

**INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES TO LEARN  
AND TEACH ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
USING ELECTRONIC MEDIA**  
**Práticas Pedagógicas Inclusivas para Ensino-aprendizagem de  
Inglês como Língua Estrangeira Usando Meios Eletrônicos**

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**Abstract**

*In this paper we present and discuss the curricular reformulation occurred in an English Language Teaching course, especially concerning the introduction of new technologies to teach and learn the English language and the results we have been able to notice, relating to the students' language competences and their development as (future) English teachers. The introduction of new technologies is seen as an indispensable act in a Teaching Education course, as our goal is to provide our students with opportunities to become English teachers who are able to use language in its several and varied manifestations, including written, spoken and virtual texts.*

**Key-words:** *new technologies; curricular reformulation; teacher education; virtual environment.*

**Resumo**

*Neste artigo, apresentamos e discutimos a reforma curricular ocorrida em um curso de Letras-Inglês, tendo como foco principal a introdução das novas tecnologias no ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa e os resultados percebidos em relação ao desenvolvimento das competências lingüísticas dos alunos e de seu desenvolvimento como (futuros) professores de língua inglesa. A introdução das novas tecnologias é vista como indispensável em um curso de formação de professores, pois nosso objetivo é oferecer aos alunos oportunidades de se tornarem professores de inglês que sejam capazes de usar a língua em suas diversas manifestações, incluindo textos escritos, falados e virtuais.*

**Palavras-chave:** *novas tecnologias; reformulação curricular; formação de professores; ambiente virtual.*

## 1. Introduction

The foreign languages teaching area has been going through constant changes especially since the sixties. As Kern & Warschauer (2000) summarize, its focus has been amplified, from grammar structures teaching to the development of communicative skills. To be able to express yourself creatively became more important than memorizing dialogs, and meaning negotiation is more desirable than repetition exercises. Some course books have started to distinguish between oral and written textual forms, including authentic and literary texts in their syllabuses. In this new context, CD-ROMs, multimedia and access to foreign language texts available on the Web have also come up.

These new technologies and the way to access them have produced a need to reflect upon our language and reading views and this reflection has caused deep changes in our foreign language teaching practice.

This paper reports the process of introducing technologies in English as a Foreign Language Teaching in a Brazilian University<sup>1</sup> located in the interior of the state of São Paulo. We discuss the curriculum reformulation of our Language course (English teachers education), reflecting upon the use of technology as a teaching resource and object, as well as the teaching strategies and approaches that should be used with and for the new technologies. Even though it has not been a long experience, we have been able to notice more motivation on the part of our students and, effectively, a larger development of the students' communicative skills.

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<sup>1</sup> It is University of Sorocaba (Uniso) - an average-size university, with around ten thousand students and thirty-five graduation courses, besides post-graduation and extension courses.

## 2. Background

In Brazil, there are new laws that rule the curricular organization of graduation courses. The National Educational Council (*Conselho Nacional de Educação*) approved on February 18, 2002, Resolution no. 1,(2002a) which institutes National Curricular Guidelines (*Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais*) for regular teacher education courses in universities, and on the next day, February 19, 2002, Resolution no. 2 (2002b), which institutes the duration of these courses (determining minimum study hours).

According to these two Resolutions, teacher education courses should consist of a minimum of 2800 hours, including 400 hours of practice, 400 hours of supervised curricular training, 1800 hours of cultural-scientific curricular subjects, and 200 hours for academic-scientific-cultural activities.

On March 13, 2002, Resolution no. 16, establishing the Curricular Guidelines for Language courses, was approved. According to this document, Language courses should offer opportunities to develop intercultural competent professionals who are able to, among other skills, use new technologies.

In the above-mentioned university, we have reformulated the English Language course, trying to follow the LDBEN/1996 (Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education) and the National Guidelines for Teacher Education and Languages courses. These transformations were performed through discussions and meetings with the English Language course professors, who are faculty members. We had noticed that our course used to focus on future teachers' education, trying to prepare the students to teach language and literature, but leaving behind the development of communicative skills. In our meetings, we sought ways to modernize the course curriculum, introducing new curricular components<sup>2</sup> which could educate future teachers with and for the use of new technologies. These transformations had two main

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<sup>2</sup> Curricular components are considered, in this text, as a synonym for subjects.

goals: to promote the inclusion of curricular components focusing on new technologies usage and to develop our students' communicative skills. We believe that as we included new curricular components, using computers, CD-ROMs and the web, we have also incorporated new language teaching and learning conceptions.

### **2.1. Teacher education for technologies usage**

The introduction of new technologies in our language teaching courses was possible due to a conjunction of factors. One of the main reasons was, undoubtedly, the faculty members' permanent development. In our courses, there are professors who have finished or are finishing their doctorate programs in language teaching, translation, languages and semiotics. Another important factor is that the institution has a Teachers' Permanent Development Program, which offers several courses, among them: Didactics for Multimedia: from overhead projector to virtual room; Distance learning teachers education; and How to improve TelEduc resources use. These courses involve theory and use of new technologies for regular classrooms and also for distance learning.

### **2.2. Laboratories' conditions**

The laboratories and equipment infrastructure offered by this institution have promoted the development of English teaching-learning activities in different environments. There is a language laboratory, with 20 individual cabins, where the students are able to do listening activities, improving their comprehension and pronunciation; and two computer laboratories, with 40 machines in each one, with Internet access, which can be used through teacher scheduling. There are also data projectors and other audiovisual resources available for the classroom, which not only the teachers but also the students can use in their activities. Furthermore, the professors can use a LMS (Learning Management System) called TelEduc. This software allows the teacher to create a virtual classroom, named support room, where the students can make free use of contents and several kinds of activities, and these support

rooms can also provide further opportunities for all the students to interact using the target language.

### 2.3. Pedagogical fundamentals for these changes

The changes occurred in the curriculum of our Teacher Education courses, facilitated by the permanent development of our faculty members and by the infrastructure provided by the institution, were also guided by new pedagogical fundamentals referring both to foreign language teachers' education, and to acquisition and development of our students' linguistic skills.

Our Institution used to have a very strong structuralistic tradition in foreign language teaching, which was reinforced by a quite inflexible and old-fashioned curriculum. When we discussed the curriculum reformulation, in order to comply with the new legislation, we were able to adopt new paradigms and to attempt, through the inclusion of new curricular components, to pursue a sociocognitive approach, which was considered more appropriate to the use of informatics resources in teaching.

Kern & Warschauer (2000) remember us that the sociocognitive approach has in Hymes (1971) and Halliday (1978) its main initial strength. According to these linguists, they explain, language is a phenomenon which is socially constructed. Hymes created the term *communicative competence* as a reply to the idea of linguistic competence developed by Chomsky, insisting on the idea that the usage rules validate the grammar rules, which was called by him *appropriateness* (Hymes, 1971 *apud* Kern & Warschauer, 2000). Therefore, Hymes understood that grammar rules are not autonomous, as they depend on social acceptance, in the same way that cognition cannot be separated from communication.

Halliday (1978), in turn, as Kern and Warschauer mentioned, introduced the three main language functions: ideational, interpersonal and textual, reinforcing the fact that foreign languages teaching used to deal only with the ideational function (i.e. referential use of the language,

to express content), while the interpersonal (i.e. language use to keep social relations) and textual functions (i.e. creation of a relevant discourse, according to the situation) were neglected.

In the eighties, communicative competence ruled language teaching, going beyond linguistic competence, as it involved sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic competences. The teaching focus became to be targeted on the student, going beyond the comprehensible input, as it was also concerned with helping students to deal with authentic discourses in discursive communities, in which they might participate later.

In the sociocognitive approach, reading and writing are considered processes which occur in specific sociocultural contexts. Teaching reading is no longer only a matter of individual strategies learning, but it tries to help students to become participants in linguistic communities. In the same way, teaching writing goes beyond the development of individual strategies and includes different forms of communicating according to the writer's audience (Kern & Warschauer, 2000).

#### **2.4. Technologies' role**

Our curricular reformulation, going from a curriculum which was grounded in structuralistic principles of language teaching to one based on a sociocognitive approach, included a new conception of use of the technological resources which were available in the institution. We were gradually able to introduce new programs in the language laboratory, which replaced the old tutorial programs that only allowed the students to do repetition exercises (drills) and "test" their English grammatical knowledge. At the same time, some teachers started to introduce in their classes activities which involved the use of computers connected to the Internet, always trying to focus on collaborative work in real communicative situations. The focus had changed: from the interaction of the students *with* the computer, to the interaction with other people *through* the computer.

Step by step, teachers could become more conscious of the new pedagogical possibilities for language teaching and for teacher education

deriving from the use of computers. WWW is an endless source of information and possibilities of contact with people from places throughout the world.

The computer, as an interaction tool, permits communication, either synchronous or asynchronous, in the target language, with other language learners. In a short period of time, only a few years, we have gone from email and IRC (Internet Relay Chat) MOO and MOOD, to blogs, Orkut communities, instantaneous messages from MSN and other programs, which allow communication from one-to-one or from one-to-many.

WWW, composed of texts and other media interconnected in the way of hypertexts (or hypermedia), enables non-linear, fast and inexpensive access<sup>3</sup> to an infinity of data and information which integrate, in most of the cases, images, graphics, audio and video. The vast amount of information and possibilities of pedagogical use are still being discovered by the teachers. The students can also publish their texts or other contents on the web. Nowadays, besides the possibilities of creating their own homepages, people can use photoblogs, videoblogs and there are sites that are specialized in publishing short amateur films. As a consequence of this contact with multimodal texts, communication involving the knowledge of integrated languages (video, audio, graphics, colors, etc.) has brought a challenge to the school environment: teaching this multimodal use of writing.

The Internet involved in its origin the idea of communication and information exchange. Nowadays, with the resources of voice use on IP (VOIOP), it is possible to talk to people (and to see them, through a webcam) in the entire world at very low costs (comparing to the costs of traditional long-distance calls). Collaborative works have been developed through WIKI resources, a program which permits collaborative writing of several participants. Today, there are oriented

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<sup>3</sup> In Brazil, there is still a large portion of the population who has no access to the Internet, and connection costs are also not affordable to most of the population. We have considered in this study our students' population and the Web access ways made available to the students by the Institution.

research works which “have migrated” from traditional teaching to the web, with some modifications and advantages: Webquests and teaching based on projects. One of the most recent initiatives for web use in foreign languages teaching is Tandem, which is an adaptation of *penpals*, and whose promising results are starting to be published.

Learning virtual environments (in English, LMS – Learning Management Systems) also open a huge perspective for foreign languages teaching and learning. In these environments, provided by teaching institutions, teachers are able to create classrooms that function as extensions of their regular classrooms and develop collaborative activities which explore authentic communication (discussion forums, chats, web research, etc.), improving even more the possibilities of the acquisition of language *in use*. In these virtual rooms, differently from the web environment, the students’ entrance is managed by the teacher, which facilitates his/her assessment process of the proposed activities as an extension of the regular classroom, permitting an integration of the face-to-face and mediated teaching proposals.

A computer connected to the Internet can support language teaching in several ways, especially in the sociocognitive approach, as it allows interaction among local students or groups of students in any other parts of the world, in varied contexts and several discursive communities. These communities may already exist, or the computer and the Internet can help to create new ones.

## 2.5. Curricular integration

Our experiences concerning the introduction of technologies in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language and in English teachers’ education corroborate Meskill’s and Ranglova’s assertion (2000) that the success of using technologies in foreign language teaching is related to how integrated they are to the learning social context and to the content. In our case, with the curricular matrix changes, we could offer curricular components which, in an integrated way, favored the development of sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic competence. In addition, they

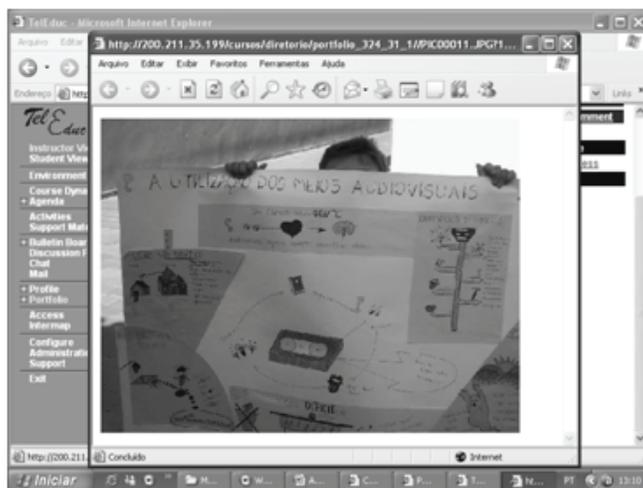
prepared the students to use English teaching integrating technologies. The following sections illustrate how the curricular components were conducted with the students.

### 2.5.1. Didactics for Multimedia

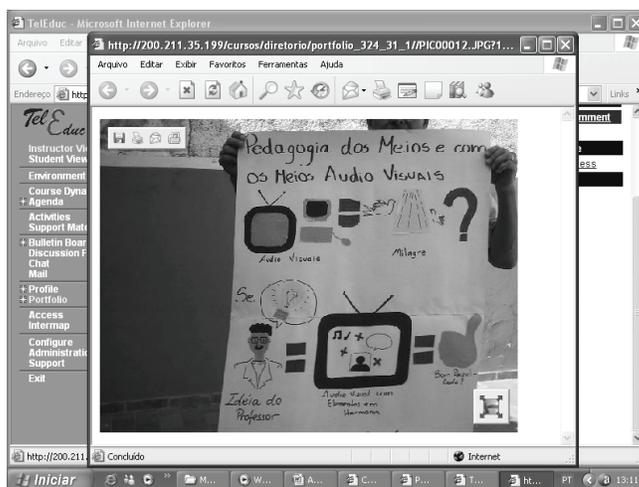
The curricular component Didactics for Multimedia, with duration of 80 hours, mainly aims at discussing theoretically and practicing the use of media resources for foreign languages teaching. In one of the proposed activities, the students analyze an extensive audiovisual material (VHS and DVD), observing and interpreting relations between the means of expression (sound, image, movement, color, oral and written texts) and the material's content. Through debates in the classroom, we study the possibilities and limitations of using these kinds of materials in the classroom, according to the proposed learning objects. In this analysis, the different realities of the places where the students work and might work (some of the students are already teaching) are considered.

One part of this component is the study of audio, video, colors and other factors, language, and how they relate to the spatial disposition of the written text, either in the elaboration of borders, overhead transparencies or data projector slides. The students made a posters session (Figures 1 and 2) about a part of the theoretical content of this subject, using, in their posters, a little of multimodal languages.

A virtual classroom (Figure 3) was opened to the students, where they participated in discussion forums about doubts concerning the subject and could interact among themselves. The virtual classroom was opened originally in English and the first texts and messages were written in English. However, as there were participants from both courses: Portuguese Language Teaching and English Language teaching, the students started communicating with each other in Portuguese. There was a proposal for elaborating a WebQuest about two optional themes: "What are you going to do when you leave the university?" and "Use of Multimedia Didactics". The first theme aims at reflecting about paths



**Figure 1: One of the posters produced by the students about audiovisual media use in teaching.**



**Figure 2: Another example of poster produced by students about Multimedia use in teaching.**

to follow in order to continue studying or to start working. The second proposes a reflection on the use of new technologies in schools.<sup>4</sup>

The students' final activity, in this component, is related to elaborating an English class using audio or video. The class should last about three minutes. In order to do that, they have learned to make a PodCast (Figure 3) and to elaborate directions for recording videoclases. The students could choose, according to their preferences and possibilities, between doing an activity based on audio language and one which integrated oral and written texts, sound and images. What really mattered for us, in a broad sense, was the usage of languages adequate to the media and to the educational purpose of the activity.



**Figure 3: Entrance page of the virtual classroom, with an agenda motivating the students to listen to the PodCast.**

<sup>4</sup> It was not possible to focus exclusively on language teaching activities, because many students would rather teach literature (and, usually, English language literatures are taught in Portuguese) and because, as we have already mentioned, some students are from the Portuguese course.



Figure 4 – A podcast model made by the teacher<sup>5</sup>

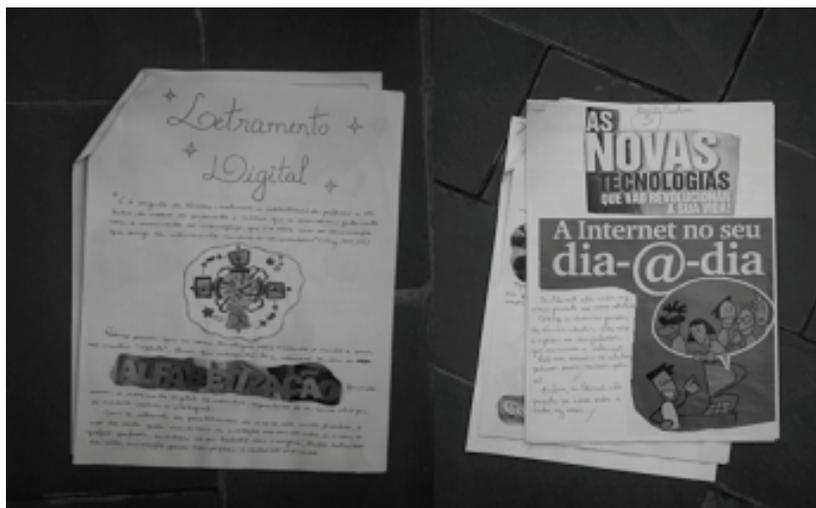
## 2.5.2. Applied Linguistics in the Multimedia context

In this curricular component, we study principles of hypertext, collaborative writing based on Wiki and the textual genres which are present in electronic media, especially homepages. Through analyses of several homepages, the students produced hypertexts in cardboard paper. Thus, they simulated, in the paper, the connection between several texts and images (Figure 5).

An important part of this subject was the participation of the students in a research project developed by Professor Doctor Maria Conceição Alves de Lima, Professor Doctor Iúta Lerche Vieira, both post-doctorate students at UNICAMP, and Professor Luiz Fernando Gomes<sup>6</sup>, a doctorate student in the same institution, about collaborative writing in Wiki. After reading several texts about collaborative writing

<sup>5</sup> Available at <http://www.uniso.br/ead/cet/Paginas/Radios/sapeando.asp>.

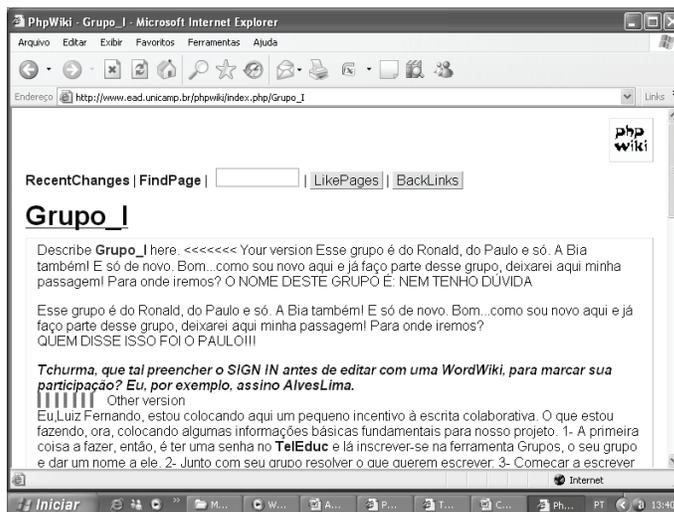
<sup>6</sup> The three researchers were advised by Professor Doctor Denise Bértoli Braga, from the Language Studies Institute (IEL) at Unicamp.



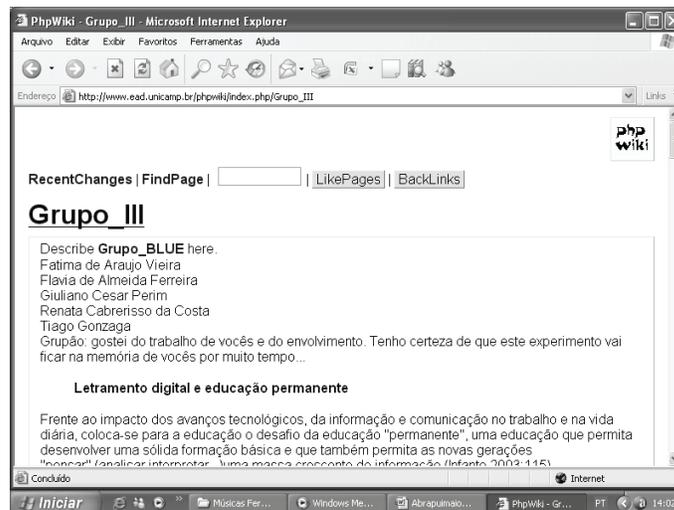
**Figure 5: Multimodal texts produced by students from the 5<sup>th</sup> semester of the English Language Teaching course, simulating hypertext connections using A4 paper.**

and hypertexts, attending a lecture and participating in discussions in the classroom, the students, divided into groups, elaborated texts about digital literacy (Figures 6 and 7). We consider very relevant to say that even though the texts should have been produced in English, the students, eventually, wrote in their mother tongue, because as their group was very uneven in their English writing skills, the groups opted, in a consensus, to use the Portuguese language. We have noticed that the curricular integration is important, in this case, so that the textual genres which are taught in the writing production classes, in English, can prepare the students for producing texts for the other subjects.

Another curricular component that was incorporated into the Language course was Psychology and Distance Interaction. This component considered, among other themes, interaction and interactivity, motivation in distance courses, isolation and cognitive overload, and dialog in synchronous and asynchronous communications.



**Figure 6: Initial texts of Group I, composed of students from the 5<sup>th</sup> semester of the English Language Teaching course.**



**Figure 7: Initial texts of Group Blue, composed of students from the 5<sup>th</sup> Semester of the English Language Teaching course**

The subject Shared Projects for Distance Education aims at preparing students for the pedagogical use of technologies. The themes focused by this subject are: interdisciplinary projects mediated by new technologies: virtualizing the university and the community; elaboration of courses/education activities proposals involving the usage of advanced technologies; creation of homepages which are focused on the community interests; and development of Distance Learning projects, directed to local needs.

### 2.5.3. Electronic texts production

In this curricular component, our students read some texts about the Internet and electronic writing and were asked to analyze some samples of genres; for instance, blogs, chats, WebQuests and homepages. One of their first production activities was related to blogs. The teacher opened a community blog and invited the students to post messages. The first message was related to writing. The students were supposed to write about their feelings about writing in English, if they had difficulties in doing it, how they dealt with them, etc. (Figure 8). The teacher also

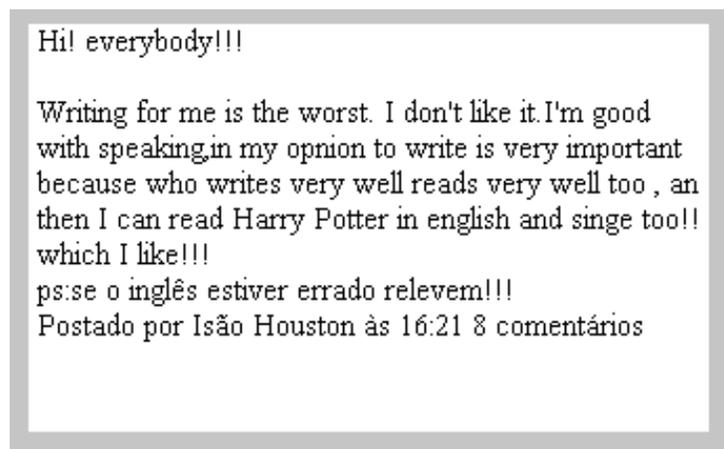


Figure 8 – An example of a message posted by a student from the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of the English Language Teaching Course (available at [http://letrasingles2007.blogspot.com/2007\\_04\\_01\\_archive.html](http://letrasingles2007.blogspot.com/2007_04_01_archive.html))

encouraged the students to read their classmates' posts and comment on them. It was possible to notice that the students tried to encourage their friends when they noticed that they were insecure about writing (Figure 9). After other tasks in the community blog, each student was supposed to produce his/her own blog, related to English teaching and/or learning (Figure 10).

**“The writing is important to...”**

**8 Comments**

100% Black said...

Good Isis,  
I am going to use your idea. When you get Harry Potter in English, please borrow me. I can consider you a intelligent girl. hehehehe!!!! Kisses

100% black  
3 de Abril de 2007 17:27

Lana said...

Ohhh...Isis don't think this!!! We know that you can and the most important thing is to try. The first moment can be difficult and can spend much time to write a little phrase but with time we are going to learn with our mistakes! OK!!!!??  
Kisses:) Lana\*

4 de Abril de 2007 08:35

Marco said...

Isis, we all are still learning, don't be scared, I am pretty sure We all will be able to write as good as possible as soon as possible, it only depends on ourselves. As I have said before, you are someone with the world in your hands. Your shine is overwhelming. Let's keep trying...  
Kisses MARCO

22 de Abril de 2007 06:05

**Figure 9: Examples of comments posted by students from the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of the English Language Teaching Course to encourage a classmate<sup>7</sup>**

<sup>7</sup> Available at <https://www.blogger.com/comment.g?blogID=4782502997830085801&postID=7324802556801079520>



Figure 10: An example of a blog produced by a student from the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of the English Language Teaching<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Final considerations

Using technologies for teaching languages and in teachers' education is becoming more and more indispensable. We have been able to notice that since 2003, when this new curricular matrix was applied, our students have become more motivated, both in face-to-face activities and in those performed in support virtual classrooms. Multimodal text production teaching and practice - in Portuguese and in English - have collaborated to develop reflections on changes in the written language. It is possible to understand that language, especially in the virtual environment, is a mixture of orality and writing, in new textual genres and in their registers. In our specific situation, we offer Portuguese and English Teaching courses and, even though most texts read by the students (of the English course) are written in the target

<sup>8</sup> Course available at <http://julianascarpa.blogspot.com>

language, their written production is not always produced in English. We infer that this means that we still lack a higher integration of the components, especially of those who are related to textual genres found on the Web and those taught at university. Another reason is that most of our students come from public schools from Sorocaba and neighboring cities and it is known that English learning and teaching in public schools is extremely deficient, with few exceptions. Most of our students arrive at the university expecting to learn English during the course, which makes our task of preparing English teachers become much more challenging and difficult. Another problem faced is that it is an evening course. Most students work during the day and do not have access to the Internet at their homes, which contributes to delays in results and improvements. However, we believe that our courses have improved considerably with the inclusion of technologies in our daily pedagogical activities. Our students are developing themselves, as language users and future teachers, and that is also a consequence of technologies use in the Language course.

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