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Aging and Learning: Community Engagemente and Self-efficacy in L2 Teaching to Elderly Learners

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AGING AND LEARNING:

Community Engagement and Self-efficacy in L2 Teaching To Elderly Learners

by

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THESIS

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Dedication

To the memory of my beloved mother, Fernanda, and grandmother, Célia, who were taken from us far too soon. Your love, guidance, and support have shaped me into the person I am today, and I will carry your legacies with me forever.

To my grandfather Celso, who has been a constant source of love and support throughout my life. Your kindness and belief in me have always been a driving force, and I could not have made it without you.

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B.A., Portuguese, Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, 2019
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Abstract

The elderly population (60 years or older) has been increasing during the past decades around the world and is expected to reach two billion by 2050 (Scult, Haime, et al 2015). However, the misconception that elderly people are uncapable, or incompetent is still part of the imaginary constructed around such populations (Minichiello and Coulson, 2005). Older adults present powerful functional capacities and social activities lead to better performance and slower decreases in their memory and executive function (Scott, Masser, & Pachana, 2020). Thus, second language learning plays an effective role in enabling active and regular engagement in social and psychological tasks. This study discusses psychosocial impacts of aging and suggests a teaching approach which considers and targets such impacts. Fifteen elderly participants in Juiz de Fora (Minas Gerais, Brazil) were exposed to L2 teaching interventions, documented their needs and interests in SLL and were assessed on how they responded to self-efficacy and community engagement as teaching strategies. This investigation culminated in the proposal of SLL pedagogical approaches to older adults, arguing in favor of a more diverse and inclusive access to education.

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Introduction

The elderly population (60 years or older) has been increasing in numbers during the past decades around the world and is expected to reach the figure of two billion by 2050 (Scult, Haime, Jacquart, Takahashi, Moscowitz, Webster, Denninger, Mehta, 2015; Santos, 2019). The main risk factor for dementia and neurodegenerative disorders nowadays is aging (Niccoli & Partridge, 2012). Therefore, healthy aging must be a priority goal in order to avoid an epidemic of dementia and other related cognitive diseases. Healthy aging includes the concern with the elder population's well-being. In other words, promoting the well-being of the older adult equals endorsing activities that lead to a good mental health state, satisfaction with life, a sense of purpose in life, as well as stress management skills (Pikhart and Klimova, 2020).

Promoting healthy aging includes the encouragement of many tasks, such as physical activities (Erickson & Kramer, 2009), healthy eating (Klimova and Novotny, 2020), music learning (van den Elzen, Daman, Duijkers, Otte, Wijnhoven, Timmerman, and Olde Rikkert, 2019), among others. Besides those, learning a foreign language is also an important aspect to be considered regarding the improvement of cognitive and social skills of the older adult. More specifically, second language learning in older age groups has led to enhancement of cognitive (Antoniou and Wright, 2017; Kliesch, Giroud, Phenninger, and Meyer, 2017; Valis, Slaninova, Prazak, Poulova, Kacetl, and Klimova, 2019) and social abilities (Pikhart and Klimova, 2020; Klimova, Pikhart, Cierniak-Emerych, Dziuba, Firlej, 2021). The enhancement of cognitive abilities in elderly learners encompasses improvements in overall cognitive abilities, inhibitory control, and working memory (Bubbico, Chiacchiaretta, Parenti, di Marco, Panara, Gianna, Ferretti, Perrucci, 2019; Wong, Ou, Pang, Zhang, Shing Tse, Lam, Antoniou, 2019). Regarding social competence, research has related Second Language Learning to the increase of well-

being and quality of life of the elderly person, helping with anxiety control, mental health, and social networks (Pfenninger and Polz, 2018; Pikhart and Klimova, 2020; Klimova et al., 2021).

However, the misconception that elderly people are uncapable or incompetent is still part of the imaginary constructed around the elderly population (Minichiello & Coulson, 2005). The authors emphasize that aging is frequently regarded negatively, with focus on health problems, fragility, and declines in cognition. These perceptions shape the access of the older population to resources that are accessible to younger sections of society. For example, second language learning is often disregarded among elderly people because of the belief that younger adults learn faster and perform better than seniors (Pikhart & Kimova, 2020). In the sense, elderly people internalize the assumption that they are not capable of learning. Therefore, it is paramount to create spaces dedicated to the learning of older adults, to avoid the feeling of discomfort and/or anxiety in seniors (Pikhart & Kimova, 2020).

Therefore, the present study focuses on providing a discussion around age-appropriate effective teaching methods and strategies that prioritize older adults in the process of learning a second language. Thus, the goal of this research is to discuss the psychosocial impacts of ageing by providing opportunities for elderly people to actively engage in social and cognitive activities through second language learning. In the next sections, I will describe the main findings from the previous literature on topics related to aging and teaching. After that, the methodology applied in the present study is presented in detail, followed by its results and their discussion. Finally, I will address the challenges faced in second language teaching in language classrooms with elderly students by suggesting a model of teaching intervention to account for the interests and needs of the target population.

Literature review

Aging and cognition

This section focuses on exploring what has been studied and concluded in the field of aging related to cognition. Research has shown that older adults present cognitive declines when compared to younger adults, such as slower mental processing and working memory, decreasing in the inhibition of irrelevant thoughts, and inferior abilities of long-term memory (Salthouse, 2012). Nonetheless, linguistic abilities based on mental models can be a well-preserved cognitive process in elderly people. In this section, each of these cognitive aspects and their relation to linguistic input and output will be discussed.

Mental models and levels of representation

Mental models are mental representations of experiences, events, and systems (Johnson-Laird, 1983). They can include representations of experiences or representations of things that were never experienced (for example, knowing how something works without ever trying to do it). Event models are part of those mental models. An event model is specifically the representation of an event. Humans use events as a mental model for the classification and organization of experiences, that is, we mentally associate and store experiences as separate events (Wright, 2016). In fact, the categorization of experiences as events is so strong that individuals can classify not-experienced information very similarly to the classification of an event. For example, people's memories of characters experiences they have read about in a book can be almost equivalent to one's autobiographical memories (Copeland, Radvansky, & Goodwin, 2009). Thus, event models can be directly experienced or linguistically based. An

experienced event model is based on one's life's experiences, while a linguistically based event model is based on a story or narrative, for example (Wright, 2016).

The linguistically based event model is called a situation model. Mental models of representation include event models (based on experiences), which in turn encompass situation models (based on linguistic input). In other words, situation models are models of representation that are experienced through language or derived from language. When we are exposed to linguistic information (through reading or listening), we construct different levels of memory representation to comprehend the linguistic input (Radvansky, Zwaan, Curiel, & Copeland, 2001). Situation models are the most complex of linguistically based models. They are the highest level of linguistically based representations because they not only include the ideas that were conveyed through linguistic input, but also interference and integration of related information. They integrate the individual's life experiences in the construction of meaning. Thus, we can elaborate on the information related to their life experiences alongside linguistic input to formulate meaning (Wright, 2016). For example, a situation model is constituted of linguistic input and contextual information, such as space, time, entity, causality, and goal (Zwaan and Radvansky, 1998).

The second level of representation (the text-based) consists of the ideas expressed through linguistic input, but not in relation to one's life experience. Therefore, the meaning of the utterance is accessed and retrieved only by a set of lexical items, which have no connection to the events or situations experienced by the individuals. This level of representation presupposes processing of meaning, since it involves the encoding and retrieval of information from memory. Thus, the same meaning is conveyed through a different set of words than the one used on one's first contact with that information. This is especially important when new

information is being learned, since it encompasses the ability to communicate the same idea in a different form (Wright, 2016). An example of this is the feeling that explaining a concept using one's own words demonstrates deep comprehension and mastery of a subject.

Lastly, the surface level of representation consists of the maintenance of the words used in the speech. The surface level of representation is accessed through verbal-based tasks, for example, in which the participants are asked to recall the representations of the exact words and letters of an utterance, without necessarily processing and activating their meaning. This is the most basic form of representation, since it relies simply on short-term memory and does not require comprehension or attachment to the long-term memory (Wright, 2016). An example of this is the need to memorize information for a very short amount of time, such as a phone number that we are about to use, or the address of a place we are about to go.

Aging and situation models

Bransford, Barclay, and Franks (1972) investigated whether speech comprehension was primarily based on linguistic structural relations (more text-based), or whether comprehension was subject to the overall interpretation of the whole situation described. To do so, they presented younger adults (undergraduate students) with sentence pairs that only had a few word differences. Some of these changes elicited only structural changes, while others generated situational changes. For example, one sentence pair would be:

a. Three turtles rested *on* a floating log, and a fish swam beneath *it*.
b. The turtles rested *on* a floating log, and a fish swam beneath *them*.

Those differences in the sentences represent a deep structure difference but portray the same situation (the fish would swim under the floating log and the turtle in any of the instances). However, let's look at this other sentence pair:

c. Three turtles rested *beside* a floating log, and a fish swam beneath *it*.

d. Three turtles rested *beside* a floating log, and a fish swam beneath *them*.

Here, the difference in preposition creates a situational change, since the fish could now swim beneath the turtles or beneath the floating log. After being exposed to these sentences, the participants had to indicate from a list which sentences they have heard before. The participants who were exposed to sentence pair 1 had more difficulty in identifying the 'correct' sentences than participants that were exposed to sentence pair 2. This indicates that language comprehension is a function based on the memory for semantic situations, rather than structural memory.

When this effect was analyzed in older adults (range of 62-82 years old), Radvansky, Gerard, Zacks, and Hasher (1990) observed that elderly people performed similarly to younger adults. This implies that older adults retain the ability to understand a text through situation models of representation. More recently, Dijkstra, Yaxley, Madden, and Zwaan (2004) compared younger and older adults' abilities to create a situation model through picture recognition. The participants were presented with sentences and later had to identify the matching picture to the sentence they had heard. Both groups (younger and older adults) demonstrated facilitation (fast response times) to the picture recognition, but the latter showed a larger facilitation effect. This suggests that not only older adults maintain their ability to comprehend language through situation models, but also had this ability developed to be able to create richer situation models, and, therefore, have more facilitation to the picture recognition

test. The authors attributed this development in the ability to create situation models by older adults to be due to compensation for the loss of their memory functions regarding the surface and text-based levels of representation.

Another study (Shake, Noh, and Stine-Morrow, 2009) found that younger adults (age range 18-29) learn simple facts easier than elderly adults (age range 55-82). This is due to the high-performance younger adults show in surface and text-based processing over older adults. However, in respect to more elaborated texts (that required the construction of situation models), elderly people performed as good as or better than younger adults. This demonstrates that an integrated and rich interpretation of texts is not as demanding as the processing of isolated pieces of information. As an example, it is easier for us to remember a series of digits that correspond to a telephone number (a meaning that we attribute to it) than a random series of the same number of digits.

In that sense, previous research such as the one summarized here above shows that younger people perform faster and easier than older people when the surface and text-based levels of representation are required. On the other hand, older adults present enhanced skills to operate the situation model of representation.

Executive functions and aging

Executive functions are a set of top-down mental processes[1] that enable humans to achieve goals, adjust to new situations, manage social interactions, regulate thoughts and

[1] Top-down processing refers to information flowing from higher levels of representation to lower levels of representation. Therefore, more complex information is processed into more basic units (Traxler, 2011). Executive functions, then, are a set of mental processes that facilitate the comprehension of complex information.

attention, etc. (Shokrkon and Nicoladis, 2022). The executive functions consist of three main cognitive components: inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility (Miyake, Friedman, Emerson, Witzki, Howerter, and Wager, 2000). Among those, studies have shown that working memory and inhibitory control are impacted by the process of aging (Gerard, Zacks, Hasher, & Radvansky, 1991; Wong, Ou, Pang, Zhang, Tse, Lam, and Antoniou, 2019). Therefore, they will be described below.

The inhibitory control is the ability to suppress irrelevant or competing information for the situation in order to maintain necessary information active. It is especially important in second language learning since it is responsible for suppressing lexical items and constructions in the native language in order for these constructions to be retrieved in the target language. Previous research (Gerard, Zacks, Hasher, & Radvansky, 1991; Hasher and Zack, 1988) has proposed that inhibitory control is affected negatively by aging. Gerard et al. (1991) conducted a study that compared response times of 27 younger (mean age of 19.1 years) and 27 older (mean age of 69.1 years) adults.

Their experiment consisted of two parts: studying sessions and a speed recognition test. For the studying part, the participants needed to memorize 18 sentences following the format of "the *person* [type of professional] performed an *activity*" (for example, "The judge cut the apple into six pieces"; Gerard et al., 1991). The participants were exposed to each of the 18 sentences for seven seconds. After studying all the sentences, the participants would undergo a test trial, in which they were asked to respond questions like "Who did some *activity*?" or "The *person* did what?" to try to recall which professional executed which activity (Gerard et al., 1991). Corrective feedback was provided right after the participant made a mistake. The

participants went through the studying phase as many times as needed until they answered all 18 questions correctly on two successive trials.

After that, the participants performed the speed recognition test. They were instructed to recognize the sentences learned in the study sessions by pressing the corresponding button of "sentence studied" or "sentence not studies." In case of a mistake, an error message would appear on the screen to indicate the inaccuracy to the participant. After the speed recognition task, the participants were asked the 18 questions again during the studying sessions. The results indicated that older adults have greater problems in retrieving information compared to younger adults in both reaction times and error data.

Gerard et al. (1991) attributed the results to the decline of inhibitory control in older adults. They argued that deficiencies in the inhibitory control due to aging caused more irrelevant information to be activated, which would decrease their speed recognition times and increase the number of errors. Moreover, the authors concluded that the elderly participants also had problems inhibiting the recall of erroneous associations, which promoted their continued strength in the older adults' memory. Thus, the suppression of irrelevant information is more difficult for older adults compared to younger people. In that sense, second language learning promotes the exercise of inhibitory control, since vocabulary and grammatical structures of the native language must be continuously suppressed to produce utterances and texts in the target language.

Besides inhibition, working memory is another one of the executive functions that is impacted by aging. Working memory is the ability to handle and operate multiple pieces of information together (Wright, 2016). Some examples of working memory functions are maintaining information active that will be later connected to more information, creating or

accessing mental images while processing information, and constructing multiple related representations of a piece of information. Working memory plays an important role in language learning because it is the cognitive function responsible for retrieving needed information to acquire new vocabulary (Wong et al., 2019). More specifically, working memory has been related to the surface and text-based levels[2] of representation (Wright, 2016). In that sense, working memory is a cognitive factor that is performed easier by young adults than older adults.

Wong et al. (2019) tested the effects of Foreign Language Learning (FLL) compared to playing games and music appreciation in older adults. One hundred and fifty-three participants (age range 60-85) were divided into three groups, one for each activity analyzed, and were cognitively stimulated two or three times a week in sessions of two and a half hours. The participants who were taking part in FLL used an online program to learn a new language, with the assistance of an instructor when needed. Since working memory and inhibition are cognitive processes related to linguistic use and language learning, the authors hypothesized that FLL would present superior results in these domains compared to games and music appreciation. Wong et al (2019) expected FLL to present higher enhancement in seniors' cognitive abilities compared to playing games or music appreciation because the neural network that is activated in learning a foreign language is also the one affected by aging and cognitive decline (Antoniou, Gunasekera, Wong, 2013; Ware, Damnee, Djabelkhir, Cristancho, Wu, Benovici, Pino, Rigaud, 2017). Therefore, the cognitive network exercised in language learning overlaps with the brain regions impacted by aging, which can lead to more

[2] The most basic form of representation, since they rely on short-term memory and do not require comprehension or attachment to the long-term memory (Wright, 2016).

significant cognitive improvement through language learning compared to other cognitively engaging activities.

Wong et al. (2019) also found that, since language use and learning engage extensive neural network, FLL entailed overall cognitive improvements in a broad set of cognitive abilities, including inhibition. Their results also pointed to a more expressive enhancement in working memory. The researchers attributed such outcomes to the exercise of focus. The participants were presented with new words and then asked to identify the words to corresponding pictures during the FLL sessions. This exercise required them to retrieve novel linguistic information and relate it to visual input, which led to the development of working memory. Moreover, they noticed that activities in which older adults had to actively participate, such as FLL and games, resulted in greater improvements than passive activities, such as music appreciation.

Taking all the abovementioned information, the results of cognitive experiments with older adults shed light on important information for Applied Linguistics and Second Language Learning. The findings obtained by Wong et al. (2019) demonstrate an inclination toward second language learning as a crucial form of cognitive stimulation in older adults, since the brain regions activated in this process are the same ones affected by cognitive decline due to aging. Their study also establishes the importance of active engagement in cognitive stimulation, which can be achieved through the correct methodology in second language learning. In addition, the definition of mental models of representation place evidence in favor of more contextualized methods and strategies in teaching a second language to older adults. The outcomes obtained by Radvansky, Gerard, Zacks, and Hasher (1990) highlight the need for language lessons to be based on real-life situations in order to increase the performance of

elderly students in second language learning and enhance their comfort and confidence in their abilities to learn a second language. Finally, Shake et al. (2009) also argue in favor of rich and integrated interpretation of texts over isolated words to enhance the elderly person's ability to perceive, produce, and retrieve linguistic information. In other words, the use of a well-supplied and contextualized input in language learning would be beneficial to the older person.

The next section focuses on addressing these issues through approaches to second language learning strategies that go along with the cognitive findings presented here. To do so, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory, Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), community engagement, and self-efficacy strategies will be explored and connected to the older adults' needs to achieve meaningful learning experiences that positively impact and tackle cognitive decline.

Teaching methods and strategies

This section is focused on providing broad parameters on Communicative Language Teaching approaches, task-based language teaching, as well as community engagement and self-efficacy applied to second language learning.

Research on second language teaching has significantly changed in the last few decades due to different popular trends. It has been argued that there is no single method that contemplates all the students' needs and interests (Brandl, 2020). In other words, second language teaching methodology is not an exact science: in fact, it relies on adaptation and versatility to address specific issues and to achieve distinct targets. Theories on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and cognitive and educational psychology have established a method that encompasses various methodologies to accomplish a common goal. The method

in question is called Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and it is founded on several approaches that perceive communication as the base function of language.

However, CLT approaches have their origins traced to 1970s (Richards, 2005; Thamarana, 2014; Brandl, 2020). Older adults that are currently seeking second language instruction may not have been introduced to CLT approaches while they were in school. In that sense, it is critical to understand previous approaches to second language learning in order to better understand this population's previous experiences (if existent) and account for their possible expectations regarding educational methods.

A historical perspective on CLT

The earliest recognized method for teaching a second language was the Grammar-Translation method, which persisted throughout the first half of the 20th century and beyond in some regions. This method reflects the teaching practices of its time, as textbooks were primarily comprised of lists of vocabulary and grammar rules (Brandl, 2020). Students were instructed to memorize these rules and translations and were often assigned translation exercises. Oral proficiency was not considered in this method, what led to its decrease and the popularization of the Direct and Audiolingual methods.

The Direct method had the premise that a second language should be learned naturally, that is, in the same way as children acquire their first language. The Direct Method was based on principles that promoted spontaneous use of the target language by the instructor (Brandl, 2020). The use of any other language besides the target language was not allowed in the classroom and the introduction to novel words or expressions was done exclusively through pictures, demonstrations, or explanations in the target language. Also, the focus was on

everyday vocabulary, and grammar topics were introduced only orally. The central idea was to practice pronunciation, which was taught on a right-wrong basis and did not account for variation.

Alongside the Direct Method, the Audiolingual method was taking place as a technique to learn a second language, and it can still be found in second language materials nowadays. Rooted in behaviorist and structuralist theories, it is centered on the idea that learning a language was primarily a result of habit and automatization (Littlewood, 1981; Savignon, 1984; Brandl, 2020). The emphasis was on spoken language: students were advised to read, repeat and memorize manipulated dialogues and texts. The use of drills was extensive: the students would apply the same structure with different nouns to practice grammar and create the habit of speaking the target language. Mistakes were avoided at all costs, under the assumption that students would learn bad habits from them.

These three methods have some aspects in common: they presuppose passive learning and no creative or meaningful use of language; they are essentially based on the 'correct' use of grammar; and do not account for linguistic variation or adequacy. Additionally, the constant requirement for "accurate" pronunciation and grammar use can promote an increase in anxiety and a decrease in self-confidence and motivation levels among students (Brandl, 2020; Kacetl and Klimova, 2021). The Direct and the Audiolingual methods recognized the importance of real-life expressions and language in use, but their methodologies did not account for linguistic interactions or context of communication. Methods that focus predominantly on pronunciation and repetition are often mistaken for approaches centered on communication. Until today, the communicative function of language is regularly reduced to pronunciation and repetition of meaningless expressions placed outside of a real-life situation.

Research on the language acquisition field shifted the behaviorist perception that language was a result of habit and practice. Instead, linguistic knowledge started to be understood as a creative process (Chomsky, 1957). Sociolinguistic studies also identified the primary function of language to be communication (Brandl, 2020), and functionalist approaches state that language emerges because of the need for interaction (Bybee, 2010). In that sense, language is better learned through communication and interaction (Hymes, 1971). Finally, the notion of stages of development for second language acquisition and the idea that such stages were not shared among all speakers (namely, not everybody learns in the same way at the same pace) were contributions of Applied Linguistics to language learning (Brandl, 2020). Due to these new findings, the shift from a grammar-centered syllabus to a functional-based syllabus in schools could take place. In other words, the main goal of the second language teaching methodologies now is to provide the students with opportunities to exercise the functions of language (such as asking, denying, arguing, describing, among others) in meaningful communicative situations. From this context, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches started to arise since the 1970s.

Understanding traditional methods of second language teaching is crucial when working with elderly students as it provides insight into their learning experiences and allows us to build upon their existing knowledge. Many elderly students were taught a second language through grammar-translation and rote memorization techniques, which were common practices in schools during their youth. By acknowledging these traditional methods, educators can better understand the expectations and perceptions of their elderly students and tailor teaching strategies accordingly. Moreover, by adapting, engaging and incorporating communicative approaches into the more traditional teaching methods, educators can create a more engaging

and motivating learning environment for elderly students, which may help them recall their past language learning experiences and become more enthusiastic about learning a second language.

Communicative Language Teaching and task-based learning

Communicative Language Teaching practices are based on the principle that the main function of language is communication. In this regard, CLT approaches focus on language teaching through communication, in order to achieve meaningful knowledge and attainment in second language acquisition (Littlewood, 1981; Thamarana, 2014). The central goal is to provide students with opportunities to develop communicative competence by actively using the target language (TL). Brandl (2020) asserts that communicative competence comprises several components, including linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Linguistic competence refers to knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the language, while sociolinguistic competence involves the ability to use language appropriately in different social situations. Discourse competence refers to the ability to communicate coherently, considering the conventions of turn-taking in interaction. Finally, strategic competence involves the ability to communicate effectively and to repair communication breakdowns that may occur. By emphasizing communicative competence, CLT approaches encourage learners to use language in meaningful ways, rather than reducing language learning to simply memorizing grammatical rules or vocabulary lists (Savignon and Berns, 1984; Lee, VanPatten, 1995). This can lead to more effective language learning outcomes and a greater sense of engagement and motivation among learners.

One of the ways to practice CLT is task-based language teaching (TBLT). Task-based learning reinforces the idea that language learning is constructed through the accomplishment of tasks that promote language use (Pérez-Nieto and Llop, 2022; Rodríguez-Peñarroja, 2022). One of the fundamental principles of task-based learning is that instruction is centered on the task. This is a departure from traditional methods that are often founded on grammar rules or pronunciation skills. These methods usually leave students in a passive position where they would simply receive explanations of grammatical rules and perform exercises that lacked real-world relevance. In contrast, task-based learning places communication at the center of the lesson, with grammar and vocabulary taught as needed to support communication. By basing instruction on contextualized tasks, learners can engage in meaningful and authentic communication in the target language. They are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process, taking ownership of their own progress and acquiring new language skills in a way that is relevant and engaging (Brandl, 2020). Ultimately, the goal of task-based learning is to develop learners' communicative competence, helping them to become confident and effective communicators in the target language.

The tasks proposed by task-based learning refer to activities or exercises designed to promote communication and language use in a purposeful way. By centering the approach on the communicative function of language, the students learn how to communicate in different real-life scenarios, such as asking for a hotel room, talking to friends, expressing their opinions on a subject, etc. They focus on the meaning and relevance of the content in students' lives. The tasks are not just a simple repetition of a grammar point, but rather a complete set of activities that can lead to the completion of a specific outcome, whether written or oral (Brandl, 2020).

The idea is to use the language in context, so students can experience how it is used in real-life situations.

Brandl (2020) explains that there are two types of tasks in CLT: real-world tasks and pedagogical tasks. Real-world tasks are those that arise from the necessity for communication in everyday life, such as ordering food at a restaurant or asking for directions. In the classroom, the goal is to provide students with activities that resemble real-life tasks, arise interest and ensues communication. However, students have pedagogical needs to conduct them in the language acquisition process, that is, a certain amount of focus on the form is important and required in L2 acquisition (Ellis, 2001; 2003; de la Fuente, 2006). This focus on the form is addressed by pedagogical tasks: tasks that are designed to tackle a specific pedagogical need, such as repeating, hypothesizing, or conceptualizing rules. They are often referred to as "assimilation" or "preparation" tasks, and they allow students to reflect upon how language works and to develop learning skills in general that will be necessary to perform real-life tasks. Therefore, TBLT is a flexible and versatile approach that ensures practice and understanding of the complexity of language.

Another principle of task-based learning is the promotion of learning by doing. This principle is based on the notion that active participation positively enhances the learner's cognitive engagement. The idea is that new knowledge is better stored in long-term memory and can be retrieved more easily if it is tied to real-world events and activities (Brandl, 2020; Wright, 2016). In this sense, task-based learning places great value on creating a dynamic and collaborative learning environment, where students work together towards a common goal. Through social interactions with their peers and feedback from the instructor, learners can refine their language skills and build confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in

the target language. The use of an interlanguage, or a language that has features of the student's native language and the TL, is expected and supported in task-based learning, as learners are encouraged to experiment with new forms of language and take risks in order to improve their proficiency (Brandl, 2020). Therefore, the design of tasks and activities should be relevant, engaging, and structured in a way that promotes social interaction and language use.

TBLT is based on the premise that input needs to be rich. In other words, students need to be in contact with the language through multimedia input (recordings, videos, texts, and so on), the maximum use of the TL by the instructor (but that guarantees comprehension from the students), and an extensive range of materials (simplified or authentic). As much as possible, the teacher should incorporate authentic texts to the classes, ensuring doable tasks and fitting evaluation (Brandl, 2020). The material should be challenging, but not so difficult that could lead to demotivation and discouragement.

Overall, Communicative Language Teaching and task-based learning constitute a flexible and versatile method to tackle second language teaching. They are founded on the application of a wide set of strategies to accomplish a final goal, as defended by research on second language acquisition and cognitive psychology (Brandl, 2020). CLT practices suggest that no SLL method is best for all classrooms, students, and objectives. Its student-centered character allows for the consideration of multiple factors that affect learning (such as students' motivation levels and past experiences). Therefore, I expect it to be a great tool to account for diversity and inclusion of the elderly population in SLL.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to one's subject beliefs towards their competence in executing a task or reaching a goal (Bandura, 1995, 1997; Wang and Sun, 2020). It can have an impact on one's behavior, motivation, and confidence. In older adults, for example, Scult et al. (2015) have found that self-efficacy enhances the wellbeing of the elderly person by promoting the decrease of depression and anxiety, and the increase of energy and overall satisfaction with life.

Regarding second language learning, self-efficacy beliefs are a critical motivational factor and therefore have a significant impact on the student's performance (Bandura, 1997). For this reason, an individual's perception of their own capabilities can be a better predictor of their performance than their actual abilities (Bandura, 1997; McIntyre, 1999; Mills, Pajares, and Herron, 2007). This is particularly significant for educators, as students with high self-efficacy are more likely to engage in tasks and achieve better results. Therefore, the enhancement of self-efficacy levels is especially relevant to seniors that seek SLL, since they are often regarded as less capable or less competent compared to younger students (Minichiello and Coulson, 2005).

Self-efficacy is a component of Social Cognitive Theory, as described by Bandura (1997). Social Cognitive Theory states that individuals can regulate their behavior through the control of their thoughts, feelings, and actions. In that sense, self-reflection plays an important role in human agency. It is through self-reflection that individuals can evaluate their thoughts, motivation, and behavior to make alterations where they see fit. Self-reflection can, therefore, influence one's perceptions of their capacity to execute a task (self-efficacy).

Therefore, regarding SLL, students can be taught strategies to self-regulate their own process of learning through metacognition skills. Metacognition refers to the self-reflection of one's cognitive abilities in terms of planning and monitoring the process, and evaluating the outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Mills, Pajares, and Herron, 2007; Basili, Gomez Plata, Barbosa, Gerbino, Thartori, Lunetti, Tirado, García, Kanacri, Giraldo, Marin, Laghi, and Pastorelli, 2020). However, Bandura (1997) highlights the difference "between metacognitive skills and their effective use. Knowing what to do is only part of the story […]. People need a sense of efficacy to apply what they know consistently, persistently, and skillfully, especially when things are not going well, and deficient performances carry negative consequences." Thus, environmental, motivational, and affective aspects play a crucial role in self-efficacy.

Following Bandura (1997), this experiment tackles increases in self-efficacies through two routes: one that focuses more on the development of metacognitive skills, and, after, another that accounts for the affective, motivational, and environmental aspects of learning. As stated above, metacognition skills refer to the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of tasks. To address the first step (planning), Tanner (2012) suggests encouraging students to pre-assess their current thinking before executing a task. This is important for the instructor to have a sense of how the students feel about a certain activity, and for the learners, so they can plan their approach to the task in terms of time, resources, previous knowledge, etc. Exercising planning with students could be done through presenting them with questions that stimulate their thinking toward the cognitive processes required to achieve the target task (for example, "What resources do I need to complete the task? How will I make sure I have them?"; Tanner, 2012). This strategy has been used in this experiment in order to give the participants more preparation time for the tasks and consequently increase confidence in their achievement.

Monitoring refers to the re-analysis of their planning to check for positive and negative aspects. Besides identifying the positive and negative points, it is interesting that the instructor invites the students to share what worked or did not work for them. In that sense, the teacher can create a safe and comfortable environment for dialogue about mistakes as a part of learning and as an opportunity for improvement. Monitoring strategies can also be applied using simple questions to guide the students in their identification of the difficult parts of the task and their possible solutions (for example, “What other resources could I be using to complete this task?”; Tanner, 2012).

Finally, for the evaluation portion of metacognitive skills, the instructor encourages the students to think about possible changes in their way of thinking about a certain topic. During the process of learning, it is common for students to not realize their progress. Moreover, learning implies a change in the students’ ideas on a topic (Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Getzorg, 1982). Therefore, by supporting post-assessments of tasks, the instructor is promoting students’ tracking and reflection on their progress and thoughts, as well as evaluating the effectiveness of the lesson provided. An example of a question that can be posited in this scenario is “What other resources could I be using to complete this task?” (Tanner, 2012).

Therefore, metacognitive strategies can influence one’s self-efficacy toward learning. They are strategies that can be applied toward the overall course, to assess a quiz or exam, to analyze a class session, or even just one activity. By encouraging the students to think about their learning process, the instructor is promoting learner’s agency and autonomy in education, as well as providing the students with powerful self-regulating strategies.

In addition, Bandura (1997) argues that self-efficacy can also be affected by enactive experience, vicarious experience, and social persuasion. Enactive experiences rely on the

notion that one's previous experiences positively or negatively influence their perception of self-efficacy. For example, many elderly learners may have had negative experiences with more traditional methodologies in SLL when they were younger. These experiences may have caused trauma, anxiety, or insecurity, which can influence their perception of their capabilities to take on language learning after adulthood.

Another influence upon self-efficacy is what Bandura (1997) calls vicarious experience. Vicarious experience is the effect of one's comparison of their performance to the achievements of others working toward the same goal. When done efficiently, vicarious experiences can enhance students' perceptions regarding their competence and self-efficacy. In the case of elderly learners, they often find themselves seeking second language instruction in classrooms full of teenagers and courses that are designed for younger learners. Unfortunately, this environment can lead to feelings of discomfort and exclusion for the older adult, who may feel that they are not being adequately considered in the learning process (Pikhart and Klimova, 2020; Kacetl and Klimova, 2021). Furthermore, the inevitable comparison between the older learner's perception of their own performance versus the performance of younger learners can be unhealthy and unfair. It is important to recognize the goals, needs and learning styles of elderly language learners and to provide them with an environment that allows for healthy and constructive self-comparison with their peers. Therefore, older adults will be motivated and comfortable in working collaboratively and interacting with their classmates (Pikhart and Klimova, 2020; Kacetl and Klimova, 2021).

Social persuasion is the third factor that can affect self-efficacy. Social persuasion refers to how encouraging and positive feedback can raise one's self-efficacy, and how punishment and negative comments can lower it (Bandura, 1997). In this vein, it is important to

acknowledge that older adults usually present very different goals compared to younger learners. They frequently take second language classes with an inner motivation to have fun and interact with people (Kacetl and Klimova, 2021). In the case of younger students, they are frequently concerned with work opportunities that foreign language can help propel. Therefore, in a method focused on older adults, punishment in case of mistakes and/or negative comments are not necessary or appropriate.

In order to enhance self-efficacy levels, the present study relies on metacognitive questions and strategies following Tanner's 2012 (planning, monitoring and, evaluating stages. Those strategies will be applied alongside instructor approaches that promote motivation, affective learning, and a comfortable environment for elderly students. Overall, this study aims at creating and supporting a sense of community among participants, favoring collaborative work and dialogue, and promoting autonomy of the older adult toward their learning process.

The strategies used in this research project presented here endorsed critical thinking and self-evaluation of the older adult toward their own way of studying and task completion habits and the creation of their own strategies to enable more effective and meaningful learning for them. Moreover, this metacognitive exercise accounted for healthy comparison between the older adult and their peer's work, in order to create the sense of community and favor collaborative work, besides promoting autonomy of the elderly student in regard to their learning process. Finally, the inclusion of metacognitive questions and strategies supported a positive view regarding the learning process, with valorization of each step of a learning task accomplished.

Community engagement

In second language learning, community engagement is often used as a tool of linguistic practice among speakers of different native languages (Baker, 2019). Community-based service-learning endorses second language learning by providing regular and significant interaction with native speakers of the target language, contributing to students' communicative proficiency (Thompson, 2012; Baker, 2019). It can be defined as the link between community service and students' academic experience through parallel reflection and reciprocity. Community engagement has been demonstrated to promote linguistic gains, cultural understanding growth, and increase motivation and interest (Elorriaga, 2007; Medina & Gordon, 2014; King de Ramírez, 2015).

However, in this research, I propose another perspective on community engagement to address the needs of the older population. Community engagement is here used as a tool to promote social networking in this population by creating a safe environment for learning and interaction. Establishing opportunities for elderly learners to engage in social activities with peers of the same age might help in the development of a community of older adults, which facilitates their friendship networks and allows for better representation of this population in SLL.

Research has shown that social support networks may positively affect cognition and may present a protective influence against cognitive impairments (Li, Wang, Lian, Zhu, and Liu, 2019; Kacetl and Klimova, 2021). Li et at. (2019) demonstrated that adequate social support from friends is extremely relevant at a later stage in life, even more so than social support from family. In the same vein, the results of not having close friends or having a low

level of social contact were correlated with higher risks of cognitive impairments at an older age. Therefore, participating and feeling part of a community can reduce cognitive decline in older adults (Klimova and Pikhart, 2020). The involvement in continued activities that encompass social and cognitive stimulation is significant in the well-being of elderly people. In that sense, community engagement approaches play an effective role in enabling active and regular engagement in social activities through second language learning.

More specifically, community engagement approaches are aligned with Communicative Language Teaching premises, since they encompass student-centered activities and development of linguistic abilities through interaction with peers and sharing of life experiences. This proposal for teaching allows students to become closer to their peers and establish friendships, which is also helpful for the motivation and engagement of the group of students. Finally, community-engagement practices also include collaborative learning toward a common goal, in the same lines as CLT theories, favoring the creation of a safe and comfortable environment for students.

Concluding Remarks

Despite the increasing popularity of communicative approaches in second language teaching, more traditional methods continue to be promoted as communicative practices, particularly online. This can lead to confusion among learners, particularly elderly learners, who may struggle to differentiate between these different approaches. Many online language courses, for example, promote the idea that developing native-like pronunciation is the key to mastering a second language, which can reinforce the belief that a more traditional approach is better for their learning. Additionally, the emphasis on repetition and memorization in traditional methods can create the impression that real understanding of the language can only

be achieved through rote learning. This can be detrimental to the development of communicative competence, which involves the ability to use language effectively in real-life situations. Moreover, these misconceptions can lead elderly learners to believe that there are forms of communication that are better than others, such as speaking with native-like pronunciation or using more formal language. As educators, it is important to be aware of these misconceptions and to help learners understand the true nature and benefits of communicative approaches in second language teaching.

In addition to promoting communicative competence, CLT approaches have been shown to reduce anxiety levels among language learners. Unlike traditional methods that often emphasize the importance of getting the "right" answer, CLT approaches view language as a means of communication and place greater emphasis on the appropriateness of language use in different situations. This can be particularly helpful for elderly learners who may be more self-conscious about making mistakes or feel discouraged when they are unable to memorize vocabulary or grammatical rules as easily as they once could. By focusing on the communicative value of language rather than its correctness, CLT approaches can help to create a more relaxed and supportive learning environment, where learners feel empowered to use language in meaningful ways and are encouraged to take risks and make mistakes as part of the learning process. This can lead to greater motivation and a more positive attitude toward language learning among elderly learners.

The present study

As described in the section above, second language teaching for elderly learners is a promising tool to prevent diseases caused by aging. Therefore, this investigation analyzes methods and strategies to contemplate seniors in the field of foreign language learning. Research shows that older adults present powerful functional capacities and that social activities lead to better performance and slower decreases in the elder's memory and executive functions (Wong et al., 2019; Scott, Masser, & Pachana, 2020). Therefore, the involvement in continued activities that encompasses social and cognitive stimulation is significant in the well-being of elderly people (Minichiello and Coulson, 2005; Pfenninger and Polz, 2018).

In that sense, the cognitive and social needs and specificities of elderly learners are the central aspect that define the strategies applied. Regarding cognition, aging seems to affect the executive functions, which directly increases the senior's response time in language comprehension and production (Wright, 2016, Pfenninger and Polz, 2018; Bubbico et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2019). However, Radvansky et al. (1990; 2001)'s results indicate that the elderly person develops their ability to comprehend texts that rely on situations or events. Events are stored in long-term memory, which is often maintained despite the effects of aging (Radvasnky, 1990, Wright, 2016). Therefore, older adults present facilitation in retrieving and comprehending contextualized words and sentences (stored in long-term memory) compared to isolated ones (stored in short-term memory).

Another cognitive effect of aging is the impact on executive functions, mainly in the inhibitory control and working memory. Both cognitive processes are activated in second language learning and, therefore, could be stimulated through language comprehension and production (Wong et al., 2019). Finally, active stimulation (such as second language learning)

has been demonstrated to yield more cognitively positive results than passive stimulation (such as music appreciation; Wong et al., 2019). Therefore, this investigation utilizes Communicative Language Teaching to target cognitive stimulation in seniors, since it is based on real-life situations and active participation of the learner.

Social interactions and a strong friendship network have been connected to the well-being of the elderly person (Pikhart and Klimova, 2020; Klimova and Pikhart, 2020). More specifically, seniors that do not have close friends or that experience a low level of social contact are more susceptible to developing cognitive impairments due to aging (Li et al, 2019). Second language learning inside CLT approaches is an interactive practice in itself. However, in this study, community engagement strategies have been applied to promote the creation of a social network of seniors, allowing them to create bonds that hopefully transcend the classroom. Moreover, the establishment of a community endorses the necessity of including the elderly population in second language classrooms.

As discussed in the previous section, the ageist stereotype of older adults being less competent in accomplishing tasks and achieving goals is so strong that it is often reproduced by elderly people themselves (Minichello and Coulson, 2005). This imaginary induces older learners to feel uncertain about their capacity of learning a second language. Therefore, self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997, 1999) was used as another cornerstone of the present investigation. Self-efficacy refers to one's perceptions of their competence to execute a task. By promoting reflection and discussions about the participants' work, this study aims at increasing levels of confidence and motivation in seniors towards second language learning.

This study contributes to the fields of healthy aging and second language learning by providing debate and consideration of the older adults' well-being in an aging world. The main

goal is to develop a teaching approach which considers and targets these social and cognitive factors as they relate to aging. To do so, cognitive, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic aspects are considered to account for a better understanding of how to deal with this population's needs and interests. More specifically, this investigation intends to answer two research questions: (i) What are the needs, interests and challenges for elderly adults in Spanish and English Second Language coursework?; (ii) How do older learner's needs, interests and challenges affect their learning at mid and endpoints of the experimental teaching interventions? and (iii) How do groups of elderly people learning English and Spanish as second/third languages respond to community-engagement and self-efficacy approaches at mid and endpoints of the experimental teaching interventions?

Based on previous findings about the topic (Scult et al., 2015; Wong et al., 2019; Klimova et al., 2021; Kacetl and Klimova, 2021), I hypothesize that seniors will respond positively to second language learning interventions based on community engagement, and self-efficacy strategies inside the Communicative Language Teaching framework. I predict that the most significant needs of the older population will be related to lack of accessibility in the materials available on the market, the scarce focus on their goals of socialization and cognitive stimulation in other methods, and their self-perception regarding their capacities to acquire a second language.

Methodology

Participants

Fifteen elderly Brazilians participated in this research, including sixteen women and one man. Their age ranged from 60-77, with the mean age of 64. Eleven seniors were interested in learning English as a second language, and six in learning Spanish as a second language. All the participants are from the Southeast of Brazil, and reside in the city of Juiz de Fora, in the state of Minas Gerais and their first language is Portuguese. In this city, the *Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora* supports a project that aims to provide second language lessons to older adults. Therefore, there is an increasing interest from the elderly population to SLL, which facilitates the participation in the present study. All the participants declared they have experience of second language lessons, most of them during school or up to twenty-five years of age. Five participants have tried second language learning after the age of 60. All of them claimed to have very basic knowledge of the target language, understanding only a few words and expressions.

For participant recruitment, word of the mouth method was used. This means that one participant indicated other people who might be interested in participating in the study. Besides that, the study was also advertised using flyers around the city and posted on the internet (on *Instagram*). All the participants agreed to participate in the study and signed a consent form documenting their agreement. The participants also agreed to fill out a background questionnaire in order to account for demographic data.

Location and Materials

The study consisted in providing older adults with second language lessons in English and Spanish using community engagement and self-efficacy approaches. The experiment took place in the city of Juiz de Fora (MG), in a rented classroom, in the months of January and February of 2023. The rented space was accessible through an elevator, the reception offered seats, air conditioning, and refreshments (water, coffee, tea, and snacks). The classrooms were equipped with a projector, a whiteboard, sound system, and tables that allowed for group work. Overall, it was a very comfortable and accessible space for learning.

The materials used in the experiment were based on existing course materials. For the Spanish lessons, the material was based on the textbooks *Conectados* (Marinelli and Fajardo, 2015) and *Español en Marcha* (Viúdez, Ballesteros, Díez, and Francos, 2014), while for the English lessons, the material was based on the textbook *Personal Best* (Scrivener and Rogers, 2017). All the material was adapted by the researcher in terms of font size and display of activities on the pages to account for possible vision impairments due to aging. Relevant themes and exercises were selected and adapted, when necessary, to consider the elderly population's interests and reality. The materials were printed and provided to the participants for every class session. Slides were also used to guide the participants through the material.

Teaching interventions and evaluation

A total of seven meetings took place, six of them being second language "teaching intervention" classes, and the last one a discussion about their experience. The participants were divided in two groups: one for Spanish lessons for beginners (native speakers of

Portuguese) and one for English lessons for beginners (native speakers of Portuguese) Classes happened twice weekly, with class sessions lasting one hour and a half.

The classes were organized in the following way: First, the instructor/researcher would greet the participants in the target language, ask how they were doing and about news in their lives that they would like to share. After that, the objectives of the lesson of the day were presented, as well as their first activity. Then, the students would work on the proposed activities in pairs or in trios, being assisted by the researcher as needed. The participants were invited to work in bigger groups if they wished to do so. The students had from five to ten minutes to work on each exercise (since the activities were at the beginner level and straightforward, this amount of time was sufficient for their completion). Each activity would be discussed with the class after the students had worked on them. After all the activities were completed, the professor reviewed the class session objectives with the participants and greeted them goodbye. Participants worked on the primary four skills of language learning: writing, speaking, listening, and reading.

In addition to class sessions with specific language teaching interventions, three surveys were completed by participants who agreed to collaborate in the experiment. Each survey was distributed at different times: The first survey was deployed at the very beginning of the experiment prior to teaching interventions; the second survey was completed in the middle of the interventions (after class session number four) and the third and final survey took place at the very end of the experiment, after class session number seven). The main goal of the survey gathering of information was to document participants' previous experiences and perceptions of learning a second language at an older age, as well as to assess their comfort with the methods applied. Thus, the surveys were distributed at a planning, monitoring and at an evaluation stage

parallel to experimental teaching interventions. The surveys accounted for their experiences and preferences in language learning, their opinions on the approaches used in the investigation, and their attitudes and feelings towards their own language learning process. The combination of teaching interventions and parallel surveys allowed me as a researcher to observe and shed light on a suitable methodology of SLL for older adults based on multiple observations and perceptions from participants engaged in the learning process.

Results

The surveys applied in this investigation are based on Tanner (2012)'s questions to develop metacognitive skills during the process of learning. In that sense, survey one serves as the planning stage, survey two represents the monitoring phase, and survey three reflects the evaluation part of metacognitive abilities (see Appendix A with questions used in each survey). Therefore, these surveys were applied to collect the participants' perceptions of their overall experience with the teaching interventions, but metacognitive skills were also employed in the activity level during class time. In other words, participants were also encouraged to reflect upon the tasks they were asked to complete before, during, and after their accomplishments.

Survey one aimed at registering the participants' perceptions on their ways of studying before being exposed to class interventions. In that sense, it serves as a pre-assessment to induce participants to think about their methods of learning a second language, as well as to inform the investigator of their preferences and background in SLL. In addition, survey one also answers our first research question: What are the needs, interests and challenges by elderly adults in Spanish and English Second Language coursework? To start answering that question, I will provide details on the participants' responses on survey one and my perceptions as the investigator and conductor of the experiment.

In the first question of survey one, participants were asked to choose from 0 to 3 points how much they identified themselves with a list of SLL strategies. It was adapted from the Language Strategy Use Inventory (Cohen, Oxford, and Chi, 2002a) and included a mix of more traditional and Communicative Language Teaching approaches. The participants had to identify their preferred strategies choosing one of the following options:

0 - I don't think this strategy works for me.

1 – I have never used this strategy, but I am interested in it.

2 – I have already used this strategy and I would use it again.

4 – I frequently use this strategy and I like it.

The goal with this question was to document the students' favorite strategies for learning a language in order to identify their perceptions toward second language learning. For the coding of this question, the number of points (0-3) was summed up for each strategy to check its popularity. The results pointed the instance "I listen to music to practice English/Spanish" as the favorite among the participants (with 33 points), followed by "I ask for help when I don't know how to express an idea" (29 points). After that, "I make lists of vocabulary to learn English/Spanish" and "I encourage people to correct my grammar" were also very common, with 26 and 25 points respectively. The affirmations "I try to initiate conversation in English/Spanish" and "I try talking to native speakers of the language I am learning" had the least popularity, with 13 points each. Participants also mentioned other learning strategies of their preference: repeating expressions and sentences, memorizing grammatical rules, writing novel vocabulary multiple times, and learning isolated words.

These results show that the participants were very open to learning through music. This approach goes in the direction of CLT practices since it is an easy way of including real text materials in the classroom (Brandl, 2020). Moreover, the willingness to ask for help (with 29 points, as described above) indicates interest in collaborative work with their peers, which promotes socialization. The next common affirmations (making lists of vocabulary and grammar correction) demonstrate more traditional approaches to language teaching, as well as the other mentioned ones (repetition, memorization of grammar rules, writing vocabulary to

induce memorization, and learning isolated words instead of contextualized ones). These strategies demonstrate the need of these participants for constant and constructive feedback during the learning process, and the false notion that language learning corresponds to grammar learning. Finally, the most undesirable strategies for the participants were related to the speaking skill. This shows a special concern with the ability to communicate orally compared to the other modes of communication.

Still in survey one, almost 30% of the participants claimed to prefer a passive method of learning in general, but 70% declared that listening to the instructor explain grammatical structures of the language and repeating and copying new information were their preferred type of class. When asked about the abilities they found most difficult in the target language, almost half of the participants mentioned all of them (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). In general, speaking and listening were classified as the most challenging.

Finally, participants were asked about the reasons for learning English or Spanish as a second language. The most common interest was traveling, mentioned 82% of the time. In second place, cognitive stimulation was indicated by over 76% of the participants, and socialization was the third most popular reason, with 47% of references. For the expectations of the teaching interventions, increase of motivation, incentive, and decrease of language anxiety were mentioned.

Since survey one was applied before the interventions, it is possible to argue that the participants' answers were based on their comfort level from previous experiences and/or on their self-efficacy levels. The results point to an interest in communicative approaches to language learning, with a focus on traveling, and the abilities of speaking and listening. These interests do not go in accordance with the participants' preferred strategies to language learning.

Most strategies mentioned reflect more traditional techniques, such as memorization of lists to acquire new words and emphasis on grammatical structure, which constitute a passive approach toward language learning. These preferences alongside the expressive number of participants that declared finding all abilities in the target language equally difficult and the expectation of increasing motivation and reducing language anxiety can lead to the interpretation that participants might feel insecure about their capacity to learn a second language (low levels of self-efficacy).

To answer our first research question, then, participants seem to show interest in travelling, and practice language inside of the CLT framework. Their biggest challenges seem to be most related to speaking and listening abilities, but also to their own perceptions regarding their competence to achieve the task of acquiring a second language. As stated by Bandura (1997), McIntyre (1999), and Mills, Pajares, and Herron (2007), self-efficacy levels are correlated to learning: students with high self-efficacy levels usually perform very well at tasks. Therefore, the apparent low levels of self-efficacy may present a challenge in their learning process. Finally, due to the differences between their goals and preferences on language learning, the needs of older adults are pointing to an increase of self-efficacy to address language anxiety and language performance, and an approach of CLT and task-based learning practices that promote contextualized learning and a safe environment for discussion.

Survey two took place after four intervention sessions. The classes were centered in CLT and TBLT approaches, focused on communication, collaborative learning, and centering the participants in all the tasks. Objectives were stated at the beginning and reaffirmed at the end of every class, reinforcing task-based work and the achievement of communication skills. On survey two, 100% of the participants rated the methodological approach as “very good”,

and 88% declared that they would not change anything in the method. The suggestions for adaptation to the method came from two participants, and both asked for an increase in listening and speaking practices in class.

When asked about self-confidence in their learning (still survey two), 12 out of 15 participants declared themselves to be "very confident" in their learning, 2 claimed to be "confident," and 1 stated to be "somewhat confident." When asked why, the majority of the responses were related to the interaction with their peers. Participants asserted that collaboration and cooperation with people of the same age were important factors in developing self-assurance of their capabilities to learn a foreign language. To encourage participants to reflect on their experience with the second language linguistic interventions, they were also asked in what ways the methods applied are supportive and/or not supportive of their learning. All the participants highlighted feeling supported by the practices in the language interventions and by the investigator, and mentioned motivation to study and clear understanding of the content as the aspects that endorsed their learning the most.

Survey two helps to answer parts of our second and third research questions: How do older learner's needs, interests and challenges affect their learning at mid and endpoints of the experimental teaching interventions? And how do groups of elderly people learning English and Spanish as second/third languages respond to community-engagement and self-efficacy approaches at mid and endpoints of the experimental teaching interventions? Survey two induced participants to monitor their learning experience, as described by Bandura (1997). Therefore, at the midpoint of the experiment, their interest seems to continue toward speaking and listening development, and addressing their needs and challenges seems to be producing promising results. Moreover, participants reported feeling confident about their learning and

abilities, and highlighted collaborative work and interaction with their peers as crucial factors to the development of their confidence related to language learning. Lastly, participants also reported motivation as one of aspects in the methodology that supports their learning the most. These results indicate that community engagement and self-efficacy approaches, respectively, are producing good results on the participants' evaluations and perceptions.

Finally, survey three was constituted solely of open questions and was applied after the seventh meeting of the experiment. All the participants declared satisfaction regarding the method applied, the themes chosen, and the materials selected. Additionally, all participants claimed to notice development in their linguistic abilities, as well as having their goals addressed. When asked about their favorite part of the experience, the interaction and the method applied were common topics in the majority of answers. Finally, the participants were asked what the importance of learning a foreign language in the third age is: Ten participants mentioned cognitive stimulation, and seven participants declared social engagement with people of the same age.

Survey three represents the evaluation part of the experiment (Bandura, 1997), and it answers the second parts of our second and third research questions. At the endpoint of the experiment, the results indicate that community engagement and self-efficacy, associated to CLT and TBLT practices, seem to be good strategies for second language teaching to seniors. The participants adapted and performed well when the classes were focused on their needs and interests. Although the present study had a limited number of participants to take on a quantitative analysis, the results obtained are qualitatively relevant and suggest possible future interventions in the field. In the next section, I propose a lesson plan for teaching English and Spanish to elderly learners based on these results to illustrate how these methods can be

effectively applied. I also analyze the purpose behind each strategy related to the theoretical approaches presented here and demonstrate how they relate to the results of the teaching interventions.

Proposed teaching interventions for elderly adults in Spanish and English language courses

This section is focused on reviewing key points explored in the literature review and targeting the most significant aspects brought by the participants of the experiment. I intend to summarize the work discussed here, giving practical and detailed suggestions on how to apply the mentioned theories in a classroom of elderly learners. The activities proposed were designed for elderly students and consider their needs and goals. The methodology used is communicative and it is centered on task-based learning. The focus of the course is to provide students with the necessary tools (in terms of vocabulary and grammar) they need to communicate and engage in listening, reading, writing, and speaking in English or Spanish. The learning is based on input of the target language, cultural discussions and real-life themes that contemplate the students' background. The students work together, interacting during class time. Homework is suggested so that learners can have the opportunity to practice individually and develop linguistic skills also outside of class.

Vocabulary practice

Vocabulary has been considered one of the hardest parts of language learning/teaching, since one needs to learn a high number of words to be able to communicate efficiently. More traditional approaches have taken on vocabulary teaching through glossaries and lists of words and their translation to the students' native language. This strategy has been identified as useful by the elderly participants of this present study. However, it is possible to argue that this preference is related to the experiences they had with second language learning in school. It has been demonstrated that older adults perform better at vocabulary retention when the word

is contextualized (Wright, 2016). Therefore, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) represents a promising way to teach vocabulary to seniors, since it defends the teaching of vocabulary in context, instead of isolated words.

Learning vocabulary is a skill that relies on several subskills, since a word or construction is constituted of many different parts. Brandl (2020) states that, besides its semantic component, words also carry phonologic and orthographic information in their spoken and written forms, as well as grammatical knowledge (morphological segments, word categories and their morphosyntactic functions) and usage information (collocations, idioms, etc). Words can also form semantic associations (synonymous and antonymous relationships, for example), phonological associations (words with similar phonemes in their composition), morphosyntactical association (a sequence of words that frequently occurs together; Bybee, 2010). These connections are important for vocabulary maintenance in memory and vocabulary activation. In addition, constant exposure to new vocabulary is crucial in attainment of a word. Therefore, due to all the complexities of vocabulary learning, the teacher needs to make a wise choice on which aspects to focus on at different times in order to achieve attainment and thorough knowledge of vocabulary in the target language (TL).

In this scenario, one strategy that is very used and recognized for its efficiency is teaching vocabulary through texts (that is, in verbal-based context). As stated above, context plays a crucial role in language comprehension, since the meaning of a word frequently depends on it. Therefore, this strategy is valued inside the parameters of CLT, since it provides students with samples of the target vocabulary in real use. Moreover, the reading and understanding of a text is a good opportunity for students to work collaboratively. This strategy was applied in the present study, and the participants related feeling more confident of their abilities when

working with peers. Constant and constructive feedback is also very important in the third age: in the discussion of the text with the entire class, it is fundamental to address the students' questions regarding pronunciation, usage, meaning, etc. The teacher needs to act as a mediator between the content being learned and the student, providing the learners with constructive feedback (Gibbons, 2002), and the learner usually appreciates reassurance of the words they are learning. Finally, the text needs to be carefully chosen and/or manipulated, in order to offer strong support for the students' inferences.

However, text-based context is not the only context an instructor can create in the classroom. Constant and diverse input of the target words are important for vocabulary attainment, and the teachers can make use of other tools to promote different ways of input in the classroom (Brandl, 2020). In that vein, multimedia and/or multisensory input comes in handy. Presenting an image or a video that represents the target word alongside its written form was reported by the participants of this study to be good strategy for vocabulary retention. Moreover, it is easier for students to create a more complex definition of the vocabulary and, therefore, makes its accessibility and attainment easier (Wright, 2016; Brandl, 2020). Regarding elderly learners specifically, the use of images might be a good strategy to attain vocabulary avoiding the association with the translation. It is not to say that translation should be abolished from language learning, but since seniors tend to present decline in the performance of the inhibitory control due to aging, avoiding the translation of vocabulary may come in handy (Wright, 2016; Wong et al., 2019).

Multimedia/multisensory input can be done through the use of technology. Integrating technology in the classroom, such as computers, smartphones, and projectors, can create a more engaging and interactive space for students, with different forms of stimulation. This also

increases accessibility and accounts for diverse and inclusive access to the content. For example, in a class, there might be a student who learns more easily through aural input alongside text-based input, or students that have visual impairments (as this study presented). Therefore, when an instructor makes use of different forms of stimulation, they are creating a more diverse and inclusive environment for their students.

It is also important to highlight that language teaching presupposes cultural discussions (Brandl, 2020). Addressing different cultures in class is crucial to the implementation of rich and diverse cultural discussions. One way of including this practice would be taking cultural objects to the discussion in class. This strategy is not only beneficial in terms of introducing the students to different cultural expressions, but also in creating an authentic context for linguistic production/comprehension. In the present study, many participants declared the desire to learn a second language for traveling reasons, in the same lines as Pikhart and Klimova (2020). Thus, the discussion of different cultures is engaging and promotes opportunities for collaborative learning and cultural exchanges.

Finally, the students' preferences should be taken into consideration. Students prefer lists of vocabulary and translation for acquiring novel words, and teachers should not disregard their choice. However, research of cognitive and social aspects of learning a second language points toward a communicative approach for language teaching that would be very useful for the elderly learner. In that sense, the list of vocabulary (or other more structuralist activities) can be introduced as a final activity of a sequence to develop vocabulary skills, or students can be instructed to create one themselves. For example, students could be asked to create a list of vocabulary expressions revolving around a theme (food and meals), or a grammatical point (irregular plurals), or a situation (ordering food at a restaurant). In this activity, they would

have the opportunity to put in practice their previous knowledge alongside inference and research skills to create a cohesive and coherent list inside a context, instead of writing and memorizing isolated words.

As an example of CLT and task-based learning in practice for older adults, I include below an example of vocabulary activity applied in the present experiment. The focus of the activity was to teach greetings in the target language while exploring the participants' previous knowledge in the topic, promoting discussion and collaborative work, developing the sense of self-efficacy and confidence towards the participants' own work.

Table 1:

Steps	Teaching routines
Step 1	Teacher asks the students how they usually greet friends and family and how they think people greet each other in English/Spanish-speaking countries.
Step 2	Students discuss in small groups how they usually greet their friends and family in Brazil. They also draw hypotheses on common greetings in English/Spanish and their usage based in possible previous knowledge.
Step 3	Teacher asks the groups of students about their greetings to family and friends in their native language. After that, the teacher asks about the students' hypotheses on greetings in the target language, while writing the possible answers on the board. Contexts and situations in which these greetings are used are also discussed.

Step 4	Instructor tells the students to look at the title of the text they are about to read and examine the pictures. The students are asked to create hypotheses of what the main topic of the text will be and discuss them with the whole class.
Step 5	Students read the text in small groups, discussing the meaning with their peers. After that, the instructor asks the students to read the text aloud. Each student reads a part of the text. Then, students and instructor discuss the text together, generalizing the main topics and addressing possible questions.
Step 6	Students are asked to identify the functions of the greetings in sentences extracted from the text in small groups. Their thoughts are then discussed with the whole class.
Step 7	Students are asked to write a small dialogue between them and another peer using the greeting expressions they just learned.
Step 8	Students are asked to walk around the class greeting their peers based on the dialogue they wrote.
Step 9	In groups, students do a simple fill-in-the-gaps exercise with the expressions they learned in English/Spanish.

Table 1 (cont.)

Greetings play an important role in certain social interactions in different countries across the world and therefore create a favorable scenario for social/cultural discussions and necessity of communication, as predicted by CLT approaches. In addition, task-based instruction would be achieved through scaffolding learning by building on students' previous

knowledge of the topic in order to perform linguistic tasks (oral discussion, writing productions). Considering preexisting knowledge and experiences from the learners is another valuable aspect in terms of CLT approaches and task-based learning in vocabulary teaching. This practice engages the learners in the activity, centers the student in the class, acknowledges their experiences as valid and important, and encompasses active participation from the learners. In terms of language development and attainment, this activity endorses richer outcomes than simply reading a list of generic greetings in the target language.

Grammar practice

The teaching of grammar is a topic that frequently causes divergent attitudes between students and teachers (Brandl, 2020). This is due to the many ways different approaches refer to it. On top of that, as mentioned in the literature review section, the popularization of distinct methods to learn a second language because of the internet has led people to form very incisive opinions about grammar. In that sense, when the teacher enters the classroom, it is not uncommon to find students that believe in the traditional way of memorizing grammar rules to learn a second language, and students that think grammar discussions should be avoided at all costs. This was true for the participants of this study: some of them liked to study through the memorization of grammar rules, while others reported hating and avoiding grammar.

Such a complicated subject should be approached carefully by the instructor. Brandl (2020) poses the question of whether grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly. Explicit instruction refers to grammatical rules being explicitly stated in a deductive way (by the material or instructor) or in an induced way (in which students are stimulated to arrive at the rule with the teacher's help). On the other hand, implicit instruction declines any kind of

guidance or focus on the form, under the assumption that language can be acquired naturally just through input. The present study considered both approaches, in order to account for the interests of all participants. Opportunities were provided, usually in the beginning of a lesson, for grammar topics to be acquired through inferences. After that, the students were induced to analyze the form of the target language to come to conclusions and write their own rules of the grammatical phenomenon in small groups. Finally, a summary of the grammar structures discussed in the lesson was provided for those who would like to have it.

Following CLT practices, grammar was taught in context in the present study. This approach recognizes that the meaning of some words can vary depending on their context, and therefore, language learning should occur in situations that reflect real-world communication. Moreover, one of the principles of CLT is that input should be rich in order to facilitate the acquisition of grammatical rules and linguistic patterns, and to account for the learning of exceptions in the target language. The focus of grammar teaching was to encourage participants to think critically about language and to promote collaborative learning.

A strategy that was used in the present study and was received well by the participants was to approach grammar through a "one topic at a time" attitude. The study contemplated beginner learners in English and Spanish as second languages, and, as expected, the participants were often very curious about many aspects of the TL. Since their motivation is appreciated and supported, the teacher has to be careful not to exceed the number of grammatical topics approached, which could be counterincentive (Long, Lee, and VanPatten, 1996). In that sense, the instructor had to balance the depth of the responses to the questions, while maintaining the focus on the objective of the lesson. This requires well-thought material, in order to predict

most doubts and curiosities that could emerge during the lesson, so that the teacher can be ready to address them appropriately to the level of the students.

It is also important to be aware of the complexities of grammatical phenomena that could confuse the students. While it is suggested that learners interact with grammar, guiding might be fundamental to address some linguistic patterns. In that sense, while students work on deciphering, hypothesizing, and formulating rules to the target language, the instructor should act as a mediator between the learners and their final goal. For more complex structures, a scaffolded task-based activity is recommended, so that the students can develop their understanding of the language through the subtle increase of complexity in the tasks.

Finally, the participants of the present study responded very well to approaches that did not disregard their first language, Portuguese. Therefore, taking the older adults' native language into account is supported, since it created a safer environment for the participants. Their native language was used for the comparison of similar structures and avoided in misleading translations. Portuguese played an important role as a support and base for the understanding of the target language's grammatical patterns. Many participants reported that the possibility to rely on their first language at the beginning motivated them and served as a relief to "past traumas."

Overall, taking the students' preferences into account and balancing them with the teacher's style and beliefs seem to be a promising suggestion regarding second language teaching to elderly learners. To illustrate the approach conducted in this study, the development of a task-based inductive grammar activity is provided below. The focus of the activity was to discuss the grammar conjugation of the verbs *be* and *ser/estar* in English and Spanish, respectively.

Table II:

Steps	Teaching routines
Step 1	Teacher tells the students they are going to watch a video. Teacher presents the students with the title and frames from the video to identify the characters of the video.
Step 2	Students discuss in small groups what they think the theme of the video is.
Step 3	Student and teacher watch a short video introducing people.
Step 4	The students answer true or false questions about the characters of the video.
Step 5	Student and teacher discuss the activity and the video.
Step 6	Students read the transcription of the video in small groups, discussing the meaning with their peers. Then, students and instructor discuss the transcription, generalizing the main topics and addressing possible questions.
Step 7	Students are asked to do an activity to identify the function and patterns of the highlighted expressions in the transcription. Their thoughts are then discussed with the whole class.
Step 8	After the class comes to a conclusion about the usage of the target expressions, the students are asked to write sentences about the characters of the video in pairs.

Step 9	Sentences are corrected in comparison to the conclusion found by the class regarding the grammar topic.
Step 10	Students are asked to write a grammatical rule for the usage of the target verbs with examples using their own words.
Step 11	In groups, students do a simple fill-in-the-gaps exercise with the expressions they learned in English/Spanish.

Table II (cont.)

Existential verbs are usually the first ones approached at language courses, and they are often irregular across languages. This activity proposes a way to integrate students in the processing of conceptualizing rules. Irregularities in the grammatical pattern are difficult to assimilate, so working with the input in different activities provides more opportunity for the learner to get used to the grammar structure of the target language. Moreover, motivating the student to develop their own rules increases self-efficacy and confidence levels, promotes collaborative learning through discussions, and requires active participation from the learners. Overall, this activity allows for more elaborate outcomes and a deeper understanding of the target language than reading the grammatical rules provided by the material/instructor.

Listening practice

Listening was described by the participants of this study as one of the hardest skills to achieve in language learning. It is a complex ability, since it takes place completely online and immediately (Brandl, 2020). Moreover, problems with hearing are not an uncommon cause of aging, and some participants of the present experiment had it. Therefore, some strategies took place in the course to account for diversity and inclusion in the classroom.

The approaches on listening are noncollaborative (Brandl, 2020), and, therefore, require a stronger preparation to increase levels of comfort and confidence in the students. The preparation can be done in the form of previous activities, or a discussion about the topic. These exercises serve to activate the learner's background knowledge of the topic, to anticipate possible vocabulary that will be found in the aural input, to create discussion regarding the topic, and to motivate the students. Moreover, metacognition strategies usually take place to make sure that the learner understands the task and why they are listening to the input in the first place, and to assure the students that the video can be replayed if needed. To consider the possible hearing impairments, subtitles were available in the audios and videos, as well as transcriptions.

Listening practices were applied in a task-based fashion in the present study. Therefore, the participants could explore the aural input several times to accomplish assignments that increase in complexity to achieve a final goal. For example, they started with marking or identifying words, then moved on to a true or false activity, and ended with an open-answer exercise. The final goal also should be engaging to the students, tangible according to their learning stage, and based on real-life situations.

As stated in the literature review, older adults tend to have slower response times due to cognitive decline (Wright, 2016; Pikhart and Klimova, 2020). As listening is performed online, elderly students might need extra time to come to complete an activity. In that case, the interventions of this study were based on offering as much time as needed for the participants, including the number of repetitions and pauses in the input, and the possibility of collaborative work to enhance confidence levels during listening practice. The participants reported these attitudes as beneficial for increasing their confidence and learning abilities.

Finally, many participants rated listening to music as a good strategy to learn a second language. Therefore, the usage of their favorite songs in class was prioritized, in order to boost their level of affection toward the target language. The participants declared this attitude to be an example of their needs and interests being met during the experiment. This highlights the relevance of considering the students' needs in class to bring their hobbies or passions into the classroom, creating a more involving environment and experience with second language learning.

Oral communication practice

Speaking was the ability that received the most comments in the surveys of this experiment. In general, participants would prioritize the practice of oral communication, and reported that they usually find it very challenging. To address these interests, the approach developed in this study went along the lines of CLT, relying heavily on scaffolding learning, constructive feedback and reassurance. Since some participants emphasized traumas related to speaking another language in their surveys, the affective and emotional parts of language teaching were also explored. Overall, the participants' perceptions of this method were positive, with many mentions as their favorite part of the experiment due to the interaction with their peers. Therefore, this seems to be a promising way to approach speaking in older adults' second language classes.

The speaking activities had to be carefully designed to be challenging and tangible to the students. The sequence of activities had to follow a cohesive line, with increasing complexity, to arrive at the final goal. The instructions had to be very clear, and the material intuitively displayed, to avoid causing uncertainty in the participants. Previous activities on

vocabulary and pronunciation had been done by the students, to account for their comfort in performing oral communication. Examples and models of the students' expected outcomes should be provided and practiced before the learners work on the activity in groups.

Speaking is an interactive ability, so it promotes collaborative learning. Thus, it is important that the learners work in pairs or small groups, and they should also be provided with opportunities to cooperate in different groups. This encompasses social stimulation of the older adult and promotes the sense of community targeted through community engagement practices. It also allows for the students with distinct skills to collaborate and help one another. While the students interact, it is crucial that the instructor is walking around, listening to them communicate and providing constructive feedback or reassurance when necessary.

Finally, it is important to address language anxiety and communicative stress. Second language learning is a challenging task that very often takes one out of their comfort zone. This feeling can be increased when students are placed in a situation they do not feel prepared for. Therefore, some strategies were taken in the present study to promote comfort in speaking, such as letting participants discuss with peers before having to speak in front of the class and allowing participants to volunteer for their answers. Additionally, older adults can present longer response times compared to younger adults (Wright, 2016). Therefore, it is crucial that the instructor waits sufficient time for a learner's answer and encourages them. Another strategy used during the experiment was supporting participants taking risks in expressing their ideas and making mistakes. Mistakes in this study were treated as part of learning and openly discussed. The application of these strategies elicited positive results and outcomes from the participants in this investigation, especially regarding increase in self-confidence levels.

Reading Practice

Reading was the most surprising ability to the participants during the interventions. It was noticeable during the study that the participants were amazed by their background experience in reading in the target language. In order to achieve those positive feelings, some reading metacognition strategies were applied with the first and subsequent texts, and it resulted in very positive outcomes. The first strategy used was to prepare the participants for the text they were about to read. They were encouraged to read the title of the text, analyze the formatting, the pictures, look at the author... All the information they could extract from the text without reading it yet. After that, they would create hypotheses on the theme of the text and possible vocabulary that would appear.

In the beginning of the course, the suggestion here is that the instructor start by reading the text with the students until they acquire enough autonomy to apply metacognition strategies themselves. As an instructor and investigator of the teaching interventions, I would read each sentence of the text with the participants and motivate them to take a pause to consider and fully understand what they have just read. By allowing this moment of reflection, working memory has sufficient time to process the definition of the different words and construct the meaning of the sentence. Very frequently, the participants of the study would start translating word by word out loud. Those translations were not encouraged, since they would require the exercise of executive functions, what could make the process of understanding more difficult for the older adult. Participants were not penalized for translating – instead, it was explained to them that this translation process could cost more of our cognitive functions than necessary to learn a second language.

Therefore, after each sentence or each paragraph, the instructor should make a pause to allow the processing of the information. Novel words or expressions were encouraged to be deciphered based on context, and, if necessary, a translation was provided. After reading one or two texts with the participants, they were feeling prepared to read one by themselves. They were separated into small groups and advised to read the text using the strategies we learned. They were also instructed to underline the words they were unsure about the meaning. This practice yielded incredible outcomes, since the participants got really surprised with the amount of meaning they could convey reading a text in the target language just after a few lessons. The participants could realize that they know more about the target language than they thought they did, due to proximity to their native language or previous knowledge.

Another critical aspect of developing reading skills in older adults is the theme and the size of the text. The topic of the text should be engaging to students and regard their life experiences or interests. Attractive themes promote enthusiasm and curiosity to read the text, which motivates the student to challenge themselves into this process. In order to keep participants engaged, a strategy that had good results in the application of this experiment was the jigsaw puzzle as described by Brandl (2020). In this activity, participants were separated into groups and one paragraph of the text was assigned to each group. Therefore, group one would read the first paragraph, group two the second, and so on. They were encouraged to take notes about the information they understood from the paragraph. After that, participants were re-organized into other groups, in a way that each new group had one representant (called "expert") of each paragraph. Then, together, the students would discuss the information of their paragraphs to try to convey the full meaning of the text through collaborative work.

Writing Practice

Writing, as a production ability, was approached in this experiment using task-based practices. In that sense, a series of activities would result in the final outcome: the production of a text. To achieve that, the participants would accomplish several prewriting activities, that intended to activate necessary vocabulary and previous knowledge of the topic, read an example to serve as a model for their composition, understand how the model is organized, and create an outline for their text. These activities were reported by the participants as helpful and encouraging.

As the experiment contemplated second language lessons for beginners, the writing practice was mainly done in pairs, to make participants feel more comfortable. Therefore, the pair could brainstorm ideas on the content and the form of their text. The rubric was decided together with instructor and students, focusing on what topics needed to be addressed in their production. It is important that the information discussed by the class is available for students to check while writing their texts, so it was displayed on the slides for this intervention. In the present study, the participants focused on the production of dialogues. Therefore, the situation and context of their outcome was stated in the beginning of the activity.

Peer review was also encouraged. The participants would finish writing their tasks with their partner, and switch groups to work giving feedback to other participants' texts. It was possible to see that participants were somewhat reluctant to 'correct' other participants' texts, and they often asked for reassurance from the instructor when providing feedback. Peer reviewing also worked as a strategy to promote discussion around their production, so that their text had a purpose besides submitting it to the instructor for correction. After peer review, a

dialogue around the themes chosen by the students would be stimulated, and general questions and doubts would be talked through.

Regarding dictionary use, the participants of this study were very familiar with Google Translate. They claimed that the Google Translate interface facilitates their access to it, so directing them to other dictionaries was a difficult task. The isolated context in which Google translates the words was not beneficial for the usage of the word in context. The instructor left the word reference website available on the slides during writing exercises, if the students wanted to check a specific definition, but it did not work well. Many participants still preferred to check Google Translate on their phones. A strategy that could have worked was to provide a small glossary under the text with possible questions from the students. This could be an interactive glossary, in which students could write definitions of other words from the text. However, this strategy was not used, so it is not possible to argue in favor of its efficacy with the data of this study.

Feedback

As discussed before, feedback is a critical part in second language teaching to elderly learners. This experiment accounted for several types of feedback so that the participants had opportunities to correct themselves before the instructor interfered. The type of feedback most used during oral communication in this experiment was positive feedback. It provides reassurance to the student and increases confidence and motivation levels, which was confirmed by the participants of this study. Confirmation (such as “very good” and “well done”), encouragement (to acknowledge the learner’s improvement), and praise (congratulate the learners for their performance) were frequently used.

For error-corrective feedback, the strategies used were pausing, clarification, and implicit correction. Pausing refers to a quick stop after the incorrect utterance performed by the student to draw their attention to the instance and allow them (or their peers) the chance of self-correction. Clarification strategy consists of asking the student to clarify the information through expressions such as “sorry?.” Finally, in the implicit strategy, the teacher reformulates part of the student’s utterance without pointing specifically to the mistake.

For the correction of texts, feedback was provided first through peer review. By the instructor, the error location and metalinguistic feedback was applied. It consists of indicating to the student where the mistake is, but not providing the correct answer. The metalinguistic part of this strategy is provided through a correction code. For example, if the student receives a word underlined in their text, it could indicate a spelling problem. The correction code is presented to the class beforehand to assure they understand the type of mistake they are making. Moreover, this approach also helps students understand that they might be making mistakes in a pattern. In this case, they really have fewer mistakes in their writing than it may seem. For example, the learner could make conjugation mistakes very frequently, and as they are signalized using the same code, it helps the students perceive in what area of grammatical or morphosyntactic structure the problem lies.

It is also important to mention that the participants of this study were encouraged to correct their peers, since mistakes were discussed openly and treated as a part of learning. However, working alongside students to increase their confidence and assuring their capabilities of achieving their goal is also part of the learning process and should be applied by the instructor, to create a comfortable environment for L2 development. Lastly, it is critical that the instructor knows what to correct or when to correct in the learners’ productions.

Overcorrecting is a significant disincentive to the student and reinforces the inappropriate goal of perfect performance in the process of language learning.

Assessment

Assessment in second language learning is a sensitive topic, especially when directed to older adults. Assessment is usually applied as a measure of the abilities, knowledge, and performance of students (Brandl, 2020). It is interesting and important to younger learners, since they need this statement for school or job opportunities. However, older adults are not seeking second language learning for the same reasons. As pointed out in the Results section, the elderly learner is looking for second language instruction mainly for interaction with people of the same age and cognitive stimulation. Thus, most traditional tests lack relevance in this scenario.

In this experiment, the only form of assessment applied was self-assessment. Since one of the main cornerstones of this study is self-efficacy, self-assessment plays a crucial role in monitoring the participants' perceptions on their capabilities to learn a second language. Self-assessment is known for empowering the learner by involving them in the evaluation and supporting autonomous learning and evaluation (Brandl, 2020). However, learners need to be guided through this process in order to avoid disincentive and decrease in self-esteem. Therefore, in this experiment, participants were presented with questions adapted from Cohen et al. (2002a) and Tanner (2012) to observe and reflect on their process of learning and their evolution. Overall, participants reported an increasing level of confidence in their linguistic abilities, and overall evolution of their knowledge of the target language. Therefore, this strategy is considered positive in second language teaching to seniors.

Materials

The material is a crucial part of language learning, and it is a helping hand for the instructor when preparing the syllabus and calendar for the class. However, when working with older adults, it is important to adapt the material better to the audience. A common complaint from the participants that had tried second language learning in the third age before was regarding the display and font size of the books. The materials used in this experiment were formatted differently to account for this preference of the older population, and it yielded positive results. The participants reported being contemplated just by simple formatting changes on the material. Most materials on the market nowadays include Communicative Language Teaching practices and are therefore displayed with images, boxes, and other visual elements to engage second language learners. However, the elderly participants of this study revealed feeling overwhelmed by the amount of visual stimulation on each page of most second language books, especially the participant with visual impairments. Another problem of most second language books is the font size, usually small, to fit more content on each page. The materials presented in this experiment prioritized larger font size and larger images, and a clearer view and location of each activity and each section. They were adapted from pre-existing materials and also included more space for writing, so that participants would feel comfortable taking notes.

Another topic mentioned by the participants as positive was the choice of the themes to approach in the teaching interventions. They reported that their experience in mixed classrooms of younger and older adults, the themes of the lesson were focused on the interests of younger learners. Thus, subjects related to going to college, working, and childhood often did not account for the experiences of the older adult. The themes chosen in this experiment were based

on the elderly learner's interests, to create familiarity and identification with the material and engage the participants in the discussion. Those aspects might seem small, but they reflect certain ideological standpoints in language learning. In order to properly address this issue, it is necessary that accomodations are made to contemplate more diverse classrooms and to promote inclusive learning.

Conclusion

The present study focused and emphasized the importance of developing specific SLL methods and strategies to elderly populations as a possible prevention for dementia or other cognitive diseases. The methodology proposed here yielded positive results from participants, and seemed to adequately target and address the needs, interests, and challenges of the elderly population in second language learning. Although this investigation has contributed to the existing literature on healthy aging and Second Language Acquisition, it is necessary to acknowledge its limitations. The limited number of participants of this study precludes quantitative conclusions on the topic. Therefore, future studies should consider increasing the number of participants in order to promote more generalized results regarding the matter under investigation. Furthermore, the examination of participants' cognitive skills before and after the teaching interventions could produce interesting results for psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics. Finally, studies regarding the application of the methods used here in online or hybrid learning are critical in order to continue promoting inclusive access to education.

It is important to highlight that although findings of this study are limited in number to make generalizations, it provides groundwork for future investigations on the fields of healthy aging and Second Language Acquisition. Additionally, the findings of this study contribute to accentuate the necessity of diverse and inclusive access to education in Brazil and worldwide. By listening and observing elderly populations being motivated and engaged in their learning of languages, inclusive and effective teaching facilitates an open space for one’s growth and satisfaction in self-perceived personal achievements.

Appendices
Appendix A

Survey one sample questions (applied before teaching interventions):

The purpose of this inventory is to find out more about yourself as a language learner and to help you discover strategies that can help you master a new language. Check the number that describes your use of each listed strategy. The categories are described as follows:

0- This strategy doesn't fit for me

1- I've never used this strategy but am interested in it

2- I have tried this strategy and would use it again

3- I use this strategy and like it

Learning Strategy Use in English

1. Make lists of vocabulary.

0 1 2 3

2. Use a dictionary.

0 1 2 3

3. Work on grammar exercises as often as I can.

0 1 2 3

4. Watch YouTube video classes.

0 1 2 3

5. Compare my pronunciation to a native speaker's.

0 1 2 3

6. Encourage others to correct errors in my grammar.

0 1 2 3

7. Use gestures as a way to try and get my meaning across.

0 1 2 3

8. Listen to music in English.

0 1 2 3

9. Write texts in English.

0 1 2 3

10. Watch movies in English.

0 1 2 3

19. What other speaking strategies do I use?

In your opinion, what English skill is the hardest?

a) Listening in English
b) Reading in English
c) Grammar of English
d) Speaking in English
e) Writing in English
f) Other: _____

What are your expectations for this experience?

Survey two sample questions (applied after the fourth session of the teaching interventions):

What is your opinion about the presentation of the content in the class?

a) I like it very much.

b) I like it.

c) I don’t like it.

d) I hate it.

How would you change the way the content is presented?

In what ways is the teaching in this course supportive of your learning?

In what ways is the teaching in this course not supportive of your learning?

How confident are you in your learning?

Survey three sample questions (applied after the teaching interventions):

Did you feel like your goals were achieved with the classes?

Do you feel like your level of the target language has evolved?

What was your favorite part of this experience?

What was your least favorite part of this experience?

What would you change about the classes?

If you were to teach this course, how would you change it?

What will you remember 5 years from now that you learned in this course?

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