

A FORMAÇÃO INICIAL DE PROFESSORES NAS HUMANIDADES

REFLEXÕES DIDÁTICAS

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BACK TO THE FUTURE: FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING AS CRITICAL PRACTICE

DE REGRESSO AO FUTURO: O ENSINO E A APRENDIZAGEM DE LÍNGUAS ESTRANGEIRAS COMO PRÁTICA CRÍTICA

ABSTRACT: This chapter focuses on models of foreign language teaching, and particularly on the conceptions of language and education underlying them. The title I chose, “Back to the Future,” is ironic and at the same time optimistic. Revisiting the history of the English language teacher-training program at the University of Coimbra between 1987 and 2009, I will show how the “radicalness” of the past seems finally to be turning into the mainstream of the present, at least in what concerns English language teaching in Portugal. By giving emphasis to “intercultural education” and “the competences of active citizenship,” the general goals of the national curriculum for English as a foreign language point to a shift away from the functionalist-communicative approaches dominant in the field before, indicating the adoption, at least in theory, of a more critical perspective in language teaching.

In the last part of the chapter, I will present some examples of activities and materials used in 7th, 8th and 9th grade classes, which exemplify methods and practices of teaching and learning foreign languages that can promote a critical awareness of the world we live in.

Keywords: foreign language teaching, English, language, education, teacher training

RESUMO: Este capítulo incide sobre modelos de ensino de línguas estrangeiras e especialmente sobre concepções de língua e educação que lhes subjazem. O título escolhido, “Regresso ao futuro”, é irónico e simultaneamente otimista. Ao visitar a história da formação de docentes de Inglês na Universidade de Coimbra entre 1987 e 2009, procuro mostrar como a perspetiva “radical” do passado parece finalmente ter-se tornado dominante no presente, pelo menos no que diz respeito ao ensino da língua inglesa em Portugal. Ao dar ênfase à educação intercultural e às competências para o exercício de uma cidadania ativa, as Metas Curriculares de Inglês apontam para uma mudança nas abordagens funcionalistas-comunicativas anteriormente dominantes, sinalizando a adoção, pelo menos em teoria, de uma perspetiva mais crítica no ensino de línguas.

Na última parte do capítulo são apresentadas algumas atividades e alguns materiais usados em aulas do 7º, 8º e 9º anos como exemplo de métodos e práticas de ensino e aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras que potenciam o desenvolvimento de uma consciência crítica relativamente ao mundo em que vivemos.

Palavras chave: ensino de línguas estrangeiras, Inglês, língua/linguagem, educação, formação de professores

1. Introduction

What do we teach when we teach a foreign language? What is involved in teaching and learning a foreign language? How does this relate to the overall education of our students, whether language learners or future foreign language teachers? To reflect upon these questions, I will start by referring to the well-known novel *Tarzan of the Apes*, not only because the narrative describes in detail the process of learning a foreign language, but also because it shows how language acquisition is not necessarily connected to communication but is certainly central in defining worldviews and in constructing the self's sense of identity, and thus the self's relationship with others.

This example serves as an introduction to the main topic of this text, on practices of foreign language teaching, and particularly on the concepts of language and education underlying them. The title I chose, “Back to the Future,” is ironic and at the same time optimistic. Revisiting the history of the English language teacher-training program at the University of Coimbra between 1987 and 2009, I will show how the “radicalness” of the past seems finally to be turning into the mainstream of the present in what concerns English language teaching in Portugal. By giving emphasis to “intercultural education” and “the competences of active citizenship,” the general goals of the national curriculum for English as a foreign language¹ point to a shift away from the functionalist-communicative approaches dominant in the field

¹ Set by the Ministry of Education in 2012, these goals (*Metas Curriculares*) began to be implemented in the 5th to 8th grades from 2014-2015, and in the 9th grade from 2015-2016 (Despacho 15971/2012).

before, indicating the adoption, at least in theory, of a more critical perspective in language teaching.

In the last part of this text, I will present some examples of activities and materials used in 7th, 8th and 9th grade classes, which exemplify methods and practices of teaching and learning foreign languages that can promote a critical awareness of the world we live in.

2. Enter Tarzan

The questions I posed above (What do we teach when we teach a foreign language? What is involved in teaching and learning a foreign language? How does this relate to the overall education of our students, whether language learners or future FL teachers?) should be posed at the beginning of any course in didactics. They help us focus on the nature of the subject we teach, the methods to be used and the goals to be achieved.

To reflect upon these questions, I will start by making a brief incursion into *Tarzan of the Apes*, by Edgar Rice Burroughs, first published in 1912. Since the general lines of the plot are well known, I will focus only on the part that is relevant for my topic and my argument.

Raised by apes in the jungles of equatorial Africa and unaware of his human ancestry, Tarzan undertakes a language learning project that lasts several years when he discovers his dead father's books and begins to decipher, with the help of illustrations, what he calls "little bugs", eventually coming to realize their "true and wonderful purpose" (Burroughs, 1982: 50). Thus, Tarzan learns to read and later to write but does not use this skill to "communicate" with other humans, for he knows none. What "use", then, does this new language have for him?

In fact, the knowledge he acquires through reading not only has a tremendous impact on how he perceives himself and the world around him but also gives him power over his environment. Before finding his father's books, Tarzan felt different from the other apes, but nevertheless thought of himself as an ape, although "whiter" and weaker (Tarzan actually means "white skin" [Burroughs, 1982: 34]). After figuring out the "true" meaning of the words

and images in his father's books, he realizes that he is not an ape, but what is more significant is that he begins to feel superior, not only to the apes, but also to the black natives of the jungle that he meets around the time he is 18 (Burroughs, 1982: 63).

The implications are clear: in learning a language Tarzan acquires standards, biases, and values that give him a new sense of self and that lead him to establish distinctions and hierarchizations. As the narrator explains, "No longer did he feel shame for his hairless body or his human features, for now his reason told him that he was of a different race from his wild and hairy companions. He was a M-A-N, they were A-P-E-S" (Burroughs, 1982: 50). When he sees for the first time a village made of huts, he is "sorely disappointed," because he compares it to the image of London he had seen in his father's books. Thus, the western industrial city, with chimneys and smoke, with trains and ships in the harbor, becomes the standard by which he judges all other human constructions: "[H]e had expected to come to a city of strange houses on wheels, puffing clouds of black smoke [...] or to a sea covered with mighty floating buildings which he had learned were called, variously, ships and boats and steamers and craft" (Burroughs, 1982: 80). Against this standard, Tarzan qualifies the African village as a "poor little village," and although he recognizes his human connection to the Africans who built it, he begins to hold them "in low esteem" (Burroughs, 1982: 80).

Back in the days when there were no Master's programs in foreign language teaching, and the teacher training program involved one year of in-service training at a public school and a year-long seminar at the university, I used to start the year with this book because, on the one hand, the narrative describes in detail the process of learning a foreign language (foreign since Tarzan already spoke the "language of the apes") and, on the other, it shows that language may not necessarily be used to "communicate" but is certainly central in defining worldviews and in constructing the self's sense of identity and therefore the self's relationship with others.

The example of *Tarzan* helped my students understand better what is involved in learning a language, and thus also in teaching it, although in theory none of this was new to them. By the time they took my seminar, in the year they did their practicum, they had had courses on Didactics of Lan-

guage and, especially, Didactics of English, where these issues were discussed in-depth. But before focusing on our specific didactics course, we need to put it in its proper context, and therefore, in the next two sections, I will briefly describe the general structure of initial teacher training in Portugal and the teacher-training program at the University of Coimbra until 2009.²

3. Teacher Training in Portugal before 2009

In Portugal, initial teacher training for the last stage of elementary education and secondary education (grades 7 to 12) has generally followed two models. Adopting the terminology used by Pauline Musset in an OECD Education Working Paper (No. 48, 2010), I will call them the “consecutive” (or sequential) model and the “concurrent” (or synchronous) model.

The consecutive model, which is now in place for the training of 7-12 grade teachers, requires candidates to obtain first a bachelor’s degree in a given subject or subjects (usually no more than two), and then undertake a further period of study to gain an additional qualification in teaching. The concurrent model involves the simultaneous study of academic and pedagogical subjects throughout the duration of the program as well as some kind of teaching experience.

Although the consecutive model prevailed for most of the 20th century in the initial training of secondary school teachers (cf. Pintassilgo & Oliveira, 2013: 25), from the late 1980s until 2009 a mix of the two models was applied. This meant that students had to take a certain number of courses (usually 4 to 6) related to teaching in the last years of their bachelor’s degree, and then studied for an additional year which involved a practicum in a school as well as an annual seminar on their main subject at university. Their practicum was monitored by both an accredited experienced teacher

² Although the law that introduced changes to teacher training in Portugal dates from 2007, it was only in 2009-2010 that the new master’s programs were put in place. Law 43 established new rules and requirements for access to master’s programs in teaching, which became the only route to teacher certification.

at school and a university supervisor who observed a certain number of the classes taught by trainees.

4. The English Teacher Training Program at the University of Coimbra

4.1. Structure of the Program

Following this mixed model, the last two years of the degrees in Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Coimbra included 3 or 4 annual (or 6 to 8 semester) courses on general subjects related to education and pedagogy (e.g. History of Education, Educational Psychology, Sociology of Education), as well as 2 or 3 annual (or 4 to 6 semester) courses in Didactics (Abranches, 1986: 186). It should be noted that this model of professionalization in language teaching required students to take double majors (for example, English and Portuguese, or English and German). Thus, after finishing their BA, they were placed in schools in the area covered by their University, and were assigned two classes (for instance, one in English, the other in French or Portuguese or German) and also taught some units in their teacher trainers' classes, which were typically higher level language courses. Their work was supervised by two experienced teachers, who worked closely with about three trainees per school, and by two supervisors from their university, who visited the school about two or three times a year to observe classes (until 2002, visits were more frequent, but budget cuts led to reductions).

In addition, all the trainees had two weekly 2-hour seminars at their school, focusing on specific aspects of teaching each of the languages, and a 3-hour weekly seminar at the university. They could choose from a variety of topics offered by the different subject areas, usually related to literature, culture and linguistics. At the beginning of each year, we established a plan of activities, which included conferences and workshops, in addition to the regular sectorial meetings between school trainers and university supervisors, and between trainees and supervisors for monitoring and assessment.

The model in place at the University of Coimbra between 1987 and 2009 offered a number of advantages, of which perhaps the most important was the year-long practicum. Trainees learned by actually teaching their own groups of pupils, by observing their teacher trainers' classes and those taught by other trainees, and by discussing their performance. Since they also taught a certain number of hours in their teacher trainers' classes, they gained further experience in teaching at different language levels and to different age groups. As Musset (2010: 8) notes,

to include practicum during initial teacher education allows to familiarize aspirant teachers to classrooms, to prevent reality-shocks at the beginning of their teaching career, to link pedagogical theory with practical problems and to construct a sound professional identity. [...] Research shows that soon-to-be-teachers that have had an extensive training in schools perform better as teachers.

Although in theory this model brought benefits to all those involved in the educational system, in practice it had some drawbacks. Schools and trainers, for example, pointed out that classes entrusted to trainees who did not have a sound education in their main subject received poor instruction. Another problem concerned the lack of interconnection between the different language areas (Abranches, 1986: 186), which led, in the words of my colleagues Helena Loureiro and Lina Oliveira, to an “almost schizophrenic process” of negotiation between substantially different, if not contradictory, philosophies of language and education (Loureiro & Oliveira, 2002; cf. Abranches, 1996: 197).³

³ It should also be pointed out that, from the viewpoint of the state, this model was extremely expensive since trainees were paid a full salary and only taught two classes, and school supervisors had a reduced workload. After 2005, trainees no longer had their own classes and stopped receiving salaries. Since then, they teach a given number of lessons in an assigned classroom under the supervision of the classroom teacher. I should add that these teachers no longer receive any compensation for the time spent in training and monitoring trainees, and as a result we have been experiencing great difficulties in finding cooperating teachers and schools.

In order to understand what this “negotiation” entailed for trainees, I will briefly discuss the concepts of language and education underlying the ELT program at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

4.2. Language, Education and Didactics

Didactics of English, which was taught in the 4th year of the BA, addressed the kind of questions I posed at the beginning of this text. The colleagues who taught it over the years insisted, against prevailing assumptions of what “Didactics” should be about (i.e., about methods and techniques, about practical rules for teaching a specific subject), that those assumptions ought to be interrogated, and this involved a critique of models of language and education, as well as an exploration of what the subject is (in this case, what “English” is, how it is constructed in the national curriculum, in school manuals, etc.).⁴

The concepts of language and education underlying this program were to a significant extent at odds with the functionalist-communicative perspectives dominant in the field in Portugal and elsewhere. Seen as “radical” in the past, the views put forward by my colleagues in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s seem finally to be turning into the mainstream of the present, at least in what concerns ELT in Portugal. By giving emphasis to “intercultural education” and “the competences of active citizenship,” the general goals of the national curriculum for English that began to be implemented in 2014-2015 point to a shift away from the previous functionalist-communicative approaches, in favor of the adoption, at least in theory, of a more critical perspective in language teaching.

⁴ To quote from the course description: “This course proposes to examine some of the linguistic, cultural and pedagogical assumptions underlying the existence of a course in ‘Didactics of English’. We will, in short, reflect on what we teach when we teach English, on what we are attempting to do when we teach English, and on the way this practice is related or interconnected with the ‘general education’ of our students” (Guia do Estudante, RFE, FLUC, 2004-2005: 68).

This critical perspective requires that we begin by asking a seemingly simple question: What is “language”? Quoting from several texts written over the years by Martin Kayman, Graça Abranches, Helena Loureiro, Eduarda Carvalho and Lina Oliveira, language is a “reflection and instrument of history and power” (Kayman, 1994: 21); it is not a “neutral” or “transparent” vehicle for conveying “information”; it is “cultural” because “it establishes a dialectical relationship with its context and its use” (Kayman *et al.*, 1991: 362; Abranches, 1996: 195). However, as Martin Kayman affirms regarding the teaching of English in Europe in the early 1990s, “the real histories and present contexts of ‘English in Europe’ are concealed by the theoretical limbo of ‘communication’ in which the functional, international ‘common language’ has been placed, cleansed of the specificities of ‘culture’ and the ‘deviations’ of ‘literature’” (Kayman, 1994: 21).

Thus, one of the main topics discussed in Didactics of English was the history of English as a school subject in Portugal and the UK, as well as the history of the different approaches and methodologies used in teaching it. Another important topic was language itself and its role in education and in teaching – language as “a means of motivation, interaction, discovery, growth, and power” (Abranches, 1996: 194-5). As Carvalho, Loureiro, Oliveira and Amado say (1998: 3), “Education is, ultimately, liberating. The primary concern of education is to make students ‘a little wiser’,” which means developing their ability to make informed choices. In this sense, the educational value of learning a foreign language is that “it can offer students a different experience from that of their mother tongue, and thus contribute to their understanding of our polyglot world as well as to emancipating them from parochialism”.

In practical terms, these goals were achieved not only through the critical reading and discussion of theoretical texts, secondary-school guidelines for English as a foreign language, textbooks, and related materials, but also through collecting and organizing materials that were alternative to those used in textbooks. Students were asked to select these from the different courses they had had in college (a ‘recycling’ that, in itself, had a significant educational value), as well as from newspapers, magazines,

novels, short-stories, films, TV programs, etc. (Carvalho *et al.*, 1998).⁵ In addition to serving as a basis for the final papers, in which students justified their choices in linguistic, cultural and pedagogical terms, this “archive of materials” also proved to be a valuable resource in the year they did their practicum (Abranches, 1996: 193).⁶

The next section presents several examples of materials, some of which were first collected for the course in Didactics of English, and discusses the ways in which they were explored in class.

5. ELT Materials

The following materials, selected from classes taught in 2004-2005, are arranged according to the general topics included in the curriculum guidelines. Although in theory teachers have some degree of freedom in choosing contents and materials for each level of language learning, in practice the adoption of a textbook produced according to the specifications of the curriculum determines much of what is taught and even the way in which it is taught. However, University of Coimbra trainees were (and are still) asked to plan classes using alternative materials, since the textbooks available in the market at that time not only did not include the different varieties of English,⁷ but also tended to reinforce sexual, racial, and class stereotypes (cf. Carvalho *et al.*, 1998). It should be pointed out that the brief descriptions that follow won't focus on the grammar content of these lessons, but rather

⁵ Until 1990-1991, final papers consisted of a critical analysis of school manuals, taking into account questions of racism, sexism, and human rights. After that, this activity was primarily conducted in class and final papers were based on alternative materials collected by students throughout the year.

⁶ After the late 1990s, as a preparation for the practicum, Didactics instructors also took students to schools, to observe classes and to listen to follow-up commentaries on those classes, which were usually quite detailed.

⁷ The national curriculum guidelines in fact only mention the Englishes spoken in the UK and the USA, although the general goals (*Metas Curriculares*) for grades 5 to 9 now include also other English-speaking countries.

on the thematic content, related to social and cultural issues and intercultural awareness.⁸

5.1. Family and Home

In general, the existing textbooks at the time focused on family relationships, household routines, the interests and activities of different family members, and the description of the various spaces of houses. The illustrations usually showed white heterosexual couples with two children, sometimes grandparents, in Dick & Jane-style houses. The examples below show how trainees used more complex approaches to teach this topic.

5.1.1. For a 7th grade class (level A2+)⁹, the teacher-trainee introduced the concept of different types of family (nuclear, single-parent, same-sex parents, families with adopted children, childless families) using photos of actual families. The image of the nuclear family that she chose to present is not what one would have expected at the time in a Portuguese textbook since it shows a multiethnic family. Although Portugal is becoming increasingly diverse, rural areas and small towns like the one where this trainee taught are still quite homogeneous, and so it is important to make students aware of diversity beyond the boundaries of their world.

⁸ The general goals of the national curriculum for grades 5 to 9 in fact stress this aspect: “To provide contact with other languages and cultures [...]; To develop [students’] awareness of their linguistic and cultural identity through comparison with the foreign language and the culture(s) conveyed by it” (Ministério da Educação, *Programa de Inglês – 2.º ciclo*, 1996: 7; *Programa de Inglês – 3.º ciclo*, 1997: 7).

⁹ Although foreign language proficiency levels were previously designated by Roman numerals (and in fact schools still use this system), for the sake of convenience and clarity, the CEFR levels indicated here are those established in 2015 in the *Metas Curriculares de Inglês – Ensino Básico: 1.º, 2.º e 3.º ciclos*.



Image 1 – Multi-ethnic family

5.1.2. The second example (see worksheet in Annex 1) is from a class on the same general topic, but focusing on gender roles. The trainee chose an excerpt from the movie *Whale Rider*, directed by New Zealander Nicki Caro (2002), whose protagonist is a young Maori girl. Although the main educational aim of this class was to “make students aware of the inequality of gender roles” in Maori culture, and by comparison in their own, they also learned some facts about New Zealand and Maori culture.

5.2. School and Education

This topic was, and in some cases still is, dealt with in a very literal fashion: learners are given a general description of the educational system in English-speaking countries (usually, the U.K.), descriptions of school spaces and routines, and little else. The classes briefly described below gave students a richer view of the issues involved in education.

5.2.1. In a unit of three classes, the trainee addressed the topic from an uncommon perspective: he introduced 7th grade students to the forced internment and schooling of Aboriginal children in Australia from the 1930s to 1970. He showed excerpts from the movie *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, directed by Philip

Noyce (2002), in which the main characters are two Aboriginal girls who were still alive at the time the movie was made. Besides learning about Aboriginal life in the Australian Outback, a reality which is very distant from their own, students also became aware of an historical experience that exemplifies the way in which the school functions as a powerful means of assimilation to the dominant culture.

5.2.2. Another trainee used excerpts from Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* to explore the issue of bullying and racial discrimination. This was the starting point for a unit of 3 classes in which students learned about segregated schools in the United States and the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement to change this reality.

5.3. Jobs and Occupations

The typical class based on textbooks involves a list of occupations, usually with images of (female) nurses, (male) doctors, (female) teachers, (male) mechanics, and so on. The texts used at the time for this and other units were generally very artificial and full of stereotypes (cf. Carvalho *et al.*, 1998). Trainees approached this topic in a variety of ways:

5.3.1. Some planned classes on child labor in which they explored authentic images, interviews, letters, and official documents, such as the UN Convention on Human Rights (1989), as well as literary texts. One of the trainees, for instance, used a poem about a boy who works in the fields and an excerpt from Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*.

5.3.2. Other trainees presented texts, films and images related to women in traditionally male occupations and men in traditionally female occupations to raise students' awareness about changing gender roles and gender discrimination. Examples include the movie *Billy Elliot* (2000), about a boy who fights against the prevailing stereotypes in pursuing his dream of becoming a professional ballet dancer, Tracy Chapman's song "Woman's Work", and Benjamin Zephaniah's poem "Who's Who".

5.4. Health and Well-Being

Images of the human body, of different kinds of food, and lists of vocabulary related to health and food have traditionally been the staples of textbooks on the topic of health and well-being. Finding innovative ways to address such a wide and complex topic can be quite difficult but the examples described below suggest ways of taking up the challenge.

5.4.1. In an 8th grade class (level B1), one trainee used the documentary *Super Size Me*, by Morgan Spurlock (2004), to explore the subtopic “Eating Disorders”, relating it to the influence of American fast food culture on children and teenagers in Portugal and elsewhere.

5.4.2. Using excerpts from the same documentary, another trainee focused on the issue of “hunger in the world” in three classes taught to 9th grade students. After an introductory class, he concentrated on the effects of fast food in the US and the world, using six excerpts from the movie. The worksheet in Annex 2 shows how the first two scenes of the documentary were explored.

6. Conclusion

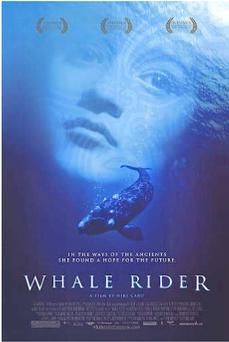
The examples presented above show a concern with addressing issues that are relevant not only in global terms, including racial and gender discrimination, world hunger, and child labor, but also in local terms, such as the impact of fast food on the health of young people in Portugal. Furthermore, teacher trainees took care to select materials to which students in a particular age group could relate, and which would thus motivate them to learn so that they could begin to ask questions about the wider world, themselves, and their lifeworld.

Finding points of contact with the students’ own context and situation, and at the same time making them see the world beyond through others’ eyes leads to the defamiliarization of the familiar, the denaturalization of what seems “natural,” taken for granted, and thus unquestioned. This, I would say, is the “use” of learning a foreign language: to make us “foreign” to ourselves, and thus coming to understand the “foreignness” of others, just like Tarzan,

who comes to see the world both as an African ape *and* as an English lord. In the words of Kayman (1997: 21), “It is this perspective to see the other, and [oneself], as ‘foreign’ – with all the anxiety, dissatisfaction, enthusiasm and passion that this implies – that I suggest is the proper basis for our discipline”.

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Whale Rider is a fascinating movie about Maori culture. It is about, Paikea, a young Maori girl. After the death of her mother and twin brother, Paikea's father leaves home. Her grandparents look after her in a small village by the sea in New Zealand.

Her grandfather, Koro, is the chief of their people, and he is obsessed with finding their new leader. He knows that his eldest son will not take on the responsibility. He cannot believe that his granddaughter, Paikea, can be the leader he is looking for. He thinks that she is useless to him. Instead he puts his energy into training the boys of the village to succeed him.

Pay attention to the scenes from *Whale Rider* and do the exercises:

1st scene: _____.

1) Choose the correct statements:

- a) Koro tells Paikea that she can sit on the first bench. b) Paikea must sit behind the boys. c) Paikea obeys her grandfather and sits at the back. d) Her grandfather shouts at her and she leaves the ceremony.
- e) The school is only for boys. f) Paikea is allowed to participate in the school activities. g) A "Taiaha" is an instrument of war. h) A "Taiaha" is a sacred song.



2nd scene: Paikea _____ her friend Hemi.

2) Complete the sentences with the following words:

Paikea

girl

angry

men

school

useless

learns

- a) Paikea _____ how to manage a "Taiaha".
- b) Who wins the fight? _____.
- c) The sacred temple of this _____ was broken by her.
- d) Koro is very _____ with her.
- e) To Koro, Paikea is _____ because she is a _____.
- f) Future Maori chiefs must be _____.



3rd scene

Circle the correct title:

The final test
Koro's happiness



3) Are the following statements true or false?

a) Courage is one of the Maori Chief's qualities.		
b) The final test is to bring a whale tooth from the sea.		
c) A boy was successful.		
d) Paikea's uncle is worried about her.		

4th scene: Paikea is _____.

4) Answer the following questions:

a) Who found the whale tooth?

b) Who is the new Maori Chief?

c) Is Paikea's grandfather happy?





A- Read the summary of this movie carefully:

About the movie: (*Super size me*, directed by Morgan Spurlock, 2004, Roadside Attractions, Samuel Goldwyn films, The Con)

Why are Americans so fat? Two words: (a) _____ . Documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock makes himself a test subject of this documentary about the commercial food industry. During the journey, Spurlock also put his own body on the line, living on nothing but (b) _____ for an entire month with three simple rules:

- 1) No options: he could only eat what was available over the counter (water included!)
- 2) No super sizing unless offered
- 3) No excuses: he had to eat every item on the menu at least once.

Spurlock is out to prove the physical and mental effects of consuming fast food. While doing this, Spurlock also provides a look at the food culture in (c) _____ through its schools, corporations, and politics as seen through the eyes of regular people and health advocates. *Super Size Me* is a movie that sheds a new light on what has become one of our nation's biggest health problems: (d) _____ .

B- Pay attention to the scenes and do the exercises:

1st scene:

Title: _____

1) What are the kids singing at the beginning of this scene? _____

2) Fill in the sentences with the correct words?

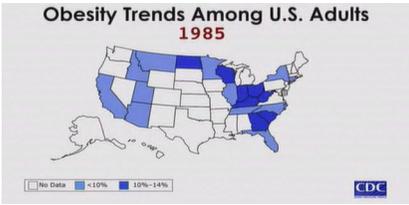
a) Obesity is the second major cause of preventable deaths in the USA, just after _____ .

b) There are more than _____ deaths per year, associated to illnesses related to obesity.

3) What does Ray Kroc mean with this quote?

"Look after the customer and
the business will take care of itself"

- Ray Kroc
McDonald's Founder



4) Look at both maps! What conclusions do you reach by looking at the obesity trends in the last 20 years in the USA? _____

2nd scene:

Title: _____

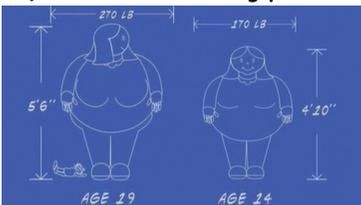
1) Are these statements true or false?

- a) In 2002, people were happy about being overweight. _____
- b) People blamed fast food companies for their obesity and illnesses. _____
- c) Nobody knows that fast food isn't good for us. _____
- d) Each day, 1 in every 4 American visits a fast food restaurant. _____

2) How many restaurants does Mc Donald's operate in the world? _____

3) How many meals do they serve every day? _____

4) Look at the following picture:



a) Do you know the American way to tell weight and length? Look at the following dictionary entries:

lb - pounds; a measurement of weight equal to about 454 grams.
foot - a measurement of length; 30,48 centimetres
inch - a measure of length; 2,54 centimetres

b) Find the girls' weight and length in the European metric system.

19-year-old girl: _____

14-year-old girl: _____