

Peer learning: mentoring in a Portuguese as a foreign language course

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Abstract

Mentoring is valued in foreign language learning, as it is based on the recognition of the benefits of the interaction between peers. This paper aims at presenting the results of a mentorship experience thought for a Portuguese as a Foreign Language course in higher education, in 2017/18. The mentees are Erasmus students attending these courses. This initiative was developed through the preparation of mentors, structured sessions of interaction between mentors and mentees, a reflection upon the experienced process and the administration of questionnaires to the participants. Data were collected through direct observation, following a naturalist observation protocol. There was a content analysis of the answers for open questions and a statistical analysis of all answers. Results suggest the existence of positive effects of the mentoring program, such as the individual, social and linguistic development of the mentors, the mentees' integration and learning of Portuguese and the interpersonal relationship in both groups.

Keywords: *mentoring, Portuguese as foreign language, Erasmus program*

Introduction

Aiming at promoting the integration of Erasmus students⁵ who take courses in Portuguese as a Foreign Language at a Centre for Languages and Culture of an Institution of Higher Education, a mentoring program was designed to bring foreign students and Portuguese students together, since we understand peer support can be very important. There are several benefits of a close relationship of these participants during the process, whose modelling behaviours (Bandura 1969) may facilitate the promotion of a good adaptation of new students in their first moments in a given institution (Welling 1997).

In this study, Erasmus students live for a few months in Lisbon, and the global dimension of the Portuguese language has to be emphasized by teachers. Taking into account the discursive issues, the structural system of the language, the semantics, the pragmatics and the socio-cultural dimension, the importance of using language in context should be highly recognized, namely in everyday communication situations. A mentoring program seems to be able to provide this use of the language in context.

More specifically, the context of immersion facilitates language learning and the appropriation of cultural aspects, and it is particularly useful if students can have, with pedagogical and linguistic supervision, access to people and places that will be part of their daily lives, promoting what is conveyed by Reis (2010) when this author claims that the notion of internationalization of the Portuguese language implies a unique articulation of language and culture.

⁵ The Erasmus+ Program is a European funding program established in 1987 offering university students a possibility of studying or doing an internship abroad in another country

Our main purpose with this mentoring program is to be able to provide new Erasmus students with a significant involvement with the school community, which implies that they know the institution and its functioning, as well as the geographic context in which they are, and that welcoming strategies are promoted in order to avoid social isolation and help to outline clear and achievable academic goals. If this type of contact exists, foreign students will have the opportunity to interact individually with native speakers on different topics, always according to their level of linguistic proficiency. For Portuguese students who took on the role of mentors in Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PLE) classes, a guide was created with guidelines for their action, with training and follow-up sessions.

In this work, a review of the related literature and a theoretical contextualization is presented regarding the characterization and advantages of the mentoring programs, highlighting the impact on the different actors. We explain how the mentoring sessions were designed and implemented and how the Portuguese students took on the role of mentors with Erasmus students. One of the main ideas was to create a more personalized approach on speaking and listening. The goals of the program, the methodology and the participants are then described. The results are presented, with regard to language learning, the development of language skills, the academic and social integration, the development of attitudes of respect and appreciation of other languages and cultures and the valorisation of the experience, followed by the presentation of the main conclusions of the study. In the last section, some final considerations are made, reflecting on the experience and establishing bridges with the general problem that gave rise to this work.

Review of the literature

In second/foreign language learning, there is evidence of the benefits of peer learning. Learning with and from each other can be termed Peer Language Learning (PLL), which refers to informal adult language learning interactions. A native speaker who is not the teacher will be seen as a reference point of the norm for the target language (Ziegler, Durus, Max & Moreau 2014: 4). As the interaction with a native speaker occurs, the learner receives input, “a necessary component of all theories of language acquisition” (Lowen & Sato 2018: 287), that will be analysed and transformed into new speaking skills or outputs, “the language that learners produce during meaning-focused interaction (Lowen & Sato 2018: 291). Additionally, PLL upholds a stress-free environment, which promotes a psychological benefit, because participants know they are not being carefully monitored and feel comfortable to experiment with the language (Lowen & Sato 2018: 295).

In PLL, communication competence is paramount, and above linguistic competence. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) can be looked at from two different perspectives: cognitive and sociocultural. The first is interested in analysing the mental process of language learning, favouring quantitative studies (Foster & Ohta 2005: 402-403); the second seeks to interpret language development as a social process and usually uses qualitative research methodology to study data. Therefore, cognitive perspective can consider a big amount of data and sociocultural research usually studies a small number of subjects.

Taking into account the possibility of increasing foreign language knowledge, Watanabe and Swain (2007) developed a study with a small group of 12 English as a second language adult learners. The purpose was to understand “how proficiency differences and patterns of interaction affect L2 learning” (Watanabe & Swain 2007: 124). They paired the 12 participants with a different group of students and gave them a task. They found that peer-peer collaborative dialogue increases language-related episodes (part of a dialogue where language learner talk about the language), especially when pairs have a collaborative orientation, regardless of the proficiency differences. Overall, “this study confirmed the importance of considering peer–peer collaborative dialogue as a mediator of L2 learning” (Watanabe & Swain 2007: 139).

The peer learning that is “collaborative practices between students” (Zabalza 2011: 411), whether in the tutoring or mentoring model, can be seen as advantageous, since it promotes “socialization, learning, career advancement, psychological adjustment, and preparation for leadership in those who are mentored” (Johnson 2016: 3).

Similarly stressing the importance of sociocultural aspects of language learning, Lowen and Sato (2018: 296) highlight “the importance of a classroom environment where learners’ collaborative interaction is encouraged and, possibly, explicitly taught. In such an environment, learner psychology may be aligned to psycholinguistic processes conducive to L2 development”.

In recognizing the impact that students have on their colleagues, not only in higher education but also in other levels, there has been a multiplication of initiatives whose core is the collaboration between peers, registering two more common situations: tutoring and mentoring, assuming that the first “typically focuses on a more advanced student helping lower-level students with course contents (...)”, while “Mentoring focuses on a more experienced student helping a less experienced student improve overall academic performance” (Colvin & Ashman 2010: 122). Regardless of the strategy to be implemented, there are some aspects that must be taken into account by all the stakeholders, which are related. On the one hand, we have to consider the role that each part will play when interacting. On the other, we have to address the expectations and objectives of the initiative.

This paper focuses on mentoring, which can be seen as a “process of intellectual, psychological and affective development based on relative frequency scheduled meetings over a reasonably extended time frame and that mentors accept personal responsibility as competent and trustworthy non-parental figures for the significant growth of other individuals” (Galbraith & Maslin-Ostrowski 2000: 136).

There are several examples of successful cases in the literature on this subject. In the 1990s, in the United States of America, a mentoring project was implemented at a public university, which involved, over several decades, 400 student mentors and 15000 student mentees. In 2008, interviews were carried out covering experienced mentors, newer mentors, teachers and mentees, and it was found that there were benefits, mainly in improving academic performance for all students involved. The women interviewees highlighted interpersonal relationships, and the men interviewees the academic results, as emphasized by Colvin and Ashman (2010: 132), as “women see relationship benefits and men see academic benefits”. Another factor evidenced in this work is related to issues of hierarchy that are created between the three parties involved, teacher, mentor and mentee, and there may be situations of struggle for power or resistance to the performance of tasks, because “students, teachers and mentors all have different ideas about a mentor's role and how it should be enacted in various relationships” (Colvin & Ashman 2010: 132).

To mitigate these struggles for power, Rosillo, García, Duarte and Santa (2018: 3301) offer recommendations, namely that the work and dedication of mentors should be recognized “as part of their teaching assignment and thus reward their effort to perform this role, they must be provided with a high level of support from program staff and should receive greater recognition and reward for their hard work and dedication to the program.”

With results that point to the conclusion that mentoring improves students' academic performance, “ensuring their persistence in university”, we find Lunsford, Crisp, Dolan and Wuetherick (2017: 316-317), who look, also, on the importance of choosing mentors, admitting that they often “may be selected according to criteria such as high level of academic achievement, interpersonal and communications skills, and conscientiousness” (Lunsford, Crisp, Dolan & Wuetherick 2017: 320). In fact, for a language-focused peer relation, it is crucial that mentors serve as a model at various levels and that they support the development of the academic, social and linguistic knowledge of the mentees. In truth, mentoring is a relationship where the focus is on the development of the mentee.

Based on the idea that, in Higher Education, peer interactions are the source of diverse experiences that can have significant and positive effects for practically all students in the university results (Manso 2016), let us focus, in more detail, on the benefits that the implementation of mentoring projects promote in all stakeholders, to include mentors, mentees and institutions. In Johnson's perspective (2016), there are clear advantages for mentees, namely:

1. Academic performance increases, because the mentees are more motivated and are able to overcome adversity more safely, revealing themselves both in an average higher than that of colleagues at the end of the degree, or in the conclusion of the academic degree within the established period.

2. The productivity of mentees increases, especially when mentoring exists at doctorate level with a greater proliferation of publications of scientific articles, as well as presentation of communications.

3. The mentees, when accompanied, recognize that the mentoring programme was a promoter of the development of skills, namely self-confidence, empathy, knowing how to listen and emotional intelligence.

4. Through the mentoring programme, the mentee has privileged access to other older colleagues and teachers from other areas, allowing network work to flow more naturally, including favouring access to other projects and grants.

5. Since increase in self-confidence is one of the benefits pointed out in the mentoring programme, the professional confidence and the identity development of the mentees favours their own perception of professional success, corroborated, often, by the mentors themselves.

6. The advantages listed above foster positive notoriety in the workplace, increasing opportunities for professional mobility, as well as the number of job offers and, consequently, better working conditions.

7. When there is a close relationship between mentor and mentee, there is greater satisfaction with the academic program and the institution, which makes the mentor feel more motivated with their studies and more likely to publicly recognize the institution, which could lead to an increase in student enrolment.

8. Once the mentee feels fulfilled with their academic participation, there are fewer conflicts in their personal path and, consequently, a reduction in stress, promoting an emotional balance that, invariably, is reflected in his professional performance.

Regarding institutional benefits, Johnson (2016: 13) states that "institutions with active mentoring are more likely to have productive employees, stronger organizational commitment, reduced turnover, a stronger record of developing junior talent, and a loyal group of alumni and faculty". Therefore, mentees whose mentoring experience was positive are more receptive to being mentors in the future, prolonging the sustainability of a project with clear advantages for all stakeholders.

In another study, carried out by the partnership between Gallup and Purdue University, the data collected allowed the authors to analyse the success of long-term graduates, including in relation to issues of employability and quality of life (Gallup 2014: 1), through positioning in five categories: general well-being, social sphere, financial stability, belonging to the community and physical health (Gallup 2014: 2). The results that we are going to highlight relate the success of the participants with the accompaniment, through mentoring, in the course of their academic training. Based on the premise that "if an employed graduate had a teacher who cared about them as a person, one who made them excited about learning, and had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their dreams, the graduate's odds of being engaged at work more than doubled" (Gallup 2014: 5). Johnson's conclusions (2016) presented above are corroborated, precisely those that focus on performance and opportunities for professionals. This underscores the idea that mentoring projects can have positive repercussions that do not stop with the conclusion of an academic degree. On the contrary, the results accompany the mentee throughout their life, in the various spheres analysed. Gallup (2014: 18) noted

“more college graduates who felt supported in college — because they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams, a professor who made them excited about learning, and felt their professors cared about them as a person — are thriving in all areas of their well-being. Seventeen percent of those who felt supported are thriving in all five areas, compared with 6% of those who did not feel supported.”

Some studies also suggest that the ability of mentors to communicate effectively and provide some type of support will be essential and may improve the future results of the mentees (Ismail & Jui 2014), which forces us to reflect on the importance of the training offered to mentor-candidates before they become mentors, as well as ongoing support during the mentoring process. This training of mentors is essential because it allows them to become aware, on the one hand, of the importance and responsibility of the role they will assume and, on the other hand, it also leads them to reflect on linguistic and other knowledge that they will share.

According to DuBois and Karcher (2005), there are three core elements of successful mentors: the mentor has greater experience or wisdom than the mentee; the mentor offers guidance and instruction to facilitate the development of the mentee; and there is an emotional bond characterized by a sense of trust between the mentor and the mentee. These aspects are very important when we think about the mentors that we select.

Although the literature reviewed here allows us to draw from experiences carried out at various educational levels, including higher education, we did not have access to studies on mentoring experiences in contexts of teaching and learning Portuguese as a Foreign Language, and as such, we envision this work as a relevant focus and that would certainly benefit from more detailed studies.

Methodology

Taking into account the recognition of the potential of mentoring experiences presented in the previous section, and seeking to extend this approach to Portuguese as a Foreign Language classes, in the academic year 2017 - 2018, a mentoring program was put into practice in a context of teaching and learning Portuguese as a Foreign Language in Higher Education. This was a methodological option based on the recognition of the benefits of interaction between peers, the language learners (mentees) and the native speakers (mentors), for language learning and academic and social integration of students. This initiative was developed with the objectives of promoting the learning of the mentees regarding oral language (speaking and listening), facilitating the linguistic and cultural integration of the mentees, and contributing to the exercise of language skills and the exercise of citizenship by the mentors.

The mentoring program was operationalized through a three-part sequence, starting with the training of mentors, followed by the promotion of structured sessions of interaction between mentors and mentees, and finally with reflection on the process experienced. This first iteration of the program worked as a pilot experiment. The analysis of data collected and the reflection carried out will allow us to improve the subsequent iterations of the program.

In the collection and analysis of data, direct observation (non-participant observation) and indirect observation (questionnaire survey) were reconciled. The crossing and triangulation of the data obtained through these two types of observations allowed us to identify the results and formulate the conclusions that we present, which guided the sequence put into practice in the academic year 2018 - 2019. The collection of information was made with two groups of participants: mentors and mentees. The mentor group consisted of 6 students from the 1st year of the Basic Education Degree, aged between 18 and 20 years old, with European Portuguese as their mother tongue. The group of mentees was comprised of 8 students attending the teaching units of a polytechnic higher education institution under the Erasmus Program, in the academic year 2017 - 2018. The mentees were between 21 and 24 years old, and studied Portuguese as foreign language at the beginning level (A1). For this study, we

paired a mentor (Portuguese native speaker) and a student (Portuguese non-native speaker), “towards a situation where a more competent speaker chooses to turn the learner’s attention productively from meaning and towards form” (Foster & Ohta 2005: 407), using communication breakdowns as valuable learning moments that pushes the Portuguese second language speaker to learn and add new forms to their linguistic repertoire.

Knowing that PLL will benefit if the meetings take place on a regular basis (Ziegler, Durus, Max & Moreau 2014: 11), four sessions, of about thirty minutes each, of interaction between the two groups of participants were observed. These observations were made by the teacher-researcher, who did not intervene in the conversation established between the students. The researcher recorded the information collected by observation through written notes, according to a naturalistic protocol, and through photographic records. The data collected were analysed by completing two analysis grids, one regarding mentors and other mentees. The data analysis grid for mentors was organized into four categories: dimension of the involvement in the project (i); the linguistic dimension (ii); the paralinguistic and extralinguistic dimensions (iii); the attitudinal and relational dimensions (iv). For the mentees, the data were organized into three categories of analysis: (i) dimension of the implication in the project; linguistic dimension (ii); attitudinal and relational dimensions (iii).

With regard to the questionnaire survey, two questionnaires were prepared, one for each group of participants, applied at the end of the set of observed sessions. The questionnaire applied to the mentors was formulated in Portuguese. This was conceived with the objective of evaluating the participation of mentors in the program. The questionnaire is composed of three parts: socio-academic characterization; involvement in extracurricular initiatives; participation in the mentoring program.

The questionnaire provided to the mentees was written in English and aimed at assessing the participation of the mentees in the program. The questions were organized in two parts: socio-academic characterization; participation in the mentoring program.

Results and discussion

The triangulation of the information collected through the different channels allowed us to identify several results, which we grouped into five categories: (i) language progress in conversation (speaking/ listening) (mentees); (ii) development of language skills in conversation and metalinguistic knowledge (mentors); (iii) academic and social integration (mentors and mentees); (iv) development of attitudes of respect and appreciation for other languages and cultures (mentors and mentees); (v) valuing of the lived experience.

(i) Language progress in conversation (speaking/ learning) (mentees)

The participation of students learning Portuguese in the mentoring sessions allowed them to practise and consolidate content addressed in other moments of the PLE classes, having registered growth in several linguistic levels: lexicon, syntax and phonetics -phonology.

There was also progress in terms of comprehension and expression, in the oral modality, which brought greater fluency to the conversation.

The mentees' linguistic learnings were observed by the teacher-researchers and recognized by both groups of participants, especially the mentors, as can be read in their own words⁶:

First, I felt that I contributed to the learning of Portuguese by Erasmus students. It was also a very enriching experience, as I will be a teacher in the future (Mentor 1).

I think it was very important to participate in this initiative because it was possible to talk to Erasmus students to get to know them more and I was able to help them with linguistic issues where they had more difficulty (Mentor 2).

(ii) Development of language skills in conversation and metalinguistic knowledge (mentors)

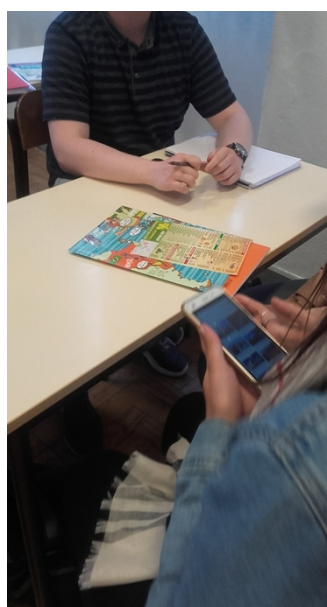
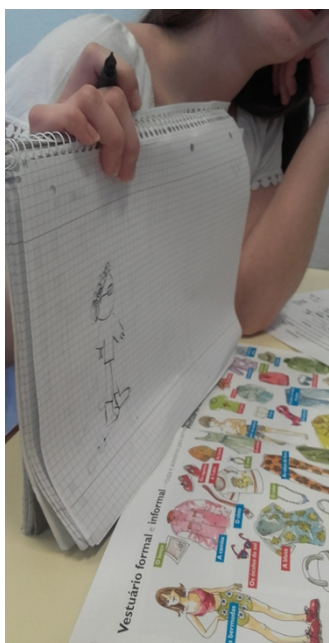
⁶ These comments were translated from Portuguese

The analysis of the observations made by the teacher-researchers in the mentoring sessions showed a progressive awareness on the part of the mentors regarding the relevance of complying with the rules of discursive interaction, the importance of didactic transposition (e.g. adaptation of grammatical structures and the speed of speech) and the use of elements that facilitate conversation (e.g. paralinguistic and extra-linguistic elements). In the following examples (see Figures 1-4), mentors support their verbal interaction with the mentees using various supports, some previously prepared, others resulting from needs at the time of communication. In fact, "When they are interacting face-to-face, they can use teaching material or objects in order to facilitate language learning" (Ziegler, Durus, Max & Moreau 2014: 8).

Figure 1: Verbal interaction between mentor (left) and mentees using images and an illustrated dictionary.



Figures 2, 3, 4: Verbal interaction between mentors and mentees using drawing (left), illustrated dictionaries and mobile phone (centre).



(iii) Academic and social integration (mentors and mentees)

A result that was easily identified by the teacher-researchers was the interrelationship between Portuguese and foreign students during the sessions in a fluid and cordial way, which facilitated the learning tasks, but also the strengthening of some social ties, not only in the class but also outside of the class. This program contributed to the mentee's integration in Portugal, as can be read in the words of two mentors transcribed below.

I met new colleagues and contributed to their integration (Mentor 2).

I think it is something very important for the integration of Erasmus colleagues and helping with that and talking to them about Portugal or any doubts that arise is very good and I feel useful (Mentor 3).

It was possible to observe, outside the mentoring sessions, foreign students studying with the mentors, which might have been a facilitating factor in the learning process, but also in the integration of the foreign students in academic life and in the local context.

The analysis of the collected data allowed us to verify that there were interactions between members of both groups outside the mentoring sessions, either by cell phone and email, or in person. In this context, some mentees participated in events at the invitation of mentors, as can be read in an excerpt from one of a mentee's responses to the final questionnaire.

(...) I was invited for the party in Santos in the end of the exam period (Mentee 1).

(iv) Development of attitudes of respect and appreciation for other languages and cultures

During the mentoring sessions, it was possible to observe in general a curiosity towards other habits and cultures by mentors and mentees.

The experience of participating in the mentoring program was perceived by most of those involved as a desire for contact, knowledge and appreciation of languages and cultures in addition to those of origin, an aspect emphasized by several participants, as can be seen by reading the excerpt:

The most positive aspects of this initiative were| meeting new people, speaking with locals, explaining cultural differences (Mentee 3).

In the following example, one of the mentors states that participation in the experience motivated him to carry out an Erasmus mission.

It allowed me to meet new people and made me think about having an Erasmus mission (Mentor 1).

(v) Valuing of the lived experience

The analysis of the information collected showed a global appreciation of the mentoring initiative in a very positive way, both by mentors and by mentees. The excerpts below speak to this positive appreciation.

It was a very rich experience (Mentor 2).

It was a nice experience (Mentee 3).

Very useful and pleasant part of Portuguese class (Mentee 1).

In general, the mentees valued the role played by the mentors in their learning of Portuguese, as we can see in the words of one of the students:

Overall a very worthwhile experience. I am very thankful for the students giving up their time to help me (Mentee 4).

The benefits of the participation in the program were recognized by both groups. Mentors valued personal and social development, professional development and interpersonal relationships provided by the involvement in the program. In fact, students who teach their peers benefit from their interaction and learn a lot from the experience (Watanabe & Swain 2007: 138). The mentees emphasized interpersonal relationships, PLE learning and their integration.

With regard to the overall appreciation of the program, Portuguese students consider the most positive aspects of the program the use of different materials, the good mood, the knowledge of new cultures and new people, the contribution for the development of the linguistic learning of the Erasmus colleagues and language games. As the least satisfactory factors, they indicate the short time of the sessions, the non-participation of mentors in all PLE sessions, the timing of the sessions (in the late afternoon), some communication problems with Erasmus students, and their own lack of preparation regarding some cultural suggestions and recommendations.

The mentees point out as the most positive aspects of the experience making new acquaintances, the conversation with native speakers, the interaction with people of a close age, the interaction with friendly and helpful students, the reflection on cultural differences, the practical application of acquired knowledge. Besides this, linguistic aspects were also mentioned: the development of fluency in conversation, the increase in vocabulary, the improvement of pronunciation, the strengthening of linguistic self-confidence. As less satisfactory factors, foreign students indicate conversation in Portuguese only, an occasional lack of conversation topics, difficulties in understanding the spoken language, the few suggestions on cultural destinations, gastronomy and travel, as well as the short duration of the sessions.

Returning to the main goals of the mentoring experience, we can conclude that mentees could develop their competence in speaking and listening to the Portuguese language. The linguistic and cultural integration of the mentees was well facilitated, and also allowed the mentors the opportunity to develop their language skills and citizenship.

Taking into account the analysis of the data collected and the reflection carried out, we identified as main limitations of this pilot experience the little preparation of the mentors at a cultural level, the limited attendance of some foreign students, the weaknesses in the didactic transposition by the mentors (using paraphrases), the type of training developed with mentors (including a lack of depth and little specific focus on cultural issues).

In future iterations of the mentoring program, we intend to keep a similar numerical proportion of mentors and mentees, sessions integrated in the class, sessions throughout the course, the initial preparation of the mentors, the presence of the teacher in the session (as a non-participant observer) and the issuance of a certificate for the mentors, as recognition and appreciation of their participation in the experience.

We assume as goals in the near future a greater investment in the preparation of mentors (before, during and after the period of realization of the sessions), an extension of the experience to several classes of students of PLE, with different levels of language proficiency, and the use of mentoring formats that allows to reach PLE classes across borders (via videoconferencing such as Skype or Zoom).

Conclusion

The evaluation and reflection on the mentoring experience carried out in a context of teaching and learning Portuguese as a Foreign Language allowed to respond to a gap identified in the research in the field of mentoring. Taking as a starting point the benefits of peer interaction for learning and socialization, pointed out by several authors, we decided to apply this methodology to PLE courses in a higher education institution. Our goal was to form a greater knowledge of the potential of the mentoring programme for the learning of Portuguese. In fact, taking into account the results and conclusions of the study, we can say that the benefits of this approach are considerable.

First, the involvement in mentoring dynamics enhanced the language learning of foreign students, who enjoyed moments of verbal interaction with native speakers of close ages, developing fluency in conversation in a contextualized, authentic and stimulating way. Although this study does not allow us to verify whether the academic performance of the participants improved with their integration in this

program, as evidenced by other investigations (Colvin & Ashman 2010, Ismail & Jui 2014, Lunsford, Crisp, Dolan & Wuetherick 2017), its contribution to students' linguistic development is evident, so it is possible to foresee its impact on academic performance.

Secondly, the involvement of Portuguese students in this initiative was highly valued by the participating mentors themselves, which is consistent with the benefits pointed out by Johnson (2016), as the mentor achieves a different fulfilment and personal satisfaction than other academic interactions. At the same time, the student responsible for accompanying the mentees can find greater motivation for their own study and for their own continued scientific learning.

Thirdly, mentors developed their linguistic and metalinguistic skills, as they were constantly challenged by the colleagues at the time of the conversation, being forced to experiment with different strategies, to diversify linguistic structures, to reinvent materials.

Fourthly, the development of the social dimension was also evident, either through the identification of the benefits of this experience for the integration and well-being of mentees in the local academic and social context, or through the contribution for the exercise of an active and responsible citizenship, on the part of the mentors, who assumed as their own the important role of contributing to the development, integration and learning of their foreign colleagues. In related ways, this experience favoured the development of attitudes of respect and acceptance of other languages and cultures, in both groups of participants.

Finally, the practice of mentoring within the classroom allows participants to enhance their development, which is reason enough to perpetuate and extend this practice in other, similar institutions. It seems to us, therefore, essential to provide opportunities for mentoring to students, aiming at their interest in participating as mentors, in order to contribute to their personal and academic growth and that of their foreign colleagues. Being an innovative practice that reinforces participation and promotes learning, it must be stimulated and supported, reinforcing the sense of belonging and community.

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