

Linguistic Portrait as a Process in the Development of Orality in EAL in a Bi/Multi/Plurilingual Public School Context

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Abstract:

Oral skills in English language teaching are often neglected, with priority given to written and structural skills, which leads to student demotivation and communicative insecurity. Although the BNCC (Brazilian National Common Curricular Base) recognizes English as a lingua franca (ELF) and plurilingual education offers cognitive and sociocultural benefits, it is still necessary to encourage practices that foster oral skill development in language teaching. This study assumes that pedagogical practices can integrate oral skills into the teaching of English as an Additional Language (EAL), valuing linguistic diversity and adopting bi/multi/plurilingual approaches, neuroscience, and active methodologies to enhance learning. This qualitative research study, with a linguistic ethnographic perspective, part of a master's thesis in Education, investigates the development of oral skills in EAL within a plurilingual public-school context. It analyzes the construction of language portraits by 15 eighth-grade students as part of a didactic sequence aimed at fostering reflection on linguistic identity and expression. The language portrait represents students' linguistic repertoires, connecting identity, emotion, and language, while reflecting communicative diversity. The practice of creating a language portrait strengthened students' confidence in oral EAL production by promoting reflection on linguistic experiences, the acceptance of diversity, and the expansion of linguistic repertoires, also impacting their social, cognitive, and cultural development.

Keywords:

Development of oral skills; Language portrait; Bi/multi/plurilingual education.

Resumo:

A oralidade no ensino de inglês é frequentemente negligenciada, priorizando habilidades escritas e estruturais, o que desmotiva alunos e gera insegurança comunicativa. Embora a BNCC reconheça o inglês como língua franca (ILF) e a educação plurilíngue traga benefícios cognitivos e socioculturais, ainda é necessário estimular práticas que explorem a oralidade no ensino. Neste estudo, partimos do pressuposto de que as práticas pedagógicas integram a oralidade no ensino de inglês como língua adicional (ILA), valorizando a diversidade linguística e adotando abordagens bi/multi/plurilíngues, neurociência e metodologias ativas para aprimorar a aprendizagem. Esta pesquisa qualitativa com viés etnográfico linguístico, recorte de uma dissertação de mestrado em Educação, investiga o desenvolvimento da oralidade em ILA em uma escola pública em contexto plurilíngue, analisando a construção de retratos linguísticos por 15 alunos de oitavo ano como parte de uma sequência didática voltada à reflexão sobre identidade e expressão linguística. O retrato linguístico representa repertórios linguísticos, conectando identidade, emoção e linguagem, refletindo a diversidade comunicativa. A prática de elaborar um retrato linguístico fortaleceu a confiança na produção oral em ILA ao promover a reflexão sobre experiências linguísticas, a aceitação da diversidade e a expansão do repertório linguístico, impactando também o desenvolvimento social, cognitivo e cultural dos alunos.

Palavras-chave:

Desenvolvimento da oralidade; Retrato Linguístico; Educação bi/multi/plurilíngue.

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Language portrait as a process in the development of

oral skills in English as an Additional Language (EAL) in bi/multi/plurilingual contexts in a public school¹

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INTRODUCTION

Language is constituted through interaction with others (Bakhtin, 2003). In English, the four skills are commonly identified as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Yet, speaking - or oral skill - appears to hold an uncertain status in the context of English language learning. According to Barcelos (2006), teachers' and students' beliefs about language teaching directly influence pedagogical practices and student engagement. This gap is often reinforced by the prioritization of written and grammatical skills to the detriment of oral practice, reflecting the perception that speaking is either difficult to teach or dependent on external resources, such as private language courses. Silva and Martins (2023), in a review of Brazilian teachers' and students' beliefs about oral skills development in English, point out that it "[...] faces strongly entrenched beliefs that contribute to the limited practice of this skill". Thus, the absence of opportunities for oral practice in public school contexts reinforces a disconnection between language teaching and its use in real communicative situations, leading students to feel unmotivated and insecure about expressing themselves in English.

Prior to the publication of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) (Brasil, 2018), which approaches English in the classroom as a lingua franca, the National Curricular Parameters (Brasil, 1998) defined English as a foreign language. Viewing a language as foreign implies conceiving it as the language of the other, with teaching practices oriented toward approximating native-speaker pronunciation standards and, consequently, valorizing the culture of the target country (Jordão, 2014); In contrast, from the lingua franca perspective, the language is perceived as a means of global communication, respecting the origins, particularities, and plurality of each individual in its use (Crystal, 2003; Gimenez *et al.*, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2005). Although concepts such as plurilingual education² and lingua franca are explored in the official documents of the national education curriculum, there seems to be few oral practices in the classroom in language teaching (Barcelos, 2006).

The relevance of a bi/multi/plurilingual³ school context lies in the numerous benefits that the use of more languages provides in a school environment, significantly impacting students' comprehensive learning process. According to Bialystok (2007), learning multiple languages stimulates cognitive development, promoting skills such as flexible thinking, problem-solving and abstract reasoning. Bi/multi/plurilingual individuals have greater concentration, memory, and metalinguistic abilities, which benefit not only language learning but also other academic disciplines. Furthermore, proficiency in more than one language expands students' social and professional opportunities, enabling effective communication and understanding of different cultures. By being exposed to different languages, students become more adaptable and open to

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² In contrast to Bilingual Education, which focuses on two languages, plurilingual education emphasizes continuous contact between different languages in the teaching-learning process and recognizes the multiplicity of students' linguistic repertoires (Council of Europe, 2020).

³ We chose to use the term bi/multi/plurilingual throughout this work to account for the nuances of the terms bilingualism, multilingualism and plurilingualism, as presented in Bailer and Ramacciotti (2024).

multiculturalism, developing empathy and intercultural sensitivity (Akkari; Radhouane, 2022).

This article presents an excerpt from a master's thesis developed in a Graduate Program in Education at a university in southern Brazil, affiliated with a research group that seeks to promote discussions and investigations that relate the singularity and plurality of languages to issues related to education. The research study, which takes place within the context of bi/multi/plurilingual education, investigated the development of oral skills in English as an Additional Language (EAL) in a public, plurilingual school context, based on studies in Education and Language and based on the principles of the Mind, Brain, and Education Science (MBE). The study was conducted through a didactic sequence (DS) proposed and conducted with 8th-grade elementary school students. The DS, using data generated through activities in six distinct stages, sought to promote experiences that allowed reflection and the construction of knowledge regarding different forms of expression, with the aim of fostering the development of oral skills. The central objective of this article is to analyze how the reflective practice of developing linguistic profiles can contribute to a greater understanding of students' bi/multi/plurilingual context and linguistic repertoire, and how this practice influences their oral production in EAL. Thus, we propose a discussion about the second stage of the DS: the language portraits created by the 15 research participants.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Education, as a continuous process of human development and transformation, aims at the integral formation of the individual, promoting knowledge, skills and values essential for their social inclusion (Saviani, 2008). This process occurs in formal and informal contexts, articulating cognition, culture and social interaction and must prepare subjects to interpret and act in a globalized and digital society (Pérez Gómez, 2015). Language, as an essential means for the realization of education, enables the construction of knowledge and structures how we understand the world (Vygotsky, 1986). It is also central to pedagogical mediation and the construction of individuals' identities (Bakhtin, 2003). In this context, language education must transcend normative teaching and consider social practices, critical thinking, and the relationship between language and culture (Ferraz, 2024), reflecting on the impact of language policies on access to knowledge and educational inclusion. Thus, research on the intersection of education and language contributes to more meaningful pedagogical practices, promoting diversity, equity, and teaching aligned with the cultural and social dimensions of language (Ferraz, 2024).

The concept of an additional language (AL), in contrast to the traditional view of a foreign language, emphasizes that an additional language does not replace a speaker's native language, but rather adds to their linguistic repertoire (Cristofolini *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, EAL can serve as a complement to English as a lingua franca (ELF), enabling learners to use the language in a contextualized and meaningful way. This approach is consistent with the view of Buonocore and Bailer (2023), who emphasize the need for teaching that recognizes the multiple possibilities of English language use, without restricting it to prescriptive native-speaker norms. Furthermore, research on teacher education indicates that understanding these conceptual distinctions is essential to ensuring that English teaching is aligned with the contemporary demands of language education and the needs of learners in an increasingly bi/multi/plurilingual world (El Kadri; Gimenez, 2013).

Bi/multi/plurilingual education seeks to value students' different linguistic repertoires and promote linguistic diversity within the school (Bailer; Ramacciotti, 2024; Ramacciotti *et al.*, 2024). The concept of plurilingualism, as described by Oliveira and Höfling (2021), emphasizes the ability of speakers to mobilize different languages according to the context and their communicative needs. Grosjean (2008) argues that bilinguals are not the simple sum of two monolinguals, but individuals who develop a dynamic linguistic repertoire, which reinforces the importance of educational approaches that encourage this flexibility.

The development of oral skills is a complex phenomenon that involves discursive, cognitive and social aspects, being essentially interactive and dialogic (Bakhtin, 2003; Marcuschi, 2007). For Vygotsky (1986), it structures thought and learning, while Halliday (1989) and Ong (1982) emphasize its dependence on context and its role in organizing knowledge. In English teaching, this traditionally neglected approach compromises students' communicative proficiency, who often master grammatical rules but fail to develop oral competence (Rodrigues, 2022).

Neuroscience shows that speech production activates multiple brain areas and that methodologies based on interaction are more effective than mere mechanical repetition (Kandel *et al.*, 2021; Ramacciotti; Eccles, 2019). Strategies such as the use of digital media and projects involving collaborative learning foster the development of oral skills by creating authentic communication contexts (Cavalcante, 2015). Furthermore, the concept of English as an additional language expands pedagogical possibilities, prioritizing the functionality of the language and the diversity of linguistic repertoires (Cristofolini *et al.*, 2022). Weissheimer, Caldas and Marques (2018) further argue that the possibility of planning and reflection before oral production can reduce student anxiety and promote learning. To ensure meaningful learning, it is necessary to overcome structural challenges, invest in teacher education, and reformulate curricula to integrate practices that promote oral communication as a central axis of learning (British Council, 2015; Rodrigues, 2022).

The transdisciplinary dialogue of MBE is essential to comprehend learning and development of oral skills in EAL because it integrates neuroscience, psychology and education, explaining the brain mechanisms, the cognitive and emotional influence, and the pedagogical practices that favor the acquisition and effective use of the language (Amaral; Guerra, 2022; Dehaene, 2020; Immordino-Yang; Damásio, 2007; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2014, 2021). Bihringer *et al.* (2024) point to these epistemological foundations as prerequisites for innovative pedagogical practices through critical teacher reflexivity in the mobilization of new knowledge for the teaching and learning processes. To illustrate this relationship, we systematize eight fundamental principles that guide effective pedagogical practices: a) learning transforms the brain and involves neuroplasticity; b) social interaction qualifies learning; c) emotion and motivation direct learning; d) each brain is unique and learns uniquely; e) attention and memory are essential for knowledge retention; f) learning requires active engagement and time; g) the learning process is dynamic and cyclical; and h) creativity and cognitive flexibility are crucial for knowledge construction (Amaral; Guerra, 2022; Brosch *et al.*, 2013; Cosenza; Guerra, 2011; Dehaene, 2020; Diamond, 2013; Dweck, 2006; Hecht *et al.*, 2021; Immordino-Yang; Damásio, 2007; Kim, 2013; Lent, 2018; Pavlenko, 2014; Pérez Gómez, 2015; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2014, 2021; Zhao *et al.*, 2024). These principles, by supporting the construction of evidence-based pedagogical practices, offer theoretical support for the promotion of oral skills in EAL in school contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This research is characterized as qualitative (Flick, 2009), following the theoretical-methodological perspective of a linguistic-ethnographic study (Fritzen, 2012), considering an expanded vision of Linguistic Education (Cavalcanti, 2013) - that is, with an open dialogue with other areas of knowledge in order to understand subjects in an integral way and how they are constituted by their languages, taking into account (also) the social nature of the linguistic phenomenon (Rajagopalan, 2008).

Qualitative research is an investigative approach that focuses on in-depth understanding and interpretation of the complexities of human experiences and social contexts (Flick, 2009). Within this vast field, research from a linguistic ethnographic perspective stands out for its focus on cultural and sociolinguistic analysis, exploring community dynamics and cultural influences on

language (Fritzen, 2012). Flick (2009) highlights as the main characteristics of ethnographic research the unstructured data prior to its collection, the extensive participation of the researcher in the field, the plurality of perspectives arising from other methodologies to compose a diverse yet unique method for the research context, the concentration of writing and descriptions of experiences, and, in general, flexible research strategies.

According to Fritzen (2012, p. 60, our translation), "the methodological procedures of ethnography foresee the insertion of the researcher in the field, as a participant observer, permanent and reflective, listening, seeing what happens in that environment". Furthermore, the author further reinforces this participation of the researcher when she states that in ethnographic research there is not just a mere collection of data, but rather a "generation" of records/data.

Regarding the research context, the DS was conducted, and data were generated at a public school on the coast of the state of Santa Catarina. The school serves all students in grades 6-9 in the municipality, offers full-time education, and has a bilingual program currently being implemented with an emphasis on Spanish. We consider this a plurilingual setting, as some members of the school community are native speakers of Spanish, due to immigration. Spanish is also a mandatory curricular component and is offered in elective pedagogical workshops included in students' study hours. English is a curricular component established by the BNCC, Libras is included in some school projects, and, of course, Portuguese is the native language of most students.

Within this diverse context, the sample that composes the field of this study is comprised of 15 participants, students from three eighth-grade classes, among eight existing classes at the school, in which the experiences took place in English classes in 2023. For these students, a DS was planned, based on MBE evidence on teaching and learning processes, with the aim of developing oral skills in the English language and investigating how students perceived themselves in this process, how they perceived that the language(s) and their different ways of expressing themselves constituted them as unique beings and how this occurred in their interactions with others.

The data analyzed in the thesis were generated through activities carried out by research participants in six stages of the DS. By comparing the descriptions of the items (Table 1) in the "Objectives" column with those in the "Results/Data Generated" column, it is possible to perceive the relevance of strategies that can encourage students to actively participate in their learning process by suggesting, planning, creating, executing activities, reflecting on them, and interacting with their peers and other stakeholders in their school context.

Table 1 - Didactic Sequence Path for the Development of Oral Skills in EAL.

Didactic Sequence		
DS stages	Pedagogical Objectives	Results/Data Generated
1- Englishes	Explore English as a lingua franca; encourage a critical view of the language.	i) Representations of lingua franca from the students' perspectives, individual work; ii) Convergence of the characteristics and ideas raised regarding the discussions on lingua franca, collective of the three classes.
2- Language Portrait	Reflect on one's own linguistic experiences; develop visual representations of linguistic profiles.	iii) Language portraits developed by participants, individual work.
3- Previous Knowledge	Encourage research and the organization of students' prior knowledge about the relationship between language and culture, preparing them to deepen their investigations.	iv) Records of previous knowledge and conclusions reached by working groups.
4- Researcher Profile	Encourage students to take a more active role in constructing knowledge by conducting research,	

	questionnaires, and interviews.	
5- Spontaneous Oral Production	Record students' spontaneous oral production in English, creating an emotionally favorable environment for them to express their perceptions and challenges in the learning process.	v) Transcription of spontaneous oral productions and final productions recorded on video by the working groups.
6- Final Oral Production	Systematize the knowledge built throughout the process by creating a final video; plan the oral production aiming at the development of orality in EAL.	

Source: Research data (2025).

The proposed and implemented DS begins with stage 1, an awareness-raising movement through the exploration of the concept of English as a lingua franca, encouraging a critical view of language. Then, in stage 2, participants were encouraged to reflect on their own linguistic experiences, creating visual representations of their own linguistic profiles. In stage 3, research and organization of students' previous knowledge about the relationship between language and culture were encouraged, preparing them for deeper investigations. In stage 4, students were given the opportunity to play a more active role in knowledge construction by carrying out research, formulating questionnaires, and conducting interviews with members of the school community. In stage 5, students' spontaneous oral production in English was recorded, creating an emotionally supportive environment for them to express their perceptions and challenges in the learning process. Finally, in stage 6, participants systematized the knowledge built throughout the process by creating a final video, planning their oral production with a view to developing their oral skills in EAL.

In the second stage, students are expected to think about issues such as accent and the way each person expresses themselves as something to be valued and not feared or denied. The goal was to make them think about who they are, based on their ways of interacting with the world through language. The class begins with the question "what is language?"⁴, the first to respond mentioned named languages (Otheguy; García; Reid, 2015): English, Portuguese, Spanish, Korean, Japanese, among others. Later, others began to contrast the use of words in their region with those in other states, accents, and word choices to express the same idea. After opening the discussion on ways of expressing themselves, one student began by saying that she expressed herself through drawings; another student said that, depending on what she wanted to say, she only expressed herself properly when using a meme on messaging apps and social media.

After these moments of expressing their ideas and listening to their peers, each student was given a blank sheet of paper and asked to make a list of all the ways they felt were relevant to expressing themselves - that is, the different languages that constituted them. Once the list was complete, they were asked to assign a color to each item on the list, making a mark in front of the word, creating a sort of label for their languages.

With the labels ready, they were instructed to draw a silhouette that represented who they are, first without filling in anything within the shape. Then, they were instructed to use the colors from the labels to apply within the drawing, considering the level of importance of that form of expression in their lives before choosing where and how much to use each color; it was made clear that they could create their own criteria for creating and distributing the colors.

This practice inspired by the study of Ou, Gu and Hult (2023) on translanguaging for intercultural communication in Higher Education with students in China, also explored in the investigation of linguistic profiles of teachers in Brazil by Megale (2017), is called a language

⁴ In Portuguese, there are more than one way of translating the word language; the term *linguagem* refers broadly to the human capacity for language and communication, while *língua* designates a specific named language such as English, Portuguese, or Spanish. In the didactic sequence, the guiding question posed to students was *o que é linguagem?* (what is language in the broader sense of *linguagem*).

portrait by Brigitta Busch (2010; [2017]). The results of these language portraits, capable of enabling reflection on the ways in which teachers express themselves and interact with the world, are characterized as the data generated and analyzed in this article.

ANALYSIS

The term ‘language portrait’, as described by Busch (2010; [2017]), refers to a strategy for profiling individuals based on their linguistic experiences and repertoires. This approach involves the use of a human silhouette, which is filled with colors representing different languages, dialects, registers, or forms of expression that make up the individual’s linguistic identity. Each color is chosen based on a label previously defined by the participant, allowing them to visually illustrate the presence and relative importance of these languages in their lives. This practice, which seeks to explore reflective practice and creativity, not only highlights the languages with which the individual interacts but also brings to light associated emotional, cultural, and contextual aspects, demonstrating the complexity of the bi/multi/plurilingual nature of human communication (Figure 1). The words mentioned in the language portraits were grouped into categories for data analysis.

The interpretation of what language means when listing items to construct the linguistic repertoire represented in each portrait is the result of the work developed in stage 1, the collective discussions in stage 2, the previous knowledge of each participant, and the result of the social interaction between them during the creation of their language portraits. Presenting only named languages as a result of the language portrait could be expected if the students had not gone through the experience of developing linguistic sensitivity as occurred in stage 1 of this DS.

Figure 1 - Mosaic of language portraits of the 15 research participants.

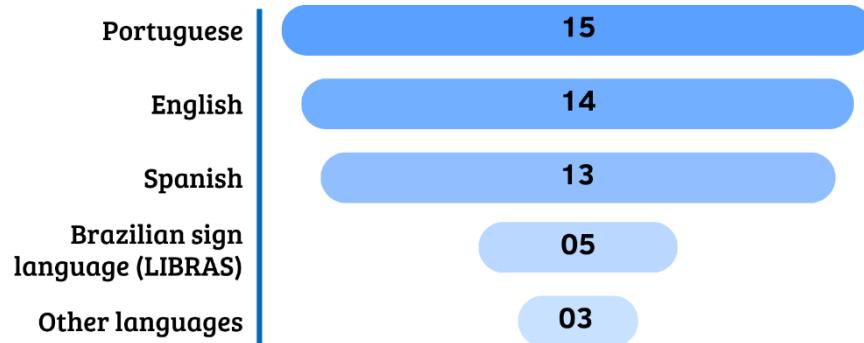


Source: Research data (2025).

By observing the terms used to compose the labels for the works in this stage, it is possible to see that the participants already consider a language as part of their linguistic repertoire, that is, as part of the language that constitutes them as a being, even if the language is still a language the student is learning. The students state that they had never had opportunities to practice speaking English in the classroom before their DS experiences. In this case, it is assumed that the same may have occurred with the other languages recorded in the works. Furthermore, the students who included the languages 'French' and 'Japanese' in their portraits report that these are languages they study on their own with the help of smartphone apps and online videos.

All research participants present Portuguese in their portraits, even though two of them had begun learning the language less than a year before the experience (Figure 2). Of these, 11 depict Portuguese occupying a larger space in the portrait, the others depict the languages with equal importance or declined to explicitly state the differences between them. Only one of the 15 participants did not list English as part of their repertoire. In this specific case, we interpret this as forgetfulness: from the field diary entries, we observe that the participant is a member of the school choir and attends the music pedagogical workshop; in both of these spaces, she has always been a significant participant as a lead singer and is often very enthusiastic and requests that the songs be sung in English. She also watches films and series in the language; and she also appears to have a great appreciation for her English classes.

Figure 2 - Named languages identified in language portraits.



Source: Research data (2025).

Thirteen participants listed Spanish as part of their linguistic profile. Spanish appears represented in the same proportion as English in most cases; in two portraits, it appears less prominent than English, and in one, it appears more prominent. Five participants recognize Libras (Brazilian sign language) (terms such as hand signs and sign language are also used to refer to the language) as their constituent language. Two of these participants even emphasize the color designated for sign language in the region of their hands. Three other occurrences demonstrate named languages that are not part of the languages that appear as part of the formal curriculum in the school context: two participants attribute French and one Japanese to the languages that are part of their repertoire.

By opening the discussion to reflect on what language is and how our ways of interacting with others influence who we are, students attributed identity-related meanings to their linguistic profiles. In addition to the languages mentioned, participants mentioned expressions such as “*Catarina accent*”, “*Gaúcho accent*”, “*Tiktoks*”, “*memes*”, “*WhatsApp stickers*”, “*lettering*”, “*love*”, “*laughing*”, “*sarcasm*”, and “*face expression*” as resources for self-expression. This perception demonstrates that they go beyond the idea of language as a rigid and singular unit, denoting aspects beyond linguistics for expressing ideas.

Of the 15 participants, only one did not name their work (Table 2). The idea of representing part of their identity in language portraits begins with the terms ‘I’, ‘me’, and ‘my’, using the first-person singular in their titles. This singularity of each participant's identity is also expressed in the terms ‘my person’, ‘just me!’, and ‘the color of my body’; one participant further reinforces the idea with the title ‘the things that are most important to me’. The use of words like ‘language(s)’, ‘speak’, and ‘express’ demonstrates a plurality and repertoire for discussing the purpose of languages.

The emotional aspects recorded in language portraits as part of language practices transcend the boundaries of named languages. Li Wei (2018) argues that human communication is multimodal, multisensory, and multisemiotic, involving not only conventional language but also paralinguistic and extralinguistic elements such as gestures, facial expressions, and emotions.

When participants register that it is part of them to express themselves through laughter, crying, screaming, or even through actions, such as singing and playing their favorite sports, these can be seen as complementary semiotic resources within the concept of translanguaging (Ou; Gu; Hult, 2023). They not only ‘accompany’ language but are an integral part of meaning-making. This perspective aligns with the idea that we think beyond the boundaries of conventional language and use a variety of cognitive, semiotic, and emotional resources to communicate (Wei, 2018). Laughter and crying can express feelings that words cannot capture. Silence, present in one of the language portraits, can be a communicative choice loaded with cultural or personal meaning. By using drawing as a communication resource, two participants embrace a language so accessible that it can have an extremely broad understanding. Music and favorite sports can

represent modes of expression and interaction that transcend the limitations of named languages (Wei, 2018).

Table 2 – Titles given to the language portraits of the 15 research participants.

Participant	Assigned name
01	<i>My person</i>
02	<i>My languages</i>
03	[no title]
04	<i>My ways of language</i>
05	<i>The things that are most important to me</i>
06	<i>How do I express</i>
07	<i>My languages</i>
08	<i>Just me!</i>
09	<i>I can speak...</i>
10	<i>My person</i>
11	<i>My languages</i>
12	<i>I can speak...</i>
13	<i>My type of languages</i>
14	<i>My language forms</i>
15	<i>The colors of my body</i>

Source: Research data (2025).

By using these resources, participants demonstrate creativity and critical thinking, questioning traditional language norms and expanding their ability to create meaning in diverse contexts (Figure 3). These ways of perceiving languages can be used to highlight that language is not just a static system of symbols, but a dynamic and integrated process involving multiple modes of human interaction (Wei, 2018).

Amaral and Guerra (2022, p. 92) state that “emotion guides learning”. Emotions are part of cognitive processes, such as assigning value to experiences, constituting meaning, generating motivation, building memories, carrying out complex thoughts, making meaningful decisions, managing social interactions, and learning. Emotion and cognition are inseparable; they are part of interdependent processes that act cooperatively in the brain (Brosch *et al.*, 2013) including and especially in the process of teaching and learning (Immordino-Yang; Damásio, 2007).

Therefore, an emotionally supportive environment combined with the opportunity to transform what is learned in the classroom into something meaningful for life (Immordino-Yang, 2016) and the creation of spaces where emotions are perceived, discussed, and embraced promote meaningful and creative learning (Immordino-Yang; Damásio, 2007). Therefore, providing dialogue and openness so that aspects related to emotion are part of classroom studies increases the chances of students feeling included and being motivated to participate in what happens in the classroom.

Of the terms used by participants in the language portraits, practically half of them use terms associated with the idea of language and emotional aspects; including terms such as ‘love’, ‘looking’, ‘touching’, ‘feelings’, ‘screaming’, ‘sarcasm’, ‘face expressions’, ‘jokes’, ‘laughter’, ‘swearing’, ‘exercising’, ‘crying’, ‘drawing’, ‘smiling’, ‘silence’ e ‘affection’. Terms as ‘exercising’ and ‘drawing’ are justified in this list for the strong connection that the choice of those items have with emotional issues for the participants that elected them. Based on the records in the

field diary and the ethnographic nature of this research study, it is possible to affirm that these participants intended to record aspects of their identity, recording elements that constitute them as subjects of the educational context of the research study.

Figure 3 – Language portrait of one of the participants in the research study on the development of oral skills in EAL in a public school, in a plurilingual context.

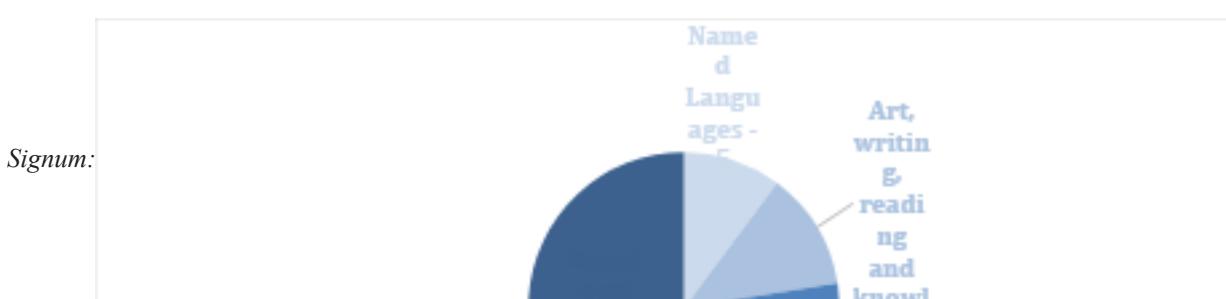


Source: Research data (2025).

The second most common category (Figure 4) reported by participants demonstrates the strong connection they, as teenagers, have with digital technologies, social media, and instant messaging apps in establishing social interactions, especially among themselves. When beginning discussions about the most prevalent forms of self-expression in their lives, the first things students mentioned involved questions like “there are things I can only express if I can use the right sticker on WhatsApp”; others said that sending TikToks, videos, emojis, memes, and specifically typed messages were more meaningful ways of expressing themselves.

Contemporary interactions are profoundly influenced by the online environment, with social media and the internet transforming the way people connect, seek information, and manage their relationships. Digital platforms replicate and adapt real-world social processes, but they also introduce unique dynamics, such as the tendency to maintain a high number of superficial connections and the impact of online approval metrics, which can shape users' self-image and emotional well-being (Firth *et al.*, 2019). The predominance of online interactions can limit opportunities for spontaneous and in-depth speaking practice, making it essential to create intentional spaces for authentic communication in the additional language.

Figure 4 - Categories and number of occurrences of terms used in language portraits.



Source: Research data (2025).

The issues of linguistic variation explored in the previous stage also emerge in the language portraits of some participants. Broadly speaking, two participants use the terms 'slang' and 'expressions' to convey this idea; another five participants record specific accents that they consider to identify them, using the terms "catarina accent", "gaucho accent", and "Joinville accent" (mentioning accents of specific regions from the South of Brazil). This usage shows that they recognize that their origins have given them linguistic characteristics that remain part of their identities. This perception can contribute to cognitive flexibility in general and can also serve to avoid emotional barriers in the development of the oral skills in an additional language.

In addition to named languages, emotional aspects, digital technologies as a means of interaction, and issues of linguistic variation and identity, some participants also mentioned arts, writing, reading, and knowledge as resources for interaction and communication. This blend of different ways of interacting with others creates new forms of self-expression, "the creative process it represents is an important and integral part of language evolution" (Wei, 2018, p. 14). Recognizing this plurality creates linguistic flexibility by reflecting on one's own linguistic profile and by recognizing the linguistic profile of one's peers. This flexibility, combined with prior learning, contributes to better understanding and valuing one's linguistic characteristics, developing greater confidence in communication (Concário; Nóbrega; Ramos, 2020). This confidence motivates independent participation in oral practices and interaction in an additional language (Kim, 2014).

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze how the reflective practice of developing language profiles may contribute to a greater understanding of students' bi/multi/plurilingual context and linguistic repertoire, and how this practice influences their oral production in EAL. The results indicate that reflection on one's own linguistic experiences and awareness of one's linguistic repertoire, provided by creating a language portrait, contributes to the development of a growth mindset, which fosters students' confidence in EAL oral production. It was observed that DS activities facilitated the acceptance of individual and collective linguistic diversity, reducing obstacles that could hinder, or even prevent, the development of EAL oral skills. Discussion practices on language concepts that value the fluid individual and collective characteristics of the processes of language use, construction, and transformation, the production of language portraits, research within and outside the school context, and records of students' oral production reveal a group of students with beliefs about languages that allow an opening for the expansion of linguistic repertoires, which can promote not only the development of oral skills themselves, but also the social, cognitive, and cultural development of students.

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