

**THE IMPORTANCE OF NEW DIDACTIC MATERIALS IN
TEACHING PORTUGUESE TO ERASMUS+ STUDENTS. SOME
PRACTICES IN COURSE AT THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION OF
THE POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE OF COIMBRA**

**A IMPORTÂNCIA DOS NOVOS MATERIAIS DIDÁTICOS DE
ENSINO DO PORTUGUÊS COM OS ESTUDANTES ERASMUS+.
ALGUMAS PRÁTICAS EM CURSO NA ESCOLA SUPERIOR DE
EDUCAÇÃO DO INSTITUTO POLITÉCNICO DE COIMBRA**

Pedro Balau Custódio⁽¹⁾

(1)Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra (Portugal)

E-mail: balaus@esec.pt

ID. ORCID: 0000-0003-2140-7304

Received: 12/03/2018

Accepted: 25/04/2018

Published: 14/09/2018

ABSTRACT:

The teaching of Portuguese - Foreign Language (PFL) constitutes a great didactic challenge today.

In the present reflection, we consider only the academic territory of Erasmus+ students who attend the Portuguese - Foreign Language courses of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, taught during the period of international mobility.

Thus, because of this experience, we will describe some work practices in this field and the importance that the digital didactic materials assume in the classes, highlighting some didactic solutions whose acceptance and results are more expressive with the students and can lead us to more effective, creative and motivational paths and learning results.

Keywords:

Didactics of Portuguese-Foreign Language, digital learning materials, Erasmus+ mobility

Custódio, P. B. (2018). The importance of new didactic materials in Teaching Portuguese to Erasmus+ Students. Some practices in course at the College of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra. DEDiCA. REVISTA DE EDUCAÇÃO E HUMANIDADES, N.º 14, setembro, 2018, 75-86. ISSN: 2182-018X. DOI: 10.30827/dreh.v0i14.7499

RESUMO:

O ensino do Português Língua Estrangeira (PLE) constitui hoje um grande desafio didático.

Na presente reflexão, consideramos apenas o território letivo dos alunos Erasmus+ que frequentam os cursos de Português – língua estrangeira do Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra, ministrados no decurso do período de mobilidade internacional.

Assim, e fruto dessa experiência, descreveremos algumas práticas de trabalho nesse domínio e a importância que os materiais didáticos digitais assumem nas aulas, destacando algumas soluções cuja aceitação e resultados são mais expressivos junto dos alunos e que nos podem conduzir a percursos e a resultados de aprendizagem mais eficazes, criativos e motivadores.

Palavras chave:

Didática do Português-Língua estrangeira, materiais didáticos digitais, mobilidade Erasmus+

1. The teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language

The interest in learning the Portuguese foreign language (PFL) has been intensifying. At the root of this motivation, there are diverse socio-economic and historical-cultural reasons, but it is also due to the growing prestige that our language derives outside the geolinguistic borders of our country.

The present reflection concerns the teaching and learning of Portuguese as a foreign language, understood as formal term space and time, restricted to a context of higher education in semestral courses taught exclusively by native teachers.

The acquisition of a foreign language benefits from the fact that the speaker already has the knowledge, linguistic, cognitive and cultural skills that they use in their mother tongue. One of the substantial differences (among others) lies, for example, in the fact that they are not in the context of prolonged and systematic linguistic immersion. It is for this reason that Stern (1983: 17) states that in the

Custódio, P. B. (2018). The importance of new didactic materials in Teaching Portuguese to Erasmus+ Students. Some practices in course at the College of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra. DEDiCA. REVISTA DE EDUCAÇÃO E HUMANIDADES, N.º 14, setembro, 2018, 75-86. ISSN: 2182-018X. DOI: 10.30827/dreh.v0i14.7499

term “foreign language”, “foreign” may want to express the relation between the person and the language”.

The expressive interest and investment in the learning of PFL is perhaps notorious because, as recalls Ançã & Reste (2012: 43), “the mastery of the Portuguese language is one of the most powerful ways of integrating foreigners, both individually (guarantee of autonomy) and collectively (social harmony) ”.

We would therefore like, according to our teaching experience, to list and to describe some teaching practices that we have come to utilize in this area.

In the Higher Education School (ESEC) of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra (IPC), the number of students in the European Erasmus+ Program has seen a notable increase as a result of new bilateral agreements. Among all the students a significant majority, over 90%, attends Portuguese classes, being divided by levels A1, A2 and B1 (QECR, 2001: 49). In a smaller number are those who attend the level B2.

These courses are semestral and occur in both periods throughout the year, being free of charge but compulsory, as well as having limited spaces and being intended exclusively for Erasmus + students.

The students who are covered by this mobility figure come from different parts of the European area, mainly from Spain, Turkey, Slovenia, Slovakia, Germany, Romania, Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, Belgium, Greece, Poland, Hungary, Sweden, and Bulgaria. Thus, the teachers of these courses are particularly attentive to the options of teaching and the choices of activities and didactic materials that are proposed to these students of different origins, languages and cultures, adapting them to the different learning rhythms and difficulties. As Saville-Troike (2006: 82) recognizes, learning a foreign language depends on, among other factors, neurolinguistic factors and the age of learners. Under these aspects, the student population is very homogeneous.

2. The importance of teaching materials

The didactic dialogism in PFL is, as in other domains, of great importance. The needs of the public, the orientations and teaching strategies chosen by the teacher, the materials used and the continuous listening of the students' difficulties constantly overlap in this area.

On this aspect of "negotiation", Correia, Grosso & Casanova (2011: 9) point out that:

"In the last decades, the epistemological model proposed by the Council of Europe accentuates interaction and communication as the main function of language. The linguistic dimension is not restricted solely to grammatical elements, but performances that depend on speech acts with functional and communicative meaning, although the level of development of linguistic resources (of the learner) plays a fundamental role in determining the appropriateness of a given task.² The learner's communicative needs in the host language result from situations of everyday life, interactions with Portuguese speakers of different social and professional spheres and the communicative tasks that Portuguese language users have to perform. In this context, trainers should be able to provide a continuous negotiation according to the trainees (as a social, human and formative being), responding to emerging needs and suggesting different solutions depending on the contexts and the target audience."

For this reason, Grosso and Casanova (2011: 10-12) consider some aspects essential, such as: "To diagnose and characterize the Portuguese learning needs of a non-native adult audience, based on the description of the functioning of the language in a situation of communication in the host country", or "Adapt the methodologies associated with teaching and learning of languages based on a permanent reflection and didactic updating".

It is therefore imperative that there be a focus on the solid training of PFL teachers in order to guarantee the necessary scientific and pedagogical preparation. These issues have been widely explained in studies and investigations, such as those of Bizarro

(2013), Correia; Casanova (2011), Mateus; Solla (2013) or Pinto (2013).

It is therefore necessary for teachers to know and be able to awaken in a stable and innovative way the students' communicative capacities, linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic skills, and also to offer them attractive activities and materials, according to the educational purpose. PFL's teaching therefore requires, in addition to the skills of linguistic intercomprehension, theoretical foundations and robust sediments of intercultural nature, attitudes of creativity and didactic innovation and, above all, an uninterrupted scientific update.

Now, leaving aside a vast set of variables, it is precisely in the field of didactic innovation that we are interested in pointing out two axes of crucial importance. On the one hand, the quality and variety of work materials; on the other hand, the innovation and the change in planning of the teaching strategies adopted in the classes.

This latter aspect is, moreover, a place that deserves special emphasis.

The editorial offer of materials for teaching PFL, although presenting some variety, is not especially expressive in this segment of education. There is still a long way to go. In fact, this is a field as demanding as it is lacking, where there is still room for the emergence of new materials and innovative didactic solutions, provided they are rigorous and creative.

As Custódio states (2016: 186):

Today, thanks to the web, several electronic sites, public, private and associative, aimed at students and teachers, are also available and offer numerous materials in this field.

We believe, however, that it is in the digital sphere (not to say that *especially* in this context) that the expansion and supply of new materials will tend to increase, since this is a privileged territory for the dissemination and sharing of new products and for modern approaches derived from them.

Custódio, P. B. (2018). The importance of new didactic materials in Teaching Portuguese to Erasmus+ Students. Some practices in course at the College of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra. DEDiCA. REVISTA DE EDUCAÇÃO E HUMANIDADES, N.º 14, setembro, 2018, 75-86. ISSN: 2182-018X. DOI: 10.30827/dreh.v0i14.7499

We are living in a time when the most traditional teaching materials coexist but, at the same time, new requirements in the scope of the practices and an unstoppable demand for highly profitable and attractive teaching materials are emerging. Selwyn (2008: 2) also alludes to this fact when, in a generic study on learning in the English system, he states:

Within the general specter of the knowledge society, the emergence of digital technology and increased digitization of everyday life is seen by many commentators as the key challenge and opportunity for didactics in contemporary society. Thus, the process of breaking down and codifying the processes of teaching and learning into a series of digital bits and bytes has taken on a heightened significance for many educationalists who see digitized technologies as offering education a chance to rid itself of its physical, cultural and other 'offline' limitations. Technologies such as the internet, for example, are seen as allowing education and educators to break free of the synchronous norms of classroom-based learning (...).

Although support manuals are of undeniable utility, it is essential that the teacher does not rely exclusively on them.

In several aspects, this finding is analogous to what happens in the different degrees of teaching of the mother tongue, in which the hegemonic use of the manual causes some didactic redundancy and failure. It should also be recognized that manuals, either by texts, themes and exercises, do not always meet the specific needs of students.

In our experience with these students, we have frequently used authentic documents such as brochures, leaflets, information brochures, catalogs, and other similar material, as a substitute for manuals, to work with simple aspects such as colors, numerals, grades of the adjectives, the simple and complex phrase, and so many other contents.

In fact, students also show a clear preference for authentic materials. In several groups, they expressed an obvious interest in materials provided by the teacher, adapted to the learning pace and the lexical needs of their areas of study (Education, Economics, Social

Sciences, Social Communication, Organizational or Computer Science). This option is therefore translated into didactic personalization on the one hand and, on the other hand, a line of work and research of motivating, innovative and efficient products, both in the field of grammar, oral expression and writing, culture and literature.

Among the materials we have used the most are those that exploit the potential of information and communication technologies. In fact, digital media have the advantage of enabling reuse of the same material, being modular, durable and rewritable by the teachers, saving them work, and progressing in tune with students' learning needs.

As a result of this observation, over the last few years we have experimented with didactic solutions and materials that have proven to be practical, very productive and to the liking of students.

As an example, we will list some of these strategies and the respective materials in which they were anchored:

Each student, individually or in a group (by nationality, university or region):

a) selects a national digital diary from their country and highlights to their colleagues, orally and always in Portuguese, the most important news, generating debate, questions, curiosities and lively dialogue;

b) searches Google maps for their city, address, or home university; reports their habits, schedules and routes to the house, describes and characterizes their institution;

c) chooses some icons of the material or immaterial heritage of their country, specific religious or pagan festivals native to their city or region, documents these events with photos that they take from the web, comments and narrates academic festivities, the most remarkable cultural habits, costumes traditional of their province, etc.;

d) suggests videos about Portugal, regional landscapes and well-known traditions on platforms such as Vimeo or YouTube, making simple comments with the purpose of stimulating activities of orality and writing;

- e) develops exercises in computer platforms that hold PFL activities;
- f) creates a class blog in order to stimulate and develop individual and collaborative writing activities;
- g) manages a page on Facebook, not only for exchanging information among all students but above all for editing texts, writing impressions and daily notes about Portugal, school habits and routines in the city where you are, sharing opinions, doubts, etc;
- h) elaborates e-portfolios to present small projects.

These activities contribute to a very expressive classroom dynamic, a pedagogical climate of dialogue and sharing, and effective linguistic and cultural learning.

The final surveys filed with the students have demonstrated a very high degree of satisfaction and a remarkable appreciation for the learning moments that students consider fun, engaging and very relaxed.

3. Synopsis

Finally, it is necessary to summarize the most significant proposals that we have outlined along these pages.

We argue that there is an imperative need to reshape some work methodologies in PFL. Likewise, we believe that the adoption of new didactic materials is a necessity and an inevitability. We do not advocate the end of the book or the manual; but we argue that the traditional space they have occupied will have to be more and more peacefully invaded and shared with other materials.

In this context, we have no doubt that the new digital universes are conquering an area that did not belong to it and expanding its borders. This is a trend that has been in development for some time and that we consider to be unstoppable. We must not forget that the students in question belong, in their entirety, to the generation of digital natives (Prensky, 2001) and, as such, the space, environment and learning contexts in which they find themselves, must be in perfect harmony with habits, patterns, and the cultural framework from which they came.

Custódio, P. B. (2018). The importance of new didactic materials in Teaching Portuguese to Erasmus+ Students. Some practices in course at the College of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra. DEDiCA. REVISTA DE EDUCAÇÃO E HUMANIDADES, N.º 14, setembro, 2018, 75-86. ISSN: 2182-018X. DOI: 10.30827/dreh.v0i14.7499

This challenge lies not only in language learning, but also in learning a foreign language. It is transversal to the whole education system and will reshape and requalify all the didactic habits that for decades have taken place in classrooms.

In the remarks that we have made, we highlight the practices that we have been carrying out in ESEC and the progressive way in which we have been adopting new teaching strategies in the specific scope of PFL. Along with the book, the notes, the textbook and the work sheets, new materials, new supports and different ways of being in the classroom and learning are beginning to emerge.

Speaking, writing and studying a new language is an exciting challenge for students and a demanding task for teachers. Both have to know where they are and how to listen to the needs and difficulties of each other.

The new digital materials impose themselves in the classroom in a natural way, in a logic of continuity with life outside of it. In the same way, the support and resources that information and communication technologies offer to students and teachers will become ever more relevant in the future.

The brief notes that we leave here, which reflect some of our practice in the teaching of PFL, are nothing more than the opening of a door that leads us to a new future in teaching and learning in general, and in that of languages in particular.

References

AA.VV. (2001). *Quadro Europeu Comum de Referência para as Línguas-Aprendizagem, ensino e avaliação*. Tradução de Joana Pimentel do Rosário e Nuno Verdial Soares. Lisboa: ASA.

Ançã, M. H. (2003). Didáctica do Português língua segunda: dos contextos emergentes às condições de existência. In Cristina Mello, Antonino Silva, Clara Moura Lourenço, Lúcia Oliveira e Maria Helena Araújo e Sá (orgs.) *Didáctica das línguas e literaturas em Portugal: contextos de emergência, condições de existência e modos de desenvolvimento*. Actas do I Encontro Nacional da SPDLL, Fevereiro de 2002. Coimbra: Pé de Página Editores, pp. 61-69.

Ançã, M. H. (1999). Da Língua Materna à Língua Segunda. *Noesis*, 51, 14-16 consultado a 15 de setembro de 2015, disponível em <http://area.dgicd.min-edu.pt/inovbasic/edicoes/noe/noe51/dossier1.htm>.

Custódio, P. B. (2018). *The importance of new didactic materials in Teaching Portuguese to Erasmus+ Students. Some practices in course at the College of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra*. DEDiCA. REVISTA DE EDUCAÇÃO E HUMANIDADES, N.º 14, setembro, 2018, 75-86. ISSN: 2182-018X. DOI: 10.30827/dreh.v0i14.7499

Ança, Maria Helena & Reste, Carmen Rodrigues (2012). "Diversidade linguística e cultural na Escola "Fraqueza" ou "Riqueza". In *Praxis Educacional*, 8(13), 31-55.

Berg, C. (2013). Desafios para a formação de professores do ponto de vista da diversidade linguística. In Rosa Bizarro, Maria Alfredo Moreira e Cristina Flores (orgs.) *Português Língua Não Materna: investigação e ensino*. Lisboa: Lidel, pp. 173-181.

Bizarro, R.; Braga, F. (2013). A formação de Professores de Português Língua Não Materna na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto: questões interculturais e ensino inclusivo do Português Língua Segunda. In Rosa Bizarro, Maria Alfredo Moreira e Cristina Flores (orgs.). *Português Língua Não Materna: investigação e ensino*. Lisboa: Lidel, pp. 155-172.

Carreira, M. (2013). Algumas Especificidades da Língua Portuguesa do Ponto de Vista do Ensino do Português Língua Segunda e Língua Estrangeira: Problematização, in Rosa Bizarro, Maria Alfredo Moreira e Cristina Flores (orgs.). *Português Língua Não Materna: Investigação e Ensino*. Lisboa: Lidel, pp.35-42.

Castro, A. C. Leiria de Mendonça Coutinho de (2015). *Materiais para o ensino do português como língua estrangeira: uma proposta de aprendizagem baseada em tarefas*. Tese de Doutoramento: Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

Correia, M. L.; Grosso, M. J. & Casanova, C. M. (2011). *Referencial de formação: formação de formadores de português para falantes de outras línguas: utilizador elementar*. Lisboa: Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional.

Custódio, P. Balaus (2017). Alguns percursos didáticos para o ensino do PLE. In Carvalho, José António Brandão et alii. *V SIELP-Simpósio Internacional de Ensino de Língua Portuguesa/V FIAL-Fórum Ibero-Americano de Literacias*. Braga: Centro de Investigação em Educação, CIED/Universidade do Minho, pp.182-191.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Flores, C. (2013). Português Língua Não Materna: discutindo conceitos de uma perspetiva linguística, in Rosa Bizarro, Maria Alfredo Moreira e Cristina Flores (orgs.). *Português Língua Não Materna: Investigação e Ensino*. Lisboa: Lidel, pp.35-42.

Martins, C.; Pereira, I. (2011). Metodologias de ensino de PL2 à medida dos aprendentes. In Cristina Flores (org.). *Múltiplos Olhares Sobre o Bilinguismo*. Braga: Edições Húmus, pp. 45-65.

Custódio, P. B. (2018). *The importance of new didactic materials in Teaching Portuguese to Erasmus+ Students. Some practices in course at the College of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra. DEDiCA. REVISTA DE EDUCAÇÃO E HUMANIDADES, N.º 14, setembro, 2018, 75-86. ISSN: 2182-018X. DOI: 10.30827/dreh.v0i14.7499*

Mateus, M. H. Mira; Solla, L. (orgs.) (2013). *Ensino do Português como Língua Não Materna: estratégias, materiais e formação*. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.

Palfrey, J. (2011). *Nascidos na era digital: entendendo a primeira geração de nativos digitais*. Porto Alegre: Artmed.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Immigrants. *On the Horizon*. MCB University Press, Vol. 9, Nº. 5, October, 1-6.

Saville-Troike, M. (2006). *Introducing Second Language Acquisition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Selwyn, N. (2008). Constructing the challenge of digital didactics: the rhetoric, remediation and realities of the UK Digital Curriculum. In *Seminar.net - International journal of media, technology and lifelong learning* 13. Vol. 4 – Issue 1, 1-15.

Stern, H. (1983). *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. Oxford: OUP.

Taveira, C. Alves (2014). *Aquisição do Português Língua Não Materna. Transferências Lexicais, Sintáticas e Morfossintáticas*. Dissertação de Mestrado. Lisboa: Universidade Aberta.

Para saber mais sobre o autor...

Pedro Balau Custódio

Holds a degree in Modern Languages and Literature - Portuguese and French Studies from the Faculty of Languages of the University of Coimbra (1987); Specialized in Portuguese Teaching (1989) and Master in Portuguese Literature (1992) by the same faculty.

In 2004 he obtained his PhD in Literature at the University of Coimbra.

He is an integrated researcher at the Portuguese Literature Center of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Coimbra.

Currently, he works as a Coordinator Professor at Coimbra's Higher Education School, where he teaches Reading and Writing Didactics and conducts teacher training seminars in the areas of reading, writing and Portuguese.

Since 2010, he is the Director of the *FEP Training Program - Training and Teaching of Portuguese*.

Over the past three years he has been a scientific reviewer of some textbooks for Basic Education in Portugal. He has also belonged to different scientific committees of national and international events in the scope of Portuguese teaching and has been a guest professor at several European universities.

Custódio, P. B. (2018). The importance of new didactic materials in Teaching Portuguese to Erasmus+ Students. Some practices in course at the College of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra. DEDiCA. REVISTA DE EDUCAÇÃO E HUMANIDADES, N.º 14, setembro, 2018, 75-86. ISSN: 2182-018X. DOI: 10.30827/dreh.v0i14.7499

How to cite this article...

Custódio, P. B. (2018). The importance of new didactic materials in Teaching Portuguese to Erasmus+ Students. Some practices in course at the College of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra. *DEDiCA. REVISTA DE EDUCAÇÃO E HUMANIDADES*, 14, 75-86.

DOI: 10.30827/dreh.v0i14.7499

Custódio, P. B. (2018). The importance of new didactic materials in Teaching Portuguese to Erasmus+ Students. Some practices in course at the College of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra. DEDiCA. REVISTA DE EDUCAÇÃO E HUMANIDADES, N.º 14, setembro, 2018, 75-86. ISSN: 2182-018X. DOI: 10.30827/dreh.v0i14.7499