

ECER 2011  
European Conference on Educational Research  
Freie Universität Berlin  
13-16 September, 2011.



## Plurilingual and Intercultural Education as a Challenge for Language Teacher Education –

The case of a research project

Ana Sofia Pinho ([anapinho@ua.pt](mailto:anapinho@ua.pt)) (presenting author) (\*)  
Gillian Moreira ([gillian@ua.pt](mailto:gillian@ua.pt))

(\*) Research Centre Didactics and Technology in Education of Trainers  
University of Aveiro



### Research Interests



Research line: Education, Supervision and Development



Language Didactics & Teacher Education

#### Line of inquiry:

- (Student) teachers' learning to draw on linguistic and cultural diversity in their teaching;
- Focus on language teachers' professional knowledge, thinking and acting, and learning over time (professional development);
- Language teacher education (processes, strategies, contents...).

**Pluralistic approaches** to languages and cultures (Candelier et al., 2007),  
namely awakening to languages, plurilingual and intercultural education

### Talk's structure

- Theoretical background
- The research project "English at Primary School"
- The study: methodological details
- Findings
- Concluding remarks

### Teacher education for a diversity-engaged teaching

- Fostering of opportunities for teachers' professional development in the scope of plurilingual and intercultural education – enduring question

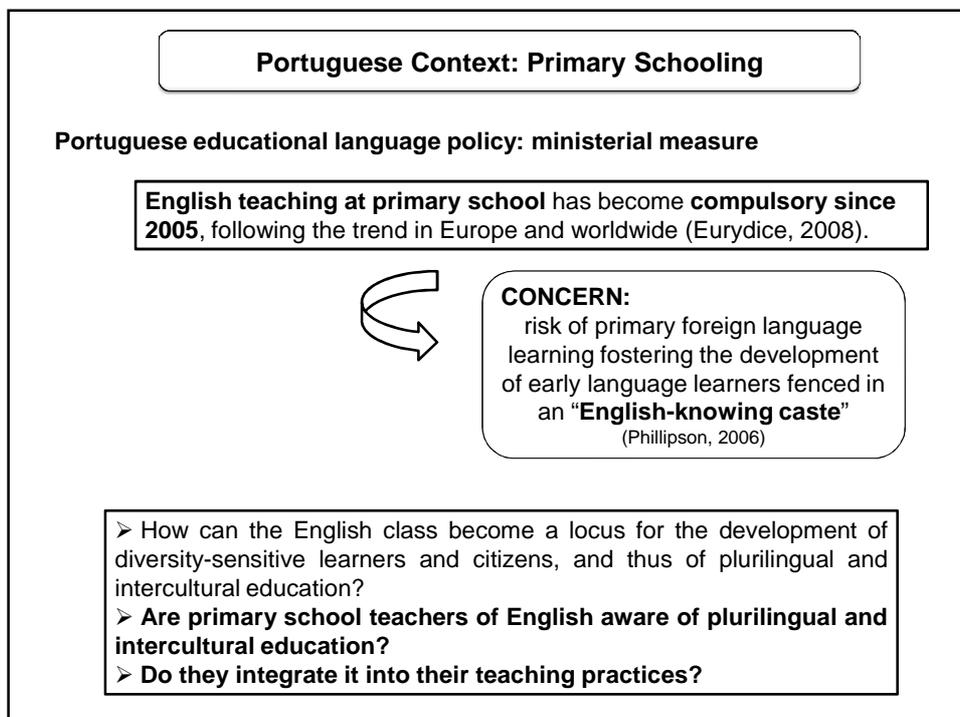
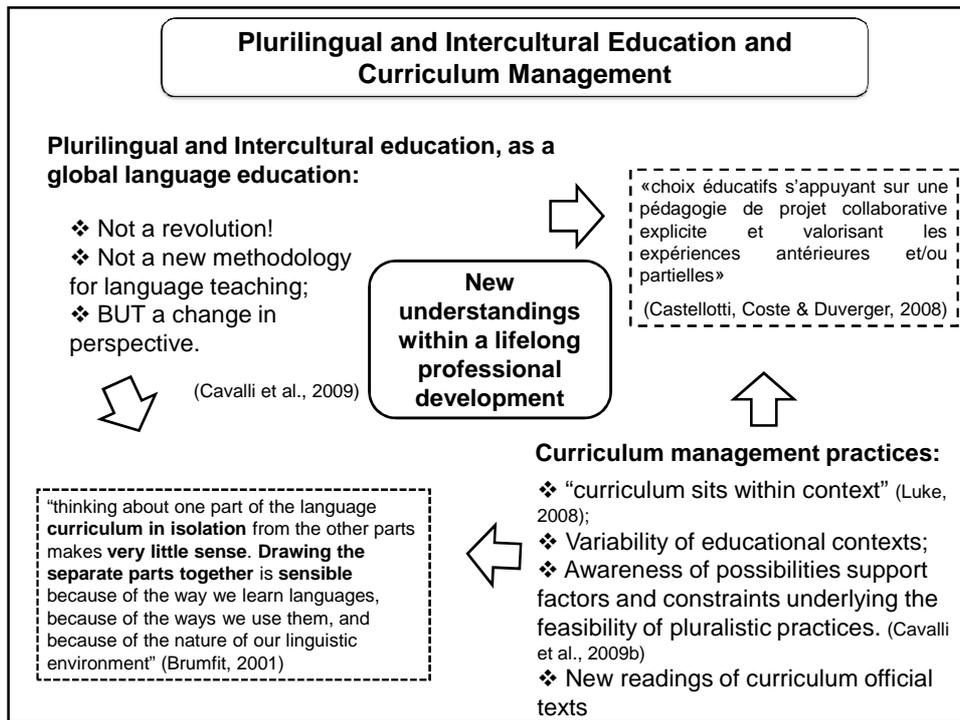
(Beacco & Byram, 2007; Cushner & Mahon, 2009; Cochran-Smith *et al.*, 2008).

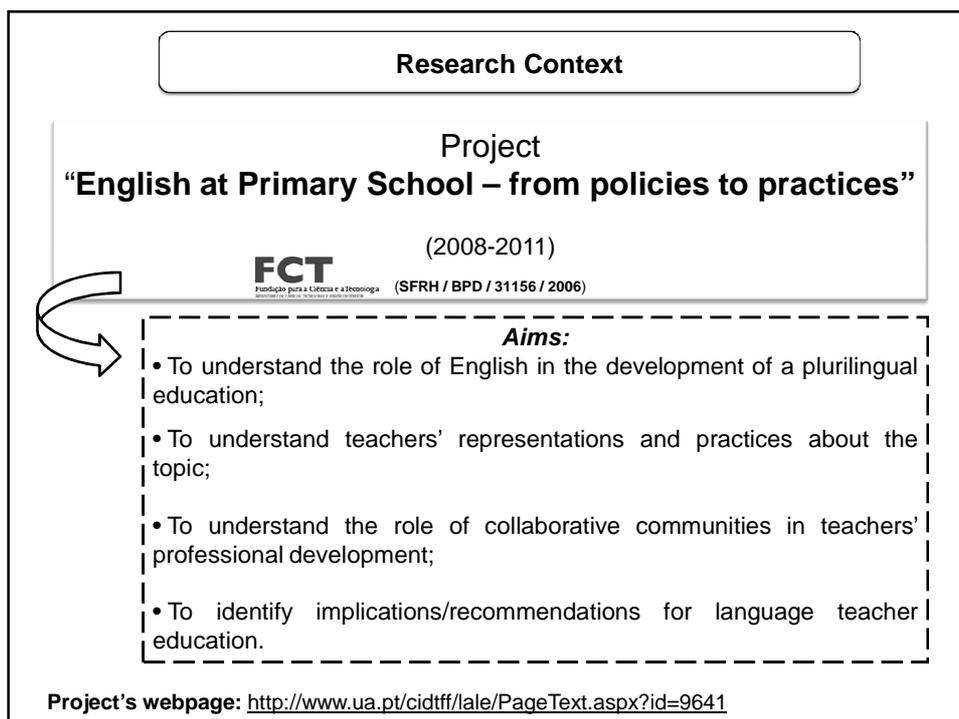
Teacher education practices are intended to "raise language teachers' awareness of plurality and grasp of otherness at several levels – individual, societal and interpersonal –, seeking to sensitise and motivate language teachers to engage with language/diversity, and to transform such commitment into pedagogical actions."

(Pinho *et al.*, 2011).

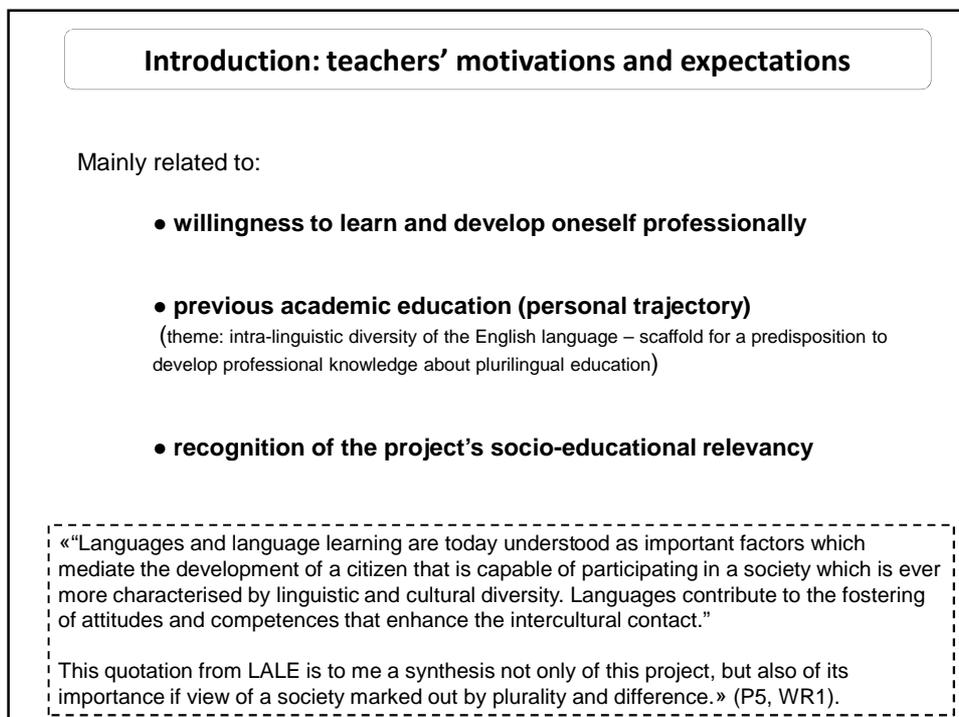
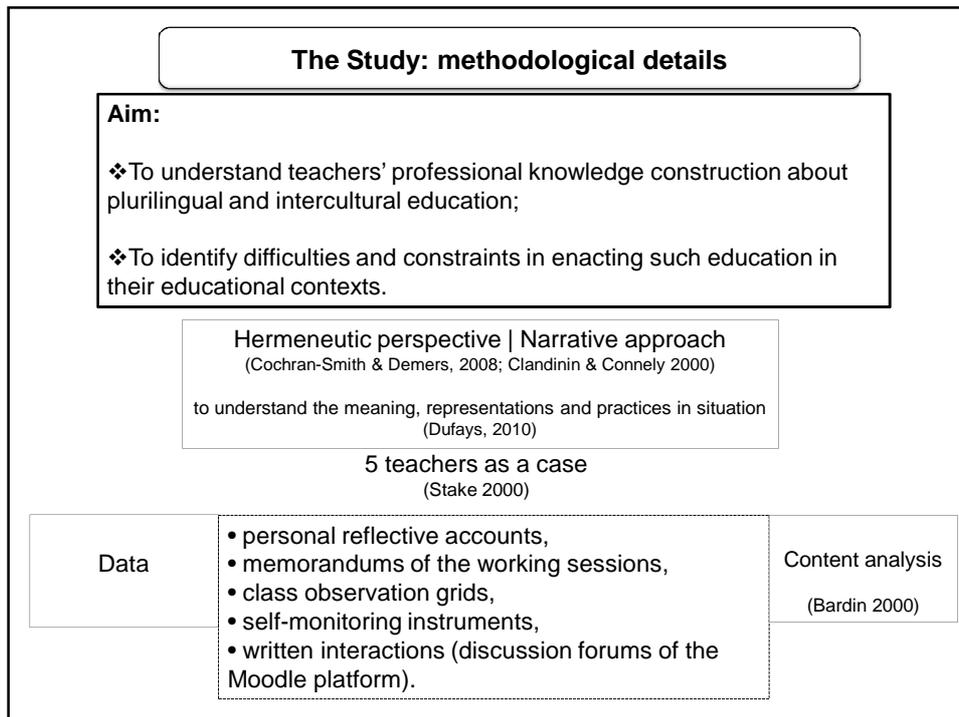
- Relevance of the creation of powerful learning environments in which language teachers can construct new structures of meaning and professional knowledge towards a more diversity-sensitive language teaching

(Pinho *et al.*, 2011; see as well Arnesen, Allan & Simonsen, 2009; Breidbach, Elsner and Young, 2011).





<b>Teacher education programme (accredited   2 school years)</b>	
<i>Plurilingual and intercultural English: Paths through awakening to languages/cultures to a culture of creativity and innovation</i>	
<b>Phase 1</b>  February 2009 - June 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Calendar</b></li> <li>• <b>Reflection upon/ knowledge of self, others and contexts</b></li> <li>• <b>Readings</b></li> <li>• <b>Contact with didactic projects and materials ...and analysis of pedagogical guiding instruments of teaching practices</b></li> <li>• <b>Planning (7 thematic units)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2</b>  September 2009 - July 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Planning (7 thematic units) - continuation</b></li> <li>• <b>Didactic experimentation – enactment of plurilingual education through intervention projects at schools</b>                (construction of didactic intervention plans, development of the projects and evaluation)</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 3</b>  July 2010/ September 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Global appreciation</b>                (overview of the educational process, professional knowledge development and community building)</li> </ul>



## Dialogue between English (Teaching) and Diversity

**Teachers' main representation of English:** object of power, mainly associated to a instrumental, utilitarian perspective; nuances of its intercultural value

"As teacher, I intend to show the importance of the assimilation of linguistic and cultural knowledge of the English language, as well as to put in evidence the predominance of this language in the financial, labouring and intellectual markets." (P1, Q1)

**Tension** between such representation and the acknowledgement of linguistic and cultural diversity, and the aims of language education nowadays (plurilingual and intercultural competences) by means of pluralistic approaches (such as *éveil aux langues*)

Knowledge of the existence of a range of languages and cultures

Intra-linguistic diversity of the English language  
vs  
Standard English (norm)

1- "I try to make my pupils aware of linguistic and cultural diversity" (P5, Q1)

2- "to foster an education for communication and diversity" (P5, Q1)

"In the course of time, primacy has been given to the need of becoming 'native speakers' and teaching our pupils the 'Standard English' so that they can be native speakers as well. [...] I try to show that there are varieties and variations within a same language and all over the world, [...] namely because languages are in constant evolution" (P4, Q1)

## Findings

**Professional knowledge construction** (Sá-Chaves & Alarcão, 2000):

- From lack of knowledge to some insight about plurilingual education, but the capacity to enact it requires a professional development process over time.

**Understanding of Plurilingual Education**  
(through an Awakening to Languages/Cultures Approach)

- Awareness of the personal/contextual **possibilities and constraints**;
- Awareness of **self-limitations** and of expansion of linguistic culture and world vision + sense of self-empowerment to develop a plurilingual education.
- Evolving **critical educational awareness** (namely of the organisation of the linguistic curriculum of Primary education);
- Acknowledgement of the **complementary nature of curricular scenarios** (*early teaching of foreign language + awakening to languages/cultures*);
- **Broadening** of the **perspective** about the **English syllabus** at primary level – other possibilities to plan language education;



- Contextual knowledge & competences to manage the language curriculum in order to bring plurilingual and intercultural education into the curriculum  
- Feasibility of plurilingual and intercultural education in the English class

**Findings**

**Difficulties and Constraints:**

Mainly related to:

- **Lack of professional knowledge about plurilingual education / Didactics of Plurilingualism:**
  - *Knowledge of the theory:* what is plurilingual education?
  - *Knowledge of the curriculum:* educational aims; unfamiliarity with European and Portuguese reference / guiding educational documents (EFRL, 2001; CARAP, 2007; Key-Competences for Basic Education; Curriculum and Programmes of other curricular areas)

Personal  
dimension

"I must confess that I contacted with some of these concepts, mainly that of plurilingual competence, I was apprehensive. It was a concept I didn't know and as something new it ended up being exciting, but frightening at the same time. Mostly because it is a key-concept in this workshop, in the development of this project and its experimentation. We cannot teach something we don't master or which we have little knowledge of. Therefore it was a challenge and a difficulty, although latter took place only at the beginning" (P4, WR1)

**Findings**

- *Knowledge of educational aims and values:* reference to many of the aims/values of language education, namely in the context of a broader perspective – education for citizenship –, but no use of terms related to plurilingual education in that context.
- *Practical knowledge*
  - *Planning* – know-how about the stages of awakening to languages approach, typology of activities, management of the English programme to integrate such activities (burden of fulfilling the programme)

"Having as foundation both theoretical concepts and practices, we began our own planning work and the development of didactic supports for each didactic unit. It wasn't always easy to develop the activities according to planned, and following the organising steps according to the conceptual framework of the Awakening to Languages approach. But with the support of theory, the teacher educator's guidance, and with a trial/error or success strategy, we evolved over time and we got to realise the logic links and chains of the activities" (P2, WR1)

"due to the accomplishment of the syllabus which we are obliged to, we will have to be very systematic in order to be able to put in practice all the planned activities and thematic units" (P5, WR1)

### Findings

- *Classroom Interaction*

- setting in motion their strategic-interactive and didactic repertoire (ex. strategic competence to manage the accomplishment of the activities);
- insecurity about pedagogically dealing with unexpected situations related with representations about diversity (xenophobia, racism...);
- development of a pedagogical meta-language related to a Didactics of plurilingualism;
- *content knowledge* – answering pupils' queries about languages/cultures other than English;
- dealing with pupils' competences and motivation to solve the activities;
- using pupils' utterances as an opportunity to foster didactic work;
- turning (unexpected) potentially learning situations to advantage.

### Findings

- **Lack of training in pedagogy of primary education and didactics of language learning at a young age:**

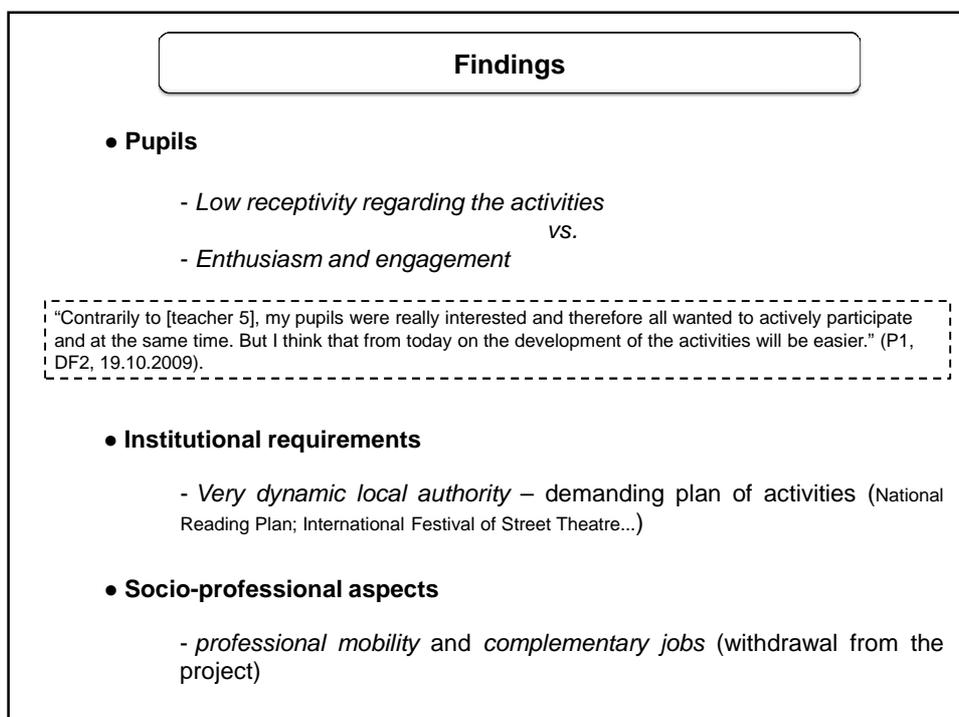
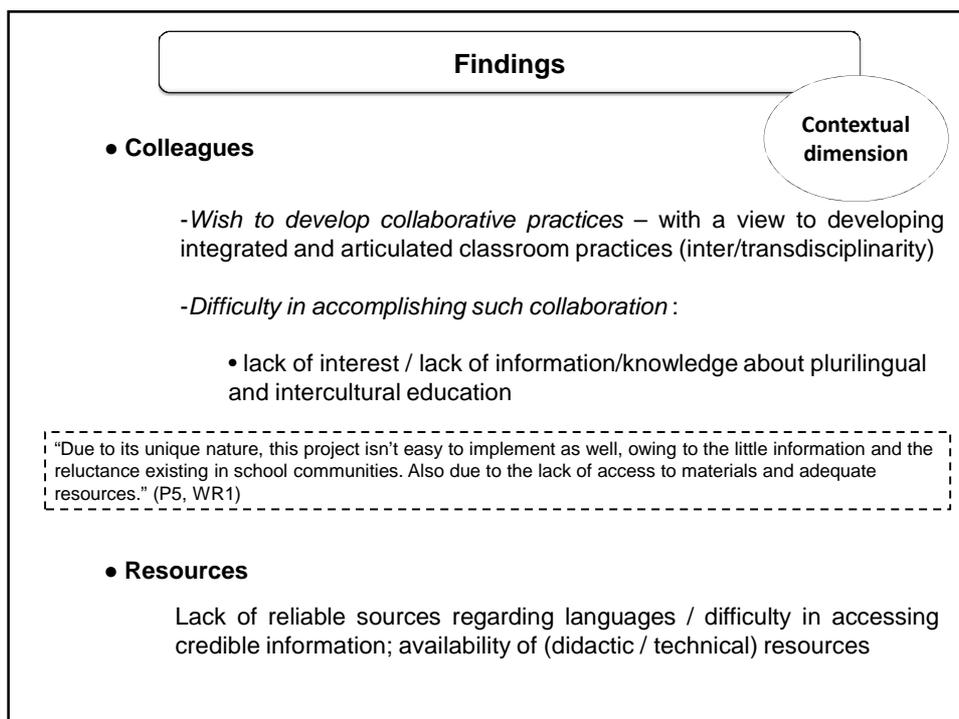
"All this process becomes even more time-consuming and laborious because my academic training didn't prepare me to deal with pupils this young." (P1, WR1)

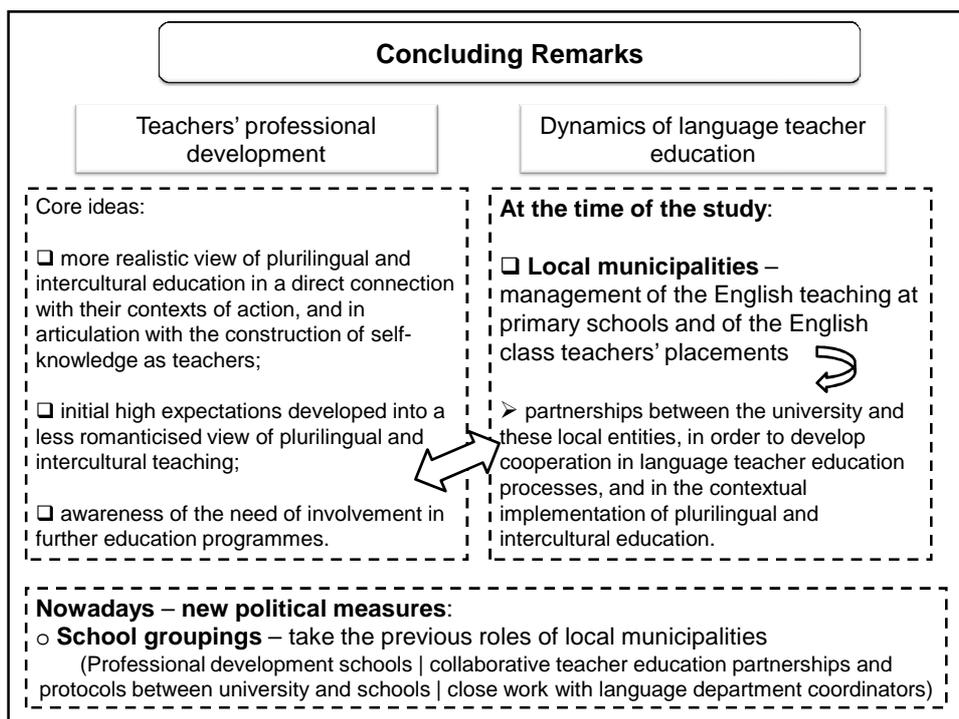
"This workshop had, for me, a huge importance. Being my academic training directed to the 3rd cycle of basic education and secondary schooling, I feel I don't have a sufficiently solid 'background' to the primary school context. As such, I had the opportunity to know, learn and deepen a series of approaches and methodologies, both with the teacher educator and all the colleagues, which have a more 'effective' experience in this school cycle." (P3, WR1).



**Aggravation of the former aspects**

(Edelenbos et al., 2006)





**ECER 2011**  
European Conference on Educational Research  
Freie Universität Berlin  
13-16 September, 2011.



**Obrigada!**

**Thank you!**

**Ana Sofia Pinho ([anapinho@ua.pt](mailto:anapinho@ua.pt)) (presenting author)**  
**Gillian Moreira ([gillian@ua.pt](mailto:gillian@ua.pt))**