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**HOW ENGLISH TEACHERS' ATTITUDE THROUGH THE MINDSET APPROACH  
AFFECT STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**CAMPINA GRANDE  
2019**

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso  
apresentado ao Curso de Letras – Inglês,  
da Universidade Estadual da Paraíba,  
como requisito parcial à obtenção do título  
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**Área de concentração:** Língua Inglesa  
**Subárea:** Linguística Aplicada

**Orientadora:** Prof.<sup>a</sup> Dr.<sup>a</sup> Daniela Gomes Araújo Nóbrega

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## HOW ENGLISH TEACHERS' ATTITUDE THROUGH THE MINDSET APPROACH AFFECT STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Lenilson Carneiro da Silva<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Facing the challenge of attempting to learn English without adapted materials for their contexts, use of teacher-centered methodologies and school neglect, students of a public school in Campina Grande city, State of Paraíba have even more reasons for not demonstrating interest and motivation to interact and take the risk of learning foreign languages. Thus, the objective of this work was to identify how a teacher's attitude through a mindset approach jointly with the application of positive discipline and affective filter towards students in terms of classroom management, specifically discipline and the teacher-student interaction, may affect students' success or change their beliefs in relation to language acquisition as a starting point. The data was collected through questionnaires applied with the school's supervisor teacher during lessons and notes from the internship final report. At the end of these lessons, it was observed mind shifts regarding English language learning and its importance by students.

**Keywords:** English teaching. Motivation. Teachers' role. Mindset.

**Resumo:** Diante do desafio de tentar aprender inglês com materiais não adaptados para suas realidades conforme, uso de metodologias focadas no professor e negligência da escola, alunos de uma escola em Campina Grande-PB têm ainda mais razões para não demonstrar interesse, tampouco motivação para interagir e se arriscar a aprender línguas estrangeiras. Portanto, o objetivo deste trabalho foi identificar como a atitude do professor de inglês por meio da abordagem do mindset juntamente com a disciplina positiva e filtro afetivo para com seus alunos no que tange à gerenciamento de sala, especificamente a disciplina e a interação aluno-professor poderia afetar os alunos e consequentemente mudar suas crenças em relação à aquisição de língua como ponto de partida. Os dados da pesquisa foram coletados por meio de questionários aplicados com os alunos e o professor titular da instituição durante regências feitas pelo professor pesquisador e relatos registrados em relatório final de estágio. Ao final das regências observou-se mudança de mentalidade acerca da aprendizagem de língua inglesa e sua importância por parte dos alunos presentes durante as aulas ministradas pelo docente pesquisador.

**Palavras-chave:** Ensino de inglês. Motivação. Papel do professor. Mindset.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Ten years ago, English language was already considered a huge plus in the resume of any professional. Being an international language gave this tongue a highly increasing status (CRYSTAL D, 2003). As the years passed by, this idea just became stronger so that recently many schools in Brazil have been implementing the so called bilingual schools.

Bilingual schools' programs are curriculums designed in an additional language aiming to teach both language skills and content. They are usually adapted to the

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<sup>1</sup> Undergraduate student at State University of Paraíba (UEPB) in the course of Letters English.

reality of the countries that adopt them and work with a dual-focus: content and language skills development. Bilingual education ought to be differentiated from teaching a foreign language because the later one will mainly focus on the language attributes, culture, syntax and so forth, whereas the first teaches content and the language skills development at the same time usually through immersion.

When it comes to second language acquisition in Brazilian public schools, a study conducted in Mato Grosso has demonstrated that learners face several difficulties. The article shows that there are many teachers that do not speak English well, have no degree and the salary is considered low (COX AND PETERSON, 2002).

In order to assist learners' learning development in language, many methodological approaches have appeared as to create innovative methods in English as a Foreign language (EFL) (BROWN, 1997).

In 2016, Carol Dweck published the book *Mindset – The New Psychology of Success* which investigates how many different people from different areas of knowledge succeed and what similarities they share. Among many inquiries that she had, prior to publishing her studies, she actually wanted to know why some students are successful at school and others are not.

Eventually, research concluded that the mindset of all successful learners shared some similarities (DWECK, 2016). By success, we meant the ability to persist and show resilience during struggles when coming across difficult learning experiences.

The literature the author presents demonstrated that students who believed that intelligence was stable and fixed would fail more often than students who believed that intelligence can be developed through a combination of hard work and the right strategies and methods. Thus, she designed an approach to foster this type of mindset in order to help educators promote the best potential of their students.

Parents are included in the research and are believed to have a significant role to maintain motivation for learning in their children. If parents, that are closer and spend more time with their children may be sending the wrong message despite their best intentions, it follows that teachers may also be making the same mistakes at school. Thus, her research is relevant to educators.

When it comes to EFL learning processes, Krashen (1987) formulates his acquisition theory and states that affective filter plays significant role in the process of language acquisition. Affective filter basically consists of what the researcher considers one of the acquisition causatives. If the relationship between student and teacher is not friendly nor healthy, there is high level of affective filter. Consequently, language acquisition is compromised. On the other hand, when teachers are keen to maintain a good relationship with learners, it follows that they are more motivated and engaged. Therefore, the learning happens more effectively. His theory can be considered a perfect match with the mindset approach, given that both require from teachers the development of friendly relationship with students. Interestingly, mindset theory will differ only in the aspect that it aims at preparing learners to successfully deal with frustration, challenges and still remain motivated during the learning experience.

Interestingly, there seems to be a link between teaching with a growth mindset and applying the so called positive discipline when one considers the way teachers are suggested to deal with students in Dweck's articles and books from a psychologic perspective (DWECK 1999; 2016). Educational systems in high ranked countries in international assessment exams no longer hold the belief that children should feel bad when reprimanded about their behavior because teachers now differentiate the behavior from the person, and this is completely different from the



traditional classroom management techniques. Rather, the person should be treated respectfully and with dignity (NELSEN, 2000).

After studying and failing to learn English during my schooling years in public education and recently teaching English through internship studies to a public school group, I wondered whether somewhat we could attempt something new to improve our English teaching practices in the public school reality by starting with this small-scaled study. Research was done about what was trending on the education field regarding psychological studies of language acquisition and the decision was made to investigate whether these theories could work.

Similarly, we wondered how successful language teaching was in public schools. The scenario in a public school that we taught through an internship program has shown that little has changed since the publishing of Brazilian PCN for foreign language teaching (BRASIL, 1998). Hence, as a starting point, we wanted to test the approach with an 8<sup>th</sup> grade group.

Since there is almost no research replicating Dweck's theory toward language acquisition, it was about time to start the first steps. This investigation was done through a case-study and action research. The data collected come from classroom observations, annotations, resident teacher and students submitted questionnaires and the analysis from the internship report written during the lessons.

Therefore, the main objective here was to identify how a teacher's attitude through the mindset approach jointly with the application of positive discipline and affective filter towards students may affect students' success or change their beliefs in relation to language acquisition as a starting point.

## 2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The following theoretical aspects are covered in this research: (i) the concept of Growth Mindset (incremental theory) and Fixed Mindset (entity theory) as described and explained by Dweck (2016) and her associates, (ii) Positive Discipline according to Nelsen (2000), (iii) Affective filter proposed by Krashen (1987) in his acquisition theory, (iv) Motivation as discussed by Ellis (2003), Brown (1990) e Gardner (1990/2000) and (v) Murray G. *et all* (2011). It is going to be explored the relationship between positive discipline, affective filter hypothesis and the growth mindset approach. Then, it is going to be shown how the application of mindset approach, positive discipline jointly with affective filter hypothesis might have affected the way students perceived their own understanding of language acquisition and how important this experience might be.

Carol Dweck, Ph.D., is one of the world's researchers that studies motivation deeply. She has investigated why some people are successful or show resilience when dealing with challenges and end up even more motivated and improving their skills while others fail, first in education and eventually in several fields of knowledge<sup>2</sup>.

The reader will see it being mentioned multiple times hereafter because there were not found studies or replications of her theory in Brazil. In fact, this topic is not well explored by Brazilian researchers, particularly in the ELT (English Language Teaching) field, even though the mindset approach is not new outside the country. It was difficult finding sources and studies from our country in Portuguese to relate or compare. Most of the articles and books used are international and come from

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<sup>2</sup> <https://mindsetonline.com/testyourmindset/results.php> Access June 6th, 2019.

countries that have been applying these ideas in their schools for several years (ANDERSEN 2016; CLARO 2016; MERCER 2009; SEATON 2018; O'ROURKE 2014).

## 2.1 Mindset Approach

Growth Mindset is an approach developed by the American psychologist PhD Carol Dweck after numerous researches that are mentioned on her books and articles. In her several researches, she presents two main concepts: The Fixed Mindset (entity theory) and The Growth Mindset (incremental theory) (DWECK *et al*, 1995). These concepts can be widely applied to distinct areas of our lives and may be used to address different types of needs. For instance: education, sports, business and so forth.

On the one hand, people with a fixed mindset rely too much on innateness or on the idea that one is born with special talents or skills, which we consider too deterministic. Say, it might be a mix of aptitude with birth calling. They have the extreme necessity to prove themselves capable most of the time and consequently end up avoiding new things, new challenges and anything that can disprove or discredit their super skills.

On the other hand, people with a growth mindset, demonstrate a different and more positive perspective. They seem to understand that there is always the possibility to learn new things with time, dedication and persistence (DWECK, 2016). It seems to be pivotal to identify whether our students are presenting such traits from these two ways of thinking and behaving. However, a study made in Japan and Austria concluded that there is no purely fixed-minded learners nor uniquely growth-minded learners. Results have showed that they have both mindsets and apply one or the other to distinct areas of their lives (MERCER, 2010).

Professor Dweck (2016) , thus, proposes that there is more than enough evidence regarding the relationship between being capable to succeed over challenges and difficulties and being continuously motivated no matter the field and the human mind. She argues: “(...) the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life.” (2016b, p. 6)

The term mindset, according to Dweck's social-cognitive framework, is described as a mental attitude that determines how someone interprets or responds to situations. The deception that could crush a few people is also capable of inspiring others to go on and keep up making efforts and improving themselves. It also tells us that there seems to have a link between belief and behavior.

The main differences between the old wisdom and what is believed by scientists nowadays are:

- Intelligence is changeable. The brain is a muscle that can be trained through practice and the growth mindset can be learned.<sup>3</sup>
- Increase of perceptions that it is not possible to have a pure and only fixed or a growth mindset.
- Methods: Any person can learn to rebuild a growth mindset and its benefits.

Brown (1997) agrees with the idea that negative attitude toward learning can be changed just like Dweck (2016) defends, based on recent studies, that fixed-

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<sup>3</sup> The argument is based on recent evidence from brain neuroplasticity studies. For further reading, check P Li (2014). The old-fashioned deterministic biology is not accounted.

mindsets can be fixed or changed into growth ones. The concept of growth mindset is relevant to this study because it fully explains how teachers can foster a culture of learning in language lessons through positive discipline, exploring affective filter even being it unconsciously, and restructuring learners reasoning towards the development of a healthy and goal-oriented mind.

Once we understand that anything can be learned with effort and dedication plus the right resources and people, our results end up being unpredictably better. Children often spend a year struggling with a certain subject, but then a new teacher's attitude influences significantly and he or she starts to learn. If this newcomer not only cares about the child's academic success but develops rapport with him his motivation is positively affected. Teachers are familiar with students speeches saying that because of "them" they started enjoying that subject.

The mindset approach enriches learners progress by equipping them through the development of appropriate self-theories about learning and intelligence. Consequently, this new way of seeing their experiences will change and they will be emotionally stronger to deal with learning challenges.

## 2.2. Main differences between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset

A fixed mindset presents different psychological forces from the growth mindset. For instance, people with this type of mindset hold the thought that intelligence is table or even static. Moreover, skills tend to be seen as unique and permanent. If someone is good at something, this person will certainly face hardships with something else that might possibly be opposed to that (DWECK, 2016).

On the other hand, people with a growth mindset understand that intelligence and skill are qualities in constant development and that with the right tools and guidance our potential can be effectively explored. These people's potential is unpredictable, suggests the researches outcomes. The discussion goes way beyond whether someone is optimistic or pessimistic and purposely avoids the ideas from self-esteem movement that a dummy in the field of psychology might relate to. There is no intention to make use of business-like discourse regarding effective steps to be successful in life or finances (DWECK 2006).

When we make a link with the Brazilian scenario in English teaching, specifically in public education, the so frequently stated sentence "*I don't even know Portuguese properly, how I would learn English?*"<sup>4</sup> can be considered a clear example of a fixed mindset. It is a state of mind that avoids new challenges for there is a concern of being exposed. People with a fixed mindset will never let anyone expose their weaknesses or ignorance about something. Thus, they will do their best to escape from new learning or challenges.

## 2.3 Types of motivation

There are numerous theories of motivation in the field of psychology and in education. In this study, we used the socio-cognitive perspective described by Blackwell, L., Trzesnieqaki, K.H., & Dweck (2007) in their researches and related articles published worldwide. The reader might be familiar with the so called intrinsic

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<sup>4</sup> "Eu nem sei Português direito e vou aprender inglês?", translated by the author

and extrinsic motivations. Being the first, internal and mostly personal goal-oriented and the second caused by external variables (ELLIS, 2003).

For instance, a person who faces all sorts of challenges training to participate of marathon can be considered goal-oriented. It is not required a kind of coach motivating this person to reach his goals. The coach might be helpful even though he is not the main motivating force. On the other hand, a person with extrinsic motivation needs someone calling, reminding, inviting to exercise, to study, to fight for his dreams and make efforts.

When there is no one doing these things, this person stops after a few days. The person feels engaged and motivated as long as there are stimuli. Once it stops, he or she gives up facing challenging hardships. At this point one might ask: "What if the person has shown effort and is visibly hard-working, but he or she has not achieved any positive outcome?" Dweck (2016) answers concerned parents with this question by recommending that they must literally make sure there really was effort done by the child. Additionally, effort does not exclude the necessity of guidance, support and explicitly teaching effective strategies for success in the target task.

In the field of second language acquisition, Ellis (2003) and Gardner (1990) claim that there are also other types of motivation such as: instrumental, integrative and resultative. Ellis (2003) argues that "Learners may make efforts to learn L2 for some functional reason-to pass an examination, to get a better job, to get a place at university (...)". The integrative consists of interest of the learners in the target people and/or culture. Finally, the resultative motivation

relies on evidence of learning occurrence. The learner seeing that is capable of advancing at some extent regardless if it was small, will feel more engaged and consequently will try to have more of that positive outcome more often.

The perspective of motivation adopted by Dweck (1999) was not intended to address second language acquisition or its relevance to learners. Rather, she and her co-researchers have focused on a more general-goal-oriented kind that can be generalized to other areas. It is somewhat dependent on the belief the apprentice holds about how the learning occurs. In other words, the type of mindset a student has towards language acquisition affects significantly his performance in the process of acquiring the target language (ELLIS,2003).

It is necessary to understand these concepts because some people might think of a too simplistic idea of motivation. It is not just about how someone feels today or tomorrow. Rather, it is about the forces that help people remain resilient and continue trying, plus what they think they know about their abilities and this creates a path toward learning or a path toward comfort zone. Depending on what way someone decides to go, it will determine their success or failure. Once more, success to accomplish goals, overcome challenges and succeed despite the high amount of difficulties.

## **2.4 Positive discipline**

In order to effectively meet students' needs and foster a growth mindset toward English language learning, we decided to apply positive discipline according to Nelsen (1987) and Nelsen and Lott (2000). The way these authors approach disruptive behavior, considering the psychological aspects developed in children and teenagers providing a model, show how teachers and parents should deal with these

issues and assist them in order to develop a healthy perspective on intelligence and how learning occurs.

Positive discipline is basically the classroom management model in which learners are treated respectfully. They should never be threatened or spoiled because there are no good or bad children, but good and bad behavior. This approach focuses on the good behavior (NELSEN, 1987)

This model is similar with Krashen's (1987) affective filter in essence. Affective filter hypothesis deals with psychological issues found in classroom like anxiety, stress, fear. The main purpose is to create an environment that everyone works as a team and are free to take risks and make mistakes. In fact, errors and mistakes are seen as natural part of the learning process.

Positive discipline model unifies this theoretical basis and concentrates in strategies teachers can use to reach all learners and make them feel worth and important despite their mistakes or disruptive behavior. What differs both is that positive discipline provides updated practices that work to address behavior problems and engage students to take responsibility for their own learning.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

The following part discusses the type of research used and its methodology. The objective was to identify how a teacher's attitude through a mindset approach jointly with the application of positive discipline and affective filter towards students in terms of classroom management, specifically discipline and the teacher-student interaction, may affect students' success or change their beliefs in relation to language learning as a starting point.

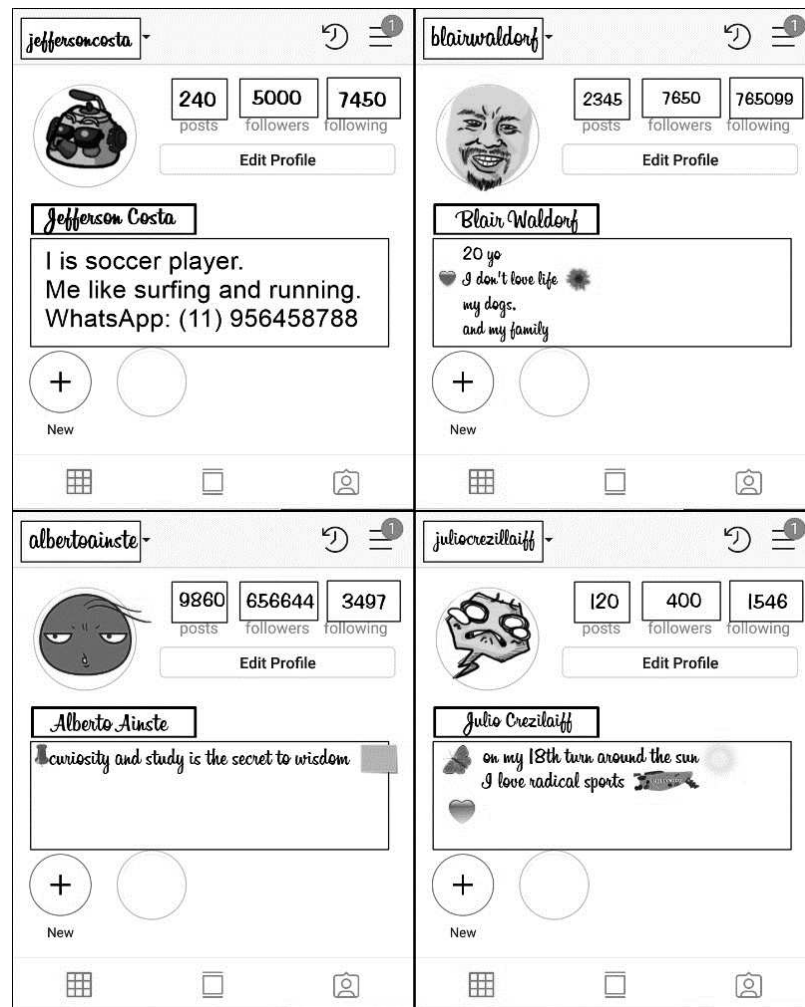
#### **3.1 Research Typology**

This is a qualitative, action research case study that was conducted during English as foreign language lessons given to an 8<sup>th</sup> grade group in a state public school in Campina Grande city, Paraiba.

An action research through a case study is defined as a participative inquiry that unites action or practice with comprehension as part of this practice. In other words, it is a way of researching in situations or circumstances while being the person who conducts the study aiming at improving, enhancing and achieving target results (ENGEL, 2000). It is portrayed as an action investigation through the action itself. Hence, the classroom is the laboratory of the researcher and provides evidence that innovations can be applied.

First, student-teacher and student-student interactions were observed and analyzed. Next, we designed a didactic sequence adapted to English language teaching and adjusted it to the reality of the students. They were expected to produce an Instagram Bio at the end of the semester. See the sample below:

Figure 1 – Instagram Bios



Source: Designed by the author

This sample was used in the classroom and contains their initial errors and mistakes. The type of didactic sequence used in this research comes from Barros (2014).

“...a group of school activities systematically organized toward an oral or written textual genre” (DOLZ, NOVERRAZ e SCHNEUWLY 2004, p.97) and that “the definition of the objectives of a DS (Didactic Sequence) should be adapted to the engaged learners capacities and difficulties” (Ibid. 2004, p. 53)<sup>5</sup>

Simply put, it works as follows. I theory, the teacher designs his plan with a presentation of a situation of communication in which one discursive genre is being used. Students will recognize the authentic genre and its use in everyday life. After that, there is a first production of a chosen genre. Then, lessons are organized in modules that are created to assist students with key concepts, skills and knowledge that will make them be ready for a final production. Lastly, their production must be socially exposed or presented in a real life situation.

<sup>5</sup> “...um conjunto de atividades escolares organizadas de maneira sistemática, em torno de um gênero textual oral ou escrito” (DOLZ, NOVERRAZ e SCHNEUWLY 2004, p.97) e que “a definição dos objetivos de uma SD deve adaptar-se às capacidades e às dificuldades dos alunos nela engajados” (Idem. 2004, p. 53)

In practice, the teacher presents a situation of authentic communication aiming at generating true interest from students. Then, he begins the modules application. The first one is a genre recognition in which students are to, as the name suggests, recognize that a discursive-written genre exists and has a purpose in society. After that, learners are to make their first attempt to produce that genre using only their prior-knowledge without guidance in order to provide an initial diagnostic. Eventually, the teacher will collect those samples and investigate where the learning gaps are and make the appropriate decisions and adjustments before teaching the other modules. During the following lessons other adapted models are delivered with the objective of assisting students in their specific needs toward a final production of the chosen genre.

The following table shows the details:

**Table 1 – First didactic sequence schedule before teaching**

| <b>Date</b>                                      | <b>Activities done</b>                                 |
|--|--|
| August 20 <sup>th</sup>                          | Lesson observation                                     |
| August 27 <sup>th</sup>                          | Lesson observation                                     |
| August 3 <sup>rd</sup>                           | Initial diagnostic                                     |
| September 10 <sup>th</sup>                       | Genre recognition / First production                   |
| September 17 <sup>th</sup>                       | Module I: Greetings and introductions                  |
| September 24 <sup>th</sup>                       | Module II: Personal likes and dislikes                 |
| October 1 <sup>st</sup>                          | First ongoing assignment                               |
| From October 8 <sup>th</sup> to 15 <sup>th</sup> | Brief look back and classwork activity checking        |
| October 22 <sup>th</sup>                         | Module III: Physical characteristics                   |
| October 29 <sup>th</sup>                         | Module IV: Dreams and plans for the future             |
| November 5 <sup>th</sup>                         | Final Assignment: Final Production of an Instagram Bio |
| November 12 <sup>th</sup>                        | Production sharing and socializing                     |
| November 19 <sup>th</sup>                        | Final feedback   |

**Source:** Designed by the author and his colleague

After designing this didactic sequence that was part of the internship program and to plan our lessons, being already delivering the lessons, an attempt was made to encourage and motivate students to learn English using words from their routine and that would possibly draw them to develop a growth mindset and generating a friendly relationship. Consequently, we expected that the affective filter levels (Krashen, 1987) would decrease.

The main intention was to address students' learning limiting beliefs in moments of clarification, activity checking, feedbacks and feedforwards and especially whenever observed that pupils could not feel safe nor confident to take risks, try new things in the learning process.

The study was conducted during an internship program from the State University Of Paraiba - UEPB. Two internship students taught a group of 8<sup>th</sup> grade from where all ideas presented in this study came from. I was one of these students.

### **3.2 Research Participants**

The study was developed as a partner-work outcome. Two internship undergraduate students planned the lessons, discussed school's issues with the resident teacher and our university professor. The author and his peer, with the help of the university professor, made all decisions during the lessons at the university. They followed the didactic sequence framework according to Barros (2014) to create their lessons as the internship professor required in the program. This colleague participated by teaching his lessons and helping design these didactic sequences and schedules. Then, he did not take part of the research nor data collection.

We were oriented during all process of investigation, from observations to the short teaching time. Similarly, the students from 8<sup>th</sup> grade participated by attending to lessons, interacting and answering our questionnaires. These questionnaires were applied to confirm or not whether their ideas about language acquisition and its importance was in the beginning of the observations and right after the delivered lessons.

The learners' age varied from thirteen to fifteen years old. They were beginners in terms of linguistic competencies of English language. All of them come from a simple community of Campina Grande, PB.

The resident teacher also submitted another questionnaire as well. His questionnaire was used mainly to request consent to apply the didactic sequence being developed in the internship lessons prior to the lessons at the school.

### **3.3 Data**

Since this research is a social study, to be specific an action research and case study, the data collected consist of observation annotations, internship academic report and the internship students' comments after the semester ended. The observation annotations were done in the first two weeks that we went to school in order to get acquainted with the group. At the end of the internship we are expected to have developed a research and relate theory studied in class and the practice, then we organize the data as an academic report. Again, students answered a questionnaire that discussed how they felt before the internship students' lessons and after so that they could share their perspective about all the lessons as well as their experiences throughout the eight weeks learning with the intern teachers.

We wanted to measure to what extent, given the short period of time the study would take, the mindset approach, affective filter hypothesis and positive discipline model could be demonstrated to work through students' written feedback. Students' voices are as important as teachers voices in the analysis because their feedback will confirm or not the effectiveness of mindset approach.

## **4 RESULTS**

We observed the class for two weeks before starting teaching. During this time, we planned and designed the already mentioned and explained didactic sequence willing to meet their needs and help with the final production. In these observations, we could identify the methodologies used by their current teacher, discuss challenges they could be facing at the time, linguistic levels, and so forth.



At first, a table was created right after the observations, conversations with their teacher and discussions with my internship colleague. Once we started teaching, other challenges began to emerge such as delay returning to class, noisy students talking and interrupting all the time, linguistic knowledge mismatching with had been covered in their student book.

As a result, we had to make some adjustments to make sure the lessons matched to their reality and needs. Therefore, the next table shows what was really done in the end of the internship program.

**Table 2 – Edited and adapted didactic sequence schedule**

| <b>Date</b>                                      | <b>Activities done</b>                                |
|--|---|
| August 20 <sup>th</sup>                          | Lesson observation                                    |
| August 27 <sup>th</sup>                          | Lesson observation                                    |
| August 3 <sup>rd</sup>                           | Initial diagnostic                                    |
| September 10 <sup>th</sup>                       | Genre recognition / First production                  |
| September 17 <sup>th</sup>                       | Module I: Greetings and introductions                 |
| September 24 <sup>th</sup>                       | Module II: Personal likes and dislikes                |
| October 1 <sup>st</sup>                          | First ongoing assignment                              |
| From October 8 <sup>th</sup> to 15 <sup>th</sup> | First assignment done by the supervisor teacher       |
| October 22 <sup>th</sup>                         | Brief review and activity checking                    |
| October 29 <sup>th</sup>                         | Module IV: Dreams and plans for the future            |
| November 5 <sup>th</sup>                         | Brief review and activity checking                    |
| November 12 <sup>th</sup>                        | Last assignment: Final production of an Instagram Bio |
| November 19 <sup>th</sup>                        | Production sharing and socializing and Final feedback |

**Source:** Designed by the author and his colleague

Once we observed, identified the school's challenges, we began planning and analyzing some strategies that could help them somewhat enhance their understanding of the importance of learning and, consequently, the importance of learning a foreign language. We also intended to effectively teach the content we were supposed to and collect positive outcomes in terms of academic performance and beliefs regarding language learning.

As a result of conversations between the two interns with their professor as well as data and annotations analysis, we decided that we would:

- Establish rules/agreements for the classroom
- Teach all students to accept and encourage themselves to try things out and accept mistakes as part of the process
- Create a routine that would foster a growth mindset towards English language learning
- Develop a healthy and friendly relationship with everyone
- Have the class reflect about their own learning in order to develop a growth mindset and reduce the quantity of absent students and their demotivation to learn English

The sum it up, they were stimulated to help each other in a kind way through group activities, and classwork comparisons.

When it comes to classroom management, it was decided to be used an assertive, inclusive and friendly attitude in order to avoid high voice level use, indifferent facial expression toward students' needs. We believed that showing sympathy for students' reality would be the best strategy to reach all learners despite the limited time we were going to spend together (NELSEN, 1987).

Thus, they were praised every time they answered activities correctly, achieved satisfactory results or participate coherently in class. For example, when the teacher is using concept check questions in order to activate prior knowledge and a student tries to participate a few times but cannot understand the concept yet. Then, he finally makes a coherent comment. At this moment, the teacher will praise this deed and stimulate others to engage complimenting this person. This creates a healthy and collaborative environment. In any given moment a passive response was used when pupils demonstrated disrespect to the teachers and/or disruptive behavior in the classroom.

Since planning requires flexibility from teachers because even though we attempt to predict numerous situations in order to be as prepared as possible, there is always something unexpected in the transition process from plan to practice. This became evident after a comparison between the two tables above.

We were well received in the school by the current resident teacher. He explained some technical procedures that the educational institution uses to function like an online platform for instance. Next, the educator introduced us to the materials, teacher guide and student books being used at the time.

It was noticeable that the teacher demonstrated concern with students' unwillingness to learn English and study at all. According to his speech, one of the causes would be the economic reality they come from. There were several things to be changed.

Initially, we had pupils do a diagnostic activity. The results were not very exciting. Many of the students used to return to class late after recess. Others would frequently take a nap during lessons. This school was part of a fulltime state program<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, learners often complained that they were tired, hungry and sleepy due to the long busy day they had had. They used to arrive at school 07:00 and leave 17:00. Thus, they basically spent their entire day at school.

The observed challenges made me wonder whether Dweck's socio-cognitive theory jointly with my knowledge on positive discipline could help these students, at least, begin changing their mindsets concerning language learning as a starting point.

As the days went on, we continued teaching and creating learning situations. Consequently, for no apparent reason the number of pupils began to decrease. The closer it got to vacation period, the emptier the school was. The resident teacher claimed that this scenario is part of a cycle that continues every year.

A significant percentage of the class remained studying until our last day teaching. This group answered a questionnaire evaluating our lessons, their learning, what they had learned about themselves, how important English language was and could be to someone, and last school's qualities and defects. The questionnaire consisted of simple and objective questions in Portuguese aiming at creating an accessible way to let students express themselves, given the literacy difficulties they had. The questions we focused in our analysis were:

1. What did you think about studying English before the internship students started teaching?
2. How do you evaluate their work and the way they conducted the lessons?
3. What did you learn in these lessons?
4. Do see any importance in learning a second language? Why?

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<sup>6</sup> In 2018 the Brazilian government through new lawsuits started implementing fulltime programs in state public schools around the country. For more information, visit: <http://educacaointegral.mec.gov.br/>

There were other questions related to the items mentioned. Alternatively, our focus was on testing if these approaches could make learners' experience a mind shift and move from a majority of fixed mindset minds toward a growth mindset one. The data will be shown and analyzed hereafter.

The first question received most of the answers in a positive tone as shown in the answers below.

1. What did you think about studying English before the internship students started teaching?

**Positive Answers:**

- A. "I thought that English was more complicated"
- B. "I thought it was annoying and boring. The lessons became more exciting and fun"
- C. "I planned to study because soon I could need. Now, I learned that it is very important to learn English"
- D. "I always thought of English lessons as unpleasant, but after they arrived, I noticed that English is great".
- E. "Lessons before had a horrible atmosphere, but with the internship students lessons happened in a fun way."
- F. "I thought that English was useless but today it is useful for many things."
- G. "I think it lacked more explanation of the contents, I don't think it had improved enough, and now everything is in a good way to learn."

**Negative Answers:**

- H. "It was very good, very good."
- I. "It was not very good nor bad. Yes, because I don't like English very much."

**Answers without link with questions:**

- J. "Yes, it is necessary for life"

Teenagers stated that after those lessons, they began to see how fun it would be to learn English and how important it is for today's reality. We can see the role of positive discipline and affective filter being represented in their answers. Most answers refer to our arrival as the causative change (See answers A to G). Despite the challenges faced during the lessons such as misbehavior, absenteeism, linguistic limited skills for example, they ended up holding positive ideas about the learning process.

2. How do you evaluate their work and the way they conducted the lessons?

**Positive answers:**

- A. "Yes, they did a good job."
- B. "It would receive grade 10 in everything, the teaching and delivering lessons..."
- C. "It was cool, the lessons were great. The internship student Lenilson is very interactive..."
- D. "The work is good... the work is great... they always demanded hard-work but it was for our well-being..."
- E. "Good, because it was better than just staying with books"
- F. "It was very good, we just could have gone to the computer lab."

- G. "I think they were very nice and are going to be great teachers."
- H. "They are (very) excellent."
- I. It was a fun, cool and practical way to understand."
- J. "They were wonderful. They explain things very well and are very nice."
- K. "I have nothing to complain... they were great and as for me they would continue teaching."

There was no negative evaluation for this question. All students believed that our work helped them significantly.

### 3. What did you learn in these lessons?

#### Positive Answers:

- A. "I learned that I have capacity to learn English and that we all are."
- B. That it is important to be yourself and have your own original ideas. I learned to be less shy and to express myself."
- C. The Instagram Bio... I learned several good stuffs about English."
- D. "To participate"
- E. "The Bio-graphy" (This student understood that a Bio is a short biography of oneself)
- F. "I learned that English is great and that we can learn through effort."
- G. "About how to create a Bio for example."
- H. "The Bio"

#### Negative answers:

- I. "I don't know"

#### Answers with no link to the questions:

- J. "Some languages"

The answers to this question showed even more explicitly evidence of growth mindset based ideas. Clearly, students understood that they can learn English as well as they learned to write a Bio. However, it is necessary good quality of lessons and a friendly environment.

In order to wrap up the descriptions of their voices in this research, let us see their answers to the last question.

### 4. Do you see any importance in learning a second language? Why?

#### Positive Answers:

- A. "Yes, if you dedicate yourself."
- B. "Yes, I think that even at work it will be useful for something"
- C. "Of course, what if, by chance, I leave the country..."
- D. "Yes, For if one day I go play professional soccer."
- E. "Yes, because there are jobs that require from you to speak more than a language"
- F. "Important, like... if you travel to another country."
- G. "Yes, because one day all of us will need it."
- H. "Yes, because it is very important to improve our life."
- I. "We can for example visit another country and speak fluently or we can work."
- J. "If we want to travel abroad or a foreign person comes so that we know how to speak too."

As the reader might have seen above, all of them consider the possibility of travelling abroad for various reasons, visiting, and receiving foreigners in our country as well.

**Table 3 – Questionnaire and students' answers**

| <b>Main questions</b>  | <b>Answers</b>   |
|--|--|
| What did think about studying English before the internship students started teaching? | 7 students gave negative feedback<br>2 students gave positive feedback<br>1 student misunderstood the question   |
| How do you evaluate their work and the way they conducted the lessons?                 | 9 students gave positive feedback<br>2 gave negative feedback<br><br>5 students learned how to write an Instagram Bio<br>2 changed their beliefs about language learning |
| What did you learn in these lessons?   | 1 learned to participate<br>1 didn't know what to say  |
| Do you see any importance in learning a second language? Why?                          | 10 students said "yes" and their reasons were related to jobs and travel   |

**Source:** Designed by the author

## 5 DISCUSSION

Eventually, the data collected showed that the students who were not engaged and willing to participate of the lessons before the internship, were now more active and starting to take responsibility for their learning. Two students actually enjoyed the way taught before the internship started, which means that there is always someone in the classroom who can learn in a certain way. One misunderstood the question or did not answer it properly for lack of attention.

We felt happy to receive positive feedback about our practice and didactic. I believe that the objective of this research was accomplished because during the lessons the students' excitement increased significantly. For this reason, several students showed more resultative motivation. This type of motivation as stated previously relies on evidence of learning occurrence (ELLIS, 2003). After seeing that they could write an Instagram Bio using the knowledge scaffolded in the lessons, they realized that anyone is capable of learning a second language. The results in the questionnaires have shown this evidence.

Although the group was challenging to manage behavior at first, affective filter through positive discipline and mindset approach (DWECK 2016; KRASHEN 1987; NELSEN 1987) were proven to be effective if combined in English language teaching. It demonstrated how important planning and choosing strategies to manage behavior and the emotional aspects of learners are. As a result, it clearly follows the evidence shown that any teacher who feels the need to make a difference in public school ought to consider all of these aspects when planning any lesson.

The increase of active participation in discussions, games and activities demonstrated how positive discipline can work effectively even in a short period of time. It also confirmed that when students begin to develop a growth mindset, they can do more than they are think of being capable of.

As showed in this study, Mindset theory was adapted to a school context in Brazil, perhaps for the first time with the objective of helping learners. We reinforce

the idea that there was no expectation of high-performance, given the short period of the research and the data collected in the first diagnostic activity.

This small-scaled research similarly showed intrinsic connection between the desire to learn a language with the possibility of living abroad or visiting another country. Unfortunately, teachers might be communicating the wrong message about English language learning. Students can benefit from the language in Brazil as well.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Although we were able to achieve success applying these approaches, it is worth saying that still there are numerous challenges to face when using Mindset Approach in the EFL classroom context. The linguistic proficiency level is quite limited, for instance. Reading and writing skills of the mother tongue – in our case the mother tongue is Portuguese - are limited in the group yet. My research was made with the intention to open the discussion; it cannot be conclusive due to its data limitations. More research can be conducted to investigate how these approaches and theories could show results for long-term case-studies and more action researches.

The issues not met are not new for English teachers or school administrators. It is a fact that school needs more support, intense professional development, and a school psychologist for each institution. Be it clear that it is not being claimed that nothing is being done currently, yet that all good initiatives must continue for their importance to the language teaching scenario in public schools.

It was disappointing to me to confirm the stigmatized version of public schools that we often hear so often among English teachers. We could have done more. I left that school believing that teaching is more complex than one can even imagine. However, as EFL teachers, we often feel that we are good enough, prepared enough, studying enough, updating ourselves enough. Simply put, this is just a feeling. We do what we can, using the resources we have with the opportunities we get, and that is ok.

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