

LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS

**LEARN A SECOND LANGUAGE
FIRST**

**A GUIDE FOR L2 RESEARCH IN
THE CONTEXT OF LANGUAGES
OTHER THAN ENGLISH**

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SANDRA FIGUEIREDO

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This work is dedicated to all the children who come to alien European countries, where they were not born. This work is also dedicated to all European countries that have become (or are becoming) host countries of these children.

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INTRODUCTION

The beliefs of native teachers are strongly based on the monolingual teaching approach that skews the multicultural and variability of skills perspective in the teaching of non-native students. The beliefs of non native students are “monolingual” (sometimes “bilingual”) because they are self-regulated in their only cognitive reference: the home language and culture which generates the learning bias. This learning bias is mostly cognitive and psychosocial and moreover the immigrant students are not fully supported in their new learning and testing. In the context of English as a second language (L2), the implications of the monolingual approach have been studied, but not significantly in second languages other than English. On the one hand, evidence from international studies indicates that less experienced or recently graduated teachers are less oriented towards a bilingual approach, as opposed to more experienced teachers. On the other hand, the second language learners are all different about learning experience: the new generations of immigrant students has prior schooling and culture references that might explain how responding could be these students in a host country.

Based on previous studies in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), this book examines the recent literature and trends of research on the expected cognitive processing difference according to the mother tongues of children and their cognitive map structures. Then, it examines the differences according to nationality, focusing on the conditions of the current refugee immigration. This will be followed by a descriptive analysis based on three cases of schools and teachers of the East Coast of the US. Finally, the book argues on the limitations of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001) and, consequently, of the teachers’ practice. Students are expected to present an order of performance according to their proficiency levels (assigned by the schools where they were tested). Our research evidence proves a contradictory scenario. This book is essentially evidence-based and it highlights the risk of underrepresented minorities being misled in host schools in Europe.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Common European Framework for Languages	(CEFR)
First Language, Home Language or Mother Tongue	(L1)
Foreign Language	(FL)
Second Language	(L2)
Second Language Acquisition Research	(SLA)

1. VARIABILITY OF STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN L2 TASKS: COGNITIVE AND BRAIN STUDIES

L2 studies (SLA Research) have received much attention since the eighties by neuroscience researchers, especially with regard to processing during tests. These tests are the assessment of specific skills in reading, writing, listening and writing comprehension with a view to analyzing aspects of the cognitive strategies used during the decoding tasks. Before examining the contributions of neuropsychology to the understanding of cognitive processes of non-native individuals, especially schoolchildren, it is necessary to understand what processes and cognitive strategies are in this context. Cognitive strategies refer to an individual's options during an activity, which determine the pace and success of the performance. These options are also based on the type of mental resources that the individual has and is aware of in order to take advantage of them. This is what happens in L2 decoding and even in a bilingual context where the learner makes use of his language background (prior knowledge) and from it retrieves information that can assist in solving the tasks. But how he retrieves and uses information (strategy) also depends on the kind of resources he has. L1 as a linguistic background and, therefore, the main cognitive resource, determines the success variability in L2 depending on the phonetic, phonological, semantic, and syntactic similarity (and therefore the linguistic rules that underlie L1) between the mother tongue (L1) and the target language (Braunstein, Ischebeck, Brunner et al., 2012; Elabsy, 2013; MacWhinney, 2005) in different proficiency cognitive tests. When we refer to the cognitive aspect of these proficiency tests, we want to understand beyond the analysis of skills that are not only language, such as more or less knowledge of vocabulary and ownership of certain syntax of the language. That is, in the field of psychology, specifically in cognitive psychology, it is important to understand how the complex cognitive processing of learners in tasks such as verbal analogy tests (part of verbal reasoning, so they do not just measure linguistic competence) can be inferred.

This type of tasks examines the dexterity and cognitive outcome of the individual who is processing a new language based on essentially transfer strategies (and memory) between his Mother Tongue and Second Language, while also involving interference in the mental lexicon (for example, there are words that are visually similar in the two languages but that are not semantically related) or interference of cognitive strategies, which are the

styles adopted in the mother tongue linguistic, and cognitive systems that may require adjustment at the time of development of a new language that becomes the main language of communication (Barac & Bialystok; 2012; Dörnyei, 2015). These same tests analyze whether the learners use the same cognitive strategies in L1 and L2 tests, such as in cases of sentence reorganization (syntax and grammar) that may require different mental strategies according to the language and its inherent sentence composition structure. Also in the cognitive domain, tasks such as verbal analogy and morphological extraction are important to examine the differences between individuals according to the critical periods that psychology and neurobiology have established, according to which children, unlike teenagers, have more difficulty in solving verbal analogies because it involves greater abstraction and rhetoric ability, not being, therefore, restricted to the verbal domain. The aforementioned recovery process and handling of knowledge between languages is known as transfer strategy, which has been analyzed since the seventies (Ellis, 2006; Gas, 1979; Gass, 1988; Grabe, 1991) to understand the reading emergence techniques in L2 when the learner already knows a first language (L1) (Koda, 1988). Recent studies are also interested in the importance of cognitive transfer between languages and only recently have gone beyond English as L2, thus increasingly covering other languages with L2 status (Chan, 2015; Norman, Degani, & Peleg, 2015; Schepens, van der Slik & van Hout, 2013; Taki, 2015; Wach, 2016). In fact, transfer studies were preceded by contrastive analysis studies (Odlin, 1989) from which it has been examined how similar aspects between linguistic segments can cause difficulty and error instead of facilitating the transfer - interference (Carroll, 1968; Gass 1980; Oller, 1970; Richards, 1974). On the other hand, it is the awareness of the similarities between languages and option to understand which L1 segments are eligible to assist in decoding L2 that enable the cognitive maturity of the individual in the development of L2 (Gass, 1980; Ladiere, 2009; Laufer & Girsai, 2009). After transfer analysis between two languages, subsequent studies began to focus on the effects of the same strategy but involving a third language (Cenoz, 2001; Jessner, 2008; Ringbom, 1992). The transfer strategies for decoding a third language appear to help more compared with monolingual L2 learners (Cenoz & Jessner, 2000; Thomas, 1988).

Bilingualism is in itself an advantage due to greater flexibility of use and thus involves awareness of cognitive strategies for decoding a not yet mastered additional language. Indeed, the advantage results from the condition of being bilingual in these cases of most successful transfer. Being bilingual is an advantage at multiple levels, such as providing greater motivation for language

learning, greater ability to modify strategies for performance in decoding, and greater awareness of operations on linguistic tasks (Cenoz & Jessner, 2000). Cummins (1980, 1991) also studied these assumptions in the analysis of cognitive strategies, focusing on the transfer and advancing the hypothesis of interdependence, which includes the assumption that the properties of more than one language mastered by the speaker are used actively during the execution of tasks in the less known language. It is a theoretical possibility frequently used in current research, despite the relevant situational constraints to the functioning of the said cognitive interdependence (Prevo, Malda, Emmen et al., 2015). One should take into account other factors such as whether the individual still actively uses L1 and also if this use is only at home or has an instructional basis (Thomas, 1988). Cummins updated his theory on this issue, incorporating this variable as essential for the interdependence of functions to work, and reiterating the importance of European countries to ensure a formal education in the mother tongues of non-native students (Cummins, 2012). The evidence shows, then, that the transfer processes relate to the activation of knowledge and previously acquired functions by the learner, which allow him to establish an interdependence of skills between two or more languages. Based on this conclusion in research studies on L2 processing, we understand why the transfer is not always positive when the languages have a significant degree of distance, essentially measured by the type of alphabet. On the other hand, it also explains why bilingualism is more advantageous for the transfer in a third language even with the obstacles of intra-linguistic distance. Romance languages like Portuguese are considerably more distant from languages such as Indo-Iranian (e.g., Punjabi) because they have different writing and also because the linguistic rules are less likely to be recovered in a transfer process (Figueiredo, Alves Martins & Silva, 2015).

In turn, this type of differences between codes has to do with transparency or opacity, a topic which will resume in the next section (1.2), and results in different activation of strategies (recovery processing or inhibition of skills and information). This activation will then have to involve different effects on the cognitive mapping. The latter is formatted in advance according to the mind map produced by the native language because the neuronal nervous system is more or less specific depending on the type of the subject's language. This produced map can facilitate or hinder cognitive processing in

L2 or in a third language (or as many as there may be) in terms of encoding and decoding because it may be crystallized depending on the age of the speaker (DeKeyser, 2006; Hernandez, Li & MacWhinney, 2005; Lenneberg, 1964; Mackey & Talmy, 2014). This crystallization has to do with the critical period, which is one of the targets of neurosciences in the specific field of acquisition and development of L2 (Birdsong, 2014; Hakuta, Bialystok & Wiley, 2003; Johnson & Newport, 1991; Kim, 1997; Lenneberg, 1964; Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978). The critical period for the facilitated acquisition of language occurs until the beginning of puberty (Lenneberg, 1964) despite the authors' lack of consensus on this matter (Birdsong, 2014; Birjandi, 2012; Keeley, 2016; Krashen, 1973; Montrul, 2008). Another nonconsensual question is the assumption that L2 learners process the information differently, given that there are studies that show that they have similar procedures (the same activated brain areas) as the natives and certain observed tasks (Friederici, Steinhauer, & Pfeifer, 2002; Steinhauer, 2014). On the contrary, Kim (1997) found that although younger L2 learners alongside native speakers activate the same cortical areas for certain tasks, the older L2 learners activate different cortical areas for the same tasks. However, it should be noted the acquisition (different from learning) of a mother tongue (which refers not only to a language but to all that the subject will become proficient in until the end of the critical period) also involves defining a series of lexical, phonological and semantic knowledge and cognitive memories on procedures for language resolution that will have a direct consequence on the "rigidity" of the mental structures for the development of other languages after the critical period (Akamatsu, 1999; Begley, 1996; Costa & Sebastián-Gallés, 2014; Moro, Chomsky, Caponigro et al., 2015; Pallier, C., Dehaene, S., Poline, 2003; Yeung, Chen & Werker, 2013). This rigidity generated the concept of crystallization or fossilization created in the early seventies and was adopted by the studies on the implications of the "termination" of the critical period (Chae, 2012; Hawkins, 1991; Hernandez, Li & MacWhinney, 2005; Li, 2002; MacWhinney, 2006; Nagai, 1997; Selinker & Lamendella, 1979).

These implications are message decoding complications in the new language, which vary, however, according to the type of mother tongue and the unknown languages being learned or acquired (Basnight-Brown, Chen, Hua et al., 2007; Hakuta & Bialystok, 2003; Geva & Siegel, 2000; Johnson & Newport, 1991). Similarly, knowing the theory of the critical period for language acquisition and the crystallization or fossilization of that period that has direct implication in the development of a L2, it is very important to understand the existence of a specific language system (different but related to

Chomsky's language acquisition device, 1978) in the human brain map that determines how the individual behaves during language learning at different stages, this specific system being different from the "problem solving" system (Davies, 2003). The latter refers particularly to executive functions and skills and until the learner is able to distinguish the two systems while processing in a language he is not a near-native in. The fossilization affects the first system, specific to the language (Han, 2004; Lenneberg, 1964; Lightbown, 1985; MacWhinney, 2006; Selinker, 2006). The studies previously mentioned on the analysis of the effects of learning a third language are also important to neurosciences due to the reconstruction of the cognitive map that the learning context may require. This is not a recent concern (Bley-Vroman, 1989; Cenoz, 2001; Jessner, 2008; Ringbom, 1992). Learning a third language and examining the brain processes involved in various language tasks particularly illustrates how neuronal systems specialize differently according to each previously acquired language (Halle, Hair, Wandner et al., 2012; Swain, Lapkin, Rowen, & Hart, 1990). This clarification stems from empirical observation of different performances of very distinct quality when subjects are operating in a third language in which they are not proficient and turn to the strategies learned in one of two languages acquired and not simultaneously to both languages. That is, a set of information is inhibited on behalf of others which the learner tries to get a better result in decoding in the new language (Costa, Santesteban & Ivanova, 2006; Jessner, 2008; Kroll, Bobb, Misra et al., 2003). One of the languages is not completely put aside but one of the languages has its resources constantly activated.

In Portuguese schools, minorities, based on immigration, speak mostly Slavic and Indo-Aryan languages and Mandarin, in addition to creoles with a Portuguese lexical base. With the exception of the latter group, coming from Portuguese-speaking African countries, groups of non-native students in Portugal are similar to the immigrant groups in European schools, which are distinct from young student groups in the US, especially the Hispanic and the Indian subcontinent groups, which are quite represented in American schools (Davies, 2003; Massey, 2008), but not in Portugal, where groups of Eastern Europe and North and Central Africa are more demographically significant (Figueiredo & Silva, 2013; King, 2000; Wall & Nunes, 2010). Whereas there is enough research on the performance and impact (in L2 learning) of the

mother tongues of students from minorities attending American schools, in Europe there is not abundant evidence that allows analyzing students' cognitive profiles. These cognitive profiles are based on a variability of performances with implications for the academic development of students. Besides the transfer analysis (Grabe, 1991; Ellis, 1996; Gas, 1979) and contrastive analysis (Odlin, 1989), the first North American studies in L2 examined the effect of long-term immersion programs for learning French as L2 in school immigrant populations in Canada and how that learning did not have costs in terms of students' proficiency in L1 (Cummins, 2000) where English was representative as L1. Then, English became the sole focus as L2 for the analysis of the development of skills of different minority groups in American classrooms. In the US, studies in L2 centered on non-native school children in the first half of the twentieth century, focusing on whether learning a L2 and becoming bilingual could be cognitively confusing and in the second half of the century on whether learning an L2 was advantageous for the cognitive and psychosocial development of immigrant children (Bialystok, 2009). If, on the one hand, American authors were concerned first with developing French and then English as L2 and with the adaptation of newcomers to the host country with a focus on immersion programs (Bankston & Zhou, 1995; Berry, Phinney, Sam et al., 2006; Hakuta, 2000; Norton, 1997; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2009; Thomas & Collier, 1997), on the other hand in Europe, studies in the past decade have examined other perspectives of school immigrant population that focused on socio-economic difficulties and shortcomings of minorities and their impact on academic performance and entry into the labor market (Heath, Rothon & Kilpi, 2008). Heath, Rothon and Kilpi (2008) have examined the educational and professional status of immigrant populations in the European continent but excluded some countries such as Portugal and Finland for not having, at the time, immigration representative numbers (which were substantial in France and Germany) in their research.

However, in the last decade Portugal has received an increasing number of new immigrants, especially now with the uncertain situation of the Syrian refugees and having received many refugees from Kosovo at the beginning of the last decade (Gisselquist, 2014). Subsequent studies (especially after 2002) limited their analysis to ethnic and cultural issues regarding the integration of minorities in our society and in school (Alba, 2005). Even the religious issue has been treated differently on the two continents, since in North America, the race is a more compelling factor than religion regarding the integration of minorities in schools, while in Europe religion, focusing on the Islamic group,

is the focus of integration of linguistic minorities. Given that integration and school inclusion are important to us, European studies only recently (after 2012) began to analyze the skills and cognitions of minorities to understand them and to assist their educational development. In Portugal this study began with research on the assessment instruments (Figueiredo & Silva, 2010; Mateus, 2009; Pires, 2009). The educational and professional status issue (entry into the labor market) is one of two perspectives that the authors have followed to study minorities in European and North American schools (Thomson & Crul, 2007). The other perspective regards cultural, ethnic and religious issues. It is common to both contexts but, in Europe, the analysis of cognitive constraints arising from all these perspectives is still missing. As for the cognitive characteristics and academic expectations of minority groups, there is enough evidence of the correlation between educational performance and socio-economic status of the families of immigrant students (Becker, 2009; Giacomini, Janssen, Pruett et al., 2011; Hulstijn, Young, Ortega et al., 2014). Within these studies examining this correlation, there are many more recent ones on parental investment (of immigrant families) in the educational performance of their children (Becker, 2009; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Jonsson & Rudolphi, 2011; Mistry Biesanz, Chien et al., 2008). The correlation with the socio-economic factor has been the most studied, even when comparing different immigrant populations in different destination countries (US and France, for example), because it appears that minority groups attend economically and socially disadvantaged schools and have lower academic success (Alba & Silberman, 2009). In terms of educational approach, recent European studies have focused on the issue of transfer between languages that are not the already examined context of English as L2 but other European countries' official languages (Chan, 2015; Norman, Degani, & Peleg, 2015; Schepens, van der Slik & van Hout, 2013; Taki, 2015; Wach, 2016) and on the effect of minorities on the academic performance of native students (Ohinata & Van Ours, 2013), as well as on the effect of the country of origin and the destination country in the academic competence of immigrant students (Levels & Dronkers, 2008).

Speaking of country of origin and country of destination effects again involves the question of the socioeconomic status of students and their families (Levels, Dronkers & Kraaykamp, 2008). This has several

implications, including: as the cognitive difference between immigrant pupils in European schools is not yet well known, then it is difficult to understand how the interdependence of L1/L2 functions advocated by Cummins' hypothesis (1991, 2005) works in the English context; with regard to assessment, what is used in terms of assessment instruments, whether in research or at school, for immigrant school minorities in the US, does not apply to European contexts because native language and target language are different. It is not a comparison between immigrant groups on both continents as regards the socio-economic condition and the type of school in which they are enrolled (Alba & Silberman, 2009), but the cognition and decoding skills of learners who have been trained to think and act in different languages and therefore have different brain mappings and reorganization (Osterhout, McLaughlin & Pitkänen, 2006; Van Hell & Tokowicz, 2010). Knowing these maps is to grasp the cognitive variability of the different speakers (according to the mother tongues) regarding L2 tasks and skills so that the school and the instruction type can understand which valid measures to use (tests, scores) at the appropriate times of the learning development of the immigrant school population. In Portuguese as L2, there are no known significant studies in the field of neurosciences, despite being a significantly spoken language worldwide and with different variants. The studies are restricted to analysis of accidental or formal exposure to Portuguese and mostly considering the Brazilian variant (Grabe & Stoller, 1997). With immigration into Portugal, the European language variant has assumed new importance, not as an expression of national identity, but as multicultural one.

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2. IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN SECOND LANGUAGE OR IN SECOND PLACE: NATIONALITIES AND REFUGEE STATUS

Students according to their nationality are supposed to have more than cultural differences. They have different cognitive mapping and schemata (connected to the mother tongue, Abu-Rabia & Shakkour, 2014; Barac & Bialystok, 2012; Braunstein, Ischebeck, Brunner et al., 2012; Kan & Kohnert, 2008) and different parent stimulation resulting in different cognitive stimulating for school activities and goals achievement (Becker, 2009; Hoff, 2003; Mistry, Biesanz, Chien et al., 2008). According to our previous analyses (Figueiredo, alves Martins & Silva, 2015) and also according to recent other studies (Glennen, 2015), children from different countries, marked by specific educational systems, develop weaknesses in different linguistic areas (in a second language and perhaps with a 'weakness-basis' in their home language(s)) converting into academic failure (Haag, Heppt, Stanat et al.,

2013). In other perspective, children present a resilience concerning the L2 learning and cultural adaptation that turns out in blocking attitude for the succeeded learning (Scott, Roberts & Krakow, 2007). Minorities behave differently in classroom in an attitudinal (and predispositional) basis (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar et al., 2005; Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Durkin, 2008; Peri, 2005). In that manner, ESL acquisition patterns are cognitive and distinctly developed which could mismatch the L2 learning goals generating imbalance achievement and groups disparities (Hwa-Froelich & Matsuo, 2010). Concerning a previous factor mentioned – the prior schooling experience and instruction strategies – the children with origin in underdeveloped countries are the most affected; the other factor is related to the gender differences as a ‘country-concept’ and a broad cultural concept that distinguishes education raising between boys and girls; and the prior schooling of those children could be the most prominent distant (or differentiated) factor from the expected academic preparation in the host country (Festa, Loftus, Cullen et al., 2014; Flores & Drake, 2014). Evidence from our study of cognitive and language-specific tasks (example: semantic associations, morphological extraction and vocabulary) replicate those assumptions by presenting the differences in performance in national groups of young students (Figueiredo, Alves Martins & Silva, 2016). The best results depended on the tasks, but the poorest performances were, as expected, in students from less developed educational systems and less similar to the Western European systems. Students from Asian countries (especially from South and Southeast Asia) and from African countries (despite having Portuguese as the official language) as being the most at-risk. The other parallel factor along with the nationality (in the perspective of the school system of each country of origin) is the home language as previously discussed that produces a lexical schemata that operates more or less as a *facilitating effect* of the L2 considering the linguistic distance between idioms (Cyrino, 2010; Faruck & Vulchanova, 2014; Taboada, 2012).

With the very recent situation of the not yet assimilated integration of the Syrian refugees and refugees from other countries such as Eritrea in European countries (Brenke, 2015; Koehler, 2016), the mentioned variable – mother tongue of the individuals – becomes inseparable from the cultural and economic issue affecting the inclusion of the Syrians in the country and in schools. Among the families received in Portugal, it is estimated that there will be a considerable increase in the near future and this underlines the need to continue analyzing the cognitive performance of non-native school aged individuals. The refugee Syrian population is currently the largest in the world,

and 40% is under 18 years of age, a significant part being still of school age who has already missed one academic year (Rogers-Sirin, Ryce & Sirin, 2014). Especially about refugees of school age, it is important to identify the languages they speak (monolingualism or multilingualism, since in Syria alone several languages coexist) and understand how distant they are from the Portuguese. In parallel, we need to understand at what stage literacy in these native languages (proficiency) is and ensure language programs for these specific groups (refugees) - as it should have been done for pre-existing linguistic minority groups (and not according to ethnic, religious and cultural differentiation), as different groups require different tests and learning at an early stage, and this is paramount. This school differentiation has been made recently in Turkey as a major asylum country for this population (Cagaptay & Menekse, 2014). Previous experiments analyzed in European research (Rose, 2015) should be an example of linguistic reception of refugees in Europe because, for example, the wave of Chechen refugees to Ireland has been answered primarily with mental health protection services and basic survival goods, but also with language teaching programs. Although it appears that the emergency condition and structuring of services only allowed the accidental learning of the language. Repercussions will be felt at identity level but also in terms of integration in the labor market (Worbs, 2003). The lack of carefully conceived structures for educational and language screening of disadvantaged immigrant populations (meaning people forced to immigrate due to war in their country of origin) has led to socio-economic problems arising from the instability of the integration of immigrants in the labor market in the host country (Worbs, 2003). On the contrary, in countries such as Austria (Figueiredo & Silva, 2007) and Sweden (Westin, 2003), educational institutions select areas to receive immigrants from disadvantaged groups (such as refugee status) and assure language teaching, not only in L2 but also in their native languages (Westin, 2003). In Portugal, refugee children, coming mainly from Syria, speak languages from different language families but we do not know how the cognitive mapping in these languages is organized and this can affect processing in L2 (in this case, Portuguese). Moreover, they are deprived of a normal academic year and their literacy, even in their mother tongue, is compromised (Hudson & Casey, 2016; Deane, 2016).

There are very few studies in Europe on the topic of cultural and linguistic hosting of the refugee immigrant population (Aras & Yasun, 2016; Ngan, Lifanova, Jarke et al., 2016), but they significantly abound in other areas: psychosocial integration of adolescents or difficulties in the labor market compared with the successful representation of native adults in Belgium (Timmerman, Vanderwaeren & Crul, 2003), Norway and Sweden (Sam & Virta, 2003) in Portugal (Neto, 2002), Germany (Worbs, 2003) and also recent studies in Turkey (Ceritoglu, Yunculer, & Burcu, 2015). On the contrary, with the same study objective, other European studies point to the reverse scenario: German immigrants in Switzerland are considered to pose a threat to native counterparts in the labor market because of their higher educational background. There is an isotopy that needs to be taken into account in many of these studies that coincides with the reverse problem currently experienced with Syria: the Turkish population is one of the most studied populations as migrants who are most disadvantaged in the labor market and the education system of these countries. This includes Syrian population before the current conflict period. On the contrary, now it is Turkey that has become the immigration host country and it has started conducting scientific research on the effect of immigrants on the status of Turkish natives in the labor market. However, the research has focused on adult refugees and not on the needs of school children. Children are overrepresented in the total refugee population (Betts & Collier, 2015). Their mother tongues are still unknown in terms of plurality and complexity. In this topic, there are two overlapping cognitive circumstances: native languages and the languages spoken at home. Which one will help learning the new host language imposed by forced immigration? Based on a previous research of our study (Figueiredo, Alves Martins & Silva, 2016), the languages spoken at home is a stronger predictor compared to the home language which suggests that the quantity of the languages in use (not reporting only to the knowledge or proficiency in one language, but referring to the real use of a language) is such more influent than the mother tongue for the tasks performance or assessment contexts (Barac & Bialystok, 2012). And, related to the languages and their knowledge and use, in the next section of this chapter we discuss a research evidence that revealed disproportionate proficiency levels assigned to different groups of immigrant students.

2.1. A CASE OF PORTUGUESE L2 LEARNERS: DISPROPORTIONS IN PROFICIENCY LEVELS

L2 studies (SLA Research) have received much attention since the eighties by neuroscience researchers, especially with regard to processing during tests. These tests are the assessment of specific skills in reading, writing, listening and writing comprehension with a view to analyzing aspects of the cognitive strategies used during the decoding tasks. Before examining the contributions of neuropsychology to the understanding of cognitive processes of non-native individuals, especially schoolchildren, it is necessary to understand what processes and cognitive strategies are in this context. Cognitive strategies refer to an individual's options during an activity, which determine the pace and success of the performance. These options are also based on the type of mental resources that the individual has and is aware of in order to take advantage of them. This is what happens in L2 decoding and even in a bilingual context where the learner makes use of his language background (prior knowledge) and from it retrieves information that can assist in solving the tasks. But how he retrieves and uses information (strategy) also depends on the kind of resources he has. L1 as a linguistic background and, therefore, the main cognitive resource, determines the success variability in L2 depending on the phonetic, phonological, semantic, and syntactic similarity (and therefore the linguistic rules that underlie L1) between the mother tongue (L1) and the target language (Braunstein, Ischebeck, Brunner et al., 2012; Elabsy, 2013; MacWhinney, 2005) in different proficiency cognitive tests. When we refer to the cognitive aspect of these proficiency tests, we want to understand beyond the analysis of skills that are not only language, such as more or less knowledge of vocabulary and ownership of certain syntax of the language. That is, in the field of psychology, specifically in cognitive psychology, it is important to understand how the complex cognitive processing of learners in tasks such as verbal analogy tests (part of verbal reasoning, so they do not just measure linguistic competence) can be inferred. This type of tasks examines the dexterity and cognitive outcome of the individual who is processing a new language based on essentially transfer strategies (and memory) between his Mother Tongue and Second Language, while also involving interference in the mental lexicon (for example, there are When referring to the cognitive aspects of these proficiency tests, we intend to understand beyond the analysis of skills that are not only about language, such as knowing about vocabulary and ownership of certain syntax of the language.

That is, specifically in terms of cognitive psychology, we wish to understand how the complex cognitive processing of learners can be inferred in tasks like verbal analogy tests (verbal reasoning, so not just measuring linguistic competence). This type of tasks examines the dexterity and cognitive outcome of the learner who is processing a new language based on essentially transfer (and memory) strategies between his mother tongue and second language, also involving interference in the mental lexicon (for example, there are words that are visually similar in two languages but that are not semantically related) or interference of cognitive strategies, which are the styles adopted in the mother tongue linguistic and cognitive systems that may require adjustment when developing a new language that has become the main language of communication (Barac & Bialystok; 2012; Dörnyei, 2015). Moreover, the same tests analyze whether learners use the same cognitive strategies in L1 and L2 tests, for example in cases of sentence reorganization (syntax and grammar), which may require the differentiation of mental strategies according to the language and its inherent sentence composition structure. Also in the cognitive domain, tasks such as verbal analogy and morphological extraction (tests used in this study, reported and published) are important to examine the differences between learners according to the critical periods that psychology and neurobiology have established, which tell that children, unlike teenagers, have more difficulty in solving verbal analogies because it involves greater abstraction and rhetoric ability, and, therefore, are not restricted to the verbal domain.

This type of analysis is required in the context of Romance languages, mainly associated with “European” languages, with second language status, to see how the validity of tests based on the guidelines of the CEFR scales and the implications that the discrepancy between these scales and actual competence (in real contexts) can have as a negative impact on the ambiguous assessment of immigrant pupils with different levels of exposure to the host language (Coombe, 2013). Teachers who use tests according to the CEFR only assess academic aspects (knowing vocabulary, syntax, grammar of the target language) and neglect the functioning and cognitive processing of learners in accordance with the aforementioned aspects (transfer, interference). In the context of psychology, and more specifically regarding L2 acquisition, processing and cognitive development is the target of analysis in this area. Therefore, it is important to understand the likelihood of significant differences between the levels proficiency assigned by teachers (through tests guided by the CEFR) and the profile of the learners’ responses in the tests of

this study, which may suggest inconsistencies in teachers' practices with regard to the assessment of minority groups, with implications for the academic success of students with identified limitations and placed in inadequate support programs. In this analysis, it is important to consider aspects of second language acquisition psychology, which fall within the area of cognitive psychology and neuropsychology, as the case of brain mapping difference (functioning and cognitive processing) according to the type of language, which determines the rate of cognitive development and decoding, as well as the learning process (Saville-Troike, 2012). These differences can be perceived through tests that measure reasoning skills (such as the speed of logical association and fluency), specifically verbal reasoning. Consequently, we used tests of verbal analogy and morphological extraction and others identified in previous studies that use the same specific tests in L2 context in order to verify cognitive processing (i.e., transfer, August, Kenyon, Malabonga et al., 2001; Woodcock, Muñoz-Sandoval, Ruef et al., 2005).

In this chapter, we reflect on the results of a previous study (Figueiredo, Alves Martins & Silva, submitted and accepted) that attests the incongruity between teachers' practices (in using and designing assessment tests) in Portuguese schools with regard to the assessment of L2 learners differentiated according to the first levels of proficiency: A1, A2 and B1, and the assessment of the same learners in vocabulary and verbal reasoning specific tests. These tests, in our analysis project, are identified as:

- "verbal analogies", that assesses the ability to complete four sentences in L2 with nouns that are in accordance with the logic of the sentence (Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey-Revised, WMLS-R 2005). In this task it was observed high degree of difficulty during the sentences reasoning. Also the vocabulary and semantic relationship was tested in this type of tasks. Children showed to have more failure than older peers in verbal analogie decoding; should be noticed that this test was not in the proficiency tests of Portuguese schools. The usefulness of verbal analogy tests should be considered as an important predictor of proficiency differences and crucial to detect the verbal reasoning ability among nationality groups (according to home languages and prior schooling of children). Johnson and Rosano (2009) analysed through the same task that more advanced proficient learners perform

better in analogies (L2 context). On the other hand, different authors (Duran, 2013; Grigornko, Sternberg & Ehrman, 2000; Lee & Sawaki, 2009; McBride-Chang et al., 2005) concluded that verbal analogies demand from L2 learners higher executive skills as well vocabulary domain. Roomaney and Koch (2013) developed a similar study by using the verbal analogies and they maintained that this type of verbal reasoning tests requires from individuals “fluid reasoning”, which is attainable likely in early learners, not early beginners in the language learning. The depth of lexicon in a second language is the crucial predictor for this task performance as well for other tasks such as morphological extraction and semantic associations (Zhao Meng, Xu et al., 2011);

- “semantic associations”, that assesses the vocabulary skills of students in identifying synonyms and antonyms of words in six items (WMLS-R, 2005); nationality groups greatly differed performing this task, in our study, which would be caused by the vocabulary depth that is compromised in the early levels of proficient (Crossley, 2013; Schmitt, 2008). Age was revealed also as a variable that determine the differences during semantic association task performance (Sheng et al., 2013), considering a formula of probability of failure such as: younger L2 learners and in the basis of language proficiency (meaning, A1-B2) showed low awareness of semantic diversity when facing several words to decode concerning synonymous/antonymous (Fernandes, 2009);
- naming images in writing, that assesses the ability to recognize images and to write their names in Portuguese (Mateus, 2009). Several synonymous cases were found in this task considering the cultural options for the same item; on the other hand difficulty for learners were found by previous research concerning the lack of similarity that young learners judged for the names from the two mental sources: L1 lexicon and L2 lexicon (Hulstijn et al., 2014; Jared, Poh & Paivio, 2013; Wang & Lam, 2009). However this task is considered of lower complexity compared to the verbal, analogies or semantic associations;
- “morphological extraction” (or change), consisting of verbal reasoning competency testing on parts and families of words in L2 (August, Kenyon, Malabonga et al., 2001). Morphological extraction was verified of high difficulty for all groups with origin in Asian

continent, with distant languages as their L1, which might be argued based on the vocabulary deficit of the A1, B1 and B2 learners and also considering that morphemes are isolated parts that are harder to decode for, for example, Chinese speakers (Shum, Ki & Leong, 2015). Other authors examined the behavior of L2 learners by using the same task (August et al., 2001; McBride-Chang et al., 2005; Wang & Lam, 2009) and they detected that morphological extraction showed high complexity mainly caused by the phonological awareness involved and required for the success during morphological manipulation.

Those tests have been used in other international studies' samples, as perceived by the results achieved for the previous described tasks, and in this trial study was expected that Portuguese immigrant students ranked in the lower levels of the CEFR would also have lower results in those tests, which shows a correlation between cognitive and linguistic performance, and not only focused on academic and linguistic aspects. And, indeed, through linear regression analysis and nonparametric tests comparing samples, our study found that: first, differences between the proficiency groups, as previously classified by schools; second, incongruity between these groups and the performances (in the tasks) in the expected order (lower levels of proficiency related to the less positive performance in the four vocabulary and verbal reasoning tasks previously identified would be expected). As the level of proficiency increases, it would be expected that the groups had more correct answers in the tasks, which was not always the case (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Kruskal-Wallis Test For Independent Samples: Comparison of groups along the four tasks, according to the three proficiency levels determined by schools

Null hypothesis: distribution is the same among the groups in the task	Verbal analogies	Semantic Associations	Picture naming	Morphological extraction
<i>Sig. (p < .05)</i>				

.030* .149** .032* .006*

* The null hypothesis is rejected.

** The null hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 2. Median and Standard Deviations: disproportionate order among groups along the tasks performance

Proficiency groups	Verbal analogies		Semantic associatons		Picture naming		Morphological extraction	
	Median	S.D.	Median	S.D.	Median	S. D.	Median	S.D.
A1	2.00	1.25	2.37	2.00	18.0	12.86	1.00	1.00
A2	5.00	1.56	6.00	3.45	33.5	4.88	4.00	2.07
B1	4.00	2.36	5.00	3.70	35.0	4.03	4.00	.82
Total	4.00	1.82	4.00	3.35	33.0	10.48	2.50	2.1

Besides this short example of data, more statistical data and complete discussion on this specific trial study was already presented by the authors (Figueiredo, Alves Martins & Silva). Recent research already detected in other language speakers' populations similar inconsistencies caused by the tests based in the CEFR benchmarks and other assessment frameworks (Alderson, Figueras, Kuijper et al., 2006; Cho & Bridgeman, 2012; Hulstijn et al., 2014; Nunes & Lorke, 2011; Weir, 2005). In sum, we confirmed that there are performance differences in tasks between groups determined by skill level and they are not linear concerning an ascending order of proficiency levels (A1, A2, B1) that should reflect also an ascending order and accuracy in the tasks performance. The type of tests used, different from national studies that focus on this type of sample, therefore indicates data on cognitive characteristics, that is, the processing strategies in L2 of groups of learners defined according to their L1. As mentioned above, this L2 determines the transfer between languages and strategies normally adopted in the L2. The strategies on which the L2 is based characterize the cognitive mapping of the learners. This mapping progresses through learning and exposure to a different language turned into an assiduous language of communication, which will influence the pace of acquisition and the learning process. The pace and process determine the cognitive differences (profiles) of learners. These cognitive differences are essentially captured in instruments that assess the transfer or interference (e.g., verbal analogies or morphological extraction). The development and cognitive profile of L2 learners should not only be classified according to age, as is often done, but according to the strategies that depend on the type of L2, the type of exposure, the type and number of languages spoken at home, family socioeconomic status and other factors, which, in addition to age and gender,

are related to code-switching strategies (cognitive strategies) in languages. Concerning the frameworks and assessment reference for second language learners and their testing, also should be discussed how the Portuguese as a foreign language is evaluated in other geographies.

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**3. “THIS IS THE NEW AMERICA”: HOW EUROPE COULD
BORROW AMERICAN MEASURES FOR
THE TEACHING/LEARNING OF PORTUGUESE AS
FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND AS SECOND LANGUAGE**

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Migration movements are closely related to the socio-economic situation of the new generation of immigrants who have come to new schools learning new languages but with different resources, which are mainly cognitive (Abreu, Puglisi, Cruz-Santos et al., 2014; Baquedano-Lopéz, Alexander & Hernandez, 2013; Becker, Klein & Biedinger, 2013; Kim, 2011; Palardy, 2013). The immigrant groups' differences determine rates of language acquisition and academic success in the schools of the host country (Hortas, 2008; Dustmann, Frattini & Lanzara, 2011). The host country is other additional variable that may explain the conditions in which the adaptation and the new language learning occur, specifically comparing the educational systems of Europe and the US as immigrants' destinations (Alba & Silberman, 2009). Teaching procedures and protocols, in the foreign language (FL) context, are also impacted by the dominant motivations cultivated in the socio-economic milieu of the students and their families (Crosnoe & Turley, 2011; Dustmann & Frattini, 2011; Dustmann, Frattini & Lanzara, 2012; Pires, 2009). Different immigrant populations have different goals and motivations, but usually economic factors are key issues (Hernandez, 2011; Isaac, 2013; Kaida, 2013). For students in the host country, these financial limitations, on the one hand, have a significant impact on the availability of, and access to, resources, and on the other, translate into a lack of time invested in the development of proficiency in a FL or a Second Language (L2) (Bohon, Johnson & Gorman, 2006; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Kim, 2011; Lew, 2006). Socio-demographic groups of new immigrants face professional disadvantages before their complete adaptation to the host society. Currently, given the refugees' situation across European countries, that "complete adaption" (Yazgan, Utku & Sirkeci, 2015) should be carefully revisited by scholars considering that refugee and migrant are distinct concepts regarding adaption in terms of regular (classic) economic migration. Young immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa predominantly face stringent economic disadvantages upon arrival, but prior schooling in the country of origin is a differentiating factor in predicting the success of the academic performance of students from these migrant communities (Hwa-Froelich & Matsuo, 2010;

Pires, 2009). This is an important factor that school administrators and educators need to take into account when strategizing about teaching approaches and methodologies. Children from Eastern Europe countries are consistently academically better structured than other migratory groups (Abu-Rabia & Shakkour, 2014; Barac et al., 2014; Braunstein et al., 2012; Glennen, 2015; Kan & Kohnert, 2008; Kogan, Gebel & Noelke, 2012; Jonsson & Rudolphi, 2011; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2013), and this has been shown to directly correlate to their good performance indicators in other previous studies (Figueiredo, Martins & Silva, 2014). Only after making an accurate assessment of the proficiency and diversity of performance levels will professionals be able to identify students at risk and thus develop support programs to address their particular needs.

Examining the home environment of linguistic minorities enables identifying which languages are spoken in the homes of students with immigrant parents of different origins (Jeynes, 2003; Zhang, Tardif, Shu et al., 2013). These interactions (among the diversity of languages at home) affect the vision these students have of the host culture and language (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Additionally, the professional situation of parents determines the daily and school routines of the students (Hoff, 2003; 2013; Becker, 2009; Mistry, Biesanz, Chien et al., 2008). Jonsson and Rudolphi (2011) in a study in Swedish school with immigrant students found that students from non-European countries had more disadvantages with regard to their academic performance. On the other hand, the behaviors and choices of students from European countries were favorably impacted by parental involvement in schooling and their encouragement to learn the second language (Poza, Brooks & Valdez, 2014). In households with limited proficiency in the language of the host country, less cognitive and academic stimulation is available for students, resulting in a decrease in their learning expectations (Jeynes, 2003; Zhang et al., 2013).

¹Furthermore, specifically, maternal stimulation with regard to development in the second or foreign language is a specific factor seen as a school predictor of success and motivation (Hernandez, 2011). There are several factors that define a risk group, such as the immigrant one (Crosnoe &

Turley, 2011). However, specific effects can be seen both in the context of native or foreign language. The socio-economic status of the family, native or immigrant, is influential on the positive (or negative) development of cognitive strategies (Hoff 2003; 2013). Students differ in their performance according to professional variability and socio-economic status of their parents, which is also related to the type of language exposure and literacy experience available to them in their socio-geographical circumstances, allowing for differentiated cognitive activation per individual (Becker, 2009; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998). It is well established that interactions between students and their nuclear families (home context) have repercussions on their academic performance (Becker, 2009; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Mistry, Biesanz, Chien et al., 2008; Suizzo et al., 2014). Immigrants' school students will be academically and cognitively impacted in cases where there is a fragile socio-economic context, which directly affects (generating high probability of slower rates of acquisition) literacy and language learning (Hoff, 2003). Emigration and Immigration is not correlated only to impoverished family backgrounds, but the bond of emigration commonly associated with professional motivation and the uneven socio-economic situation of history, especially in speakers of Indo-Aryan languages (from Indian countries) and of Romance languages, considering the American destination (as the case of Spanish and Portuguese speakers), while the Asian (considering mostly Indian countries) and Slavic populations are essentially working immigrants in European destinations (Crosby & Dunbar, 2012; Entorf & Minoiu, 2005; Giacomini et al., 2011; Schepens, Slik & Hout, 2013; Yamamoto & Li, 2012). Based on the observation that the authors of this chapter carried out in 2014 in selected educational institutions of the US East Coast and in collaboration with Princeton University and the Coordination for the Portuguese Language Programs and Education Affairs in the US, it was noted, with regard to resources and support of Foreign Language programs, that these institutions have been best organized in the United States since the 1960s, while in European countries the support provided does not have the same structure and is less attractive, as corroborated by previous studies (Crosnoe & Turley, 2011; Giacomini et al., 2011; Halle et al., 2012). A major

¹ Data referring to these socioeconomic differences in immigrant students were published in Figueiredo, S., Martins, M., & Silva, C. (2016). The Parental Investment Effect on Immigrant Children at Schools: Employment and Specialization of Parents as an Explaining Variable for Tasks Achievement in Second Language. *International Journal of Advances in Psychology*, 5, 23-34

concern is ensuring that families can access educational materials to increase skills in FL and in L2 from home, and thus align this with the school's educational goals and reduce the distance between home and school settings that lower socio-economic groups experience, and the discrepancy between school and domestic resources (applied to literacy and L2 learning).

In the US, we noticed that the support given to the teaching of Portuguese, mainly focusing on immigrant populations from Portugal and Brazil, began as an initiative by non-profit organizations. A more structured teaching was subsequently developed with coordinating entities (coordination centers) that are associated with the teaching of various languages, such as Spanish and the Cervantes Institute. Classes, certification and recruitment are subject to more rigorous procedures at the Cervantes Institute in view of the significant dimension of Hispanic immigration in the US. This growing population, and the economic and political power associated with it, was crucial in the studies on their domestic contexts and indexes of academic success in US schools (Crosby & Dunbar, 2012; Jesus & Xiao, 2013; Quesada, Hart & Bourgois, 2011; Valdés, 2001). Contrarily to the poor academic scores of African students from immigrant families in European schools (Pires, 2009; Figueiredo et al., 2015), Crosby and Dunbar's report (2012) concluded that in US schools African children with origin in immigration showed better preschool reading skills than their Hispanic peers, even in the presence of controlled effects for intergroup differences, like socioeconomic background (Crosby & Dunbar, 2012, pp. 18-20). However, when comparing African children with white and Asian children, the academic and preschool skills are lower for black children (Crosby & Dunbar). This difference in the higher performance of European and Asian children is emphasized by the socioeconomic factor that acted as a predictive variable in the comparison between African students and their white and Asian peers in American schools (Crosnoe & Turley, 2011; Hamm, Bradford & Heck, 2005; Steinberg, Dombusch & Bradford, 1992). Recent studies (Chiswick & Gindelsky, 2015; Feliciano, 2001) showed different results: on the one hand confirming that Hispanic and Asian immigrant young students are best positioned in terms of academic abilities, on the other attesting the low performance of white non-Hispanic students. A different scenario emerged when comparing Portuguese and American contexts, considering that Asian Indian immigrant and European students have better

and higher educational attainments than their African peers (Crosby & Dunbar; Figueiredo, Alves Martins & Silva, 2015.; Pires, 2009; Hamm, Bradford & Heck, 2005). In Portuguese schools, the Asian Indian immigrants are the poorest performers in L2 reading and other linguistic skills comparing with all groups (Figueiredo, Alves Martins & Silva, 2015). Similarly, it was noted that East Asian immigrants (Chinese and Korean) in schools both in the US and Portugal show positive indices of academic adjustment, as well as greater adaptation to the labor market (Figueiredo et al.; Byun & Park, 2012; Crosby & Dunbar). The Hispanic population in the US denotes the same complexities, but that is also associated with low socio-economic status (Crosby & Dunbar, 2012; Jesus & Xiao, 2013; Quesada, Hart & Bourgois, 2011; Valdés, 2001). Disadvantaged situations related to socio-economic factors have only been analyzed focusing on the correlation between native population (in the context of native language) and skills in reading, for example, explaining school dropout rates and academic failure (Hernandez, 2011). In a native language context, the interaction with parents from an early age is well documented (Chiswick & Gindelsky, 2015; Crosnoe & Turley, 2011; Leyendeckera et al.; Zhang et al., 2013) as having great influence on language stimulation, considering the familiar routines in which it develops and its effectiveness at younger ages (Bankston & Zhou, 2006; Becker, 2009; Bialystok, Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998). Still, the FL context presents different circumstances and has new variables, such as the exposure time and duration of stay in the host country (Calvo & Bialystok, 2014; Keels, 2009; Halle et al., 2012).

There is valid scientific evidence on American immigrant students and their learning constraints and socioeconomic characteristics, which have implications on academic achievement, as seen in previously mentioned studies and additional indicators (Capps, Fix, Murray et al., 2005; Chang et al., 2014; Jeynes, 2003). Contrarily, the socio-economic specificities of students and their families are often overlooked by educators in European schools, particularly by teachers in Portuguese schools, because the priority is given to assessment and placement of these students in classes, not to socio-economic backgrounds (Barret, McGuinness, & O'Brien, 2012) to distinguish classroom profiles and design explicit instructional strategies (Pires, 2009; Hortas, 2008). This is a major gap in the Portuguese schools' administrative process, missing an important opportunity to tailor approaches that steer students towards school achievement. Studies (Calvo & Bialystok, 2014; Mistry, Biesanz, Chien et al., 2008; Suizzo et al., 2014) show that for immigrant students whose families have less economic flexibility due to constraints posed by unstable

jobs or job accumulation for financial survival, it becomes more difficult to promote literacy even in their native language, and school administrators should address their particular needs. Therefore, migrant student populations face a dual problem: increasing the learning of both native and second languages (Kroll & Bialystok, 2013). This situation is compounded by the lack of support to either language (sometimes more languages, when students have more than one native language), which happens in many European countries that do not offer significant language immersion programs (Halle et al., 2012).

3.1. Contrasting Schools and Teachers of the East Coast

The study examined contrasting school practices in specific cases in New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts, addressing both linguistic minorities and native learners and focusing on Portuguese language instruction (mainly as a Foreign Language). The contrasting analysis generates what we called “state-switching” with regard to the visible difference on practices adopted by each American state concerning language education, frameworks and policy. The analysis focused on the following questions:

1. Which are the current teaching methods of Portuguese as a foreign language used in three US East Coast contexts: New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts?
2. Which are the current frameworks (References) used for the assessment of students’ success in languages other than English (not only Portuguese)?
3. Which are the preferences (and labor expectations) of American native students enrolled in Portuguese language courses as an investment in learning Portuguese not as a heritage language.
4. How do European and American standards differ regarding foreign language education?

The first section of the study focus on the New York (i) and New Jersey (ii) specific contexts. These states were selected because of the significant population of Portuguese speakers (mostly Brazilian) and their distinct district educational systems. The comparative analysis examines the types of courses

that the American contexts have made available to those interested in studying Portuguese, both to the Portuguese immigrant community (first learning scenario: Portuguese as native language) and to the American population in general (second learning scenario: Portuguese as foreign language). In the US students have two options: courses in public schools and courses in nonprofit organizations. Public schools are, in turn, organized into two types: Portuguese schools (such as the Portuguese School of Clark in Newark) and American schools (such as Park High School in Newark). In New Jersey, Portuguese as a foreign language is strongly present in primary and secondary schools. In the Portuguese community, there are community-based associations (identified as nonprofit organizations) that organize the teaching of Portuguese primarily for second generation Portuguese-Americans, and that depends exclusively on their own structure to define the recruitment of teachers and school materials. In the case of the Portuguese community in the United States, these organizations promote the maintenance of Portuguese as a heritage language and Portuguese culture in second and later generations. These courses have the support of the coordination center (Coordination for the Portuguese Language Programs and Education Affairs in the US), which backs the courses with teaching resources and provides teacher training. This coordination center has a function that is similar to that of the Embassy. In universities, Portuguese as a foreign language is mainly chosen by American students and students from other nationalities (also immigrants in the US), which indicates that the attendance of such courses is not related to Portuguese nationality, culture or heritage language.

Why Portuguese? The language is a common option because of the requirements of certain labor markets, as well as the fact that many students master Portuguese but not at a satisfactorily proficient level and also because the Hispanic population are close to the Portuguese language and culture. The language choice often has a strong relationship with identity traits and with the mother tongue familiarity of the students (Crump, 2015). In addition, there is interest in Portuguese culture from students originating from African countries with Portuguese as official language. Concerning the Portuguese-speaking teachers, they are guided in their training on three occasions that are divided in the guidance Framework for Portuguese Foreign Language Teaching (Grosso, Soares, Sousa, et al., 2011). This framework provides strategies to prepare lessons and curricular themes, materials management, knowledge of the European framework of language teaching (European countries), and training for the correct administration of assessment sheets. Also related to the teaching and support of Portuguese as a foreign language but also as a native language,

immigrant families receive support and guidance in order to involve them in school goals for their children (Crump, 2015). This is an innovative aspect in the context of support programs: parental involvement in student learning. Regarding the evaluation of all procedures, teachers of primary and secondary schools develop their own tools and use them in the beginning of the school year to assess the proficiency of students and their placement in classes. After each term there are expected targets for students, following the guidelines of the European frameworks (in the case of Portuguese schools in the US). The development of FL learners whose families vary in socioeconomic status generates a wide range of profiles considering learning environments, which leads to different teaching procedures. In this observational study with foreign language teachers in schools in New Jersey and New York, there was a wide diversity of resources and interventions in the classrooms. American schools, unlike the Portuguese schools in the US, have different guidelines for assessment and placement that do not follow the European Framework of Reference (2001). American schools use the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2012) and have their own curriculum without the influence of coordinating or agencies centers, for all foreign languages, not just Portuguese. Motivation to learn Portuguese differs between non-governmental organizations and American schools of New York, given that these organizations aim to maintain Portuguese language and culture as an inheritance. We observed that continuing training in the native language is not the perspective shared by the American schools, with the Portuguese and other minority languages being only optional in American school programs.

In the American schools we noticed that unclear and scientifically incorrect educational practices are still kept: it is understood that English language learners do not differ in terms of cognitive processing from other types of foreign language learners (Harper & Jong, 2004; May, 2011). These arguments are weak and compromised regarding their scientific basis, therefore refuted by the neuroscience authors (DeKeyser, 2010) who have found other outputs on the cognitive processing of individuals in the context of foreign and second language acquisition, and considering the cognitive improvement inherent to bilingual activation (the simultaneous activation in two languages). Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders et al. (2005)

corroborated the importance of support programs that address the real gaps that immigrant students have in languages learning, including bilingual stimulation. In linguistic contexts other than English, pedagogical adaptation should be reviewed (Crump, 2015), as well as the focus on bilingual education in regular classrooms (Harper & Jong, 2004). Avoiding parallel instruction in the native language is related to a political issue according to which American schools maintain the primacy of English (Halle, 2012; Jong, 2013; Macedo & Bartolomé, 2014; Pennycook, 2014). The motivation of immigrant students can be compromised by this school policy, which also conditions the encouragement of minority language education programs. Individuals tend to progressively reject the heritage language in favor of English (Liddicoat & Curnow, 2014; Halle, 2012; Manan & David, 2014). On the other hand, Portuguese schools (excluding non-Portuguese schools with different teaching methods and objectives from this analysis) in Portugal offer weak support to minority language programs, not encouraging the simultaneous learning of mother language by students with migrant backgrounds (second generation immigrants). But the basic argument is not related to the harm that has been incorrectly assigned to the cognitive development of children (Bialystok, 2002; Cummins, 1992; 2012; 2014). Effectively, teaching directed to the native languages of the immigrant school population is not a type of education offered, due to having less experience with immigration Portuguese schools when compared to American schools. Except for the Chinese population, immigrant parents are not involved in creating initiatives to support teaching minority languages, and there are no economic structures able to support these immediate needs. The social status strongly depends on the relationship with the dominant language, leading disadvantaged immigrant families to encourage their children to develop skills in the dominant language (the second language) and neglect continued learning in the native language (Liddicoat & Curnow, 2014; Bialystok, 2002; Cummins, 2014; Mann & David, 2013). May (2011) refers to “monolingual bias”, and other scholars (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders et al., 2005; Keysar, Hayakawa, & Ann, 2012) have identified several countries and languages that devalue the importance of bilingual competence and the notion of the fact that all languages can be respondents to communication needs, all have the same status and are not subject to the primacy of the most spoken languages.

3.2. European and American Standards for Foreign Language Education: in What Do They Differ?

Based on the study that we conducted on the American context and in collaboration with Princeton University, different assessment methods were examined. Regarding assessment, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001) is not considered in the US in the same way it is in Europe. Variability in learners' performance has been thoroughly tested in international school areas, especially in the US, since the 1960s (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages 1996; Bachman, 2000; Bailey & Huang, 2011; Bygate, Swan, & Skehan, 2013; Coombe, 2013; Hinkel, 2011; Scaramucci, 2013; Ramirez, Chen, Geva et al., 2010). In the specific field of assessment, international research has focused on the development and validation of instruments for immigrant school populations (Bachman, 2000; Coombe, 2013; Bailey & Huang, 2011), although each national system has developed its own guidelines, as is the case of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2012) in the US, the Canadian repository of tools and tests - ALBERTA (2012) and the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), in Europe. European and American resources are very different in terms of scientific research and school practices, which have an impact on enhancing evidence and validity of new materials and new data in this scientific field (Bachman, 2000; Bailey & Huang, 2011; Cowles, Oliveira, & Wiedeman, 2006). Which is the best reference? The type of linguistic minorities shall determine, in each country, the instruments necessary for assessment, placement and learning. The type of guiding reference is essentially a school policy, and studies like this must then compare and analyze the effectiveness of the variety of benchmarks in education, and in FL learning specifically (Cowles et al.; Reljic et al.). However, the materials available are mostly restricted to English as a Second Language and as a Foreign Language, as attested by the several PhD theses and exploratory studies conducted since the 1960s (Coombe, 2013). In Europe, besides assessment and certification systems, the reference available to education professionals regarding designing materials for teaching and learning may be found in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In Portugal, as well as in other European schools, the CEFR is used in schools and universities (in both contexts of Portuguese as a second or as a foreign language) to determine the proficiency of immigrant learners of different ages and nationalities and from different school levels. Yet, the

impact of this in the performance levels of the immigrant population is not known. Moreover, despite the fact that the guidelines and rules of reference such as the CEFR and the Framework for Portuguese Foreign Language Teaching (Grosso, Soares, Sousa et al., 2011) are considered to have been developed based on scientific research (Grosso et al., 2011, p. 21), there has been no psychometric validation or longitudinal study of the scores that define the profiles and cut-off points (Bachman 2000; Bailey & Huang, 2011).

The existing frameworks of reference are only a small part of the intervention and identification of linguistic minorities (Figueiredo, 2013). The descriptors of these guiding frameworks do not specify the assessment methods (Grosso et al.) to assess proficiency, and the certification procedures in the first language context do not complete assessment in a formal education environment. These are separate methods and do not address the need to analyze the linguistic and cognitive profiles of the immigrant population in European schools (Elfers & Stritikus, 2013; Loeb, Soland & Fox, 2014; Garver & Noguera, 2012). The US had to be better prepared at this stage compared with Europe, due to its immigration history. This also has a military origin: the military population on American soil in the 1940s generated the need to establish conditions for language education in order to ensure communication in the military field where different populations and nationalities coexisted, particularly those not related to English. On the other hand, in Europe the Erasmus program pointed to the need for benchmarks like the originals produced by ACTFL (1996). This would prepare for, and respond to, sudden requirements for the teaching and learning of official languages for the increasing number of Erasmus participants whose mobility depended on the acquisition of new languages. Despite the earlier initiative to develop support programs for teaching many languages, many educational administrators still fail to understand the advantages of multilingualism, perceiving it as a threat to the stability of cognitive monolingualism (Bialystok, 2002; May, 2011). In Europe, although the benchmarks are research-based, there is still insufficient data to verify psychometric information, or longitudinal studies able to build composition scores to define profiles and cutoffs. The frameworks are only a small part of the intervention and of the identification of linguistic minorities. Their descriptors do not specify the assessment methods (Grosso et al., p. 21) for measuring proficiency, and they do not provide a full certified evaluation in a formal education environment. Other concern refers to the concepts' biases (Crump, 2015). The concept of heritage language remains unclear, although recently Portuguese schools in the US have started to strengthen the terminology for

languages such as Portuguese and Spanish (Figueiredo, Martins, Silva, 2015). Effectively, heritage language differs from native language. Sociolinguistic skills are not completed in the heritage language, creating a gap in proficiency and an interlanguage stage. Halle et al. (2012) address these concepts' substitution in L2 as the research evolves, "language inheritance" and "language affiliation" becoming common synonyms for native language. On the other hand, "limited English proficient" is a common expression to identify second language learners with migrant backgrounds. Recently, "additional language" has also emerged as a concept similar to that of foreign language and third language, despite the social implications that this may cause.

3.3. Massachusetts Case Study: Dialogue between Education Scholars, Practitioners, and the CBI Method

In the Hudson Secondary School, MA, learning a foreign language is mandatory for graduation purposes, and the teaching of Portuguese is offered as an option among others, such as Spanish, French and Latin. There is a large Portuguese speaking community, mainly Portuguese and Brazilian, and its descendants form the majority of students learning Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL). The great motivation to learn PFL is related to the fact that Portuguese is the mother tongue of parents and grandparents (Crump, 2015). It is difficult to find any evidence of students willing to pursue studies in Portuguese or seeing it as an important asset to their professional careers. In general, students of PLE are the third generation of immigrants coming from the Azores. Many of them have never visited Portugal and the cultural knowledge they have of the country comes from the story of their families, most of them from poor backgrounds and low socioeconomic status. There is no real knowledge of the culture; students do not know authors or Portuguese artists, they also do not read newspapers or have a reasonable opinion of Portugal's political, economic and cultural development. Given this context, teaching Portuguese seems essential to maintain the culture and the language in the region and in this the school plays an important role. Measures were taken to ensure that the number of students studying foreign languages increases. Since then, foreign language learning became compulsory for at

least three years. Changes were also made in the curriculum, aiming to clarify the role of language departments in schools and to promote changes in teaching methods towards more effective learning. Although Massachusetts, through ACTFL, establishes standards and guiding principles for languages, the fact is that schools have full autonomy to develop their own curriculum and learning methods. Therefore, the faculty of this school has been implementing a new curriculum following the Content Based Instruction (CBI) presented by Shrum and Glisan (2001). The school chose this methodology based on Stoller's (2008) assumptions, according to which the CBI method allows a natural approach when learning the four skills of a foreign language (FL). According to the author, the CBI allows reading authentic materials, interpret and evaluate information on the subject under study, and develop projects in which students must cooperate to develop oral and written skills. This study also has other advantages: 1) with the CBI, students are exposed to the language, while learning its content; 2) the metalinguistic reflection is contextualized, only studying the part of grammar that is essential for the understanding of the message, avoiding work in isolation and artificial language fragments; 3) students can bring their knowledge of the world to class and increase their motivation to learn.

It is suggested that the themes to be worked must follow students' interests, and, if necessary, be discussed with them (Alan & Stoller 2005). These must promote working methods able to develop cooperative learning, apprenticeship learning, experimental learning, and project-based learning. Finally, it should be noted that the CBI is a student-centered model that follows students' interests, allowing greater flexibility and adaptability in curriculum design. In Hudson's secondary school and in the Boston context, the last five years have been devoted to the curriculum conceptualization process and materials development. The program is divided into thematic units that are addressed according to the CBI and from a Portuguese-speaking cultural perspective. Implementing such changes in the curriculum poses challenges to teachers. The biggest is the lack of authentic and relevant material for the age level of the students. The other is the need for continuous research and search for materials, which may be problematic if the school cannot provide time and conditions to conduct that research, creation and teaching process. In language classes, there is also concern with "class management", indiscipline and control of strategies or unproductive students. Part of this reality has to do with how students are distributed in the classes. District schools begin to offer Portuguese 1 in primary education and continue until level 5 in high school. However, there is no guarantee that all students

will have the same linear path. Many start studying languages in later levels because they have already mastered part of the language, others repeat the same level several times, or change language because they did not like the previous experience. This leads to a situation where there is great disparity of ages, backgrounds and interests in the same class. Regarding assessment, it takes place exclusively in schools. There is no available data allowing us to measure or compare students' proficiency levels with other schools or other realities, even knowing that these teaching methodologies used by this group of teachers are actually the most suitable for teaching PFL. In conclusion, we can assume that the combination of complete freedom of curriculum construction, the lack of external support (research in universities, continuous training of teachers, transfer of learning support materials), and the lack of external quality assessment education can place Portuguese as Foreign Language teaching in a grey area without any projection or importance in the context in which it is taught. What is done in this school results from the individual vision of the department coordinator and his group of teachers, rather than from being the result of a strategic plan for language teaching.

In sum, three contexts examined in specific schools of the US East Coast from several instruction levels show strong differences regarding methodologies and value for foreign language learning and for specific immigrant communities. The nonprofit organizations are more representative in New York and New Jersey, while the Massachusetts case study offers a picture of a school-based curriculum. On the one hand, continued instruction in Portuguese as a native language has more expression in New York and New Jersey compared with Boston. Language identity has different expressions across the states as well. On the other hand, engagement in foreign language programs and maintenance of heritage languages are more prominent in New York and New Jersey. The Portuguese immigrant communities are larger in New Jersey, which is a variable explaining more language support and other additional structures for assessment and maintained instruction. Each district has a *sui generis* structure for the teaching of foreign language courses and the research-based instruments are used mostly in New Jersey schools and at the University. Research-based instruments are less used in Boston. In Hudson, the CBI method is specifically used with autonomy compared with the other districts. With regard to research in FL studies, it would be very important to

compare European and American settings concerning foreign language teaching, focusing on romance idioms as target languages. We also suggest comparing the American (ACTFL) and European (CEFR) frameworks to understand distance between assessment criteria and subsequently make adjustments to ensure a balanced adaptation for immigrant populations enrolled in language support programs. Both suggestions intend to ensure the advancement on FL learning and teaching of languages other than English.

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