CONFIGURATIONS OF THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE SUBJECT AREA: GIVING VOICE TO SECONDARY EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Starting from the specificity of the Portuguese language subject within the high school curriculum, and with the consequent recognition of students as agents and co-creators of their own knowledge, this thesis project aims to understand the perception that students in Scientific-Humanistic Courses in high school have regarding the nature and functions of the Portuguese language subject, as well as the methodological options involved.

To achieve this, a case study was conducted with students from Scientific-Humanistic Courses at a school in the municipality of Évora, using questionnaires and interviews.

The results highlight that students attribute a utilitarian value to the subject due to its formative and cross-disciplinary nature within the curriculum, considering that the skills developed in and through it focused on oral and written communication, in interaction with reading, literary education, and grammar are essential both for academic success and for social and extracurricular life, especially in a professional context.

KEYWORDS: learning; Portuguese, curriculum, secondary education, Scientific-Humanistic Courses

CONFIGURAÇÕES DA DISCIPLINA DE PORTUGUÊS: DANDO VOZ A ALUNOS DO ENSINO SECUNDÁRIO

RESUMO

Partindo da especificidade da disciplina de português, no espaço do currículo, e consequente valorização dos alunos como atores e coautores do seu conhecimento, este estudo pretende compreender a representação que os alunos dos Cursos Científico Humanísticos do ensino secundário têm da disciplina de português quanto à sua natureza e funções, bem como relativamente às opções metodológicas nela envolvidas.

Para o efeito, foi desenvolvido um estudo de caso com alunos dos Cursos Científico Humanísticos, numa escola do concelho de Évora, recorrendo ao inquérito por questionário e por entrevista (focus group).

Dos resultados obtidos destacamos que os alunos atribuem à disciplina valor utilitário pelo seu caráter formativo e transversal, no contexto do currículo, considerando que as competências nela e por ela desenvolvidas, focadas na comunicação oral e escrita na leitura, educação literária e gramática são fundamentais quer para o sucesso académico quer para a vida social e extraescolar, sobretudo no contexto profissional..

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: aprendizagem, português, currículo, ensino secundário, cursos científico humanísticos

1   INTRODUCTION

Perceived as a flexible platform of opportunities, secondary education is a stage in students' lives that appears to be a phase of uncertainty and instability, which is affected by several factors, namely: the selection of a more specific area of study, the change of school, teachers and pace of work. These changes often lead to a growing lack of interest in school on the part of the students, the reasons for which can be related to a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as the inability to apply the content, frustration with the academic results, the fact that they don't like all or some of the subjects in the chosen course or because they don't recognize the practical and useful application of the content being taught.

In the current educational context, the Autonomy and Curricular Flexibility Project (PAFC), in conjunction with the regulations on the Profile of Students Leaving Compulsory Schooling (PA), Essential Learning (AE) and the National Strategy for Citizenship Education (ENEC) - common denominators for all students in educational matters - define strategic teaching actions aimed at giving students a more active role, positioning them as protagonists in the process of their own learning. As Rodrigues (2016) points out, "thinking about (...) who the recipients of the education system are" (p.59) is fundamental to building a school that makes a difference. Thus, studies on listening to what students have to say about their learning process, as a democratic exercise in education, are in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). Several authors, including Cook-Sather (2002) (2016), Mitra (2004) and Fletcher (2005), point out that the real involvement of students in school practices from their experiences and perspectives brings changes to the school, through the presentation of their ideas and dialogue with educational structures, promoting more responsible citizenship, a greater degree of motivation and involvement in the teaching and learning process. However, what we really see is often a contradiction between the centrality that the student acquires in the legislative field, which presupposes the development of competences to make decisions about what and how to learn, and some dissonance in practice.

Aware of the central role that students must play in the teaching and learning process and the active role they must play within the school as a community, over the last decade in Portugal, efforts have been made through a number of initiatives by the Ministry of Education to ensure that this voice is heard more, such as the "Voice of the students" initiative promoted by the Ministry of Education in 2016, but still without major repercussions, because although students often have a seat in school structures, their voice is confined there and does not produce effective changes in the operationalization of teaching strategies or in curricular matters.

Based on the specific nature of the subject of Portuguese in the scientific-humanistic courses (CCH) of today's secondary education and the consequent appreciation of students as actors and co-authors of their knowledge as a result of the most recent educational policies, which seek to focus, preferably, on the diversity of needs and potential of each and every student, by increasing their participation in learning processes and in the life of the educational community, this study aims to give the students a say, to find out the meanings they attribute to the subject of Portuguese in the context of the CCH curriculum and thus contribute to improving and adapting

educational work, focused on building "A humanist-based profile (...) of a society centered on the person".) of a society centered on the person and human dignity as fundamental values." (MEC, 2017) that prepares young people for the active citizenship of the 21st century.

Recognizing that the subject of Portuguese plays a privileged role in the context of the secondary school curriculum, in building the profile of the citizen that the school helps to construct, both through the organization of work by domains and through interaction with diversified textual genres and literary texts contextualized in a diachronic way, enhancing dialogue and the values advocated in the PA, it is important to understand the reasons behind the growing lack of interest in the subject among the students of the CCH curriculum.

1.1. Study design: methodological Options

The publication of Decree-Laws No. 54/2018 and No. 55/2018 of July 6, initiated a break with the centralized and bureaucratic model of the curriculum, embodying changes, albeit slow, in practices, towards the construction of a school that provides an answer for all, therefore more inclusive, that prepares the new generations for a life of full social participation, subordinated to the principles of mutual solidarity and respect for difference.

As Portugal is associated with policies designed, developed, monitored and disseminated under the auspices of the OECD and the EU, the current educational context is based on a strong commitment to a pedagogy for participation, as a response to the multiple challenges of today's world and the development of skills for the 21st century.

Faced with the challenge of reconciling the current social and cultural diversity in schools and ensuring that all students acquire knowledge and achieve meaningful learning in each of the subjects in the curriculum, it is important to listen to the direct beneficiaries of current education policies.

Recognizing that the content taught and to be taught in the subject of Portuguese intersects elements of tradition, history, achievements and values, together with the authors/personalities of a people and national history, the study that takes place in this subject is the effective "soul of the curriculum" (Penim, 2011).

After a succession of (re)configurations of the subject area of Portuguese, especially in secondary education, not only because of the variety of education on offer at this level, but also because of the changes that have taken place in the revision of the syllabus, this study aims to find out what representation the students of the CCH have of the subject of Portuguese and the learning they do, taking into account their needs and expectations. For these reasons, the main objectives of our study were: to identify the representations that students have of the subject of Portuguese, in the context of their secondary school curriculum; to identify the operationalization of the contents and skills to be developed in the context of the curriculum; to understand the elements that can interfere with the learning associated with each of the domains of the subject of Portuguese in secondary school and to understand how students project, in a personal,

academic or professional context, the use of the skills developed in the subject of Portuguese in secondary school.

This study took place in a school grouping that covers pre-school education, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles of basic education and secondary education, located in the district of Évora, in NUT II. In the 2021/2022 school year, the school group offered three scientific-humanistic courses: Science and Technology (ST), Languages and Humanities (LH) and Socio-Economic Sciences (SE).

The school selected for this study was based on the following criteria:

a) convenience of geographical proximity;

b) compared to schools in the district with the same socio-economic characteristics, this is the one with the greatest inequality of results within the school: average distance between the school's students in terms of their classification in the Portuguese exam.

Data was collected by means of a questionnaire survey applied to all HCC students enrolled in the school that year and by three semi-structured focus group interviews.

Given the objectives of the research, this work falls within the interpretive paradigm, also known as constructivist (Creswell, 2012), since it places the "central interest in human meaning in social life and in its elucidation and exposition by the researcher" (Erickson, 1986, p. 119).

According to Erickson, what makes a study interpretive "is a matter of substantive focus and intent, not a matter of data collection procedures." (1986, p. 120).

It should also be noted that our study is based on qualitative and quantitative information, taking a mixed approach, since the theme is based on understanding the "voice" of the students, in order to arrive at the meanings they attribute to the subject of Portuguese. This approach involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in the study, combining different methodologies (Patton, 1990) (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003); (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2004) (Creswell, 2012); (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009); (Sá, Patricia; Costa, António Pedro; Moreira, António (coord.), 2021) (Silva & Pinto, 2009); (Duarte, 2009); (Hibberts & Johnson, 2012) allowing for a more accurate reading of the richness and complexity of the object of study, in a more complete and holistic way, based on various points of view, making the research more consistent, more credible and less susceptible to ambiguity, since they "reveal different aspects of empirical reality" (Carmo & Ferreira, 2008, p. 202).

According to Guba and Lincoln (1998), both quantitative and qualitative methods can be appropriately used in any paradigm, and Nancy Leech and Anthony Onwuegbuzie (2009), when characterizing mixed methods, present this investigative approach in a way in which quantitative data is complemented by qualitative data, collected sequentially and integrated into the various phases of the research, resembling an architectural project (Merrian, 1988), in which information (data) is gathered, organized and integrated to obtain a specific end product (research results).

Since our intention was to "study what is particular, specific and unique" (Afonso, 2014, p. 74), we opted for a case study. The choice of this type of research focuses the study on understanding a phenomenon, which is based on the questions "how" and "why" (Yin, 2010, p. 30), especially because "the unique strength of the case study is its ability to deal with a wide

variety of evidence" (Yin, 2010, p. 32). (Yin, 2010, p. 32), based on what is idiosyncratic to each context.

Aware of the complexity of the subject under study, we set out to triangulate the data by collecting the same type of information from different students in order to increase the likelihood of controlling the "validity of the meanings expressed in the researcher's narratives, descriptions and interpretations" (Afonso, 2014, pp. 76-77). In the path established for the research, we selected a set of methodological techniques and tools that would allow us to observe and analyze the complexity of the object of study, in order to capture the different perspectives that reflect this same complexity (Amado, 2017).

The data collection techniques used in our study were:

a)   documentary analysis;

b)   a questionnaire survey;

c)   three semi-structured focus group interviews.

After a thorough reading of the documents that make up the corpus of the current legislative framework in the field of education, different methods and techniques were used that complement each other, namely: the questionnaire survey and the interview survey (Cohen et al., 2000).

In the process of collecting data via the questionnaire survey, students from the school's CCHs were involved. The questionnaire was administered online (limesurvey platform) to all the classes at the school's CCHs, after the parents had filled in the informed consent form, a task which was the responsibility of the respective class directors.

In the 2021/2022 school year (the year in which the data was collected), the school had 280 students enrolled in the CCHs, 198 of whom responded to the questionnaire survey, thus considering the sample to be representative (70.7%), 82 students did not respond to the questionnaire (29.3%). In order to collect data in greater detail, three semi-structured focus-group interviews were also carried out with three students from each year of secondary school and each of the CCH courses, with the prior consent and authorization of their parents/guardians. Content analysis was the technique used to process the data from the interviews.

The questions in the questionnaire were organized into four blocks, as described in Table 1:

Table 1: Questionnaire survey matrix.

Blocks	Objectives	Descriptors
I		Sociodemographic characterization

II	*To identify what representations students have of the subject of Portuguese, in the context of the secondary school curriculum, taking into account the Profile of Students Leaving Compulsory Schooling.*	Importance of the aspects included in the student profile. The importance students attach to the subject and its content. Importance of the skills to be developed. Difficulties experienced in the subject and ways of overcoming them. Self-regulation of learning. Expected results.
III	*Identify how to operationalize the contents and strategic teaching actions geared towards the students' profile.*	Students' perception of the importance of certain strategic teaching actions. Individual representation of the skills acquired in each of the areas Students' suggestions for possible changes to the Portuguese syllabus in the context of the secondary school curriculum.
IV	*To understand how students use the skills they have acquired in Portuguese in other contexts.*	The contribution of Portuguese to academic, personal and professional success.

In order to collect data in greater detail and to delve deeper into some aspects or clarify issues relating to representations about the nature of the Portuguese curriculum, we used semi-structured interviews, since according to Cervo and Brevian (1983) the main difference between the questionnaire survey and the interview, as data collection instruments, is that the latter is presented as a free conversation, although always oriented towards the objectives of the research, but often used simultaneously, especially in case studies, such as our research.

The interviews carried out with three focus groups of secondary school students aimed to deepen the representation that HCC students have of learning Portuguese in secondary school, taking into account their needs and expectations. The sessions were conducted by involving the students in the conversation, the questions were asked one by one, as Krueger and Casey point out(2009) , when conducting the focus group, one should promote self-disclosure among the participants, making them feel comfortable, respected and free to give their opinion, thus, the authors continue, the role of the interviewer is not to pass judgment, but to question, listen, keep the conversation on track and make sure that each participant has the opportunity to participate.

To this end, an interview script was drawn up to ensure that the questions covered most of the data that was to be collected and that, at the same time, they were in line with the descriptors of the questionnaire survey, thus ensuring that they complemented each other. The interview script was structured into four blocks, as described in Table 2:

Table 2: Matrix for drawing up the interview script

BLOCKS	THEMES
A - Legitimizing the interview	A.1. Background and objectives of the interview
	A.2 Motivation
	A.3 Confidentiality and anonymity
	A.4 Authorization for audio recording
B - Interviewee profile	B.1. Interviewee profile
	B.2 Subject preferences at curriculum level
	B.3 School career
C - Representations about the subject of Portuguese.	C.1 Importance of the subject in your course curriculum.
	C.2.Evaluation of the work carried out in the subject.
	C.3 Opinion on the content taught in Portuguese
	C.4.The importance of the work done in the subject for the development of transversal skills.
	C.5. Usefulness of learning the contents of the subject for everyday and academic life.
D - Implementation of the Portuguese syllabus	D.1. Activities that help people learn the content better and are more motivating.
	D.2 Activities that give confidence and autonomy to express and discuss different points of view with colleagues and teachers
	D.3 Evaluation of personal performance in the different areas of the subject.
	D.4 Ease/difficulty in the domains.
	D.5. Opinion on the different domains.
	D.6 Degree of importance of the different domains.
	D.7 Opinion on what should be changed in the secondary school Portuguese syllabus.
E - Expectations	E.1.Opinion on whether the subject of Portuguese prepares students for further study/occupation.
F - Ending the interview	F.1 Further clarification or additional information.
	F.2 Acknowledgements.

Source: Own elaboration

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2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

2.1. The importance of Portuguese

With regard to the importance attributed to the subject of Portuguese in secondary school, the majority of students consider it to be important**.**

Table3 : Perspective on the subject of Portuguese in secondary education

	1 Nothing important		2 Not very important		3 Important		4 Very important	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Q13a From your perspective, the subject of Portuguese in secondary school is:	3	1,5	30	15,2	**116**	**58,6**	49	24,7

Source: Own elaboration - data extracted from questionnaire surveys

When asked why this was important, the answers to the open question were grouped into the following categories:

Table 4: Importance of Portuguese in secondary education

Importance of discipline	f	(%)
Improves oral and written expression	37	38,9
Deepens knowledge of the authors' language and Portuguese culture	25	26,3
Contributes to academic and professional success	19	20,0
Facilitates reading, interpretation and comprehension	10	10,5
Develops critical thinking	4	4,2
TOTAL	95	

Source: Own elaboration - data extracted from questionnaire surveys

Improving oral and written expression, deepening knowledge of the language, authors and Portuguese literature, contributing to academic and professional success, facilitating reading, interpretation and comprehension and developing critical thinking are five aspects that converge to reinforce the importance that students attach to the contents of the subject in the context of the HCC curriculum.

At the same time, the data obtained from the interviews shows that the students value the subject because it is a place where their mother tongue can be used, recognizing its importance both for the acquisition of knowledge in other subjects and for the construction of their own knowledge throughout compulsory schooling, and above all for the importance that this knowledge can play in their professional future.

Table 5 : Interview Registration Units

Tema I – Representações sobre a disciplina de português

Categoria	Subcategoria	10 CT	10 LH	10 SE	11 CT	11 LH	11 SE	12 CT	12 LH	12 SE	f	F (%)
Importância da disciplina no currículo do teu curso	Língua de aprendizagem	2	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	6	
	Comunicação oral	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	5	
	Interpretação	0	0	0	2	1	0	2	0	0	5	
	Exposição de ideias	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	
	Trabalho com outras disciplinas	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	**42 (70%)**
	Conhecimento de autores e obras literárias	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	
	Futuro académico e profissional	2	2	1	2	2	1	3	2	3	18	
Competências que a disciplina desenvolve	Escrita	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	6	
	Leitura	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	**18 (30%)**
	Comunicação com os outros	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	6	
	Discussão debate de ideias	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	4	
	Total	6	8	5	6	6	3	13	8	5	60	100%

From the interviews, we highlight the opinions of some students who corroborate the importance they attach to the subject in the context of the secondary school curriculum:

"I think it helps in the future, perhaps to write and express ideas better and to communicate with others, I think that's very important, even for the job market." (10th LH);

"...it even ends up preparing us more than perhaps other subjects..." (11th LH).

This highlights the importance of the cross-curricular nature of the subject of Portuguese and its centrality in the teaching and learning process, as it develops linguistic skills, which are related to proficiency in oral and written communication and interpersonal skills, perceived by the students as essential for what they consider to be success.

In terms of practical usefulness, the students point to the subject as being important for everyday life, as it helps them to write and express their ideas better, and is therefore very important for communication, which could be very relevant for the job market.

"...the ability to interpret, argue and develop a critical spirit, all things that are very necessary for a person's future life... both personally and in the job market..." (12th CTS).

"...I think that for us to go to university we really need to write well and I think this subject is important to give us the ability to go to higher education and the world of work" (12th LH).

The students who consider the subject to be not at all important or not very important highlight six factors:

Table 6: Reasons for the low importance given to the subject

No Importance of the subject	f	(%)
Outdated topics and content that do not develop skills for the future.	8	36,4%
Grammar content without practical application.	5	22,7%

Excessive depth in literary works.	4	18,2%
Very strict and demanding evaluation criteria.	1	4,5%
Mismatch between the program and the nature of the course attended by the students.	4	18,2%
TOTAL	22	

Source: Own elaboration - data extracted from questionnaire surveys

Although the students attribute a utilitarian value to the subject, they question the importance given to learning some of the content, especially in the areas of grammar and literary education. The students suggest some changes to the content of the SA (Figure 1).
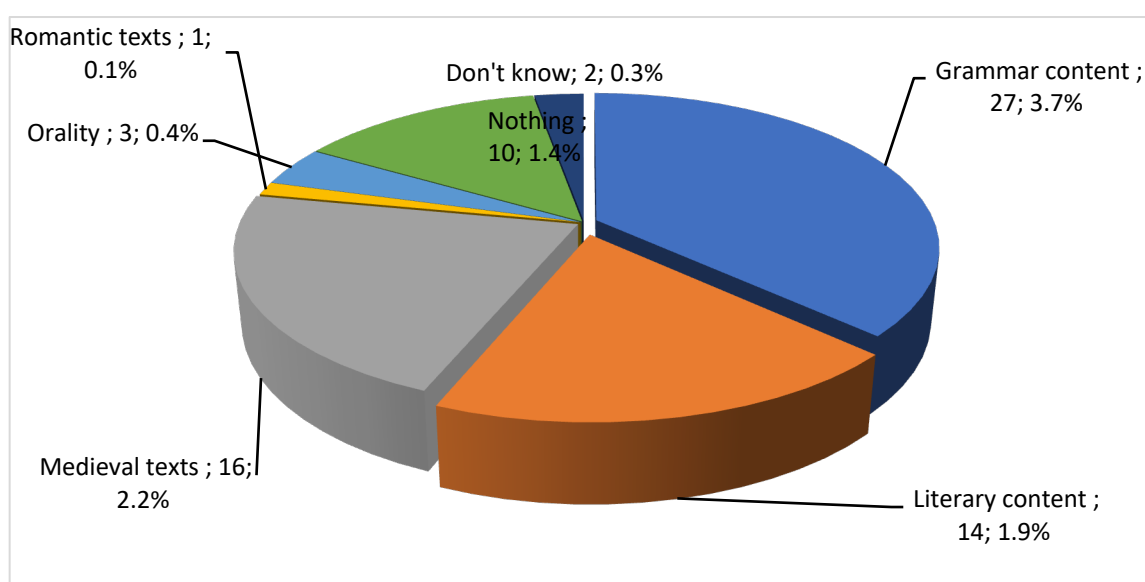

Figure 1: Content that students would take away from the course

Source: Own elaboration - data extracted from questionnaire surveys

Delving deeper into this item, the students revealed that medieval texts, taught in the 10th grade, are the least preferred: *"medieval texts to start the 10th grade are a dose... they demotivate"* (10th LH).

Next, the novel Os *Maias* and the poetic texts were the least favorite. In a similar position are *Os Lusíadas, Amor de Perdição, Frei Luís de Sousa, Sermão de Santo António aos Peixes* and the poetry Fernando Pessoa, which is mentioned by the students separately from the other poetic texts.

With regard to the students' preferences for the literary texts included in the LA, it seems pertinent to mention that the construction of the literary canon is a complex process, influenced by historical, cultural, political and social factors. In Portugal, the discussion about the literary canon also involves criteria of an aesthetic nature, highlighting characteristics of a particular work

or author as evidence of the work's intrinsic merit. The Portuguese school system, like many others, has enormous potential as a canonizing body, and it can even be said that "the school is powerful when it comes to opening and closing the canon" (Costa, 2013, p. 46), due to its role in the training and education of students.

2.2. Representations of the skills developed in each of the subject areas

First, we'll present the results for speaking. On average, the students feel *quite capable of* using *Oral Expression and Comprehension*, especially for activities related to the presentation of work.

Table7 : Capacities in relation to activities developed in the field of orality

Com as atividades desenvolvidas no domínio da oralidade, até que ponto és capaz de:	1 Nunca ou quase nunca		2 Às vezes		3 Bastantes vezes		4 Sempre ou quase sempre		Explic.
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	%
C1. Compreensão do oral (M=2,72 DP=0,55)									*46,379*
22.1 Interpretar textos orais de géneros diferentes.	1	*0,5*	71	*35,9*	**102**	**51,5**	24	*12,1*	
22.2 Usar a capacidade crítica e criativa.	0	*0,0*	65	*32,8*	**95**	**48,0**	38	*19,2*	
22.3 Sintetizar o discurso escutado com um vocabulário adequado.	1	*0,5*	56	*28,4*	**114**	**57,9**	26	*13,2*	
22.4 Traçar mapas mentais para melhorar a comunicação.	21	*10,7*	**87**	**44,2**	70	*35,5*	19	*9,6*	
C2. Expressão do oral (M=3,01 DP=0,86)									*23,574*
Q22.5 Apresentar pequenos projetos de pesquisa.	11	*5,6*	39	*19,7*	**86**	**43,4**	62	**31,3**	
Total									*69,953*

Source: Own elaboration - data extracted from questionnaire surveys

The oral domain is perceived as the one that requires the least study, but it is the most valued in the acquisition of skills that enable the development of important competences for the future, at the level of orality and interpretation of the world, appearing intrinsically associated with reading and writing, as domains in constant interaction.

As far as reading is concerned, in a school context it is one of the main areas for students to acquire knowledge in the different subjects, and many of the difficulties students face are mainly due to the difficulty in mobilizing appropriate reading strategies, rather than a lack of aptitude for learning.

Table8 : Capacities in relation to the activities developed in the field of reading

Com as atividades desenvolvidas no domínio da leitura, até que ponto és capaz de:	1 Nunca ou quase nunca		2 Às vezes		3 Bastantes vezes		4 Sempre ou quase sempre		Explic.
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	%
C1. Domínio da leitura (M=2,75 DP=0,56)									*66,053*
23.1 Ler textos em suportes variados com diferentes graus de complexidade e de diferentes géneros	3	*1,5*	76	*38,4*	**90**	**45,5**	29	*14,6*	
23.2 Realizar leitura crítica e autónoma	3	*1,5*	78	*39,4*	**85**	**42,9**	32	*16,2*	
23.3 Clarificar tema(s), ideias principais e pontos de vista	4	*2,0*	69	*34,8*	**94**	**47,5**	31	*15,7*	
23.4 Analisar os recursos utilizados para a construção do sentido do texto	8	*4,0*	**94**	**47,5**	77	*38,9*	19	*9,6*	
23.5 Interpretar o sentido global do texto	3	*1,5*	43	*21,7*	**111**	**56,1**	41	*20,7*	
Total									*66,05 3*

Source: Own elaboration - data extracted from questionnaire surveys

Recognizing reading as a vehicle for transmitting and consolidating knowledge, Dionísio (2000) points out that school success is associated with it, since "You learn science, history, mathematics and foreign languages by reading". (p. 48), referring to the cross-curricular nature of this area, as corroborated by Amor(1993) when he mentions that "As a cross-curricular practice [...] it occupies [...] a considerable part of the overall teaching time, and it is desirable that some skills, such as those relating to functional reading, are promoted in the other subject areas" (p. 105).

Beyond school, reading competence is an indispensable tool for learning, acting, interacting and participating in today's world, so it's not enough just to have good reading skills, but good literacy skills are necessary for success in tertiary education, work and everyday life (OECD, 2016).

Literary Education emerges as the area in which students show the greatest difficulty, associated with aspects of content related to authors, literary modes and the complexity of the cognitive processes mobilized.

Table9 : Capacities in relation to activities developed in the field of literary education

Com as atividades desenvolvidas no domínio da educação literária, até que ponto és capaz de:	1 Nunca ou quase nunca		2 Às vezes		3 Bastantes vezes		4 Sempre ou quase sempre		Explicação
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	%
C1. Educação literária (M=2,47 DP=0,60)									*67,976*
24.1 Contextualizar textos literários portugueses em função de marcos históricos e culturais	7	*3,5*	**105**	***53,0***	72	*36,4*	14	*7,1*	
24.2 Interpretar textos literários portugueses de diferentes autores e géneros	10	*5,1*	**98**	***49,5***	79	*39,9*	11	*5,6*	
24.3 Analisar o valor de recursos expressivos para a construção do sentido do texto	15	*7,6*	**108**	***54,5***	65	*32,8*	10	*5,1*	
24.4 Comparar textos em função de temas, ideias e valores	12	*6,1*	**104**	***52,5***	62	*31,3*	20	*10,1*	
24.5 Reconhecer valores culturais, éticos e estéticos presentes nos textos	10	*5,1*	**101**	***51,0***	64	*32,3*	23	*11,6*	
24.6 Expressar pontos de vista fundamentados, suscitados pelas obras e seus autores	7	*3,5*	**100**	***50,5***	61	*30,8*	30	*15,2*	
Total									*67,976*

Source: Own elaboration - data extracted from questionnaire surveys

When we look at the students' representations of the content of literary education in secondary school, this seems to be the area in which the students feel least able to carry out the tasks, yet it is referred to as interesting and fundamental for the individual construction of the "I", promoting reflection and critical thinking (Costa & Botelho, 2016), reflecting an affective relationship with the majority of readers of the texts. At this point, it is interesting to highlight Michele Petit's point of view (2019) on literary reading. This author states that literature helps us to understand what we experience and to imagine and create other worlds, although it has no practical effect on life, it is art, it serves to humanize us, it escapes our control and is therefore subversive, arousing different feelings in the reader. Reading a literary text takes the reader on a journey, imagining what others before us have lived through and created, leading them to be moved by beauty, to experience new sensations and assign meanings to our existence, thus helping each reader to construct their own narrative.

With regard to the field of writing, the data shows that the students point out some constraints in this area, especially with regard to the use of textual linguistics, namely grammatical mechanisms linking sentences, periods and paragraphs of a text (cohesion) as well as the logical relationship between ideas in a text that stems from its argumentation (coherence) as factors guaranteeing and preserving textuality, giving efficiency to the transmission of the written message, as can be seen in Table 10:

Table10 : Capacities in relation to the activities developed in the field of writing

Com as atividades desenvolvidas no domínio da escrita, até que ponto és capaz de:	1 Nunca ou quase nunca		2 Às vezes		3 Bastantes vezes		4 Sempre ou quase sempre		Explicação
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	%
C1. Domínio da Escrita (M=2,83 DP=0,60)									62,669
25.1 Planificar um texto	5	2,5	71	35,9	**92**	**46,5**	30	15,2	
25.2 Escrever textos usando mecanismos de coerência e de coesão textual	7	3,5	75	37,9	**85**	**42,9**	31	15,7	
25.3 Editar textos em diferentes suportes, após revisão, tendo em conta a adequação do vocabulário e a correção linguística	2	1,0	47	23,7	**102**	**51,5**	47	23,7	
25.4 Respeitar os princípios do trabalho intelectual: identificação das fontes utilizadas, cumprimento das normas de citação, uso de notas de rodapé e referenciação bibliográfica	4	2,0	58	29,3	**89**	**44,9**	47	23,7	
Total									62,669

Source: Own elaboration - data extracted from questionnaire surveys

As we can see from the data in Figure 11, the area least preferred by the students is grammar. From their perspective, the content is not useful, it is approached in too much depth and, finally, they point to the fact that grammar content is presented in a decontextualized way as a demotivating element (Oliveira Pereira, 2019).

Tabela 1: Capacidades desenvolvidas no domínio da gramática

Com as atividades desenvolvidas no domínio da gramática, até que ponto és capaz de:	1 Nunca ou quase nunca		2 Às vezes		3 Bastantes vezes		4 Sempre ou quase sempre		Explicação
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	%
C1. Domínio da gramática (M=2,63 DP=0,61)									71,582
26.1 Conhecer a evolução da língua	6	3,0	86	**43,7**	88	**44,7**	17	8,6	
26.2 Analisar frases simples e complexas	5	2,5	69	34,8	91	**46,0**	33	16,7	
26.3 Realizar análise sintática	15	7,6	82	**41,4**	80	**40,4**	21	10,6	
26. 4 Explicitar aspetos do vocabulário português	7	3,5	77	38,9	97	**49,0**	17	8,6	
26.5 Usar mecanismos de coesão e progressão textual	7	3,5	73	36,9	91	**46,0**	27	13,6	
26.6 Reconhecer valores semânticos de palavras	8	**4,0**	83	**41,9**	89	**44,9**	18	9,1	
Total									71,582

Source: Own elaboration - data extracted from questionnaire surveys

For all domains, it is interesting to note that the teaching and learning strategy that most students considered to be very important is listening to the teacher explain the subject, showing an influence of the traditional teaching method, centered on the teacher and the transmission of content, although they highly value the group/project dynamics designed by the teacher to place the student at the center of the teaching and learning process, stimulating their active participation, critical reflection, autonomy and collaboration.

The students specifically point to project work, group work, debates and activities that promote interaction/communication between peers as methodologies that facilitate learning, in

other words, they want to see themselves involved in their own learning process, in which they are active players and whose voice is taken into account, which is why they regret the fact that creative activities are rarely designed by teachers.

3. CONCLUSION

We hope that this study will allow teachers to reflect on the planning and organization of student-focused learning situations and find new ways to stimulate innovation and creativity, paying attention to students' voices, valuing their opinions, encouraging them and building environments that are conducive to learning.

Recognizing that secondary education is, in the current educational context, a fundamental stage in the lives of our young people, it was necessary to reflect on how this level of education, particularly in the formative offer more geared towards further studies, the subject of Portuguese responds to the demands imposed on students in the 21st century, since the most recent educational policies seek, in essence, to harmonize a common national prescription with the curricular autonomy of schools for contextualized curricular decisions.

The recent changes in educational regulations suggest the transformation of the "old" paradigm of the mass education system into something innovative that focuses, preferably, on the "(...) diversity of the needs and potential of each and every student, by increasing participation in learning processes and in the life of the educational community" (Decree-Law nº. 55/2018, July 6, 2018), however, in reality, there is a contradiction between the importance that the legislation gives to the role of the student and the relevance that is given to it in the daily life of schools. The challenge of this study was to listen to the students about the school and what is required of it, since a truly inclusive school is one that must meet the educational challenges of the moment, which also means rethinking education.

Although representations are not directly observable elements in our relationship with the world, we are constantly called upon to make assessments and decisions that regulate our attitudes. In the school context, such actions inevitably interfere in the thinking and daily practice of each of the educational agents, as well as in the teaching and learning process, as pointed out by Madeira(2005) "In the field of language teaching/learning, interest in the study of beliefs has arisen because of the influence they exert on the teaching/learning process: they influence the teacher's actions and the student's process of acquiring new knowledge" (p. 19).

We conclude that, for the students on the CCH courses, the subject of Portuguese is capable of promoting a certain cultural vision and critical understanding of the world. It follows that the development of critical thinking is one of the most valued aspects, associated with the interpretation of information, planning and conducting research, which immediately presupposes students' awareness of the relevance of analysis and critical evaluation in a world full of multiple and constantly changing information, in which it is essential to be able to adopt a position and defend it in the face of divergent opinions. Critical and creative thinking, as an area of competence in the AP, is associated with the work dynamics that can be developed in an educational context.

The students prioritize learning that involves project work and group work, demonstrating an accurate perception of the importance of active methodologies for the development and improvement of activities of a reflective nature, which lead to the exercise of a more active and critical citizenship. It is also clear how the teachers' practices in terms of design, implementation and assessment can influence the students' perception of the work carried out in and consequently the importance it can have both in the context of the course curriculum and in their personal and professional future.

The consultation with the students shows that they have a very clear vision of the work being done in the subject, but there is also a sense of dissatisfaction, due to the fact that their voices and opinions are not really taken into account in the planning processes, curriculum organization and definition of teaching strategies, leading to some demotivation and lack of involvement in the learning process.

As such, the students value the work carried out in the majority of the domains, with Reading, Writing and Speaking standing out for the development of instrumental skills, since these domains enable the mobilization of other languages, which is particularly important for HCC students, because being proficient in speaking and writing makes it possible to convey one's thoughts to others and increases the ability to defend different points of view in a sustained manner, which is in line with what the students perceive to be their academic, professional and social demands and expectations. Despite the fact that Literary Education involves a lot of effort and study, it is still valued by the students, but the approach to literary works is far removed from the students' expectations and interests, emerging as a factor that generates demotivation and lack of interest in the subject. The students also point out as a negative element the mismatch between some of the topics and content of the SA and the nature of the HCC course in which they are enrolled, with this mismatch constituting a constraint on their interest and success in the subject. At the same time, the excess of material, the excessive depth of the literary works stipulated in the SA and the strict and demanding assessment criteria are also mentioned as factors that compromise meaningful learning. Added to these factors are other elements such as the decontextualized approach to content, especially in the field of grammar, and the inability of students to see a practical application of the content they have learned.

For these reasons, in view of the current social and cultural diversity in schools, listening to what students have to say about the AE of Portuguese and their learning is not only the beginning of promoting young people's rights as members of the school community, accepting them as capable of thinking about the subjects in the curriculum and about school, but also to enable them to become actively involved in educational change and the eventual design of new curriculum policies, strengthening the exercise of citizenship in a democratic society, in which students learn to develop critical skills, feeling free to express their opinions constructively, listen to different points of view, take part in debates and make collective decisions. Therefore, listening to students is essential not only to promote a more inclusive and effective educational environment, but it is also a way of preparing young people for their future as active and aware citizens.

Recognizing the importance of this issue, the CNE Report "The voice of children and young people in education" issued a recommendation to give centrality to the student voice in educational policies, pedagogical practice and representative spaces, pointing out the

"...transversal dimensions of the voice: as an instrument of interaction, participation, appropriation of knowledge and social empowerment, promoters of human development and affirmation of citizenship" (CNE, 2021, p. 75). 75), but there is still a long way to go in this area if student participation is to gain effective recognition and increase the level of participation as advocated by Hart (1992), because the stronger the degree of involvement/collaboration, the better the well-being of students and adults in the school environment.

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COMO CITAR ESTE ARTIGO:

Martins, A., & Costa, P. (2025). Configurações da disciplina de português: dando voz a alunos do ensino secundário. HOLOS, 1(41). https://doi.org/10.15628/holos.2025.18421

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