

**UNIVERSIDADE DE CAXIAS DO SUL
ÁREA DE HUMANIDADES
CURSO DE LICENCIATURA EM LETRA – INGLÊS**

MARIA CRISTINA BORGHETTI SCARABELOT

**PCN+ AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN
CAXIAS DO SUL/RS**

CAXIAS DO SUL

2018

SUMMARY

1	TOPIC	3
2	RESEARCH PROBLEM	3
3	MAIN OBJECTIVE	3
4	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	3
5	JUSTIFICATION	3
6	RELEVANCE	5
7	METHODOLOGY	5
7.1	Literature review	6
7.2	Documentary research	7
8	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	7
8.1	Foreign languages in the history of public education in Brazil	8
8.2	English in Brazilian High School	10
9	CHRONOGRAM	13
10	REFERENCES	13

1 TOPIC

Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais (PCN+) and the Teaching of English language in High School

2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

To what extent are the PCN+ guidelines implemented in public High School English classes in the city of Caxias do Sul/RS?

3 MAIN OBJECTIVE

Analyze whether a High School English teacher's Work Plan, in Caxias do Sul/RS, is based in the PCN+ for foreign languages or not, and if so to what extent.

4 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Show different moments of foreign language teaching in Brazilian public education;
- Discuss the challenges faced by English teachers as a foreign language in public High School;
- Examine an English teacher's Work Plan on the three years of a public State High School in Caxias do Sul/RS;
- Compare and contrast the contents, competences and abilities suggested in the PCN + to the ones recorded in the examined Work Plan.

5 JUSTIFICATION

The teaching of at least one foreign language in Brazil became mandatory from the sixth grade of Middle School to the third grade of High School in 1996. Since then documents which aim to assist and guide teachers in the process of teaching and learning their subjects have been written by specialists in education together with the school community. These documents, called Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais (PCN), were also thought to help standardize education around the country. Nevertheless, no regular or substantial teacher

training was offered to boost the new directions, and since they are not a requirement, teachers may not consider applying them.

I have always been interested in understanding what policies rule teaching in public education, as well as the reasons why the teaching of English language is so poorly effective. Moreover, it is disappointing to know that foreign language classes are sometimes so underestimated in the curriculum that even English teachers end up believing they are pointless. I heard about the existence of PCNs for the first time in the Internship I of my undergraduate major in Letras-Inglês at UCS. Reading part of the PCN I realized the purpose of teaching English in regular schools is different from the one in language institutes, and started looking at it in a different perspective. Then, I started becoming curious to find out if public school teachers rely on this document in order to plan their work or not.

Specific methods are not demanded by educational laws due to Brazil's remarkable size and vast cultural diversity as well as social inequality, and approaches that could work in some regions or realities may not work in others. So, what the Parameters appoint are suggestions in line with the goals of national education while allow teachers to have own autonomy to adapt their classes according to the students' background. However, many teachers keep making use of the outdated grammar-based methods, which have already been proven not to work effectively (ALMEIDA, 2012, p. 335).

The PCN+ (2002, p.23), which is the most recent publication for High School, presents the role of foreign languages in basic education, which is not only to teach program content but also to help students develop their critical thinking, reflection on the world around them, and autonomy. The lack of knowledge about these goals in conjunction with High School encyclopedic tradition may be the reason why most teachers tend to rely on grammar rules as their teaching method.

Stationary summaries, standardized and decontextualized activities, and passive learners, despite being observed in Brazilian schools, are not suggested in the official documents. On the contrary, they are said to be one of the reasons why teachers and students feel frustrated and carry the belief that languages cannot be learned in regular schools (ALMEIDA, 2016, p.3). Understanding the purpose of teaching and learning foreign languages as well as the competences and abilities to be developed by students suggested in the PCN+ could be the first step in making foreign languages more socially and educationally relevant to the school community.

Therefore, the present study aims to know to what extent the PCN+ guidelines are implemented in an English teacher's Work Plan in a public State High Schools in Caxias do Sul/RS. For many reasons, including the relevance in the contemporary world, and the easiness to find teachers, English has been the chosen foreign language to be implemented in the curriculum in most of the schools around this region and the country.

6 RELEVANCE

Teaching foreign languages in public education has been through different moments over the years in Brazil. Some methods have been baseline such as grammar-based and communicative; however, they were disqualified after years of flawed results. In order to understand the current situation of the teaching of languages in Brazilian High School, a historical outline with the most relevant changes it has faced is held. Moreover, this first overview is necessary to understand the PCN+ guidelines since they take into account the unsatisfactory, and beneficial aspects already experienced.

It is known that the non-implementation of the PCN+ in schools is not the only issue Brazilian High Schools face. Some challenges a large majority of English teachers need to deal with routinely are presented in this study, where they are introduced as the reasons why many teachers feel unsuccessful. For this reason, one of the intentions of the research is to provide another perspective of looking at the teaching and learning of languages in public High School, so that, while structural solutions do not happen, small changes can start in the classroom by the teachers.

The PCN+, just as the previous PCNs, was published with the mission of supporting and assisting educators around the country. English teachers can find the purpose of teaching a new language, as well as the competences and abilities they should introduce in the classes in order to reach this goal. Studying and applying them in the classes could be a cause for teachers to feel more successful and satisfied since they would be following the government directions for a quality education. Knowing the extent to which the PCN+ is implemented in a Work Plan will clarify whether the teacher relies on it or not.

7 METHODOLOGY

The present paper will be developed throughout a literature and a documental research. Firstly, a literature review will be handled over the background of foreign languages in

Brazilian High School and how they are regulated, which is significant to understand the situation of these classes in the curriculum nowadays. In addition, some of the challenges English teachers as the foreign language face will be indicated, since the lack of application of the PCN is not the only one found.

The documental research will be firstly to analyze the most recent document published for High School in the area of Languages, Codes and its Technologies, which was released in 2002 under the name of PCN+, and concentrate on the contents, competences and abilities suggested to be developed by the students. Subsequently, an English teacher's Work Plan for the three years of public High School in Caxias do Sul will be compared and contrasted to what is proposed by the policy document. The Work Plan to be analyzed according to the PCN+ is used by the teacher not only to list the contents needed to be handled each year but also to define the approaches, techniques, and resources used in the classes. Therefore, the aim of this analysis is to find if the Work Plan was based in any of the suggestions the official document submits, and if so to what extent.

7.1 Literature review

A brief outline of the history of foreign languages in Brazilian schools will be presented, indicating the reforms it has faced over the years. The intent on doing this descriptive research is to comprehend the regulations that guide today's language classes in High School. According to Best (1970 apud COHEN et al, 2007, p.205) a descriptive research is concerned with

conditions or relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of views, or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing. At times, descriptive research is concerned with how *what is* or *what exists* is related to some preceding event that has influenced or affected a present condition or event.

Most of what is outlined about reforms and laws that changed the educational system over the years could be found in books. On the other hand, the roles that foreign languages have played in history were found in journals, which will be the main source of information since they "represent in the present times one of the most important bibliographic sources" (GIL, 2002, p.45, our translation¹).

Additionally, a literature review on the challenges of teaching English in Public High School in Brazil will be held based on recent journal articles. The aim of this second part of

¹ In the original text: "representam nos tempos atuais uma das mais importantes fontes bibliográficas".

literature search is to show the PCN is not the only lack found in public schools. There are many issues that prevent a better quality education in the country.

7.2 Documentary research

According to Gil (2002, p. 45) both bibliographic and documentary research differentiate almost entirely in the nature of sources. As the name implies, this type of research focus on studying documents, which can vary broadly from personal records to public documents written by skilled professionals. In this study, two different types of documents will be studied: one official document published by the Brazilian government aimed at educators, and the others written by English teachers who work in public High Schools to formalize their work plans. The bibliographic research on foreign languages, and, more precisely, English in High School in Brazil is essential for this stage since “the documents must be studied in their context, in order to understand their significance at the time” (COHEN et al, 2001, p. 202).

The Ministry of Education published, in 2000, documents to assist High School teachers and schools in the execution of their educational functions. As mentioned in their website, ‘Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais’ (PCNs) were created to encourage and support the reflection upon daily practice, lesson planning, and the development of the curriculum. Then, a case study will be presented over an English teacher’s Work Plan who work in a public State High School in Caxias do Sul/RS. The Work Plans consists of the contents, abilities, teaching and learning strategies, evaluation criteria, resources, and recovery study. An analysis of what is p

8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The two sections researched for the first part of this study complement each other in the understanding of how English teaching is settled in Brazilian High School as well as the role English classes have in this stage of basic education. It is necessary to understand the context and background in which the PCN+ was written in order to be able to analyze it reliably. By understanding these subjects, looking critically at teachers’ Work Plans becomes more coherent and possible.

8.1 Foreign languages in the history of public education in Brazil

According to the História do Ensino de Línguas no Brasil (HELB)² website, the teaching of foreign languages began with the creation of Colégio Pedro II in Rio de Janeiro, in 1837, during the Imperial period. This institution was established to serve as a model to schools around the country, and it decreed the teaching of Latin, Greek, French, and English. Before that, during the Colonial period, due to its influence, French was taught in the Royal Military Academy. During these periods, as Quevedo-Camargo and Silva (2017) cite, the instruction was based on grammar and translation methods, in order to enable the access to literary texts in the target language, since the students were part of the aristocratic society and education was a symbol of social status.

A year after the Ministry of Education (MEC) was created, in 1930, a reform called Francisco Campos – the name of the then minister – was imposed to the whole nation, and revolutionized public education in Brazil. More specifically, it redesigned secondary education by creating a serial curriculum, requiring compulsory attendance and dividing it in two cycles: fundamental (five years) and complementary (two years) (ROMANELLI, 2010, p. 132-141). The Reform also stimulated the teaching of modern foreign languages, reducing the number of hours for Latin and increasing for English and French. Furthermore, as a response to the grammar-translation method, the Direct Method was elicited, emphasizing oral skills over the written ones (LEFFA, 1988 apud QUEVEDO-CAMARGO; SILVA, 2017).

A new Reform was undertaken in 1942, when the minister, Gustavo Capanema, started some renovations under the name of ‘Leis Orgânicas do Ensino Secundário’. These laws, according to Romanelli (2010, p. 160), restructured the secondary education in two cycles: ‘ginasial’ (4 grades) and ‘colegial’, which was divided in two: classic or scientific (3 grades). During this period, foreign languages were given even more focus since more hours were destined to French and English in both stages.

The year of 1961 was significant in Brazil’s education scenario, because it was when the first ‘Lei de Diretrizes e Bases’ (LDB) was approved, and implemented in the Constitution in order to establish guidelines and basis for the national education. However, the document discharged foreign languages from the curriculum, and made them optional. It also decentralized education, leaving the responsibility for foreign language implementation to the States. From this moment on, no methods for instruction were prescribed in official

² <http://www.helb.org.br/>

documents, and the teaching of languages became unsupported (QUEVEDO-CAMARGO; SILVA, 2017).

LDB underwent changes in 1971, and redrew the basic education structure, dividing it again in two stages: '1º grau' (later Elementary School) and '2º grau' (later High School). According to Veiga (2007, p. 313), the curriculum for this last stage had some subjects for general education which were in common for the whole country, and some other subjects that could be chosen by the States in line with the needs and singularities of the regions. The teaching of foreign languages remained optional, though.

Another great change in education happened in 1996, with the new LDB, which prevails until these days. The '1º and 2º graus' became Elementary and High School, respectively. The document determined the High School as the final stage in basic education and guarantees access for everybody. It also assigns four main purposes for High School, which are applicable to the role of foreign languages in the program:

- I – the consolidation and further development of the knowledge acquired in Elementary School, providing the continuation of the studies;
- II – basic preparation for work and citizenship so that pupils keep learning, in order to be able to adapt easily to new occupation conditions or subsequent adequacy;
- III – the improvement of the student as a human being, including ethical education and the development of intellectual autonomy and critical thinking;
- IV – the comprehension of scientific and technological basics of the production process, relating theory and experience in the teaching of each subject (BRASIL, 1996, our translation³).

The compulsory requirement of at least one foreign language in the curriculum returned with the 1996 LDB, and the law was applied from the sixth grade of Elementary School to the last year of High School. The language selection and the number of hours a week became the school community's responsibility. Again, no methods for the teaching of the languages were suggested. However, two years later the 'Parâmetros Curriculares

³ - In the original text:

I – a consolidação e o aprofundamento dos conhecimentos adquiridos no ensino fundamental, possibilitando o prosseguimento de estudos;

II – a preparação básica para o trabalho e a cidadania do educando, para continuar aprendendo, de modo a ser capaz de se adaptar com flexibilidade a novas condições de ocupação ou aperfeiçoamento posteriores;

III – o aprimoramento do educando como pessoa humana, incluindo a formação ética e o desenvolvimento da autonomia intelectual e do pensamento crítico;

IV – a compreensão dos fundamentos científico-tecnológicos dos processos produtivos, relacionando a teoria com a prática, no ensino de cada disciplina.

Nacionais' (PCN) started being published committed to assist teachers from all the subjects, including foreign languages.

The first PCN was aimed at Elementary School, yet in 2000 the Parâmetros Curriculares Nacional para o Ensino Médio (PCNEM), addressed to High School was posted, and the second part of the document focuses entirely in the area of Languages, Codes and its Technologies. In accordance with the introduction, “the document has a guiding and interpretive nature, proposing the interactivity, discussion, construction of meaning in, through and with language” (BRASIL, 2000, our translation⁴). In the foreign language section, a great focus is given to the competences that should be developed by the students, which go beyond grammar, but they also include: sociolinguistic, discursive, and strategic competences. The text breaks the paradigm that learning a new language is learning its grammar rules; on the contrary, it suggests the language as a means to access information and communicate appropriately in the globalized world. The PCNEM also implies that the students' reality must be taken into consideration before choosing the language to be taught, and also when choosing the method, the competences, and abilities to be worked in the classroom.

In 2002, complementary guidelines for High School were developed by the educational society and published under the name of PCN+. This document aims to facilitate the organization inside Brazilian schools in a more thorough way, and it also brings suggestions of pedagogical methods suitable to the social and cultural changes in the modern world.

8.2 English in Brazilian High School

As a matter of necessity, English is, nowadays, the foreign language taught in most of the schools in the country, and one of the reason for this prominence is that, because of globalization, it started to be used around the world as a *Lingua Franca*, which is a “‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (FIRTH, 1996 apud SEIDLHOFER, 2004).

⁴ In the original text: “O documento é de natureza indicativa e interpretativa, propondo a interatividade, o diálogo, a construção de significados na, pela e com a linguagem.” (BRASIL, 2000)

Despite all the policy documents, the teaching in public High School in Brazil is poorly regulated and there is a lack of standardization (BRITISH COUNCIL, 2015, p. 8). LDB is the only document which sets the basis of national education that is regulatory. The PCNs, by contrast, were published to guide the elaboration of the school curriculum, and, consequently standardizing teaching and learning, but are not required, nor supervised. A new document for High School has been published by MEC earlier this year, and has been analyzed by ‘Conselho Nacional de Educação’ (CNE) before being formalized, or not. Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) is a document that aims to improve the PCNs to more thorough and objective guidelines.

The lack of regulation is not the only issue foreign language in High School has to deal with. English teachers have to face challenges every day, and some of them are: a) few hours destined to foreign language classes in the curriculum – usually 45 or 90 minutes a week; b) heterogeneous classes, where students have different ages, language proficiency levels, races and social classes (ALMEIDA, 2016, p. 3); and c) absence of technological resources, such as computers, laptops, projectors, and internet connection.

Almeida (2016) discusses a “lack-of-it-all” belief that is shared by some public school teachers, which encompasses the lack of time, appropriate groups, and resources, and makes them, and the whole community, believe it is not possible to achieve language proficiency in regular schools. Where this assumption is observed, the transfer of responsibility to teach and learn English to language institutes is also seen. As a consequence, a diversion of one of the principles of education (LDB, 1996), which is guarantee of quality standards is arisen.

For a long time the methods used in language schools were reproduced in the regular ones. One example is the audio-lingual method, which during the 1970s was very successful in private institutions with its emphasis on oral skills and exhaustive repetition of structural exercises; however, because of all the conditions involved, showed to be little effective in public classrooms, especially regarding fluency (ALMEIDA, 2012, p. 333).

As the audio-lingual method was seen as disqualified, researchers started proposing, from the 1980s on, a new methodology called ‘communicative approach’. According to Fonseca e Rojas (2007, p.6), a greater interest on the social aspects of language emerged from this approach, focusing on the point, meaning, and the interaction among the individuals in the foreign language. Almeida (2012, p. 333) states that “this movement identifies the skill of reading as the most relevant one for the students attending the majority of Brazilian regular

schools”, since the use of this ability outside school is more likely to be useful than the knowledge of the grammar rules, which do not mean capacity to communicate properly. This approach became so well recognized that the first PCN for foreign languages (1998, p. 20) addresses it, and claims that “reading meets, on the one hand, the needs of formal education, and, on the other, it is the ability that the students can use in his/her immediate social context” (our translation⁵).

The PCN+ mentions that the strictly encyclopedic tradition of Brazilian High School causes students’ disinterest and low performance. Some of the characteristics of the traditional method that are criticized by the documents are the absence of contextualization, patterned exercises, and students as passive receivers of information. Although the government has a proposal which goes beyond this disruptive instruction, it was not enough widespread to be effected. This proposal mentioned are the guidelines included in the PCN+, which will receive its own section in the present work.

According to Almeida (2016, p.3), “[...] at regular schools ELT⁶ must contribute to the education of the student as a whole, so the concern in this context has more to do with the development of critical, responsible citizens, than with the promotion of language proficiency per se”. Understanding the reason why foreign languages are in the curriculum and what is expected the students to learn and develop from them – and apply it – can be the first step to eradicate the untrue belief that teaching English in basic education is pointless.

⁵ In the original text: “[...] a leitura atende, por um lado, às necessidades da educação formal, e, por outro, é a habilidade que o aluno pode usar em seu contexto social imediato” (BRASIL, 1998, p. 20)

⁶ English Language Teaching

9 CHRONOGRAM

YEAR	2018					2019				
MONTHS	August	September	October	November	December	March	April	May	June	July
ACTIVITIES										
Topic definition	X									
Searching and reading of theoretical support	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	X		
Justification and Relevance			x							
Problem, Goal and Objectives		X								
Chronogram			x							
Theoretical Framework			x	x	x	x	x	x		
Methodology			x	x						
TCC I Submission				x						
Qualifying Session					x					
TCC I Final Version					x					
Writing Chapters						x	x	x		
Conclusion									x	
TCC II Submission									x	
TCC Presentation										x
TCC II Final Version										x

10 REFERENCES

Books:

COHEN, Louis; MANION, Lawrence; MORRISON, Keith. **Research Methods in Education**. 6. ed. New York: Routledge, 2007.

GIL, Antonio Carlos. **Como Elaborar Projetos de Pesquisa**. 4. ed. São Paulo: Editora Atlas, 2002.

ROMANELLI, Otaíza de Oliveira. **História da Educação no Brasil**. 36. ed. Petrópolis, Rj: Editora Vozes, 2010.

VEIGA, Cynthia Greive. **História da Educação**. São Paulo: Editora Ática, 2007.

Articles:

ALMEIDA, Ricardo L. T. The teaching of English as a foreign language in the context of Brazilian regular schools: a retrospective and prospective view of policies and practices. *RBLA*, v. 12, n. 2, p. 331-348, 2012. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.24.2473>

ALMEIDA, Ricardo L. T. ELT in Brazilian Public Schools: History, Challenges, New Experiences and Perspectives. **Education Policy Analysis**, v. 24, n. 81, ago. 2016. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.24.2473>

COSTA, Isabel Nascimento da. **A Aprendizagem de Língua Estrangeira na Escola Pública**: Reflexões sobre Métodos de Ensino. 20f. Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso (Graduação) – Curso de Letras, Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, 2017.

FONSECA, Regina B.; ROJAS, Jucimara. A formação de professores de língua estrangeira no Brasil sob o enfoque do liberalismo e do marxismo. 21 f. VII Jornada do HISTEDBR, Universidade Federal do Mato Grosso do Sul, 2007. Available at: http://www.histedbr.fe.unicamp.br/acer_histedbr/jornada/jornada7/03trab-gt-gt2.htm

QUEVEDO-CAMARGO, Gladys; SILVA, Gutemberg. O inglês na educação básica brasileira: sabemos sobre ontem; e quanto ao amanhã? **Ens. Tecnol. R.**, Londrina, v. 1, n. 2, p. 258-271, jul./dez. 2017. Available at: <https://periodicos.utfpr.edu.br/etr>

SEIDLHOFER, Barbara. 10. Research Perspectives on Teaching English As a Lingua Franca. **Annual Review of Applied Linguistics**, 24, 209–239, 2004. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190504000145>

Websites:

<http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/consti/1988/constituicao-1988-5-outubro-1988-322142-publicacaooriginal-1-pl.html> <Accessed in Oct. 12th, 2018>

http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/L9394.htm <Accessed in Oct. 12th, 2018>

<http://pne.mec.gov.br/> <Accessed in Oct. 19th, 2018>

http://portal.mec.gov.br/seb/arquivos/pdf/pcn_estrangeira.pdf <Accessed in Oct. 21st, 2018>

<http://portal.mec.gov.br/seb/arquivos/pdf/linguagens02.pdf> <Accessed in Oct. 21st, 2018>

http://portal.mec.gov.br/seb/arquivos/pdf/14_24.pdf <Accessed in Oct. 21st, 2018>

<http://www.helb.org.br/index.php/revista-helb/ano-1-no-1-12007/98-historia-do-ensino-de-linguas-no-brasil-avancos-e-retrocessos> <Accessed in Nov. 2nd, 2018>