furthermore, all of the intelligences could be enhanced through training and practice.

At first Gardner (1993, p. 65) introduced seven intelligences but after a few years was added the eighth to the list:

- a) Musical intelligence is the ability to perceive, transform, and discriminate between musical forms and includes sensitivity to rhythm, pitch and timber.
- b) Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is the ability to solve problems or form products using all or part of one's body.
- c) Logical-mathematical intelligence is the ability to use numbers effectively, manage long chains of reasoning and involves an awareness of logical and numerical patterns.
- d) Spatial intelligence is the ability to form a mental model of the visual-spatial world, and to be able to maneuver the model. It also includes sensitivity to colors, lines, patterns, spaces and forms, and the relationships between them.

e) Linguistic intelligence is the capacity to use words effectively both orally and in writing. It comprises sensitivity to the sounds, meanings and functions of language.

f) Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand the feelings, motivations and moods of other people, and respond appropriately to them.

g) Intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to understand oneself, to assess one's strengths, weaknesses and emotional states, and act effectively using this knowledge. It is the intelligence most difficult to define, as its expression often depends on the use of other intelligences, such as music or language.

h) Naturalist intelligence designates the human ability to discriminate among living things such as plants and animals, as well as sensitivity to other features of the natural world such as clouds and rock configurations.

3.4 Motivation

Motivation has been seeing as a key element in the foreign language-learning process. Ur (1996) questions, if it is the success in the learning process that causes its own motivation, or if it is the previous motivation causes the success?

According to Harmer (2005) motivation is an internal mechanism that encourages the learner to keep trying on this action. If we have a goal and that is something we really want to achieve, we really feel strongly motivated to do what we need to accomplish it.

In the teaching-learning process, motivation must be present all the time in the classroom (HARMER, 2005). In other words, it will be the driver that will lead the student to get the necessary development to ensure their learning.

It can be demonstrated through the teacher's personal support to the student, the interaction with the students or the rapport established between the student and the teacher. Motivation can also be provided by activities done in the classroom which, besides building knowledge will please students. One the other hand, students can come to the classroom with the desire to learn the language. Hence, we have two different types of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic.

3.4.1 Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation according to Harmer (2005) is something that comes from outside the class. Ur (1996) says that extrinsic motivation is something that derives from an influence on an outside encouragement.

Lowes; Target (1998. p. 24) say:

TEACHING ENGLISH IN PUBLIC REGULAR SCHOOL: avoiding the traditional approach

Extrinsic motivation is the kind that is produced by the promise of an external reward of some kind. Many people learn English because it will improve their job prospects. Children may learn in order to please their parents or to pass an exam. English is a means to an end.

On the contrary, intrinsic motivation is related to the physical environment conditions; the method; the teachers; the support established in class among students.

Harmer (2005, p. 51) says:

Intrinsic motivation, by the contrast, comes from within the individual. Thus a person might be motivated by the enjoyment of the learning process itself or by a desire to make themselves feel better.

Intrinsic motivation is related to the desire to learn, the willingness to start something just for the pleasure and personal satisfaction in accomplishing it. A student that is intrinsically motivated can turn the learning process into something pleasant, he is always looking for it to his own satisfaction, his goal.

According to Deci; Ryan (2000) people may manifest themselves as intrinsically motivated to certain activities while others do not. Moreover, not every person is intrinsically motivated for any specific task, thus meaning that individuals establish a relationship with the task or activity itself. Intrinsic motivation is quite evident when the individual performs a certain activity simply for the pleasure of performing it in a detached way.

Eccles and Wigfield (2002) say that intrinsically motivated people do an activity because they are interested only in enjoying the activity itself. Due to this, intrinsic motivation helps the student to be interested in the learning and because of this, the student learns easily and quickly, however, each student is motivated differently: one is intrinsically motivated and the other extrinsically. That is why the teachers face a hard role to keep learners motivated independently of the type of motivation.

One way of dealing with motivation is by arousing interest in class. This will be better discussed on the next chapter.

4 Adapting the traditional approach to the English teaching in public schools in Franca

4.2 The context in public schools

According to the British Council site (2015), there are many difficulties that can affect the learning in public schools such as: a high level of social vulnerability, sometimes there is violence inside and outside the school, excess of students in classrooms, classes in which there are different learning levels, lack of didactic resources, students with basic reading and writing problems and demotivated employees because of their bad salaries.

These schools are often in violent neighborhoods, in which the security is not good or many violent stories that happen around the school. Some schools tried to solve these violence problems, they started monitoring the students with cameras inside and outside there, window grille and lockers in the gates. These kinds of security make the school environment even more demotivating and many students feel demotivated to go to school because of these problems.

However, Amorim (2015) says that even though it is possible to teach a second language in public schools. Some teachers overcome difficulties and show examples of creative and successful projects. They understand the student's context, and use the technology in the classes. Many of these educators seek to make classes more modern and dynamic and go beyond reading and grammar rules to allow interactivity and the development of conversation skills.

Based on these problems related to the learning in public schools and also on the lack of interest by students, we are seeking to find ways of making classroom more dynamic and show that games/ extra activities can be used to teach conversation in public school classrooms.

4.3 The communicative activity through a text

There are many ways to improve the learning process and develop fluency in the classroom. As we discussed in the previous chapter of this paper,



TEACHING ENGLISH IN PUBLIC REGULAR SCHOOL: avoiding the traditional approach

students have to be motivated to learn. Most students from public schools in Brazil are unwilling to learn English since they do not expect to travel abroad as they belong to a social class level that will not afford it. Nonetheless, they are not aware of the fact that this is not the only reason why a person learns a language nowadays.

During the university compulsory internship, we also realized that most of them feel bored in the classroom as most of the times they learn about the language - grammar rules and not the language.

Ur (1996) declares that a person who wants to know a language wants to speak it. So, students have to use the language in the classroom to communicate and we, teachers, have to provide them with this opportunity.

Scrivener (1994) defines communicative activities as activities to make students speak and listen to each other. Its goal is to make students to use the language that they are learning and interact with each other in a real and meaningful way, most of the time involving information exchanges. Scrivener (1994) also emphasizes that a communicative activity is not just about creating dialogues or new examples about grammar structures, its main goal is to achieve the communicative success and not just the accurate use of the specific language items.

Learning a foreign language is hard and meaningful activities make the learning process more effective because students will be really involved with them.

In the public schools in Brazil students usually deal with English through the Grammar Translation Method and based on a text, therefore, these texts can be used to guide students to a more effective learning.

Harmer (2005 p. 250) says:

Texts as models: especially where students are working with genre-focused tasks, written and spoken texts are a vital way of providing models for them to follow. One of the best ways of having students write certain kinds of report, for example, is to show them some actual reports and help them to analyze their structure and style; to get students to give spoken directions they will benefit from hearing other people doing it first. Productive work need not always be imitative. But students are greatly helped by being exposed to examples of writing and speaking which show certain conventions for them to draw upon.

Based on the idea above, if you have already seen an example or something to base on, to know where to start from, how to start, etc., it is easier to speak or write.

Something else that can motivate students is the game. Wright, Betteridge and Bucky (1991) say that games encourage students to work and keep the interest, but they can also help the teacher to create real and meaningful language contexts. Games are not funny things to do at the end of the class when you have some minutes lasting, they are part of the learning, they help students to practice the grammar in a real context, to understand and being understood, to communicate, etc.

According to Stevic (1994), the learning process is a long way, but students need to be motivated every class, they need experiences that guide them to great results and one of these experiences is the game. In a language game, they can use the vocabulary and grammar that they have already learned. One of the characteristics of the game is that even if it is a controlled activity, which is the one that the students practice the new subject in a limited form controlled by the teacher, we can have different and unexpected results.

Through the game-activities teachers can foster motivation. Therefore, students learn faster and more effective.

4.4 A text and two attempts of approaching it

The aim of this paper was to verify if communicative-activities, undertaken in public regular school, can really make the teaching-learning process more meaningful and motivating to the students so that they can speak the language. This curiosity arouses during the school internship class observation.

As it was said before, we were doing our internship in a public school in Franca, São Paulo, and we decided to develop this research there. We randomly chose two classes of the sixth grade, the first will be called class A, that is the one in which we applied some communicative activities according to our procedures, and the second will be called class B, in which another English teacher from the regular school, applied the same activity with his usual own procedures.

The activity was prepared by the authors of this paper focusing on Simple Past which was the content that was being approached by the teacher of those classes. We created a text about a character called Leonardo Maestri that tells the story of his last vacation. In this text, we used regular and irregular verbs in the Simple Past and some lexis based on the topic.

Choosing a text reminds of Harmer (2005), who says that through a text it is easier to understand the grammar rules and what is being said because of the context. If you have something to base on, you can learn fast and effectively.

The text was entitled *The best vacation of my life* (for the text and instructions, see Appendix A). This activity was applied through two different procedures. In class A, as internship students, we applied it following our lesson plan. In class B, our suggestion was followed by the teacher according to his own procedures.

4.5 Class A

To start the activity, we gave the text *The best vacation of my life* (for the text and instructions, see Appendix A) to each student in class. Then, we started reading the sentences of the text checking understanding and also asking students to repeat them.

After reading it, we showed them flashcards (for the flashcards and instructions, see Appendix D) to help them understand the words they did not know from the text.

Then, we asked them, in English, if they saw any differences between the verbs, and they replied saying that to some verbs it was added *-ed* at the end of the word, however, others has completely changed.

To explain the Simple Past, we started writing a sentence from the text on the board, then, we highlighted the verb in the past and circled the *-ed* ending. Then, we wrote *go* and *went*, and they quickly understood that there are two types of verbs, regular and irregular. So, by doing this way, writing on the board, showing them examples, they understood how it works.

After that, we repeated the verbs in the base form and asked them to say how they would be in the Past and we wrote both forms on the board. Next, we divided students into six groups of six people.

We gave them two activities to do in groups. The first one was to write the verbs from the text *The best vacation of my life* in the Past form on a table (for the activity and instructions, see Appendix B). After they had finished this activity, we corrected each group individually.

Correcting each group's table was our way to evaluate and check their difficulties. By doing it, we could help every group and make the correction meaningful and effective.

To reinforce the Past tense form, we gave learners some pieces of paper with the text verbs written on them. This activity consisted basically in matching the correct past form of the verbs to the base form. The winner was the group with more corrected answers (for the activity and instructions, see Appendix C).

Group one, three, four and six got all the words right. Group two got 27 out of 29 correct answers and group five got 28 out of 29.

The following class, we started by showing them some flashcards (for the flashcards and instructions, see Appendix D). There were pictures of actions that we can do in our vacation. For example, our first picture was an airplane and a boy getting on it, then we asked: *Which verb does this picture indicate?* Almost everybody in the class replied: *to travel*. Then, we did the same procedure with all the vocabulary flashcards.

After that, still in groups, they started a production activity. Now, the winner would be the group with more sentences using flashcards of the verbs and vocabulary. We gave them fifteen minutes to think about the verbs and vocabulary they wanted to use in their sentences, and then, they would say their sentences orally to the whole class.

The sentences students produced in their groups were as follow:

Group one: *I went to the amusement park last vacation; My sister travelled to Mexico last vacation; I played soccer on the street with friends.*

Group two: *I went to the horse riding; I travelled to beach.*

Group three: *We went swimming; I played horse.*

TEACHING ENGLISH IN PUBLIC REGULAR SCHOOL: avoiding the traditional approach

Group four: *Ana went to a fairground; Pedro played friends.*

Group five: *My sister went mall; I travel amusement park; My father stayed museum mother January.*

Group six: *Katelyn went to swimming, Rafael play ball.*

Group one won the activity because they got more sentences correct and they made said more sentences than the others. While they were talking about their sentences we were evaluating them. Then, we talked to each group individually about what was missing in their sentences and why.

To compare our procedures, we chose other class to observe another teacher applying the same activity to class B.

4.6 Class B

As we have already said, we gave the teacher the same activities to be applied, however, he was free to follow his procedures.

The teacher started asking students to choose their groups to do the activities together. After that, he gave learners the text and asked them to translate it by writing on their notebooks. For this task, students took two classes.

The following class, the teacher wrote on the board all the Simple Past structure and explained it in Portuguese and students copied everything in their notebooks. Then, he asked students to complete the Verb Chart (see Appendix B).

To deal with the Simple Past verb tense matching (see Appendix C), he asked the students to stick the verbs on their notebooks and write the Simple Past form in front of it. After that, he divided students into two groups and each group was supposed to write two sentences with the verbs.

The first group could not write any sentences, they told the teacher that they were not able to make them. Then, the second group wrote two sentences that were very similar to the text sentences: *I grew up in a poor family with four members; We arrived at the home.*

The last day, he prepared an activity (see Appendix F) to evaluate if the students had learned.

4.7 AnalySis

We know there are many ways to improve the learning process and develop fluency and communication in the classroom. As we discussed in the previous chapters of this study, students have to be motivated to learn.

Harmer (2005) says that motivation can be demonstrated through the teacher's support to the students. Motivation can also be provided by activities done in the classroom which, besides building the knowledge will please students.

Before applying the activities, we observed some classes to know students' difficulties, language levels and the context they were inserted in. Therefore, we tried to avoid the Grammar-Translation Method, as our aim was a more communicative and meaningful class. Zhou and Niu (2015) mention that, in the Grammar-Translation Method there is little use of the target language for communication, its focus is on the grammatical forms and inflections words. The result of this method is an incapability on the part of students to use the language for communication.

That is why we chose to avoid the Grammar-Translation Method and prepare activities in which students would be exposed to the language and have chance to use it. Venâncio-Faleiros (2004) reinforces it by saying that through a communicative approach, students learn a language with the purpose of communicating. It is necessary to expose students to the target language and give them opportunities to use it.

Scrivener's (1994) states that a communicative activity is an activity that makes students speak and listen to each other and that was exactly our goal. Students needed to use the target language and interact with each other in a real and meaningful way.

To start the activities, we chose a text. Since through it, it is easier to understand the grammar rules and what is being said because of the context (HARMER, 2005). If you have something to base on, you can learn fast and effectively.

TEACHING ENGLISH IN PUBLIC REGULAR SCHOOL: avoiding the traditional approach

In our case, the important thing was the activation of the language and not its construction. Students could use any structure that was appropriate for the context we were talking about. Based on Venâncio-Faleiros' (2004) ideas it can be done through listening or reading in the Task-based Learning Approach.

We asked students to repeat the sentences from the text as it is done in the Audio-Lingual Method to master good pronunciation (VENÂNCIO-FALEIROS, 2004).

After reading and repeating the text, we used some flashcards to help them understand the vocabulary from the text. Using flashcards, according to Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory reminds teachers that there are many types of learners in a class who absorb knowledge in different ways. Through pictures or drawings, even if there were advanced and basic students in the class, it was easier for everybody to associate the word with the meaning (GARDNER, 1993).

Flashcards helped to avoid the use of the Grammar-Translation Method, because they could easily understand the text and make their sentences based on the pictures without any translation.

After understanding the text and practicing pronunciation, to explain the Simple Past, we used a sentence in context to explain the verb tense, which helped, students understand it easily.

The Simple Past verb tense matching (see Appendix C) was similar to a memory game as students had just filled in a chart with some verbs and at this time they would do it with the same words inside a bag and they could not check any reference. According to Wright, Betteridge and Bucky (1991) games encourage students to work and keep the interest. Stevic (1994) also says that games can be used with vocabulary and grammar students have already learned to make them communicate, even if it is a controlled activity, we can have different results.

Through the last activity, learners were assessed. We showed them more flashcards with new verbs and asked them to make sentences. In this activity, they needed to talk and help each other to create the group sentences. Through the students' sentence (see Chapter 3.4.1) it is possible to analyze that even with some inaccuracies they could communicate and convey the message.

After each activity, the individual group correction was a way to evaluate them and see if they could understand the content. By doing this way, they did not feel nervous because they were not aware that they were being tested.

Due to it, this way of assessment does not demotivate students. This kind of correction made them feel comfortable to communicate and it was easier for us to see if they learned. Eccles and Wigfield (2002) states that intrinsically motivated people do activities because they are interested in doing it.

In all these procedures, we always spoke with students in English. As we can see, students were able to accomplish the activities and understand the content. To compare our procedures, we chose other class to watch other teacher applying the same activity to class B.

As we could see, class B teacher's procedures were based on the Grammar-Translation Method. The teacher asked them to translate the text using a bilingual dictionary. All his classes were taught in Portuguese, which was the students mother tongue. According to Venâncio-Faleiros (2004) by translating text we are only comparing both languages, especially grammar rules and a language involves more than that. Richards and Renandya's (2002) also comment that almost no attention is paid to the context of the text, when we deal only with translation. As Harmer (2005) suggested, it is important to provide students with different activities to keep them engaged. We suggested some activities that were an attempt to improve the English learning, going beyond the traditional Grammar-Translation Method, what is common in most public schools in Brazil. The text was useful for students to make them feel familiar with what would come next. The activities were a helpful tool, because they provided lots of benefits in the classroom, which guided students to communicate and feel motivated, which are important characteristics for an effective learning.

These contributions made by the authors, we have just mentioned, may justify the fact that in class B, learners were almost unable to produce sentences and communicate ideas.

5 Conclusion

Nowadays English is one of the most spoken language in the world and it is considered a *Lingua Franca*, a language which allows people to communicate with others who speak different languages. It connects the world. The importance of English made people want to learn it, either for travelling, professional life, or school curriculum.

Our aim was an attempt of if avoiding the Grammar Translation Method in public schools to have a more meaningful and communicative activities to teach English and help them use the target language.

The analysis showed that the students from class A, the ones who undertook activities following whose procedures were elaborated by the authors of this paper, even with some inaccuracies, produced cohesive and coherent sentences and also speak some during the activities. They felt comfortable and were creative.

On the other hand, students from class B showed many difficulties while doing the activities but following the classroom teacher's procedures. Most of the groups were not able to make sentences and none of them practiced speaking. The activity was not applied in a communicative format, it was more based on the Grammar-Translation theory.

We could see the advantage of dealing with students in a more communicative way in few classes that were taught. Therefore, the analysis indicates that this should be a consistent procedure. We can conclude that having a more communicative approach, the learning of grammar and vocabulary is more real, meaningful and motivation to students.

It helps students develop awareness of the target language and also of his importance in the world making the learning environment more motivating.

Last but not least, it also helps teachers understand that using the target language means more than knowing its grammar, it involves learning vocabulary and functions. Therefore, learners will feel more excited to deal with the language.

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TEACHING ENGLISH IN PUBLIC REGULAR SCHOOL: avoiding the traditional approach

APPENDIX A – Text about vacation

The best vacation of my life

Hello guys! My name is Leonardo Maestri, I'm 20 years old and I'm from a small city in Colombia, called Medellin, and I want to tell you about my last vacation, so let's start from the beginning! I grew up in a poor family with seven members, my parents and my other 4 siblings. It was always hard for us to have a good education in some good schools, but I knew it wouldn't be a problem for me. I always liked to study, and Math was always my favorite subject. Once, I participated to a Math Championship and the winner would have the chance to travel to another country during the school's vacation to have an international course, and guess who won the championship, yes, it was me! I had the chance to travel to United Kingdom to have this course, and I could invite a person to go with me, so I invited my sister, Leila, to join me during the trip.

We travelled in December and stayed there until January. It was amazing! When we arrived at the airport, there was already some good people waiting for us, and they took us to the place we would stay. The next day was unforgettable, it was our first day in the school, we studied a lot all the time, we met a lot of good teachers and specially, we made a lot of friends. After we made some friends, we visited a lot of museums, we ate good food and we had a lot of good experiences all together.

The best part was that, we traveled to five countries while we were there, we learned a lot about their culture and we could go to restaurants, parties, amusement parks and everything. Leila and I loved the chance we had to go so far and learn so much, we made many friends, we learned a lot, it motivated us to study more and more, and specially, it made me believe that I can do anything I want if I believe and fight for what I want!

Source: Developed by the authors

Procedures:

- The teacher gives the text to students.
- Then, the teacher reads and asks students to repeat after him.

- The teacher explains the text. If students do not understand something. The teacher should explain it in other words or using flashcards.

APPENDIX B – Verb chart

VERBS	PAST SIMPLE
To call	
To want	
To tell	
To start	
To grow up	
To be	
To have	
To know	
To like	
To study	
To participate	
To travel	
To guess	
To invite	
To join	
To stay	
To arrive	
To take	
To meet	
To make	
To visit	
To eat	
To learn	
To love	
To go	
To motivate	
To do	
To believe	
To fight	

Source: Developed by the authors

Procedures:

- The teacher divides students into six groups of six learners.
- The teacher gives students this activity to practice the Past, in which they need to complete the Past form of these verbs from the text.
- Next, the teacher corrects it individually.

APPENDIX C – Simple Past verb tense matching

TO CALL	CALLED
TO WANT	WANTED
TO TELL	TOLD
TO START	STARTED
TO GROW UP	GREW UP
TO BE	WAS/ WERE
TO HAVE	HAD
TO KNOW	KNEW
TO LIKE	LIKED
TO STUDY	STUDIED
TO PARTICIPATE	PARTICIPATED
TO TRAVEL	TRAVELED
TO GUESS	GUESSED
TO INVITE	INVITED
TO JOIN	JOINED
TO LOVE	LOVED
TO GO	WENT
TO MOTIVATE	MOTIVATED
TO DO	DID
TO BELIEVE	BELIEVED
TO FIGHT	FOUGHT
TO STAY	STAYED
TO ARRIVE	ARRIVED
TO TAKE	TOOK
TO MEET	MET
TO MAKE	MADE
TO VISIT	VISITED
TO EAT	ATE
TO LEARN	LEARNED

Source: Developed by the authors

Procedures:

- Still in groups, the teacher gives students these words mixed inside a bag.
- Students put the words on the table and turn all of them down.
- Students, in their groups, try to find the right Past form of the verb in the base form, they can not check their notebooks.
- The group which gets more verbs right, wins the game.
- The teacher corrects each group's answers.
- For those groups which get something wrong, the teacher gives them feedback explaining which is the correct answer and why.

APPENDIX D– Holiday Flashcards

 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids go to the beach www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids go sightseeing www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>
 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids go to the mountains www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids take photos www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>
 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids stay in a hotel www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids go to a fairground www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>
 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids go camping www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids make a sandcastle www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>
 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids write postcards www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids throw a beach ball www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>
 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids have a picnic www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>	 <p>BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish Kids play beach volleyball www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids</p>



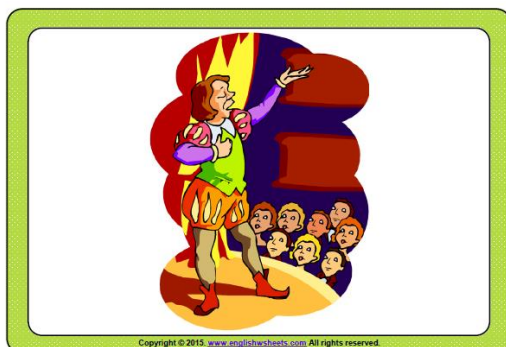
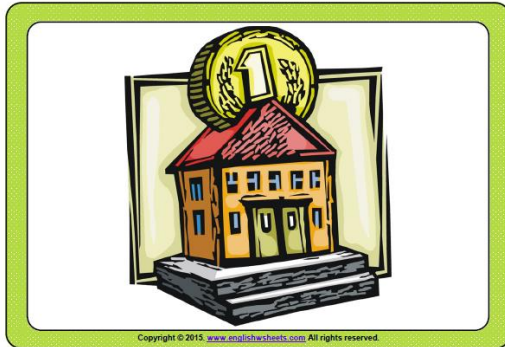
Source: BRITISH COUNCIL, online, 2017

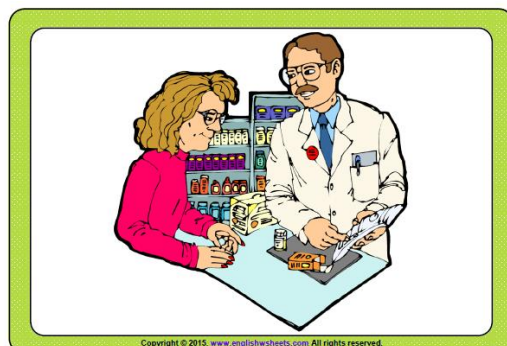
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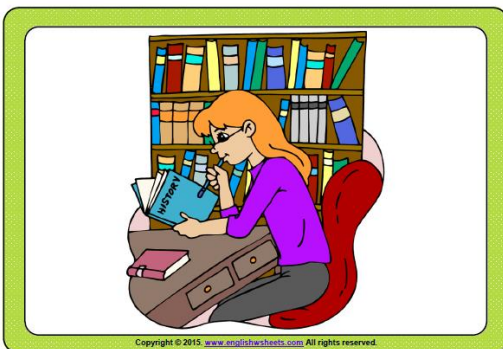
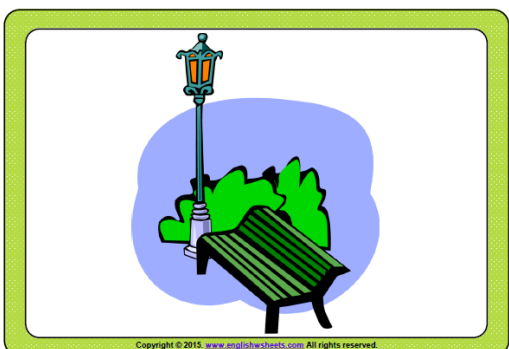
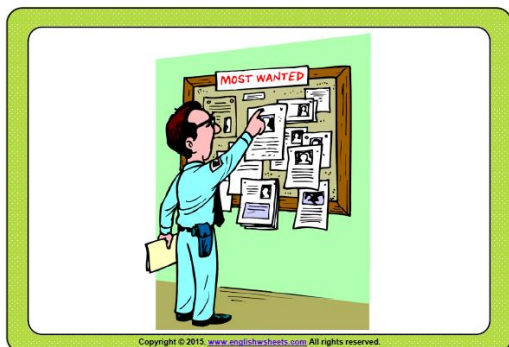
- The teacher shows the flashcards to students.
- The teacher asks students: “Which verb does this picture indicate?”
- If students do not know the answer, teacher helps them by saying, for example: “You can do it with a horse!”
- If the students do not know the exactly word, the teacher says the verb and asks them to repeat it.
- Then, the teacher shows the flashcard with the way we write this verb.
- After showing all the flashcards and doing the same procedures above with each verb, the teacher asks students to make orally sentences with the verbs according to their last vacation.

[Digite texto]

Flashcards of places in the city







Source: English Language Teaching Resources, online, 2017.

Procedures:

- The teacher shows the flashcards to students.

- The teacher asks students: “Which word does this picture indicate?”
- If students do not know the answer, the teacher helps saying, for example: “It is the place you go to see clowns!”
- If the students do not know the exact word, the teacher says the word and asks them to repeat.
- Then, the teacher shows the flashcard with the way we write this word.
- After showing all the flashcards and doing the same procedures above with each vocabulary, teacher asks students to make orally sentences with them, according to their vacation.



APPENDIX E – Class B- TEST

Nome: _____

Número: _____ Data: ____/____/____

Professor: _____

ATIVIDADE AVALIATIVA DE INGLÊS

The best vacation of my life

Hello guys! My name is Leonardo Maestri, I'm 20 years old and I'm from a small city in Colombia, called Medellin, and I want to tell you about my last vacation, so let's start from the beginning! I grew up in a poor family with seven members, my parents and my other 4 siblings. It was always hard for us to have a good education in some good schools, but i knew it wouldn't be a problem for me. I always liked to study, and Math was always my favorite subject. Once, I participated to a Math Championship and the winner would have the chance to travel to another country during the school's vacation to have an international course, and guess who won the championship, yes, it was me! I had the chance to travel to United Kingdom to have this course, and I could invite a person to go with me, so I invited my sister, Leila, to join me during the trip.

We travelled in December and stayed there until January. It was amazing! When we arrived at the airport, there was already some good people waiting for us, and they took us to the place we would stay. The next day was unforgettable, it was our first day in the school, we studied a lot all the time, we met a lot of good teachers and specially, we made a lot of friends. After we made some friends, we visited a lot of museums, we ate good food and we had a lot of good experiences all together.

The best part was that, we traveled to five countries while we were there, we learned a lot about their culture and we could go to restaurants, parties, amusement parks and everything. Leila and I loved the chance we had to go so far and learn so much, we made many friends, we learned a lot, it motivated us to study more and more, and specially, it made me believe that I can do anything I want if I believe and fight for what I want!

- Leia o texto acima e responda as questões:

1. Qual é o assunto do texto?

2. Qual é a tradução do título?

3. Qual tempo verbal que predomina no texto?

4. Com a ajuda do dicionário e com seus conhecimentos sobre o Simple Past, traduza o segundo parágrafo.

5. Preencha as frases abaixo colocando os verbos no Simple Past.

- John _____ (to travel) to Italy.
- Maria _____ (to work) until late yesterday.
- We _____ (to listen) to English songs.
- She _____ (to go) to the park in the morning.

Source: Developed by the teacher from class B.

Procedures:

- Teacher gives this test after practicing it in class.