

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE APPROACH TO L1 ORACY IN POLISH AND PORTUGUESE EARLY EDUCATION CURRICULA

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Abstract

The aim of our paper is to describe and examine the approach to oracy in core curricula in two European countries: Poland and Portugal. In the paper, we examine kindergarten and early education L1 curricula, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, similarities and differences, and discuss theoretical positions that support the guiding documents of the educational activities in the two countries.

Though Polish and Portuguese early education recommendations and obligations include teaching oracy, the importance they put on its development is quite dissimilar. Polish legislation focuses on teaching literacy. The term “oracy” is not used, and oracy itself is treated as a sub-category with specific requirements concerning most elementary forms of expression, e. g. naming or answering questions. Portuguese legislation lists orality among four main educational components, together with reading and writing, literary education, and grammar. The term “orality” corresponds to oracy, and is treated as a tool for both expression and comprehension, and a prerequisite for advanced cognitive skills.

We think that the development of oracy in early education should be considered a priority, together with the development of literacy, taking into account its importance for the children’s future academic achievement and active citizenship.

Keywords: oracy, Poland, Portugal, curriculum, early childhood education

1. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE APPROACH TO L1 ORACY IN POLISH AND PORTUGUESE CURRICULA

Our paper aims to describe and examine the approach to a native language (L1) oracy in core curricula in two European countries: Poland and Portugal. We focus on the development of L1, which is the main point of interest in the legislation. In the paper, we examine kindergarten and early education curricula, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and compare their similarities and differences. Moreover, we discuss theoretical positions that support the relevant educational documents in the two countries. In our opinion, though oracy skills of pre-school and primary school pupils play a major role in both academic and professional success, they are not sufficiently examined. Frequently, once children are able to express themselves in their L1, early education teachers no longer focus on developing their students' oral skills. Also, research has focused predominantly on literacy, neglecting children's oracy, even though it is crucial for the development of knowledge and literacy. The theoretical understanding and practical suggestions concerning oracy are described in the official, national educational documents (i.e. the formal side of oracy), and later implemented in the classroom (i.e. the practical side of oracy). The research project described in this article focuses on the formal side of oracy and on pre-school and primary school, namely, the foundational stages of education¹. To our knowledge, our paper is the first one to compare official documents about oracy in Portugal and Poland. The investigation of two diverse approaches to oracy will allow to suggest new, effective solutions to be introduced in the legislation and in educational practice, aimed at equipping the learners with the best possible skills for active citizenship in both countries.

Oracy refers to an exploratory talk, dialogue, talk for learning, and for intentional information searching. According to Jones (2017), this term was created by Wilson (1965) to equal its importance with that of literacy. Pereira and Viana (2003) defined oracy as the ability to understand, use, and reflect on oral texts in order to achieve goals, develop knowledge and potential, and participate in society. Thus, they emphasised that it is both a subject for teaching and a tool for learning. In the literature, the terms: oral development, communication skills, speaking, and listening have been used interchangeably with oracy (Alexander, 2012). In accordance with this, in this paper, we use the terms oracy and orality interchangeably, because in the Portuguese syllabus (which we examine here), orality corresponds

¹ In Poland, kindergarten education encompasses the children aged three to six/seven. The early education comprises three years of primary school for children from the age of six/seven to nine/ten. In Portugal, kindergarten education encompasses the children aged three to five (the last year is called a pre-school). The early education comprises four years of primary school for children from the age of six to ten.

to oracy, and is treated as a tool and an ability for both expression and comprehension, and a prerequisite for advanced cognitive skills, much as oracy is. Vygotsky (1978) recognised the interrelationship of talk and learning. Portuguese documents describe orality as a subject, an ability to be learned and an instrument for learning, a tool for interaction and participation, for thinking and being. This understanding treats orality as a concept similar to oracy. However, we wondered if this approach to orality is fully understood and put into practice in the classroom.

The 1990 Portuguese syllabus stated that oral communication, understood as an important acquired skill, should be taught at school. During the first cycle of basic education (primary school), three types of skills are to be developed: oral communication, written communication, and language in function (grammar). Since 1990, other disciplines in the Portuguese curriculum, such as History or Mathematics, have included orality as well. In the *Profile of Students at the End of Compulsory Education (2017) (the Student Profile)*, communication constitutes one of the key competences, along with critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative work. The operational guidelines for the *Student Profile* were published in 2018 as *Essential Learning in Basic Education (the Essential Learning)*, which we both analyse these documents.

In Polish educational (ministerial) documents (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, 1999, 2017; Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu, 2002), the terms oracy (or orality) do not occur. The authors of the documents, however, do focus on developing oracy skills in young learners, as they use such concepts as verbal expression, productive skills, attentive listening, speaking skills, speaking fluently, written and oral communication or efficient communication in place of oracy.

Oracy comprises speaking and listening skills (van den Bergh, 1987), Hewitt & Inghilleri, 1993, Graham, Courtney, Tonkyn, & Marinis, 2016), while literacy encompasses reading and writing skills (Graham et al., 2016). Oracy and literacy interrelate in early education (Riley, 2006b). Alexander (2012) states that the quality of speaking in the classroom influences the level of achievement in a student's first language, mathematics, and science.

Oral language production enables children to understand their own experience and to inform others about this comprehension (Riley, 2006). Students' voices are crucial for their academic learning and active citizenship (Alexander, 2012). In the past, teachers encouraged students' silence, treating it as a sign of thinking and productive work (Cullinan, 1993). However, especially in early education, talking is crucial for the development of children's thinking and learning (Alexander, 2012). According to Vygotsky (1978), oral language plays a key role in learning, serving both an interpersonal and an intrapersonal function.

Language acquisition happens in at least three external environments: family, peer group, and school, and can be organized (systematic and planned, in order to evoke a child's expected behaviour) or not organized (Niesporek-Szamburska, 2010). As familial and peer speech patterns influence children's speech, they

should be used as a base for an academic discourse (Anderson & Hilton, 1997; Niesporek-Szamburska, 2010). In fact, spoken language, learning, and thinking develop most successfully within meaningful and authentic contexts, which can be achieved in school environment through a conversational approach (Riley, 2006; Sousa, 2015; Fuertes, Sousa, Lockiewicz, Nunes, & Lino, 2018). Alexander (2012) claims that classroom talk should be used for thinking, learning, communicating, democratic engagement, teaching, and assessing. Thus, it serves a cultural, cognitive, and social purpose. Effective classroom instruction during early education should include the following: listening games and activities, vocabulary-expanding exercises, arrangement of classroom resources (e.g. objects labelling), language enrichment through stories, open questions (which allow the students to negotiate the meaning like in authentic conversations), reading stories, e.g. using picture books (Riley, 2006), and small group collaboration (Haworth, 2001).

1.1 Patterns of interaction in the classroom

Simich-Dudgeon (1998) described three typical patterns of teacher-student interaction during question-answer activities: Question-Response-Evaluation (Q-R-E), Question-Response-Feedback (Q-R-F), and Student-Organized Interaction. In the former two, the teacher chooses the topic of discussion, asks a question directed at selected students, and assesses the students' response. In the Q-R-E pattern, the teacher accepts or rejects a student's response, frequently without giving any feedback. Although different from everyday situations, the Q-R-E seems to be the most frequent pattern in education. It is also called Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE), or recitation (Alexander, 2012). In the Q-R-F pattern, the teacher facilitates the negotiation of meaning with students, through paraphrasing their responses (Riley, 2006b). However, children must learn to answer questions correctly, and to "use talk to narrate, explain, speculate, imagine, hypothesize, explore, evaluate, discuss, argue, reason and justify" (Alexander, 2012, p. 4.) In the Student-Organized Interaction pattern, students initiate and lead discussion, answer questions, and control the interaction while the teacher acts as a participant and facilitator. The last pattern resembles a natural, everyday conversation the most; that is, an interaction when at least two interested and engaged speakers co-operate, draw upon their knowledge of the world and their ability to use language, negotiate co-constructed meanings, as they adapt the message based on the listener's understanding (Riley, 2006). Student-Organized Interaction should consist of five or more utterances, and include phatic phrases and non-verbal communication to maintain contact (Riley, 2006). Dialogic teaching exemplifies a Student-Organized Interaction. It is based on five principles: collectivity (teachers and children engage in learning tasks together), reciprocity (teachers and children are both speakers and listeners), support (children are encouraged to voice their ideas and negotiate meanings with other students), cumulation (teachers and children expand each other's ideas into comprehensible lines of thinking and inquiry), and purposeful-

ness (teachers implement dialogic teaching with a particular educational goal in mind) (Alexander, 2008, as cited in: Alexander, 2010; Bignell, 2012; Jones, 2010).

The most well-known study about the use of talk in the classroom in Portugal is from the eighties (Pedro, 1982). Although primary and high school differed, the question by the teacher and answer by the students pattern was dominant. This is similar to the Simich-Dudgeon (1998) Q-R-E pattern or to Alexander (2012) IRE pattern. Pedro (1982) also outlined that teachers talked much more than students did. Moreover, they used more and longer utterances (on average, four times longer than those of students in primary school and five times longer than those of students in high school) (Pedro, 1982). The students' and teachers' role were fixed: the teacher controlled the speech and the rules, managed students' talks, decided on the topic, etc. (Pedro, 1982).

1.2 Formal aspects

Based on terminological considerations above, we analysed Polish and Portuguese official documents which outlined educational aims at the most general level. In Poland, the core curriculum comprises all school subjects and disciplines. In Portugal, the *Student Profile* discusses ten areas of competence, but does not mention individual subjects. Instead, the documents pertaining to particular disciplines known as syllabuses are defined in *Essential Learning*. This difference in the equivalent documents has far-reaching consequences for any empirical study juxtaposing educational systems in the two countries. The Portuguese documents (subject-oriented syllabuses) are more detailed and focused on subject specifics. Conversely, the Polish core curriculum lacks substantive specifications, but it brings subjects together and enables us to say more precisely what the general approach to L1 oracy in Poland is.

Since we started working on this project, the basic education in Portugal has undergone many changes and the Portuguese official educational documents, the syllabuses, have changed. Although no previous documents were revoked, new documents were produced. The syllabuses did not change much between the early 1990s and 2009. In 2009, a new syllabus was published and the process of elaborating curricular standards started. In 2015, the syllabuses and standards changed. In 2018, new guiding documents were published. During the previous reforms, syllabuses and standards had been drawn up and the information had been presented in several different documents.

The 2018 reform (which did not repeal the previous documents) constructed the *Student Profile*, "a reference document for the organization of the entire education system, contributing to the convergence and articulation of the decisions inherent to the various dimensions of curricular development" (Martins et. al., 2017, p. 8). As an aggregating document that defines the student profile, it aimed to clarify the curriculum and facilitate the decisions of educational managers and decision makers in organizations responsible for educational policies and teaching.

In addition to the *Student Profile*, the *Essential Learning* documents are developed for each year. They add to the curricular documents and aim to identify, for each discipline and year, the essential contents, capacities, and attitudes. This is done to guarantee effective learning and to ensure the development of skills that take longer to master and the effective differentiation in the classroom. The listed key competences provide reference for an external evaluation.

The *Essential Learning* is a document that aims to be the "Common Curricular Denominator for all students, but does not exhaust what a student should do throughout the school year. They are not the minimums to achieve for a student's approval, they are the common base of reference" (Ministério da Educação, Direção Geral da Educação, 2018).

2. METHOD

In order to systematise the study and to enable the juxtaposition of the Polish core curriculum against (a selection of) Portuguese syllabuses, the analysis has been organised around four components, predetermined and theoretically driven. Specifically, they were prompted by the rationale introduced by Niemierko (1999) and Messick (1995). As Polish and Portuguese curricula differ a lot, we used these components on oracy to organise our studies. Thus, we could systematically analyse and compare these documents. The Polish version of the taxonomy of educational objectives (Niemierko, 1999) is inspired by Bloom's traditional model, but comprising the three higher levels into one: that is analysis, synthesis, and evaluation is covered by the umbrella term "applying knowledge for problematic situations". In the Messick's (1995) validity-oriented theory the objectives reach higher and include not only how particular knowledge and abilities are assessed, but also what kind of social consequences they lead to. In our research we referred to Messick's theory for the study of documents in a way similar to analyses of educational measurement, whereby it is analysed how comprehensive tests used for verifying students' mastery of subject content is. Accordingly, the four components—formulated at the very outset of our joint studies—include: Categories (relating to definitions, terms, etc., which "belong to" the taxonomical level of remembering, reproduction), Organisation (relating to the logic of documents, their build-up, etc., which is linked to comprehension), Procedures/Methods (which prompt questions on the (taxonomical) category of application/use), and Effects (which pertains closely to Messick's (1995) fourth validity aspect and encompasses questions requiring assessment, evaluation of goals, etc.). Thus, the components relate to the rationale of educational assessment, in which the learners' knowledge and skills are evaluated at various, more and more complex levels. Whilst Component A below represents "the shallowest" stage of analysis, the later components go "deeper" or "further" in that they aim to partially reflect or reconstruct the reasoning of the authors of particular documents. Although some of the wording we included below may appear somewhat arbitrary, the overall logic followed by us in the con-

struction of the research questions cited here rests on the degree of depth of our analysis. In other words, at first, we “filtered” the documents through terminological lenses, after which we studied the way in which particular concepts are organised, how oracy/orality is juxtaposed against school subjects, what methods are accordingly recommended and what effects are—as a consequence—envisaged.

Component A “Categories” identifies and analyses oracy-related concepts that occur in the Polish and Portuguese educational documents. Component A addresses five questions:

- A-1: What oracy-related words and expressions are used and how frequently?
- A-2: How is the core (national) curriculum categorised? How wide are the categories included? What are the sub-categories? What are the domains named?
- A-3: What is the status of ‘orality’/‘oracy’? Is it a category, or a sub-category?
- A-4: What terms are defined and how? If the term oracy is not explicitly used, what other terms appear instead? Are these terms synonymous to oracy, or do they only overlap?
- A-5: In what sense does the reasoning applied in the documents reflect modern scientific knowledge? Are scientific theories and studies indicated as the source for the documents’ rationale?

Component B “Organisation” addresses the following questions:

- B-6: What is the structure of the documents? (domains; components)
- B-7: What skills/abilities are prioritised?
- B-8: What progression concerning how lower and higher levels of oracy are understood can be observed as stipulated in the documents and syllabuses? Is this progression expressed in terms of numbers?

Component C “Procedures/Methods” addresses the following questions:

- C-9: What quantitative measures of the students’ progress in achieving learning objectives are recommended?
- C-10: What activities are recommended?
- C-11: What registers/genres of texts are recommended?

Component D “Effects” addresses the following questions:

- D-12: What are the expected outcomes?
- D-13: What is the degree of specificity of the expected results?
- D-14: What are the purposes of achieving/developing oracy?
- D-15: What is the role of oracy in learning and critical thinking as presented in the documents?

3. RESULTS

3.1 Component A: Categories

Poland. Oracy does not appear as an explicit category in the Polish core curriculum. Specific terms paraphrasing or pertaining to oracy appear within descriptions of different areas of child development. In the part devoted to educational aims to be

attained by the end of the first educational stage (early education, Year 1 to Year 3, learners' age 6/7 to 8/9), they appear in three out of four areas. In the most recent core curriculum of 2017, the terms are: 1. in the educational area—"ability to *name* (one's emotions or feelings)", "ability to *name* (other people's emotions and feelings)", "ability to *present* (one's emotions) in a simple spoken form", "ability to *express* (...) by means of a spoken expression", 2. in the social area—"ability to *name* (values)", "ability to *name* (social groups and their features)", 3. in the cognitive development area—"ability to properly *use the Polish language in speech* (...) enabling independent activity, communication and effective learning", 4. in the physical development area—no such terms occur (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, 2017). Hence, at the level of educational goals oracy functions as a most elementary form of expression. No references are made to the development of linguistic or communicative competences, or the ability of language exploration and creation. Moreover, the documents fail to explicitly elaborate on the different patterns of language interaction.

Slightly more specific references to oracy can be found in the part entitled "Content-specific requirements", at the level of "achievements in listening" and "achievements in speaking". The achievements in listening include the following descriptors: "[a student] listens attentively to utterances of the teachers and other people", "asks questions", "seeks own patterns of proper articulation and verbal interpretation in the native language". These behaviours indicate that children creatively seek language correctness, which is consistent with the current psycholinguistic knowledge concerning the development of child's language (Carroll, 2008; Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2011). The achievements in speaking include the following descriptors: "[a student] expresses himself/herself smoothly, clearly, applying spoken language techniques appropriate for situations", "formulates questions", "expresses himself/herself in an organised way", "orders his/her speech", "corrects errors", "discusses content", "builds in the spoken form", "adopts a suitable form", "tries language experiments", and "creates utterances characteristic of himself/herself" (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, 2017). These examples prove that the detailed part of document is dominated by references concerning one's control over language and speaking techniques. Additionally, several references to exploration (experiments) and creation of students' own speaking style occur.

Oracy (listening and speaking) appears (as first and second) among six sub-categories of "Polish Language Education", divided into achievements in listening, speaking, reading, writing, language education, and self-study.

Oracy has a lower status in the Polish core curriculum, as it appears only as a sub-category within specific requirements. Thus, terms equivalent to or implying oracy are not defined. Instead, the traditional concepts of language skills (speaking and listening) are employed more systematically. The document cites Więckowski's concept of early education from the 1990s as the main theoretical grounds, and it discussed contemporary pedagogical perspectives more superficially. The constructivist didactics is mentioned mostly in the description of instructional guidelines,

e.g. “teachers organise children’s education as a dynamic process of assigning their personal sense and understanding of the constantly changing reality”, “the process of education enables exploration of the world, acquisition of new experience and interaction with the surroundings” (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, 2017). Yet, in the description of specific requirements, particularly those related to speaking, a turn to behaviouristic didactics occurs, as correctness, form, and conventionality are emphasized.

Portugal. As mentioned above, the documents have been changing in Portugal. In the *Student Profile*, the competences most related to orality are: 1. languages and texts, and 2. information and communication. The *Essential Learning* discussed five syllabi from Year 1 to Year 4 (of primary education): the Portuguese Language, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science, Artistic and Physical Expression, and English (the latter one only in Year 3 and 4).

The word oracy is not used in the documents. In *Curricular Syllabus and Standards of Portuguese in Basic Education* (2015) and in *Essential Learning in Basic Education* (2018) not *oracy*, but *orality* (oralidade) stands as a domain of competence development. Four main competences are listed in the syllabus: orality, reading and writing, literary education, and grammar. The 2015 syllabus for primary education enumerates 21 main objectives. Four of these relate to orality: “(a) to acquire and develop active listening strategies in order to collect essential information, to develop the understanding, and to produce oral statements in specific contexts; (b) to understand the different communicative intentions in situations of orality and to learn to use them critically, not only on a daily basis, but also in the production of speeches in formal contexts, including of argumentative speeches; (c) to produce oral texts in standard Portuguese, belonging to specific genres and categories, while gradually analysing their different dimensions and characteristics; (d) to use the language fluently, mobilizing various verbal and non-verbal features, and using technological resources in a timely manner” (Buescu, Morais, Rocha & Magalhães, 2015).

While characterizing primary education, the *Curricular Syllabus and Standards of Portuguese in Basic Education* (2015) confirms that the population differs greatly in their comprehension and oral expression skills. Thus, the knowledge and the mastery of the orality must be deepened (Buescu, Morais, Rocha, & Magalhães, 2015, p. 7). Moreover, the syllabus emphasizes the importance of acquiring courtesy rules and cooperation principle. It also stresses the development (with increasing autonomy) of articulatory and prosodic skills, oral comprehension, and oral expression skills, as needed for verbal interaction and short texts production (Buescu, Morais, Rocha, & Magalhães, 2015, p. 7). The document suggests that school genres (e.g. short presentations, small persuasive discourse, narration, and retelling in Year 3, and debate, justification of one’s opinion, and summary of main ideas in Year 4) must be introduced by orality. To conclude, in the *Curricular Syllabus and Standards of Portuguese in Basic Education* (2015) orality is linked to listening, understanding, production, fluency, genres, and interaction. The new document, *the*

Essential Learning (2018), uses a similar organization for different sections: 1. Domains, 2. Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes, 3. Teaching strategic actions oriented towards the student profile, and 4. Student profile descriptors. The four domains are relatively balanced, although less focus is placed on orality, as compared with other areas. This is more visible in the first two years of primary education. In Year 1 and 2, orality training focuses on discourse interaction, comprehension, and expression.

Orality is also discussed in other disciplines. The Mathematics and Science and Social Studies syllabi state the relevance of orality for both learning and expression of what is learned.

In the Portuguese language syllabus, oracy comprises both a relational and a learning dimension. Linguistics and pragmatics support the relational dimension (e.g. Grice, 1975). The learning dimension relies on exploratory talk and socio-cultural approaches (Vygotsky, 1978), as it requires students to be active and to participate in their own learning processes. The key role of talk in education is recognised (Sousa, 2015), specifically in the access to and the expression of knowledge, and in relationships and citizenship (Martins et al., 2017).

3.2 Component B: Organisation

Poland. The core curriculum specifies: the general aims of schools, the general abilities of school students, the tasks of schools, the notes on choosing substantive content for particular subjects, and general and specific requirements. Long sections are devoted to oracy-oriented issues. However, the document accentuates reading far more than speaking, communication is presented in very general terms as part of students' social skills, and the section on early education (the first three years) is significantly shorter than the one on the subsequent primary education (the following five years). These parts are, respectively, 25 and 162 pages long.

The prioritised qualities of oracy include correctness in articulatory, syntactic and pragmatic terms. These are signalled by strong emphasis laid on pronunciation, organisation of speech, and expressions of politeness, respectively. The range of key abilities is presented in terms of either expression of particular meanings (e.g. reciting poems, answering questions, presenting daily routine, presenting one's likes or feelings, etc.) or communicative needs (e.g. reacting to instructions, cooperating with peers, using forms of politeness, etc.). Language itself is not presented as the subject of analysis or exploration. Instead, its role is confined to a tool, which serves social functions rather than shapes students as human beings (as stipulated by the so-called linguistic turn (Lafont, 1999)).

In other words, no larger section of the core curriculum proves to be "oracy-driven", that is built upon components making up the larger construct named as "oracy", the understanding and the importance of which remains largely vague throughout the document. Its vagueness renders it essentially impossible to detect

a clear-cut indication of how learners' progress in oracy is expected to proceed, which constitutes a major drawback of the Polish document.

Portugal. In Portugal, a document organised around competences that define the student profile when leaving school (not a core curriculum), *the Student Profile*, is used. This document aims to contribute to curricula organization and management, and to define strategies, methodologies and pedagogical-didactic procedures to be used in the teaching practice. It includes the following sections: Principles, Vision, Values, and Areas of Competence (Martins et. al., 2017). 10 areas of competence are defined: languages and texts, information and communication, critical thinking and creative thinking, reasoning and problem solving, scientific and technological knowledge, interpersonal relationships, personal development and autonomy, health and environmental well-being, aesthetic and artistic sensitivity, body awareness and mastery. As an addition to *the Student Profile*, *the Essential Learning* presents different syllabi, and serves as a basis for each course, and provides guidelines for schools, students, and external evaluation (national exams).

In the former syllabus for primary schools (2009), the particular syllabi for different disciplines: Portuguese and non-native Portuguese (or Portuguese as L2), Mathematics, Social Studies and Science, Physical and Artistic Education, Citizenship Development and Moral and Religious Education were organised differently, and, sometimes, were based on different educational principles.

The orality domain includes comprehension and expression skills, and lists different strategic actions that are articulated in the *Student Profile*. To achieve the expected comprehension skills, Year 1 students should be able to listen in order to interact properly and to identify essential information in utterances. To achieve the expected expression skills, students should be able to use appropriate intonation and rhythm patterns when formulating questions, assertions, and requests. They should be also able to take turns, speak in a clear and audible manner, express opinions, share ideas and feelings. The skills are redefined for each Year, as children's capabilities develop. Thus, Year 4 students should be able to: "select relevant information according to listening objectives and memorize it using various techniques; distinguish between facts and opinions, implicit and explicit information, essential and accessory information, denotation and connotation" (Ministério da Educação, Direção Geral da Educação, 2018, p. 6). In regard to comprehension and expression skills, students should be able "to ask and take turns, respecting others' turn; to plan, produce, and evaluate brief oral speeches, using varied vocabulary and complex phrases, either individually or in groups; to participate with commitment in activities of oriented oral expression, respecting specific rules and roles; to produce brief speeches, including planning and speaking in order to express opinions and share ideas audibly, with good articulation, intonation and appropriate rhythm, and to ensure eye contact with the audience (body posture, facial expression, appearance)" (Ministério da Educação, Direção Geral da Educação, 2018, p. 6). According to the *Essential Learning* (2018, pp. 2-3), at the end of primary school (Year 4), students should be able to understand speech (to listen,

infer the meaning of unknown words from the context, know how to retain essential information, identify the communicative intention of the interlocutor in texts appropriate for their age group). They should also be able express themselves appropriately (clearly, audibly, and appropriately to the context), as they are developing and consolidating their discursive capacities such as constructing narratives, descriptions, opinions, and requests.

3.3 Component C: Procedures/methods

Poland. At the instructional level, the process of native language education is treated as an integrative element, an “axis” for the organisation of education in different areas, in contact with the social and natural world, and in relation to the regional and national culture. Instructional guidelines promote flexibility, as they encourage teachers to employ their own creative solutions when covering the content of the core curriculum, as the capabilities of children (including those with special needs), differ. The reasoning found in the documents is that creativity of learning leads to the exclusion of organisational or methodological patterns. Such a guideline relates to a general rule of planning teaching methods, yet no specific instructional guidelines for the shaping of speaking skills are provided.

No quantitative means that could demonstrate how oracy improves with age are suggested (these could be, for example, the increased rate of speaking, the number of words used in speech, and alike). Hence, the core curriculum remains at a highly general level, formulating slogans rather than specifics. The document defines two areas in which students can improve. They can learn how to speak more correctly and search, to some extent, for own speaking style.

Portugal. The *Essential Learning* (2018) states that Year 1 language incorporates competences fundamental for a personal and social fulfilment and a conscious and active citizenship. In the introduction to this document, Portuguese language, as an object of study, is understood as achievement, communication, aesthetic enjoyment, literary education, problem solving, and critical thinking. In order to achieve these goals, schools and teachers should organize teaching in order to achieve learning objectives for all students. The inclusion of all students is highly valued. Education should be organized also to develop interdisciplinary skills that take longer to master.

There are no quantitative measures, but the *Curricular Syllabus and Standards of Portuguese in Basic Education* (2015) presents a set of extensive skills in: interaction, listening to learn, producing oral speeches, and participating in the activities of oriented oral expression. Both the *Essential Learning* (2018) and the *Curricular Syllabus and Standards of Portuguese in Basic Education* (2015) the expected students’ achievements and competences in different genres increase in difficulty following the development of children’s capabilities. For example, children should practice presenting, retelling, storytelling, simulation, and role playing in Year 1,

and oral speeches, oral presentations, short persuasive speeches, and debates of ideas in Year 4.

The Essential Learning (2018) recommends that teachers adopt the project work methodology (e.g. In Year 3, the students construct their project to become readers) to promote literacy education through affective and aesthetic relationship with literature and literary texts (both oral and written), and reading poems, dramas, and prose. The document also asserts that the use of diverse resources and strategies and rewarding reading experiences can promote reading and instil a life-long habit, thus motivating students to continue learning through reading.

3.4 Component D: Effects

Poland. The entire core curriculum is results-based. The categories specify children's abilities expected at the end of the early education. The paramount goal is that students can communicate in a degree that enables them to learn at the subsequent educational stages. The expected results, however, concern basic language abilities and communicative competence and thus encompass simple utterances, correct and adequate for specific situations.

The core curriculum is written primarily from the perspective of pedagogy. Interdisciplinary considerations occur only occasionally. This contrasts with general recommendations (referred to earlier in this paper) that early education teachers know and use content from multiple subjects and disciplines. Although language as a whole is recognised as involving students' holistic experience, the core curriculum fails to specify in what ways oracy is to be supported and analysed by interdisciplinary means. And conversely—the core curriculum does not state in what sense oracy determines and boosts the students' interdisciplinary progress.

Portugal. The documents produced between 2016 and 2018 emphasise the students' participation, inclusion, and citizenship. The *Essential Learning* (2018) is organized around oral comprehension and oral production, and expected competences advance. The *Curricular Syllabus and Standards of Portuguese in Basic Education* (2015) details the students' final achievements and competences. Orality is explicitly linked to becoming a knowledgeable, wise, educated, communicative, systematic, organized, respectful, participative, collaborative, and creative person (Martins et al. 2017).

The *Essential Learning* (2018) states that the competence in orality (comprehension and expression) enables a speaker to interact appropriately within the context and for various purposes (namely, reproducing short messages, following instructions, answering questions, expressing opinions, sharing ideas and feelings).

The *Curricular Syllabus and Standards of Portuguese in Basic Education* (2015) aims to develop the understanding of different communicative intentions and the knowledge how to use them in daily life and in formal contexts, e.g. presentation and argumentation discourses.

Portuguese, as an object of study, is understood as achievement, communication, aesthetic enjoyment, literary education, problem solving, and critical thinking. The focus is put on consolidating the study of reading and writing in Portuguese, essential for the critical construction of knowledge.

4. CONCLUSION

After the analysis of available documents we conclude that, although both Polish and Portuguese official early education recommendations and obligations include teaching oracy, the importance they put on its development is quite dissimilar (see a summary of our findings in Table 1). The Polish legislation, the core curriculum, focuses on teaching literacy. For example, a huge disproportion of content devoted to early and primary education (even if we accept that the latter period is longer and includes education in new school subjects) is hard to justify. This reflects, in our opinion, an inferior treatment of early education. The term “oracy” is not used, and oracy is treated as a sub-category with specific requirements expecting that students are able to use most elementary forms of expression, e.g. asking questions or communicate with other speakers politely. Hence, we conclude that the authors of the core curriculum do not assign oracy a significant or overarching role and, accordingly, do not present it in the curriculum as a particularly salient learning or critical thinking. Although a number of slogans relating to the development of reasoning, the interpretation of reality and cultural messages occur, no unequivocal indications as to the unquestionable value recognised in the spoken element involved in these activities appear. Thus, language is generally treated as a tool that serves social functions.

The Portuguese legislation, which comprises three separate documents, lists four main components: orality, reading and writing, literary education, and grammar. The term “orality” in the sense it is conceptualized and used corresponds to oracy, and its inclusion among the major teaching areas underlines its importance. Language is treated as a tool for both expression and comprehension, as well as a prerequisite for advanced cognitive skills, like problem solving. The developing use of language enhances the capacity for reflection and to express and communicate the constructed knowledge.

Table 1. The comparison of approaches to oracy in Poland and in Portugal.

POLAND	PORTUGAL
One document—core curriculum (the recent referred to above dates from 2017)	Three documents: <i>Curricular Syllabus and Standards of Portuguese in Basic Education</i> (2015) <i>Student Profile</i> (2017) <i>Essential Learning</i> (2018)
The term “oracy” does not appear in the core curriculum; the closest term is “speaking and listening skills/achievements”.	Instead of the term “oracy”, “orality” is used; this term, however, generally reflects the idea of oracy.
Oracy (understood as speaking and listening skills) does not appear as a separate category, it appears within descriptions of different areas/sub-categories	Orality is a domain of teaching; “orality is linked to interaction, to listen and learn, to express and affirm themselves in the contexts”.
Oracy is mostly referred to the ability to <i>name</i> something (e. g. emotions, values).	Orality is focused on more advanced skills, communicative intentions, critical skills etc.
The legislation focuses on the elementary forms of expressions.	The competences connected to orality are more specifically and deeply taken into consideration.
References to oracy appear in the content of specific requirements in language education which are “achievements in listening” and “achievements in speaking”	Orality is mentioned and supported also within other subjects e.g. Mathematics, Social Studies and Science.

We believe that an explicit mention of oracy skills in the curriculum, as well as the focus on the importance of oracy for the development of other skills, including literacy, should be included in the documents. This is necessary for the early education programmes to be focused appropriately on the support of oracy, and influences the teachers’ attitudes and behaviours. In fact, the next step of our study will be an analysis of Polish and Portuguese early education teachers’ approach to oracy, using a questionnaire on teachers’ beliefs about oracy and observation of interaction in the classroom. It would be also interesting to examine the approaches to oracy in other educational systems, both in legislation and in school practice. Our results show that early education teachers in different countries receive dissimilar guidelines, while the conceptualisation of certain concepts, like oracy, and the importance with which they are treated, should consider their impact for educational practice. This latter issue will be, in fact, investigated in the next stage of our project. The observations of classes taught in both countries will help to clarify this issue. We think that the development of oracy in early education should be considered a priority (and the term itself explicitly named and separately discussed in the relevant legislation), together with the support of literacy, taking into account its importance for the children’s future academic achievement and active citizenship (cf. Alexander, 2012; Martins et al., 2017).

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