

EDITORIAL

Teaching Strategies in Portuguese as an Additional Language

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We are pleased to present the second edition of BELT+ focused on Portuguese as an Additional Language, with the theme of this issue being Teaching Strategies. We continue to highlight the rise in interest in Portuguese as an Additional Language (PAL) in higher education institutions around the world. As mentioned in the 2014 (vol. 05, no. 2) edition, the Ministry of Education has been promoting its Languages without Borders Program¹ (LwB) to prepare outgoing and incoming students participating in the Science without Borders Program² (SwB) for the purposes of improving the quality of higher education and research programs in Brazil. LwB includes the offer of courses of Portuguese for Foreigners. These programs have led to increased scientific and academic mobility as well as international agreements between Brazilian and foreign institutions. Despite the economic and political challenges currently facing the country, the programs will still be in operation for the foreseeable future. Moreover, interest in Brazil and Brazilian Portuguese (BP) continues to climb with the creation of new Portuguese language programs around the world.

Another initiative by the Brazilian government is the Rede Brasil Cultural³, launched in its current form in 2013, which promotes the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture abroad, similar to institutions such as Instituto Camões for Portugal, Goethe-Institut for Germany and Instituto Cervantes for Spain.

¹ <<http://isf.mec.gov.br/>>

² <www.cienciasemfronteiras.gov.br>.

³ <<http://redebrasilcultural.itamaraty.gov.br/>>.

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However, the network has existed under different names since 1962 and is now represented by 24 Cultural Centers, 40 university lecturers and 5 Centers of Study. The Cultural Centers and Brazilian Centers of Study are considered extensions of Brazilian Embassies and/or Consulates offering courses in the Portuguese language, as well as cultural activities, including dance, music, gastronomy and arts, among others. The lecturers work in foreign higher education institutions as university professors, promoting the language and culture. The Rede Brasil Cultural has also highlighted the importance of advancing the study of Portuguese as a heritage language.

This steady rise in interest has been confirmed by the most recent report issued by the Modern Language Association (MLA, 2015), which is based on a survey of 2,435 American colleges and universities that offer programs in languages other than English. The report includes data on foreign language enrollment in two and four-year institutions, as well as graduate programs, from 2009 to 2013. Overall, language enrollments in U.S. higher education has decreased by 6.7% in the period studied. Even Spanish and French, which continue to be the two most studied foreign languages, still suffered a decline of around 8%. However, it is notable that some languages showed an increase in enrollments, namely Korean, American Sign Language (ASL), Portuguese, and Chinese. Portuguese enrollments increased by 10.1%, considering all higher education modalities. See the table below, taken from the MLA report, for an overview of the changes in enrollment in languages other than English.

Table 1: The top languages studied in US colleges and universities in fall 2013

Language	Enrollments	Change since 2009 (%)
Spanish	790,756	-8.2
French	197,757	-8.1
American Sign Language	109,577	+19.0
German	86,700	-9.3
Italian	71,285	-11.3
Japanese	66,740	-7.8
Chinese	61,055	+2.0
Arabic	32,286	-7.5%
Latin	27,192	-16.2
Russian	21,962	-17.9
Greek, Ancient	12,917	-35.5
Hebrew, Biblical	12,551	-8.7
Portuguese	12,415	+10.1
Korean	12,229	+44.7
Hebrew, Modern	6,698	-19.4

The Figure 1 reveals the raw numbers depicting the increase in enrollments in higher education courses in Portuguese since 1960. Strikingly, the numbers have doubled since 1990, from 6,926 to 12,415 in 2013. This suggests that the tendency is for enrollments in this language to continue to increase as time goes on.

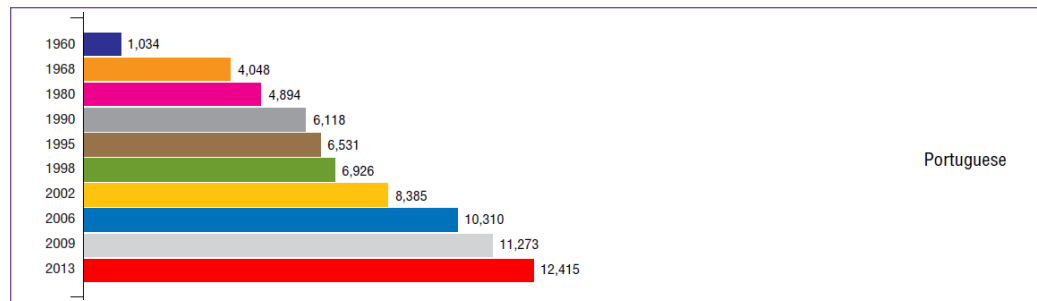


Figure 1: Enrollments in Portuguese language courses at U.S. Institutions of Higher Education

However, it should be noted that these numbers do not reveal the patterns in each type of higher education program. According to the report, 17 new higher education institutions reported enrollments in Portuguese, from 221 to 238, compared to the previous period studied, 2005-2009. Moreover, when considering advanced courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels, Portuguese has seen increases of 22.7% and 18.4%, respectively, while other more commonly taught languages have seen declines reaching double-digit percentages. These numbers make it clear that U.S. college students are increasingly aware of the importance of this language on the global level, believing in the benefits in terms of career and employment opportunities.

Considering the trends outlined above, teachers, researchers and academic institutions alike need to shift their focus accordingly to accommodate the changing demands of language learners. More specifically, this means that teacher training, linguistic and educational research as well as institutional support for language learning must place greater emphasis on the unique characteristics of the Portuguese language and the Portuguese language learner. While this shift may be slow and steady, we hope to provide our humble contribution to this movement through the publication of this journal, with one edition per year focused on linguistic issues related to PAL.

We begin by presenting the article by Mariane Veiga Barrantes, entitled “*Língua adicional e integração? Análise de duas propostas de curso de língua adicional no Brasil e na Alemanha para reflexão de temas e novas possibilidades levando em conta os recentes fluxos migratórios*” (*Additional language and integration? An analysis of two proposals of additional language courses in Brazil and in Germany to reflect on themes and new possibilities taking into account the recent migratory flows*). Barrantes takes on a highly relevant topic in today’s global current events by addressing the issue of immigration and the obstacles immigrants face in São Paulo, focusing on the aspect of language acquisition as an instrument of social inclusion. To this end, the author compared the structures of non-profit language courses offered to immigrants in São Paulo, Brazil to those offered in Germany with similar objectives. Barrantes concluded that a variety of elements need to be taken into account when developing these types of courses, ranging from course location and structure, to teacher training and public policies.

Moving on to specific teaching strategies employed in the classroom, we present an article by Deryle Lonsdale and Jarrett Finlinson Lever on “*Elicited imitation for Brazilian Portuguese*”, which focuses on a specific method for measuring oral proficiency when preparing students for oral

proficiency exams. While acknowledging the limitations of this type of tool, its advantages regarding convenience and cost-efficiency make it a strong candidate for use in assessment contexts. As such, for the purposes of this study, the authors developed an elicited imitation test for BP and found a significant correlation between these test scores and consequent ratings in an oral proficiency interview. While this method may not replace other assessment tools for this modality, these correlational results are promising.

In the third paper of this edition, authors Rafael de Oliveira Dias and Leonardo da Silva present “Atividades de leitura no ensino de PLA: uma análise do material didático *Muito Prazer*” (*Reading activities in teaching PLA: an analysis of teaching material Muito Prazer*). The authors focus on reading strategies as they are presented in this popular textbook for teaching PLA, raising problems for the teaching methodology suggested by the teacher’s manual. Dias and Silva believe that these reading activities do little to provide a more profound analysis of the text in question, providing little opportunity for the learner to develop opinions on the topic or adequately explore vocabulary. Therefore, the authors suggest that an aspect of critical reading should be incorporated in these types of activities, with their basis founded in the area of discourse genres from a Bakhtinian perspective. Considering the recent rise in teacher training courses aimed at teaching PLA, the authors believe studies such as theirs can provide for a richer teaching and learning context, taking into account language as a social practice.

Finally, we conclude this edition with a paper that provides a linguistic approach to PLA in “Uma análise dos substantivos como marcadores de posicionamento em artigos acadêmicos em língua portuguesa” (*An analysis of nouns as stance markers in academic articles in the Portuguese language*) by authors Sheila Nunes and Cristina Becker Lopes Perna. This study made use of a corpus composed of undergraduate academic papers written by native speakers of BP to analyze the expression of stance in noun phrases across different academic areas. The results indicated that students in the Exact Sciences used more expressions of stance when compared to students from the Humanities. This type of linguistic research may be of great use for providing support for incoming non-native speakers of BP as they are not likely to be familiar with the specific characteristics of writing for academic purposes in this language.

We would like to thank the authors and reviewers for their valuable contributions to this edition and we hope the content presented here inspires future investigations in these areas.

We wish our readers a Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

BELT+ Editorial Team

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