

BELIEFS OF PROFESSORS AND STUDENTS TOWARDS THE USE OF ICT TOOLS IN THE LETRAS INGLÊS PROGRAMME AT UFSC

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ABSTRACT: This paper reports the results of a research which aimed at investigating (a) the use of ICT tools by both professors and students in the Letras Inglês programme at UFSC, (b) the beliefs of these professors and students concerning the use of ICT tools in that programme and (c) the relationship between the use of ICT tools in the programme and the professors and students' beliefs towards this use. The data were collected from professors and students by means of online open-ended questionnaires, online semi-structured interviews and self-reports. The analysis consisted of interpretation and constructions of meanings from the triangulation of data. Results show that professors use a number of ICT tools in the courses they teach. Moreover, most professors and students expressed positive beliefs towards the use of ICT tools. However, a few students reported not to benefit from the way some tools were currently being employed. Finally, a good degree of coherence was found in the relationship between the use that both professors and students reported to make of ICT tools and their beliefs towards this use.

KEYWORDS: ICT tools; Letras Inglês Programme; beliefs of professors and students.

RESUMO: Este trabalho apresentará os resultados de uma pesquisa cujos objetivos eram investigar (a) o uso de ferramentas de TIC por professores e alunos do curso de Letras Inglês da UFSC, (b) as crenças desses professores e alunos em relação ao uso de ferramentas de TIC e (c) a relação entre o uso das ferramentas de TIC e as crenças dos professores e alunos em relação ao uso. Os dados foram coletados de professores e alunos através de questionários abertos online,

entrevistas semi-estruturadas online e auto-relatos. A análise consistiu de um processo cuidadoso de reflexão, interpretação e construção de significados a partir da triangulação dos dados. Os resultados indicam que professores usam várias ferramentas de TIC nos cursos que lecionam. Além disso, a maioria dos professores e alunos expressou crenças positivas em relação ao uso de ferramentas de TIC, apontando várias formas como essas ferramentas podem complementar o próprio curso e ajudar os alunos a melhorarem suas habilidades lingüísticas. Porém, alguns alunos reportaram não se beneficiar da maneira como algumas ferramentas estavam sendo empregadas. Por fim, um bom grau de coerência foi encontrado da relação entre o uso que professores e alunos dizem fazer das ferramentas de TIC e as suas crenças em relação a esse uso.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: ferramentas de TIC; curso de Letras Inglês; crenças de professores e alunos.

1. Introduction

The present paper aims at investigating a) the use of ICT tools by professors of Letras Inglês Programme at UFSC, b) the beliefs of professors and students from that programme towards the use of such tools and c) the relationship between the use of ICT tools in the Letras Inglês Programme and the professors and students' beliefs towards this use.

During the past few decades, there has been a revolution in technology. With the advent of the Internet, in 1991, the access to information became independent of time and space. Consequently, widespread dissemination of knowledge was made possible and this availability has brought changes not only to the political and economic scenario, but also to the field of education. In the wake of these changes, a number of

initiatives, initially abroad and later in Brazil⁴, explored the potentials of information and communication technologies (ICT) offering quality distance higher education to places where access to a university would be otherwise impossible.

In the context of foreign language teaching and learning, specifically, the potential of computers and their applications combined with the internet and other ICT tools assist both professors and students (EHSANI & KNODT, 1998; PAIVA, 1999A, 1999B, 2001; MELONI ET AL, 2001; BRANDL, 2002; STEPP-GREANY, 2002; YOUNG, 2003; WHITE, 2003; SAMUEL & BAKAR, 2005; LEFFA, 2006; SIMSEK, 2007, STOCKWELL, 2007). Computers have assisted the process of language learning since the 1960s (LAGHOS & ZAPHIRIS, 2005; GRUBA, 2006). Some of the benefits found in studies that investigate the use of e-mail (GONZÁLES-BUENO, 1998, HANDLE & CORL, 1999) websites and chat-rooms (LEE, 1998), computerized reading programmes, videocassettes and authoring tools (ADAIR-HAUCK, WILLINGHAM-MCLAIN & YOUNGS, 1999) for language teaching show improvements in students' level of accuracy, initiative to interact, motivation to learn the target language and use of more language functions. In Brazil, the number of studies investigating the use of ICT tools in language teaching and learning has been steadily increasing. The studies so far point to the importance of learning more about the outcomes and challenges in the use of ICT tools, as could be observed in the last ABRAPUI⁵ conference in 2012, whose guiding theme was "Language and Literature in the Age of Technology."

⁴ The Open University in the United Kingdom was created in the 1960's and by late 1990's had become 'the world's largest e-university' (Open University, n.d., para.3). The Open University of Brazil (UAB), in turn, was created in 2005 and has been expanding fastly. The aim is to reach eight hundred thousand students per year by 2013.(UAB, 2012, para. 2)

⁵ Associação Brasileira de Professores Universitários de Inglês.

Research has shown that successful integration of ICT tools must involve training, improvements in infrastructure, technical support assistance and active participation from school administration members and teachers (PELGRUM, 2001; JONES, 2004; BAITANEH AND BANIABDELRAHMAN, 2006). In addition, studies (GALANOULI, MURPHY & GARDNER, 2004; SAMUEL & BAKAR, 2005) found that some teachers keep not using ICT tools even after having received specific training to do so, and having a positive attitude towards the use. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, as cited in LEVINE & DONITSA-SCHIMIDT, 1998), “beliefs about an object lead to attitudes toward it and that, in turn, attitudes lead to behavioural intentions regarding the object” (p.128). To gain a better understanding of possible reasons why professors and students may avoid using ICT tools to assist in their teaching/learning process, research investigating their beliefs towards this use is necessary.

2. Review of the Literature

2.1 The use of ICT tools for foreign language teaching and learning: benefits and limitations

Information and Communication Technology tools have the potential not only to help students to improve their communication opportunities and language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) but also to enhance students’ autonomy within the learning process, and raise motivation and self confidence, while also broadening the chances for active student participation, interaction and verbalization (EHSANI &

KNODT, 1998; GONGLEWSKI, MELONI & BRANT, 2001; BRANDL, 2002; YOUNG, 2003; WHITE, 2003; SAMUEL & BAKAR, 2005; PAIVA, 2001).

Brandl (2002), for instance, who investigated the integration of internet-based reading materials into the foreign language curriculum, stated that “The Internet as a resource can enrich and expand language instruction” (p.88). Moreover, provided that teachers manage to overcome challenges regarding the judgement of the reliability of the material offered and the designing of tasks that effectively allow students to explore and benefit from these materials, the author claims (based on CHUN & PLASS, 2000) that some of the features of internet-based materials have the potential to improve language learning. Such features regard access to authentic material, communication through networking and the multimedia and hypermedia characteristic.

Conole’s (2008) study - which investigated undergraduate students’ use of technology - showed that the students use a number of ICT tools to assist or complement their learning of the courses they take. Two students, (out of eight from different subject areas) who were studying Applied Linguistics for language teaching, reported to have benefited from the use of ICT tools to learn linguistic skills, to have access to information, to solve vocabulary doubts as well as improve vocabulary and to communicate with friends and tutor. In addition, students showed to be familiar with some ICT tools (word processors, blogs, e-mail, MSN, Skype, etc) prior to using them for learning the courses they were taking.

Studies investigating the use of e-mail (GONZÁLES-BUENO, 1998; HANDLE & CORL, 1999), website and chat rooms (LEE, 1998), computerized reading program, videocassettes and authoring tools that enable the teacher to design interactive activities (ADAIR-HAUCK, WILLINGHAM-MCLAIN AND YOUNGS, 1999) endorse the potentiality of such tools for enhancing foreign language learning. The results of the

studies using e-mails showed that the voluntary, informal exchange of e-mails between students and instructor to discuss varied topics in the target language improved the level of accuracy, the amount of language use and language functions and students initiative to interact.

The results of the study using website and chat rooms showed that the use of a website designed by the instructor that provided students with links to Hispanic newspapers and search tools to look for materials for the final term project helped students improve reading skills and develop cultural knowledge. In addition, the use of chat rooms for having guided discussion and interactions with native speakers assisted students develop better oral skills and motivated them to keep using the target language to talk with native speakers outside the school. On the whole, the use of both websites and chat rooms increased students' interest and motivation to learn the target language.

Lastly, results of the study carried out by Adair-Houck et al. (1999) showed that the combination of a computerized reading program (that offered authentic newspapers texts, bilingual glossary, pre- and post reading questions and grammar notes), interactive multimedia activities (focusing on the grammar being used in each chapter of the course book) and videocassettes (that presented stories performed by native speakers acting out the topic of each chapter of the course book) proved to have improved students' reading and writing skills in the target language.

Besides the various benefits that ICT tools can bring to the foreign language teaching and learning process, their utilization is not without limitations and a number of considerations must be taken into account for successful integration of ICT tools in the foreign language classroom. Samuel and Bakar (2005) investigated the scenario of the integration and utilization of ICT tools among school English language teachers in Malaysia and looked at the obstacles faced by them. Results of the study show that

some reasons for the scenario of poor integration of ICT tools among teachers in that context are the problems related to infrastructure and computer software. In addition, the difficulties they face is related to the school administration's weak support for ICT tools implementation and the insufficient ICT training that these teachers receive, resulting in a negative attitude towards its implementation. As ICT is a complex information and communication medium and is rapidly and constantly evolving, continuous training of educational professionals is indispensable.

Moreover, Mateus (2004) argues for the importance of teachers' knowledge and specialized training on new technologies as key elements for promoting meaningful, reflective and critical learning. Citing Pretto (2001), she calls attention to the risk of students' non-reflective and non-critical learning if teachers have just superficial knowledge and training on ICT tools. Likewise Samuel and Bakar (2005), Mateus investigated the scenario on the use of computers by prospective teachers of a Letras Português/Espanhol Programme and their attitudes towards the use of ICT tools in their pedagogical practices. The results of the study suggest that, as the Letras programme does not explore the potentiality of ICT tools and computer assisted teaching, it is likely that the in-service teachers will not consider them in their pedagogical practice.

In summary, it has been proposed that the use of ICT tools can play an important role in the development of diverse skills in foreign language learning. However, successful integration of such tools must involve not only improvements in infrastructure and technical support assistance, but also active participation of school administration members and teachers in order to both develop policies for ICT use and to include ICT in the subject curriculum. Moreover, in-service teachers must receive specialized training on technology use, and prospective teachers must experience technology during their graduate courses, so that full potential of ICT tools is explored.

As stated by Sutherland et al. (2004), it is up to the individual teacher and his/her perspective to which degree ICT tools should be implemented in the classroom, and that some subjects may by their nature be more suitable for the use of ICT than others. In any case, they advise not to view ICT as entirely unproblematic and/or as a solution to all problems in education, but state that ICT in combination with more traditional methods and technologies has the potential of considerably enhancing the learning process.

Finally, some studies have shown that teachers and students have positive attitudes towards the use of ICT tools for foreign language teaching and learning and for other subject areas (ALBIRINE, 2004, 2006; CONOLE, 2008; SIMSEK, 2007). Other studies, in turn, have shown that even after having gone through a period of ICT training, most teachers from the schools investigated still do not integrate ICT in their pedagogical practices (GALANOULI, MURPHY & GARDNER, 2004; SAMUEL & BAKAR, 2005). Similarly, some students who have experienced ICT tools in the classroom as a learning tool and showed to have positive attitudes towards using the tool seems not to benefit fully from this use (SUSSKIND, 2005, 2007). Reynolds et al. (2003) and Bauer and Kenton (2005) have also carried out a study on the integration of ICT for educational purposes and they found out that most teachers, despite being technologically educated and competent, do not integrate ICT tools in their pedagogical practices or in their subject's curriculum. These findings suggest that training and positive attitude alone are apparently not sufficient for the integration of ICT tools in education in general, neither in the context of foreign language teaching and learning specifically.

One way to understand why teachers and students keep not using ICT as teaching or learning tools is to investigate their beliefs towards the use of such tools,

since beliefs can guide one's actions (BARCELOS, 2006) and this way influence future decisions.

2.2 Beliefs and the use of ICT tools for foreign language teaching and learning

Even though a considerable amount of research has been carried out on ICT integration for language teaching and learning and on beliefs about language teaching and learning, very few studies have dedicated to investigate professors and students' beliefs towards the use of ICT tools for foreign language teaching and learning. Contributions come from Perina (2003) and Ertmer (1999, 2005).

In the Brazilian context, Perina (2003) investigated the beliefs of English language teachers (both public schools and private language school teachers) towards the use of computer in their teaching practice as well as towards their roles in the digital society. Based on some authors (WARSCHAUER & HEALEY, 1998; MASETTO, 2000; AND BEHRENS, 2000), she states that Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and other ICT tools made available by the internet has the potential to promote: interaction among students and students and teachers, motivation, curiosity, critical sense and autonomy. Moreover, they can offer the opportunity to work with authentic material, situations similar to experiences in real life and real time communication. The results of this study show that from the twenty English teachers' beliefs towards computers in their teaching practice identified, four were more frequently stated: students know more than teachers, teacher must know how to use computers, activities must be relevant and teachers must lose the fear of using computers. Moreover, even though most schools offered computer facilities and English language teachers have

reported to know how to use computers, some teachers did not use them in their teaching practice because of contextual constraints, such as lack of technical support and teachers' training, and incompatibility with the subject curriculum.

Another contribution, though not about language teaching and learning specifically, comes from Ertmer (1999), who proposes to describe barriers that can negatively affect teachers' attempts to integrate technology in their classes. According to this author, there are first-order and second-order barriers that affect technology integration. The former refers to barriers extrinsic to teachers, such as poor access to computers or other ICT tools, lack of time for instructional planning and inappropriate pedagogical administration support. The latter refers to barriers that are intrinsic to teachers, such as their beliefs towards teaching, learning and computers and deep-rooted classroom routines based on their experience. In another study, Ertmer (2005) emphasizes that most research has focused on the investigation of how teachers' beliefs influence their pedagogical practices in general, rather than looking into the influence that teachers' beliefs can exert on their adoption of technology in class. The author proposes then to examine the relationship between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their technology practices. To do so, Ertmer (2005) presents two different findings from some empirical studies. Some studies (CALDERHEAD, 1996; CLARK & PETERSON, 1986; PAJARES, 1992; KAGAN, 1992; IN ERTMER, 2005) found that beliefs that teachers hold are essential for understanding or even predicting their behaviour in the classroom. On the other hand, some studies (ERTMER ET AL, 2001; FANG, 1996; KANE ET AL, 2002; IN ERTMER 2005) did not find a relationship between teachers' belief and their classroom practices, attributing this fact to contextual constraints such as curriculum requirements and pressure from school administration. Moreover, "the potential power of beliefs as an influence on behaviour is inherently related to the nature

of beliefs” (ERTMER, 2005: 29; based on NESPOR, 1987). Ertmer (2005) takes the view of Nespor (1987) who describes beliefs as being socially constructed and based on previous experiences, and adds that previous bad experiences with technology can negatively influence teachers’ beliefs towards using it in future teaching practices.

Barcelos (2000, 2006), Barcelos and Kalaja (2003) seem to share this same opinion about the nature of beliefs. Barcelos (2006) states that beliefs can both influence and be influenced by teachers and students’ actions and by the context where they are inserted. Similarly, Horwitz (1987) - who seem to take a normative view on the investigation about beliefs - states that beliefs can be influenced by students’ past experiences as language learners and can as well be shaped by their cultural background. In this sense, as argued by Ertmer (2005), a previous negative or frustrating experience using ICT tools (either for language teaching and learning or personal purposes) and constraining contextual factors (poor infrastructure and administration support, lack of teacher training) may lead teachers and students to believe that technology adds more burden than facilitates the teaching and learning process.

3. Method

The study investigated the following research questions:

1. Do professors of the Letras Inglês programme at UFSC make use of ICT tools in the courses they teach? If so, which ICT tools do they use?;
2. What beliefs do students and professors have towards the use and integration of ICT tools in that programme?

3. What is the relationship between the use of ICT tools in the Letras Inglês Programme at UFSC and the beliefs of professors and students towards this use?

We carried out a qualitative research. Data were collected through online open-ended questionnaires, online semi-structured interviews and self-reports. Participants were 43 students and five professors from the Letras Inglês Programme at UFSC. The analysis consisted in the triangulation of data, where I confronted the data collected through the three aforementioned instruments and engaged in a long and careful process of reflection, subjective interpretation and construction of meanings to reach the results. As Dörnyei (2007) states “Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive, which means that the research outcome is ultimately the product of the researcher’s subjective interpretation of the data” (p.38)

4. Results and discussions

The results and discussions are presented as the questions the study pursued are answered.

1. Do professors of the Letras Inglês Programme at UFSC make use of ICT tools in the courses they teach? If so, which ICT tools do they use?

The results of the analysis of data collected through the on-line open-ended questionnaire applied to 43 students and 5 professors, and through the on-line semi-structured interviews conducted with 6 students and 3 professors show that both students and professors reported a number of ICT tools to be used in the courses of the Letras Inglês Programme at UFSC. Concerning the use of ICT tools, results show that a number of tools were reported to be used. These tools were: e-mail/e-mail groups,

discussion groups, websites, blogs, CD-ROMs, DVDs/DVD player, television, CDs (course book CD and music CD)/CD player, software (PowerPoint, Windows Media Player, Audacity, Wordfast, HotPotatoes), videos from YouTube, data show, and the voice recording equipment from the Language Lab.

In total, 12 different tools were reported to be used in the Letras Inglês Programme at UFSC. Amongst them, e-mail seemed to be the tool most required in the courses, as all the students referred to the use of this tool in their answers. In second place came discussion groups and websites, with 18 students reporting the former and other 18 reporting the latter to be used in the courses. In last place came CD-ROMs and DVDs, with 10 students reporting the former and other 10 reporting the latter in their responses. When asked about other ICT tools required in the courses in the Letras Inglês Programme, devices such as CDs, software (PowerPoint, translation programmes), television and hi-fi system were the most cited ones by a group of about 6 to 4 students, followed by another group of about 3 to 1 students who reported the use of data show, videotape players /videotapes and the voice recording equipment in the Language Lab.

2. What beliefs do students and professors of have towards the use of ICT tools in the Letras Inglês Programme at UFSC?

Overall results from the analysis of students' responses to the on-line open-ended questionnaire, the on-line semi-structured interviews and the self-reports indicated that they hold a number of beliefs towards how the ICT tools used in the courses they take in the Letras Inglês Programme at UFSC can assist them in their learning process, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1

Students' overall beliefs towards the use of ICT tools in the courses they take

Students' overall beliefs towards the use of ICT tools in the courses they take	
E-mail	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. favours the use of the target language in real situations 2. facilitates solving doubts with students and professors 3. it is a practical tool, helps in communication 4. students can send and receive material 5. does not make any difference in the learning process
Disc. Groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. allow for reflective thinking as students have more time to do the activity 7. favour the use of the target language in real situations 8. adapt to students with different learning styles 9. allow closer contact between students and professors
Web sites	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. provide extra information and material 11. assist in the learning process of some courses 12. allow the student to go deeper in the content of the courses
CD-ROM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. assist in the perception of sounds and intonation of words

DVDs/ DVD player	<p>14. complement the content and call students interest, as well as complement grammar classes and Literature classes</p> <p>15. assist in the learning process of students with different learning styles</p> <p>16. make students get more interested in the subject being taught and in his/her own learning process</p> <p>17. let the classes more motivating</p>
Software	<p>18. PowerPoint complements courses as students can organize their presentations and professors can offer expository classes, helps in the comprehension and organization of the content of the courses and it is a practical and sustainable tool</p>
CDs/ CD players	<p>19. course book CD helps to improve listening, pronunciation and music CD help to contextualize the content and add fun</p> <p>20. assist in the learning process of students with different learning styles</p> <p>21. make the classes more pleasurable, motivating, add fun and help to contextualize the content</p>
VCR	<p>22. compare a film with the respective book complement Literature classes</p>
Data show	<p>23. allow better visualization and understanding of the content being taught</p> <p>24. can become tiring if used too often</p>

It is clear to perceive in most students' beliefs how beneficial the use of ICT tools are to their learning process of the courses they take in the Letras Inglês

Programme. Furthermore, students' beliefs as presented in Table 1 corroborate the literature on ICT tools, which states that these tools have the potential not only to help students to improve their communication opportunities and language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) but also enhance students' autonomy within the learning process, raise motivation and self confidence, while also broadening the chances for active student participation, interaction and verbalization (EHSANI & KNODT, 1998; MELONI ET AL, 2001; BRANDL, 2002; YOUNG, 2003; WHITE, 2003; SAMUEL & BAKAR, 2005; PAIVA, 2001).

A few students, however, reported not to benefit from e-mail the way it had been employed by professors, as shown in the excerpt "*An e-mail doesn't make you learn anything, it just assists in informing which activities should be done, the activities are what help in the learning process*", and still others argue that professors seemed not to know how to take advantage of some tools' potentialities, making repetitive use of the tool. Some other students, though not referring to any specific tool used in class, expressed their beliefs calling attention to the limitations of ICT tool use, such as the risk of being a waste of time, promote solitary learning, affecting students' interaction in asynchronous discussions, besides problems with lack of infrastructure and lack of acquaintance with the tools, which have already been mentioned in the works of Ertmer (1999, 2005) and Baitaneh and Baniabdelrahman (2006).

Likewise students, professors also expressed a number of beliefs towards how the tools they used in the courses they teach assisted in their students' learning process and in their own pedagogical practice, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Professors' overall beliefs towards the use of ICT tools in the courses they teach

Professors' overall beliefs towards the use ICT tools in the courses they teach	
E-mail/	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. facilitates communication between professor and students 2. offer the opportunity for student to use the target language and practice writing
Disc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. facilitate communication between professor and students
Web sites	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. good source for research and assist students to understand the content being taught goals as offer many different resources 5. complement and allow going deeper in the content 6. assist professors to reach their goals as offer many different resources 7. allow professor to reach students with different learning styles and can be motivating for students
CD-	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. provides good quality input and help to improve listening
DVDs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. motivate students and complement the discipline 10. assist to introduce the topic of discussion and help teaching linguistic skills such as grammar

Software	<p>11. assist to practice pronunciation (Windows Media Player, Audacity Quick Time)</p> <p>12. PowerPoint facilitates presentation and discussion of relevant topics, optimize explanation of content with visual aids and students get more concentrated in the classes</p> <p>13. contribute to students digital literacy</p>
CDs	<p>14. helps to improve listening</p> <p>15. songs can assist in the teaching of grammar functions</p>
Blogs	<p>16. students have the opportunity to practice writing in the target language</p> <p>17. complement the classes as offer the students a tools for self-reflection regarding the subject being taught</p>
Lang. Tools	<p>18. assist to practice pronunciation</p>
Data	<p>19. offer more visual aid, and assist in the learning process working as a guide for both professors and students</p>

Table 2 presents the overall beliefs identified in the professors' responses to the three instruments used to collect data. Similarly to the students, professors' responses show that their use of ICT tools in the courses they teach can contribute and assist their students learning process in a number of ways, such as offering the opportunity for students to use the target language, facilitating access to information, enhancing linguistic skills, contributing to their digital literacy and serving as a motivational source for the classes. Apart from that, some professors claimed that the amount of time spent in learning how to use the tools, course curriculum constraints and heavy workload are reasons why they do not use more diversified ICT tools in their classes. Such limitations have already been mentioned in the study of Samuel & Bakar (2005)

and Mateus (2004). Still, another professor called attention to an issue she considers more of a challenge than a disadvantage itself, as she states *“I don’t see as disadvantage, but I see that these tools require a more autonomous student and this is an important issue to be dealt with in class – the education of a student more responsible for and aware of his own learning process”*.

Finally, comparing the beliefs towards the ICT tools used in the courses that stemmed from students’ questionnaires to the ones identified in the professors’ questionnaire, it is possible to notice that many of their beliefs are equivalent. Barcelos (2006) states that beliefs can both influence and be influenced by teachers and students’ actions. In this sense, if professors use ICT tools in their courses based on their beliefs towards the benefits these tools can bring, and if professors’ beliefs match with that of their students – for instance, they both believe that CD-ROMs help with pronunciation – then it seems reasonable to suggest that the maybe the pedagogical goals set by professors for employing those tools are being achieved.

3. What is the relationship between the use of ICT tools in the Letras Inglês Programme at UFSC and the beliefs of professors and students towards this use?

Results from the analysis of the triangulation of data indicate that professors’ beliefs towards the use of ICT tools in the courses they teach are coherent with the use they reported to make of such tools. In order to illustrate this relation, I present an excerpt of a professor’s response to the questionnaire in which he states the ICT tools he uses ([ICT tools used]), the purpose for using these tools ([Purpose of use]) and express his beliefs towards this use ([Beliefs towards use]).

The professor stated that

“Email, software (HotPotato), websites, DVD (...)” “There is a wide range of great materials available on the web, such as websites that assist in the development of writing skills and academic writing” [ICT tools used]. “(websites) to advice the development of academic writing skills” (...) “(email) contact with students, general orientations, messages (...)” (...) “HotPotatoes allows the creation of activities like fill in the gaps, question and answer, that can assist, for example, in the teaching of conjunctions, transitions, punctuations, etc” [Purpose of use]. “Professors should use all possible and adequate tools in order to reach their goals. Tools such as DVD illustrated the content of the discipline, allowing me to relate the story with the content of the discipline. Moreover, there is the motivating appeal of movies with which students identify and enjoy. Tools available for my discipline, such as websites, are absolutely rich with information, colourful illustration and graphs that assist (students) to comprehend the content and (teachers) to reach their goals” [Beliefs towards use].

We can notice in his excerpt that this professor’s use of a number of ICT tools reflects his belief that professors should deploy of resources available to them to reach their teaching goals and assist their students in their learning process. It is possible that this professor not only use ICT tools because of his beliefs towards this use, but because his familiarity with them made him believe ICT tools can assist his students in number of ways, given that beliefs can both influence and be influenced by teachers and students’ actions (BARCELOS , 2006).

Overall, professors' use of ICT tools seems to corroborate their beliefs towards this use and, likewise, their beliefs seem to corroborate their utilization of the tools, showing that there is a good degree of coherence between their reported use of ICT tools in the courses they teach in the Letras Inglês Programme at UFSC and their beliefs towards this use.

Similarly, the analysis of data from the majority of students indicate that their beliefs towards the use of ICT tools employed in the courses they take are coherent with the use they reported to make of those tools. In order to illustrate this relation, I present an excerpt of a student's response to the questionnaire in which he states the ICT tools employed in the courses he takes ([ICT tools used]), the purpose with which these tools were used ([Purpose of use]) and expresses his beliefs towards this use ([Beliefs towards use]).

The student stated that

“e-mail, discussion groups, CD, DVD/Video, websites” [ICT tools used].

“(e-mail) allow the contact in moments we're not in class (...) we can solve doubts, the professor can clarify something he would investigate after class” (discussion groups) (...) classmates posted suggestions of terms that could be translated, others responded agreeing with the suggestion or proposing something different. Sometimes a classmate would find a nice site and pass on to everyone. (website) (...) used in the translation course and in the Introduction to Applied Linguistics course. (DVD/Video) we used in the Introduction to Narration course (...) to exemplify types of angles, and (was also used) to watch some works and discuss about them later” [Purpose with which is use]. “Students can learn the language and also learn how to use different tools (...). The

classes get more diversified and appealing (...) and students with different learning styles can be benefited, as different ways of teaching are being used” [Beliefs towards use].

It is possible to notice that he does not only say he believes that the ICT tools employed in the courses he takes in the Letras Inglês Programme help him learn the language and facilitate access to information necessary for learning, but he effectively uses them, showing a coherent relationship between what he says his beliefs are and the use of the tools. This is an indication that the tools used by the students are benefiting them in their learning process and that professors are reaching their teaching goals, since they are the ones who promote the use of these tools.

There was one student, however, who argued that ICT tools do not make any difference in his learning of the courses he takes. That is, this student uses e-mail and discussion groups in the courses he takes in the Letras Inglês Programme but he does not believe they complement or assist in his learning process, as we can see in the excerpt

“e-mail and discussion groups” [ICT tools used]. “(E-mail) messages and deadlines. (Discussion groups) messages and deadlines” [Purpose with which is use]. ““(ICT tools) don’t make any difference. What matters, in my opinion, is if the teacher teaches properly” [Beliefs towards use].

In the case of this student, his beliefs do not maintain a relation of coherence with the reported use of the ICT tools employed in the courses he takes. That is, this student uses e-mail and discussion groups in the courses he takes in the Letras Inglês Programme but he does not believe they complement or assist in his learning process. A

possible explanation for this might be related to the purposes with which the tools are being used. Another possible explanation is his lack of experience using ICT tools, as he reported he had never used them to learn English outside university.

5. Final Remarks

The results obtained from the study revealed that both students and professors hold predominantly positive beliefs towards the use of the ICT tools reported to be used in the courses they take/teach in the Letras Inglês Programme at UFSC. The large majority of students' beliefs referred to how the tools complement the classes, to their influence on the content taught, and to how these tools can be of assistance within the learning process. The negative beliefs identified had to do with the way in which the tools were being employed, with the limitations involved when trying to integrate the tools in the classes and with infrastructure.

Similarly, professors' beliefs also referred to how the ICT tools they use in their courses complement the content taught, and their potential to assist in the students' learning process. The negative belief expressed by some professors was related to the amount of time spent in preparing classes that include the use of ICT tools, since professors are not always well-acquainted with the tools. Moreover, by contrasting students' beliefs with those of professors, I found that most of them are congruent. This might be an indication that professors' pedagogical goals set for employing ICT tools in their courses to assist in the students' learning process are being achieved.

Concerning the relationship between the participants' use of the ICT tools reported to be employed in the courses they take/teach and the beliefs they hold towards this use, analysis of the results shows that, overall, what participants say they believe

about the use of ICT tools is coherent with the use they claim to make of these tools. In other words, professors not only believe that the ICT tools they reported to use can benefit their students in a number of ways, but they seem to effectively use these tools in their pedagogical practices. Likewise, the large majority of students not only believe that the ICT tools used in the courses assist in their learning process in a number of ways, but they reported to effectively use these tools in the courses they take.

Even though positive results emerged from the study, so did a number of challenges which require special attention. Findings showed that one student reported not to believe that ICT tools can assist in his learning process of the courses he takes in the Letras Inglês Programme. Other students might share the same opinion. Therefore, future studies might wish to focus on the reasons that lead students and/or professors to develop such beliefs since, according to Ertmer (1999), negative beliefs can be a barrier to the use of ICT tools.

In addition, according to Sutherland et al (2004), some subjects may, by their nature, be more suitable for the use of ICT tools than others. In the face of this, further research focusing on which tools are used in which courses in Letras Inglês Programmes could contribute to a better understanding of why some professors use more ICT tools than others, as has been noticed in the findings of this study.

Finally, future research might wish to investigate topics related to the development of ICT pedagogy, since participant students made it clear in this study that many times professors adopt a new technology but not a pedagogy that copes with the features and demands of the new tool.

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