CLILNetLE

DIGITAL PRACTICES IN AND OUT OF THE CLIL CLASSROOM: PORTUGAL

A Report by CLILNetLE Working Group 4

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NOTE. This country report presents results from the Portuguese dataset, collected as part of two pan-European surveys administered by WG4 of the COST Action CLILNetLE. For the main report see *Digital Practices in and out of the CLIL Classroom: A pan-European survey of students and teachers*.

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1. Digital Literacies Student Survey (DLSS): Portugal

1.1. Introduction

The administration of surveys in schools in Portugal requires a request for prior authorisation from the General Directorate of Education (GDE). As COST members of the Portuguese team, we submitted a first request to the platform in February 2024. After a first round of clarifications, we submitted a second request in the middle of March 2024. Only 2 months after the first request, the authority provided an answer, and some issues were raised: the GDE platform to submit requests is designed for submissions of national institutions, who are supposed to attach either a declaration of a university supervisor or data protection officer, which could not be produced, the organisation responsible for the survey being European (working group of a COST action); the consent form produced along the COST survey was not sufficient for the GDE; and, the modality of administration of the student survey raised questions related with parental consent.

It is worth highlighting that the 2023/2024 school year has witnessed regular protests and unrest by teachers disrupting education and dynamics of national institutions. Furthermore, some students ended the school year without teachers in basic subjects such as Mathematics. In addition, the fall of the government in December 2023 and the scheduling of early parliamentary elections for March 2024 led to an increase in the feeling of discontent among the Portuguese population, including teachers. The experience of these turbulent times posed various obstacles for schools and teachers to respond to emails, to engage with and contribute to projects/activities.

However, as part of Working Group 4 of the CLILNetLE COST action, the respective team in Portugal attempted to reach target participants through alternative strategies. Educational institutions from a pre-existing list of 37 international schools were contacted via email; afterwards, a subset of these schools was reached via telephone to promote participation in the study/survey more directly[1]. Furthermore, other members of the CLILNetLE action who are part of CLIL networks in Portugal and who have a vast list of schools they collaborate with were contacted as well. A colleague using CLIL in Portuguese with non-Portuguese speaker students in transition to courses of higher education in Lisbon was also contacted. Despite these efforts, the COST survey administration in Portugal resulted in only a low number of responses from students attending CLIL education.

CLIL is not universally present in mainstream education across all levels in Portugal (Ellison et al., 2022), and projects and respective research mostly involve higher education (Piacentini et al., 2022). English is the foreign or second language most frequently selected among

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[1] The researchers used a list of previous contacts and selected a group of schools that implemented the CLIL approach.

Portuguese CLIL initiatives, both institutional and grassroots, at compulsory school levels (Ellison et al., 2022; European Commission, 2017).

CLIL is mainly known through the 'top-down' policy of the PEBI (*Programa Escolas Bilingues em Inglês*/Programme of Bilingual Schools in English) of the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the British Council. The number of school clusters involved in the programme has increased from 11 school clusters in 2016-2017 (first PEBI edition) to 38 at present, the coverage being still under 7%. Thus, CLIL practice has been growing as a result of several bottom-up initiatives, in public and private schools, of engaged teachers in collaboration with universities or polytechnics (Ellison et al., 2022, p. 43). Additionally, the policy of curricular 'flexibility' introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2017 – allowing for up to 25% autonomous curriculum management – has been a factor that has contributed to the increasing interest in CLIL in the Portuguese context.

More recent findings about the conditions and possibilities of implementing CLIL in Portuguese public and private schools can be found in Ellison et al. (2022). Within private and international schools in Portugal, numerous educational institutions can be found that adopt content-language teaching. These often embrace CLIL to meet the demands of a globalised world, providing students with competitive training that intends to improve their language skills alongside academic content. In these contexts, students regularly benefit from greater flexibility in curriculum design and resource allocation. The adoption of CLIL in private Portuguese schools is often accompanied by a strong emphasis on immersive and interactive learning environments.

1.2. Summary of main findings

- Bureaucratic obstacles with the national education authority.
- Number of responses to the COST survey was below expectations by the stipulated end date (June 5, 2024).
- Responses from 12 students, 15 years old (on average) attending schools located, mainly, in suburbs.
- Portuguese was the home language and the main school language, at least for 9 of them; several other languages were used to communicate with family and friends.
- English was the main CLIL language, present in any content area but frequently used for CLIL Natural Sciences and Economics classes.
- CLIL classes seemed to be more focused on the learning of the linguistic discipline than on the non-linguistic one and seemed not to use the CLIL language exclusively.
- Social media, video streaming, online video and music, as well as digital storytelling were activities important for supporting the students' CLIL learning daily.
- Mobile phones and desktop computers were the digital devices more frequently used in and out of school; laptops were also frequently used out of school; tablets were used, in and out of school, but not frequently.
- Internet access occurred mostly at home, followed by public settings and school. Limited internet, mainly at school, represented a problem related to the use of digital technologies

1.3. Participant background

In the case of Portugal, data cleansing resulted in 12 responses considered valid for analysis. As depicted in the bar chart below, the respondents' **ages** ranged between 13 to 21 years, the average age being 15.

Q2.1 Age of participants
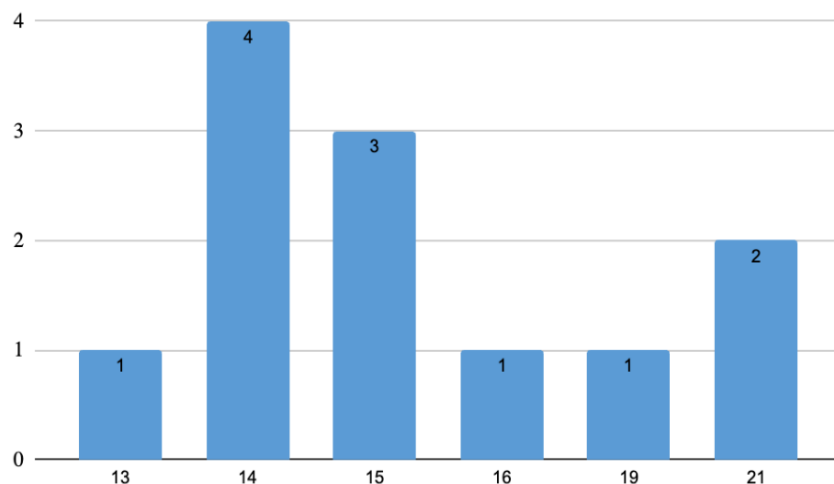
As for participants' **gender**, seven of the 12 students identified as female and five as male, as clear in this pie chart.

Q2.2 - Gender distribution of participants
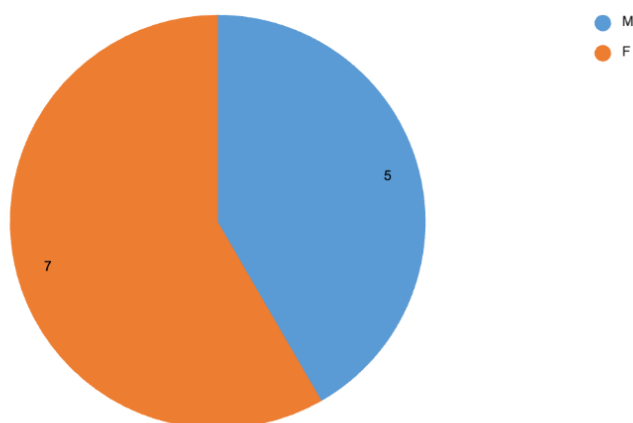
Concerning their **parents' highest level of education**, as the following chart shows, one respondent indicated that their parents had primary education, three respondents that their parents had a bachelor's degree, four that they had a master's degree, and three a PhD. One respondent did not answer the question.

Q2.3 Highest level of parents' education
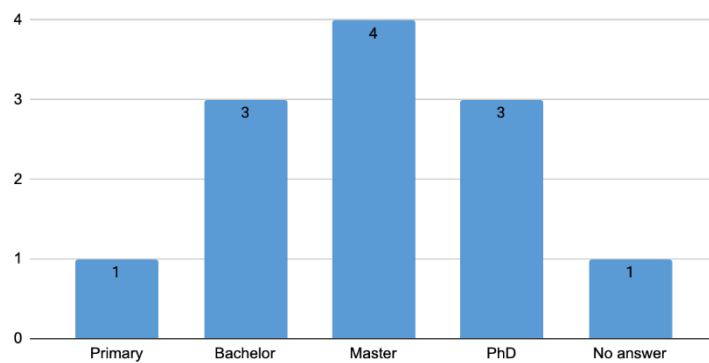

Q2.3 Parents education level

The bar chart below shows all the **languages** that participants (*N*=12) reported using **at home**. Portuguese (*N*=9), English (*N*=4), Romanian (*N*=1), Turkish (*N*=1), French (*N*=1), Spanish (*N*=1), and Bengali (Other, *N*=1) were mentioned as languages used for communication in the family context. Several respondents reported using various languages at home.

In terms of the **languages used to communicate with the extended family**, students mentioned English (*N*=6), Portuguese (*N*=4), Italian (*N*=1), Turkish (*N*=1), Bengali and Lingala (Other in the chart, *N*=2).

Q2.4 Languages used at home
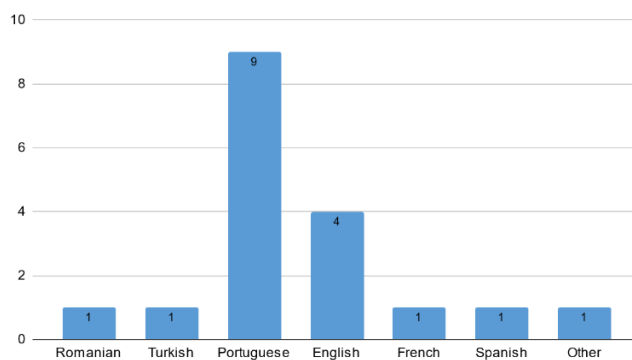
Q2.5 Languages with family elsewhere
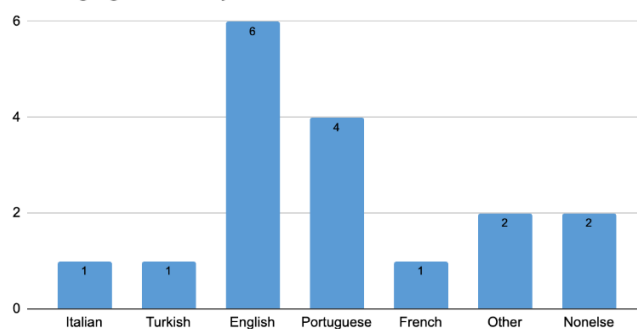

Q2.5 Languages with family elsewhere

Respondents displayed a higher diversity of **languages when communicating with friends** "face to face": Portuguese (*N*=10), English (*N*=7), Spanish (*N*=3), Italian (*N*=1), Turkish (*N*=1), Galician (*N*=1), Ukrainian (*N*=1), as well as Bengali (*N*=1), Hindi (*N*=1) and Urdu (*N*=1) ("Other" option in the question).

Q2.6 Languages used with friends
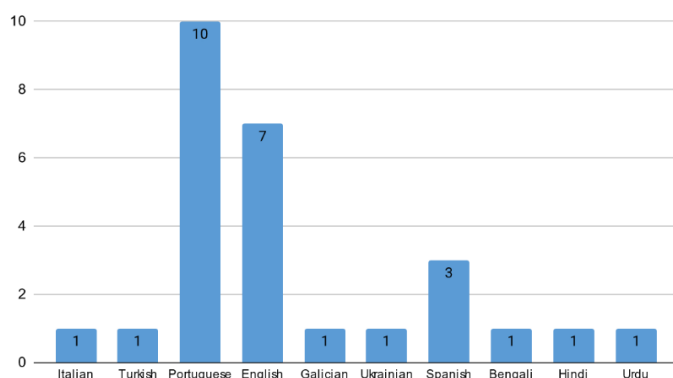
As depicted in the bar charts below, which are related to the school context, Portuguese was indicated as the **main school language** (*N*=9), as well as Greek (*N*=1), Turkish (*N*=1) (these two answers could be related to the students in the transition to university/polytechnics) and English (*N*=1). Almost all students indicated English as **the main CLIL language** (*N*=10).

Q2.8 Main school language

Q2.8 Main school language

Q3.2 Main CLIL language
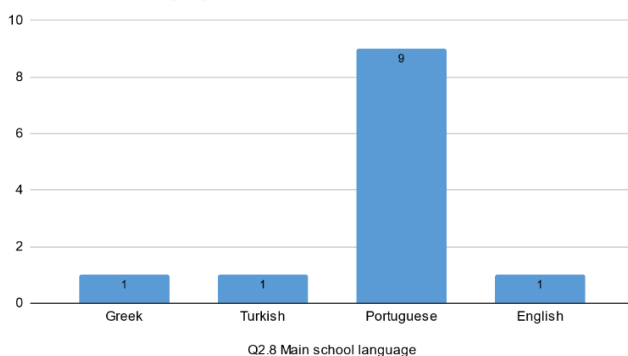
Q3.2 Main CLIL language
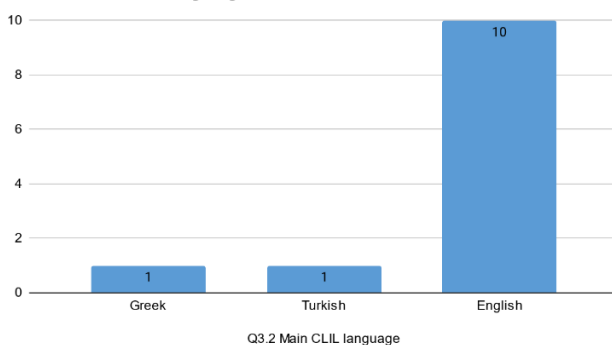
Participants were asked to select their **school year**, by counting upwards from the first year they started primary school until they reached the current year that they were attending. Of the 12 respondents, four were in 6th grade, three in 8th grade, one in 7th grade, and one in 9th grade. Two did not answer the question and one said they were in the 13th grade (this answer does not fit in with the structure of Portuguese education, which ranges from 1st grade up to 12th).

Participants were also asked to indicate the **location of their educational institution**. Data presented in the following chart show that nine students attended a school located in the suburbs, two in urban and one in rural settings, respectively.

Q11.3 School location

Q11.3 School location
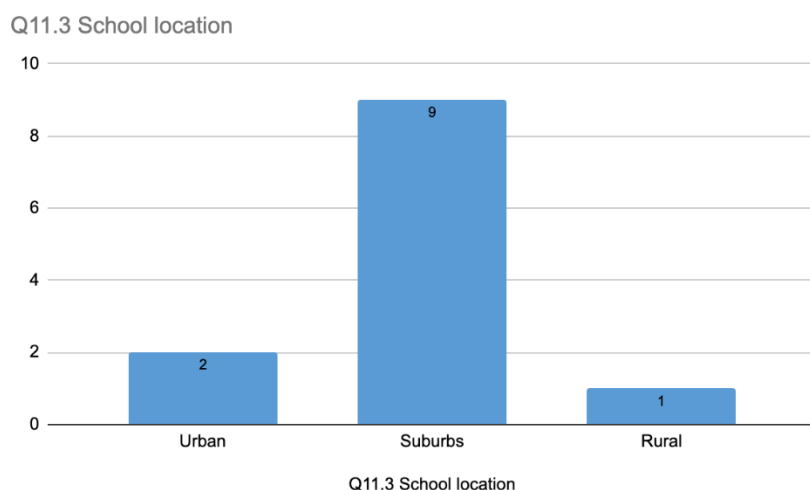
1.4. Participants' CLIL learning experience

In terms of the **subjects taught in the CLIL language**, it is clear that English was predominant in every content area, from Arts to Tourism-Hospitality, at the schools of these 12 students. Only in two cases, Turkish was mentioned as the language to learn Economics and Health (one respondent), and Greek for Tourism-Hospitality (one respondent). Without counting the Language subjects, Natural Sciences and Economics were mostly pointed out by respondents (N=5 and N=4, respectively) as being CLIL subjects taught in English.

Participants positioned a slider, that is, an arrow on a scale ranging from '1' to '100' to indicate whether the **main aim of the CLIL lessons** they had was more on language learning ('1') - or content learning ('100'). The analysis of the data revealed that, for these 12 students, CLIL lessons were focused more on language learning than on content learning (M=38.33).

The next question addressed to what extent **only the CLIL language or more languages** were used during the CLIL lessons. By using the same system - a slider on a scale from '1' (monolingual) to '100' (multilingual), results showed that the average value resulted in 49.50. This seems to show that, within the CLIL classes attended by the participants, the use of only

one language (monolingual) almost equated to the use of more than one language (multilingual).

1.5. Focus on spare time

Students were asked to reflect on the **digital activities** they engaged in daily during their free time. They were provided with a list of activities (as depicted in the frequency table and bar chart below) and asked to indicate the importance of each activity to develop their skills in CLIL subjects using their first CLIL language. Four students of the full Portuguese sample (*N*=12) did not answer this question, leading to a smaller sub-total (*N*=8).

	Important	Moderately important	Not important
Social media	4	1	1
Phone-based apps	2	2	1
Instant messaging	3	1	0
Single-player online gaming	1	2	0
Multiplayer online games	1	0	0
Video streaming	3	2	0
Online video	4	1	0
Online music	4	3	0
Online shopping	2	1	1
Mobile photography	3	1	1
Digital storytelling	5	0	0
Online forums	2	0	0
Online research & learning	2	0	0
Free educational apps	1	0	0
Paid educational apps	1	0	0
Online courses	1	0	0
Digital projectors & whiteboards	1	0	0
E-textbooks	1	0	0
E-book readers	1	0	0
Digital reading devices	1	0	0
VR & AR	1	0	0
AI-based technologies	2	0	0

## Q6.1 Spare time digital activities that support CLIL learning
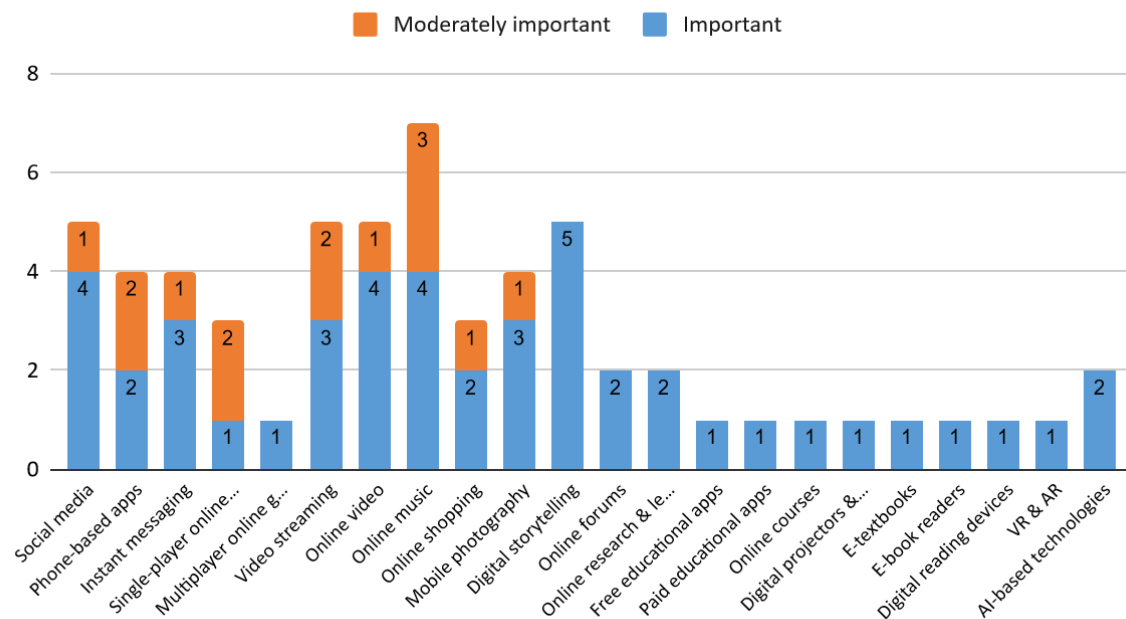
Generally speaking, respondents considered that the listed activities were important to support CLIL learning. Social media, video streaming, online video and music, as well as digital storytelling were the activities that more than half of the responding students reported as an 'important' support for their CLIL learning daily. Online music and digital storytelling were mentioned as 'important' or 'moderately important', by a higher number of students. The digital activities that were considered 'not important' for the students' CLIL learning (shown in the table, but not in the chart) by at least one respondent were social media, phone-based apps, online shopping, and mobile photography, which could be explained by the participants' average age being 15 years. Multiplayer online gaming, VR and AR, free and paid educational apps, online courses, digital projectors and whiteboards, e-textbooks, e-book readers and digital reading devices were mentioned as 'important' by only one respondent.

1.6. Access to digital devices in and out of school

While using digital devices, students have **access to the internet in different locations** (shown in the following horizontal stacked bar chart): at home (in general and in their room) every day for most of the students. Public settings, students' schools, and relatives' and friends' houses were also frequently reported.

12.2 Frequency of internet acess
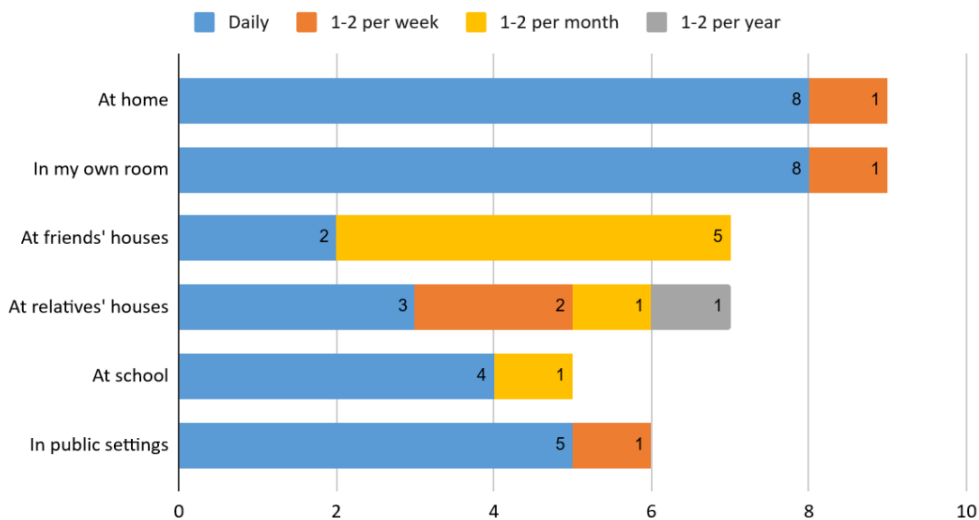
To understand the **frequency of their use of digital devices in and out of school**, they were asked to indicate how often they used different digital devices both outside of school and at school.

In terms of the **extramural use** of a given list of devices, the chart below shows that mobile phones, laptop and desktop computers, and smart home technologies were the digital devices mostly used ('daily' and/or '1-2 times per week') out of school by these 12 students in Portugal. Tablets were used by several students, but not frequently. Game consoles and e-book readers were rarely used. Smartwatches were either used 'daily' or not used at all and smart TVs were used with different frequencies.

12.3 Use of digital devices outside of school
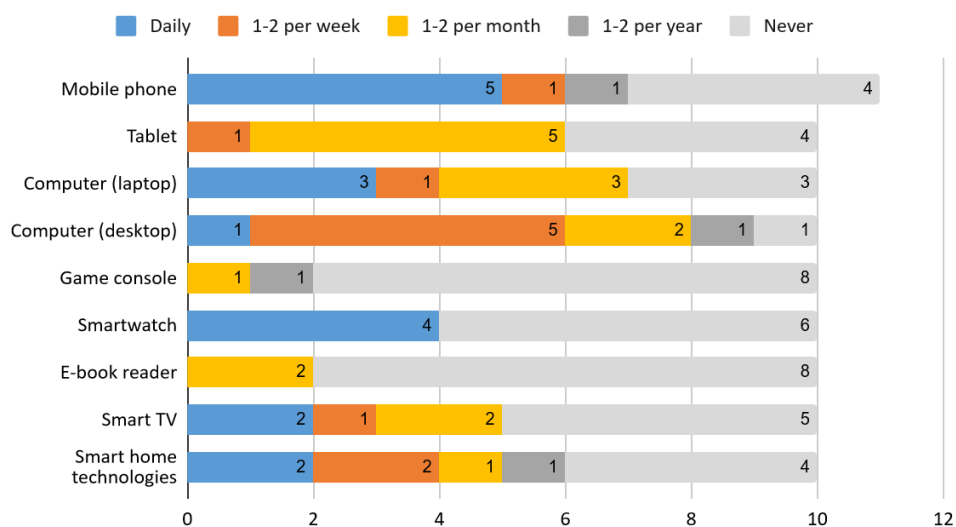
With regards to the same list of devices **used at school**, the chart shows that mobile phones and desktop computers were the digital devices mostly used ('daily' and/or '1-2 times per week') at school by these 12 students in Portugal. At school, laptop computers and tablets were used by several students, but with different frequencies or not frequently, respectively. Game consoles, smart TVs and smart home technologies were 'never' or rarely used at school, as expected. Smartwatches and e-book readers were also rarely used.
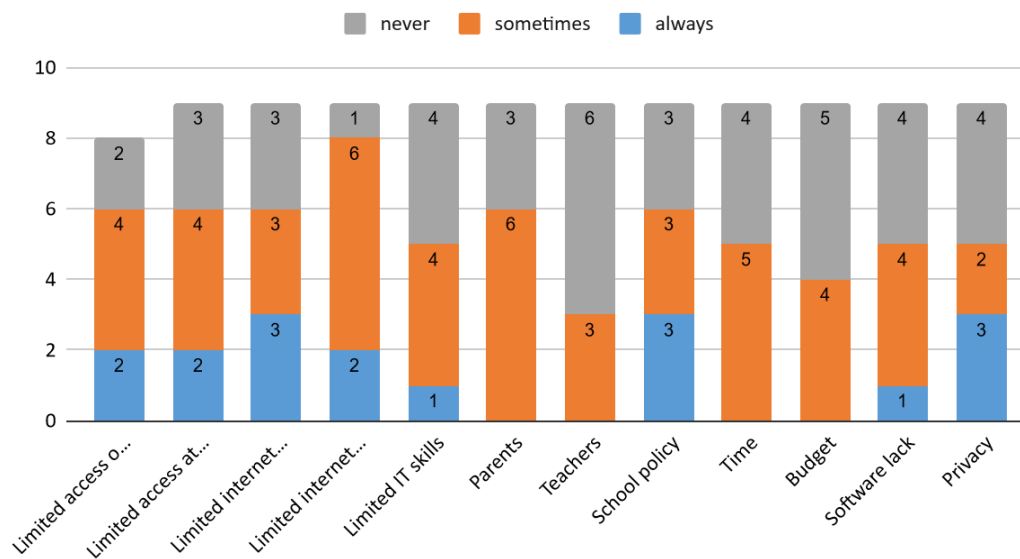
13.1 Use of digital devices at school
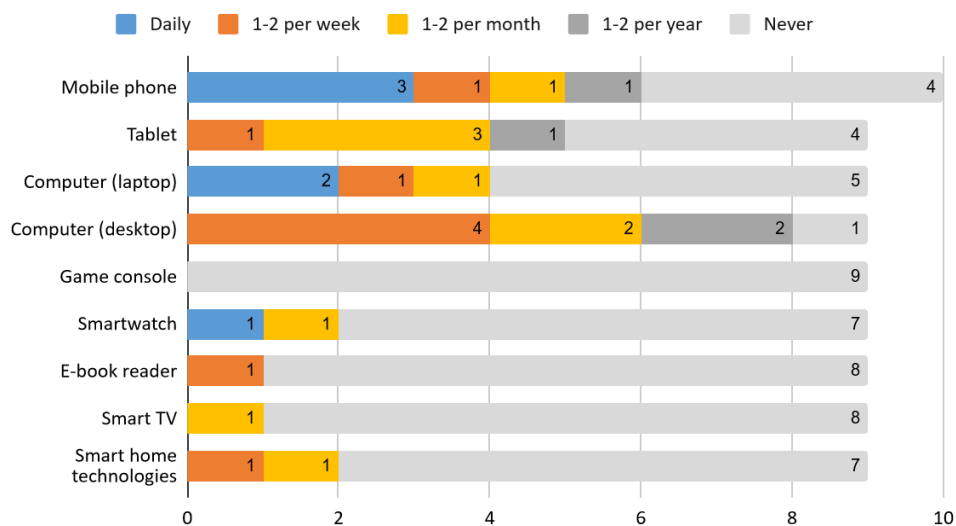
1.7. Challenges when using digital technologies

Students were asked to identify **challenges** that they experienced when using digital technologies in and out of school. They were given a list of possible problems (as depicted in the frequency table and bar chart below) and asked to indicate whether they encountered them 'always', 'sometimes', or 'never'. Three students of the full Portuguese sample (N=12) did not answer this question, leading to a smaller subtotal (N=9) of the answer rate, which is what is reported next.

The most recurrent problems that these students had with the use of digital technologies were the following: limited access to them, both in and out of school, limited internet, both in and out of school, and school policy and privacy. Limited IT skills and lack of software also constituted a regular challenge, as well as parents and time. For most participants, teachers and budget did not represent a problem related to the use of digital technologies.

Q14.1 Problems with digital technologies

Legend: never (grey), sometimes (orange), always (blue)

Category	always	sometimes	never
Limited access o...	2	4	2
Limited access at...	2	4	3
Limited internet...	3	3	3
Limited internet...	2	6	1
Limited IT skills	1	4	4
Parents		6	3
Teachers		3	6
School policy	3	3	3
Time		5	4
Budget		4	5
Software lack	1	4	4
Privacy	3	2	4

2. Digital Literacies Teacher Survey (DLTS): Portugal

2.1. Introduction

To be able to administer the survey in the Portuguese public schools, the respective national COST team needed the approval of the General Directorate of Education (GDE) in Portugal. Therefore, a first request was submitted in February 2024 and a second one in the middle of March 2024. Only 2 months after the first request, the authority replied to the request and some issues emerged: the GDE platform to submit requests is designed for submissions of national institutions, who are supposed to attach either a declaration of a university supervisor or data protection officer, which could not be produced, the organisation responsible for the survey being European (working group of a COST action); the consent form that went with the COST survey was not sufficient for the GDE; and the modality of administration of the student survey raised questions related with parental consent.

In addition, the 2023/2024 school year has been marked by regular protests and unrest by teachers. Besides the protests and strikes, some students ended the school year without teachers in basic subjects such as Mathematics. Furthermore, the fall of the government in December 2023 and the scheduling of early parliamentary elections for March 2024 led to an increase in the feeling of discontent among the Portuguese population, including teachers. The experience of these turbulent times implied many obstacles for schools and teachers to respond to emails, join projects and get involved.

Although the team resorted to alternative contact strategies to reach target participants – through other members of the CLILNetLE action who are part of CLIL networks in Portugal and have a vast list of schools they collaborate with; through direct contacts and, to a certain extent, through groups of teachers on Facebook – all these constraints have resulted in the absence of respondents and responses to the teacher survey whose end date was May 6.

The mapping of the extent of CLIL practice or teacher education for CLIL in Portugal is still an ongoing process. However, in comparison with other European countries, CLIL is not universally present in mainstream education across all levels in Portugal (Ellison et al., 2022), and projects and respective research mostly involve higher education (Piacentini et al., 2022). English is the foreign or second language most frequently selected among Portuguese CLIL initiatives, both institutional and grassroots, at compulsory school levels (Ellison, 2018; Ellison et al., 2022; European Commission, 2017).

In fact, CLIL is mainly known through the 'top-down' policy of the PEBI *(Programa Escolas Bilingues em Inglês*/Programme of Bilingual Schools in English) of the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the British Council. School clusters have to meet specific requirements to apply to the programme: stability of teachers in schools, curricular time devoted to CLIL, pedagogical supervision of CLIL implementation, and subjects taught through CLIL. In the first PEBI edition (2016-2017), 11 Portuguese school clusters were involved in the programme,

the number having increased over time to 38 in 2023-2024. The goal is bilingual education in 7% of the schools/school clusters in continental Portugal by 2025.

CLIL practice has been growing as a result of several bottom-up initiatives, in public and private schools, of "engaged teachers who have begun […] incorporating innovative teaching practices in their classes and into the system and designing their own CLIL programmes and materials across the curriculum" in collaboration with universities or polytechnics dedicated to teacher education (Ellison et al., 2022, p. 43). According to these authors, the policy of curricular 'flexibility' introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2017 – allowing for up to 25% autonomous curriculum management – is a factor that has contributed to the increasing interest in CLIL in the Portuguese context.

More recent findings about the conditions and possibilities for implementing CLIL in Portuguese public and private schools can be found in Ellison et al. (2022), who clarify that the methodological approach adopted has brought "limited information on how private and international schools use and conceptualise CLIL" (p. 94). The exploratory study of these authors also indicates that "more attention [should be] given to developing a dynamic of training and practice across disciplinary frameworks" (p. 32).

2.2. Summary of main findings

- Bureaucratic obstacles with the National Education Authority
- No responses by the stipulated end date of the COST survey (May 6, 2024)
- General information about CLIL practice from the literature

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