

Designing an Advanced Writing Course of Portuguese as a Foreign Language within a Genre-based Approach

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1. Introduction

The objective of this paper is to present a Portuguese as a foreign language (PFL) curriculum for a course on advanced writing and grammar, as well as to discuss the genre-oriented assumptions that underlie its design. The course is intended for graduate and undergraduate students in a university in the southwestern United States. According to Byrnes and Sprang (2005), “advanced L2 abilities are not acquired in instructed settings because little explicit curricular and pedagogical attention is focused on their acquisition” (p. 50). Thus, this paper contributes to studies on pedagogical decisions regarding advanced levels of foreign language courses.

This study represents the first steps taken toward the development of courses under the genre-based approach for the Portuguese language program mentioned. Hence, this paper first presents an overview of the PFL field in the United States and throughout the world in order to situate the context of Portuguese language teaching. Second, a brief literature review explains genre-based pedagogies, mainly based on Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1986) principles. The third section discusses genre choice and progression, which are related to important decisions regarding curriculum design. The fourth section describes the course, and the fifth section is devoted to reflection on literacy and assessment, drawing from Kern (2000). Finally, it is important to clarify that even though there are a vast number of scholars who developed theoretical frameworks and conducted empirical studies related to genre in the United States and other countries (Hyland, 2003, 2004, 2007; Johns, 1995, 2002, 2011; Martin, 2009; Tardy, 2009, among others), this study is affiliated with the Brazilian didactic approach to genres (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010). Such a framework justifies the reliance on Bakhtin’s theory on speech genres.

2. Portuguese as a Foreign Language in the United States

According to Furtoso and Rivera (2013), the interest for Portuguese language in universities in the United States peaked mainly between the years 2006 and 2009. The southern region of the U.S., for example, had a 75% increase in enrollment in Portuguese courses during this period (Meilleret, 2012). Moreover, the expansion was greater in regions with a high number of descendants or immigrants of Portuguese speaking cultures. Numerous courses on Latin America, as well as job and travel prospects for countries such as Brazil—which underwent recent years of economic success, and hosted

international events, such as the Soccer World Cup (2014) and the Olympics (2016)—are aspects also related to the increasing interest for Portuguese language learning during this period.

Gonçalves (2012) points out that Spanish speakers are the group that most contributes to the rise of Portuguese course offerings in the U.S. For example, at the university in which this work is developed, the courses designed especially for Spanish speakers generally have many sections due to the high demand for Portuguese. The similarity between Portuguese and Spanish may influence students' interest in the sense that they will learn a foreign language with certain ease. This fact contributes to the adoption of a methodology that focuses not only on vocabulary and grammar differences per se, but aims at expanding students' contact with authentic texts in order to enable them to perceive similarities and distinctions by themselves. Furtoso and Rivera (2013) highlight the role the courses play on students' decisions:

Em geral, o que pode ser concluído desta informação e da interligação entre o mundo externo e o mundo acadêmico é que os alunos procuram português porque os cursos estão sendo renovados de uma forma que faz com que a aprendizagem se torne mais atraente para os alunos do que o formato anterior e, junto com a globalização da economia brasileira, esta aquisição da língua tornou-se mais relevante e útil. (p. 7)

Therefore, both the external and academic worlds are important factors that contribute to students' interest for Portuguese language classes. Additionally, student motivation to learn Portuguese is related to universities' concern to foster student awareness about how it can be useful for their careers, opening up a new range of professional and leisure prospects. Taking this point into consideration, a curriculum that better prepares students to participate effectively in a more varied scope of contexts plays an important role when students choose

to study a new language. More than just focusing on grammatical structures, a genre-based approach provides opportunities to raise students' awareness of how linguistic resources play out in different situations for different communicative purposes. Byrnes and Sprang (2005) advocate for an expanded intellectual frame for foreign language collegiate programs based on text and literacy. Referring to new methodological proposals to address a literacy focus, the authors argue that:

Less than a refutation than a redirection of how the FL profession might realize the necessary emphasis on meaning-focused communication over form-focused instruction, they recommend expanded contexts for communication in the imagined worlds of both oral as well as written texts as they define a linguistic-cultural community over time. (p. 48)

Having contact with authentic texts in the classroom develops students' abilities towards a global comprehension of the imagined worlds in which they are able to participate. In this sense, the meaning-focused instruction broadens the learning goals to interpret meaning based on the analysis of the forms while challenging the student to go beyond them by exploring their relationship with the context.

The current learning goals that structure the Basic Portuguese Language Program are organized as follows. First, the curriculum comprises two courses at the basic level focused on grammar; one intensive course of grammar for Spanish speakers (which starts basic but progresses quickly towards the development of intermediate level abilities); and one course concentrated on conversation and culture, which also aims to improve an intermediate proficiency language level. After taking these courses, students study advanced grammar and composition in the course described by this paper.

Although students will have studied Portuguese for at least two semesters before they start the advanced course on grammar and writing, their profi-

ciency levels will still vary substantially. As in any other foreign language class, this fact is due to a wide range of reasons. Not only does students' personal motivation affect how much they develop the target language skills, but how much they are involved with literacy events inside and outside the classroom also plays a role. The questions for curricula designers and instructors are: How do we take into account students' heterogeneous proficiency levels and previous literacy practices to design a genre-based curriculum? What should the goals be for advanced level courses? What is the role of assessment in this process? These questions will be addressed in the fourth and sixth sections, respectively.

3. Genre-based Pedagogies in the Foreign Language Classroom

Bakhtin (1986) advocates that the bond between language and life is realized through concrete utterances. Speech genres, thus, are defined as relatively stable kinds of utterances elaborated by each sphere of language use. The author explains that, when the nature of the utterance and the details of generic aspects of discourse are not taken into account in an analysis, the formalism and the excessive abstraction debilitate the bond between language and life. In other words, Bakhtin claims for the analysis of the utterance within its context of production. Hence, through this perspective, it is essential to examine speech as it is produced in real life situations by taking the social dimensions of interlocutors and their purposes into consideration.

Byrnes and Sprang (2005) also refer to how language is connected with real life activities. They argue that the main concern of a genre-based pedagogy focused on developing advanced skills in a foreign language is such that students "may gain the capacity to lead meaningful lives through language at the personal level and also to access and influence a variety of public fora and goods" (p. 52). Bearing in mind that reading and writing mediate activities within

social practices, as well as mediate socially and historically situated *identities* (Gee, 2002), activities in the classroom should provide opportunities for students to increase their participation in a broader variety of contexts in order to expand their identities as Portuguese speakers.

Mittelstadt (2013) points out three important aspects to be followed in lesson planning and curriculum design in order to improve advanced level skills: (1) diversity of themes; (2) expansion of abilities from more familiar to more public spheres, and (3) cultural diversity. The first aspect can be illustrated by the example of "Ecology" as a theme, which can be organized in modules such as "Urban Ecology", "Recycling in Brazil and in the World", "Ecology and the Law", and "Sustainable Development". The second aspect has to do with the social positioning the student takes when writing a specific text. For instance, writing an email to a friend inviting him to participate in a recycling project in their community comprises a task directed to a familiar interlocutor. However, writing an open letter to the mayor complaining about the waste collection service in the neighborhood requires awareness of how linguistic features and rhetorical expressions mark a different social position in this case. In order to perform both tasks effectively, the students need to be able to select the appropriate vocabulary, grammar features, content, and to understand the best rhetorical strategies to fulfill the texts' objectives, which are different depending on the genre and the interlocutor. Finally, the third aspect mentioned by Mittelstadt (2013), cultural diversity, focuses on providing opportunities to discuss cultures through different perspectives. In this sense, obtaining advanced proficiency in an additional language is associated with being aware of the realities of Portuguese-speaking countries and, consequently, being able to reflect upon people's realities in comparison with their own. Especially when teaching Portuguese as a Foreign Language, providing opportunities for students to expand intercultural awareness is important to minimize the ef-

fect of the teacher as the only cultural and input source. These three directions aim to enhance students' participation in social practices of different spheres in Portuguese: from ordering a meal in a restaurant to writing an article expressing their position on how the recycling policy of their city is negatively affecting the environment in the region.

The transition from writing to familiar interlocutors to writing to broader audiences encourages students to identify their own authorial voices in different situations. For Byrnes, Maxim and Norris (2010), "the ability to handle a range of genres confidently is exactly the possibility and opportunity to affirm and even to assert an individual presence in social contexts" (p. 57). The authors draw from Bakhtin to claim that a pedagogical genre approach acknowledges two critical learning needs. These are going to be addressed in the following paragraphs.

First, there is the "need to learn how to do things with words in the way the cultural community does them, [a] part of learning both culture and language" (Byrnes et al., 2010, p. 57). Based on this statement, teaching within a genre-based approach is to take into account language and culture as intertwined, since the way a community does things with words is exactly its singular cultural aspect. Language expresses culture through its own structure and through how people use it. Hence, connecting this need with the idea that students should have the ability to place their individual voices within this new cultural community, how do instructors foster students' singularity and authorial voices through curricula arrangements? What exactly is the place of individuality that we, as instructors, allow students to develop in the classroom?

Bakhtin (1986) highlights that every utterance is individual. As each speech act reflects the speaker's individuality, the singular mode of expressing an utterance can be understood as a speaker's own linguistic style. According to the author, literary genres are the most likely to accept any writing style as valid. Nevertheless, Bakhtin acknowledges that individ-

uality is in discourse's own nature, thus making not only the literary genres a unique individual expression, but genres of any kind.

This reflection about individuality is aligned with the second critical learning need discussed by Byrnes et al. (2010), which is that of understanding power relationships instantiated in genres and how they can be challenged if a learner wants to promote a new identity in different language use situations. For Luke (1996), addressing Bakhtin (1986), speech genres are not reproductions of techniques and forms; rather, they are the materialized intersection of social interests. Such a critical approach to literacy questions the justification for genre-based pedagogies because teaching genres may hide differences of social class. Since curricula are usually constituted of selections of texts that may be taken as "natural, truthful and scientific," and they do not tend to critically embrace class, patriarchal, or cultural differences (Luke, 1996, p. 318). This point is a challenge for curricula designers to keep in mind as they attempt to not limit the students' view of social practices to the ones addressed by the curriculum, but to encourage them to critically move among other genres and readings of these genres.

In this sense, if we want students to participate more confidently in the communication spheres that constitute life in the Portuguese language, the pedagogical approach should account for a critical analysis of stylistic and compositional characteristics of genres, as well as the political, cultural, and social effects that shape language use through genres. By being aware of genres' idiosyncratic nature, students can position themselves more self-assuredly in these discourses. Furthermore, they can empower their speaking and writing expression by singularly appropriating themselves of the words in the foreign language concomitantly with the knowledge of how people make use of these words to produce specific effects. Knowing how to position themselves in a varied range of situations by handling degrees of formality and closeness to the interlocutor via language

register choice is a remarkable ability for asserting the learner's individual presence as a participant in a community of practice.

4. Designing Curricula: About Genre Choice and Progression

After having discussed some critical learning needs related to genre-oriented pedagogies, one more question is posed: how do we choose relevant themes and, consequently, genres to constitute a progressive curriculum? According to Devitt (2004), the selection of genres depends on the goals of both the teacher and the institution. However, as Byrnes and Sprang (2005) point out, teachers' and institutions' aims might not always be the same. Such a fact establishes one more challenge for implementing approaches focused on an integral view of form and meaning. Even though there is not a homogeneous definition as to what a communicative approach should consist of, most foreign language courses at the university level rely on such an approach. Additionally, grammar is still taught through drills, although some exercises attempt to diminish the purely structural effect by including vocabulary of more familiar contexts to be completed by the students. The common curricular structure in post-secondary institutions in the United States, which separates learning goals between those developed in basic language courses and literature courses, creates a culture of learning that is different from the one required by a genre-based approach. Therefore, preparing the students to develop abilities via actual analysis of authentic texts also involves a learning culture shift for students and for teachers who might utilize different approaches in the same curriculum.

A common critique to the genre-based approach is that, if genres are inappropriately presented in the classroom, students might memorize them as stable formats instead of as changeable and flexible spaces for meaning making. Hyland (2003) reinforces this concern: "There is always some danger of reifying genres with a text-intensive focus, as inexperienced

or unimaginative teachers may fail to acknowledge variation and choice" (p. 26). This positioning points to the concern that the didactization of genres might play against its own fluid and dynamic concept. In this sense, common critiques addressing grammar-based methodologies would be applied to genre-based approaches as well, since genres would be taught as forms, such as text-based structures that could be (re)produced based on how-to lists or recipes of certain genres (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013). Taking this concern into consideration, we could ask: what would be the most effective methodology in order to avoid limiting student understanding of genres to fixed models or repetitive features? How can we make explicit the intertwining nature of text, the social practice it entails, and the interlocutors who give birth to its dialogic process? How do students position themselves in this literacy process as foreign readers and writers?

The resolution proposed by Devitt (2004) is to teach genre awareness instead of the textual features of particular genres or how to produce texts within particular genres. According to the author, "[g]enre awareness can teach students to seek the rhetorical nature of the genre, to understand its context and functions for its users, in order to avoid formulaic copying of a model rather than rhetorically embedded analysis of samples" (p. 201). She argues that making students' understanding of genres explicit is a strategy for them to gain a conscious critical awareness about how genres work. Likewise, the author affirms that students need to practice moving within genres.

Possible strategies discussed in Devitt's book include proposing tasks where students have to create alternative genres, like altering their purpose, ideology, or relationship between participants and interlocutors. In the author's words, "[t]hey need to discover that genres allow a range of choices, as well as set constraints" (p. 200). In order to better understand how genres work in particular contexts, the author also suggests that the teacher could assign

mini-ethnographies to be conducted by the students, so that they can develop a critical perspective from what they experience every day and not only rely on what the teacher brings into the classroom. This idea is aligned with Kern (2000), who sees the participants inside the classroom both as informants and ethnographers. The goal of a pedagogical approach that takes an ethnographic approach into account would be an “interpretive practice,” (Kern, 2000, p. 21) since the analysis would turn the learners’ eyes to peoples’ cultural artifacts, such as films, songs, and status symbols.

Taking the theoretical considerations discussed so far into account, the program to be presented in this article has the goal of preparing Portuguese language learners to participate as more confident authors in a broad range of contexts. In this sense, the activities would not only enable the students to improve communication skills in contexts they already participate in, but also expand their linguistic skills to position themselves effectively in less familiar and more public spheres. These contexts can include tertiary schooling, civic lives, workplaces, and any literacy events for which the students manifest interest. These goals are in line with the principles described by Mittelstadt (2013) in a direct dialogue with Schlatter & Garcez (2012), as well as with the specifications of the Certificate of Proficiency in Portuguese for Speakers of Other Languages (Celpe-Bras).

Hence, the first genres selected to compose the curriculum proposed here are those directed to a very close interlocutor and are based on practices possibly known and shared by most students. Sometimes, the process of teachers becoming familiar with students’ backgrounds unfolds during the students’ own movement of reflection and (re)discovery of previous literacy practices. In the first class, students should be asked to fill out a document expressing their expectations about the course, as well as to provide information of their background with reading and writing texts in different languages. For in-

stance, students should answer if they usually write or read emails, novels, short stories, news reports, and other genres, and in what language. Such an activity also provides an opportunity for the instructor to investigate his/her students’ learning profiles and be familiar with their reading and writing experiences. Based on student responses, the instructor should adapt the course and plan tasks according to their needs. For example, if students are familiar with reading short stories in other languages, the lesson plan can draw on the genre awareness that they would already possess regarding short stories. On the other hand, if students are not used to reading news articles in magazines and newspapers, for example, the teacher should scaffold the genre knowledge in a more detailed explanation.

In spite of the course having a focus on writing and advanced grammar, it is important to highlight how oral genres are related to written texts. Tannen’s (1982) oral-literate continuum conceives how the interplay between strategies related to oral and written traditions produces meaning in various settings. In terms of teaching, the oral-literate continuum is a notion that informs which variables are chosen by a writer in order to constitute effects on the text regarding the reader. In this sense, the interpersonal involvement, associated more with the oral side of the continuum, is also present in a written text; however, the modalities comprised in this communicative feature differ. Likewise, the literate end of the continuum focuses on message content; nonetheless, a person cannot perform an oral genre satisfactorily without having prepared the message content according to his/her audience.

If the instructor is aware of this continuum, her/his lessons can be planned in order to include useful strategies to enhance student awareness of oral-written choice effects. This way, a more critical and better prepared linguistic production—oral or written—is part of the learning outcomes. Hence, as Tannen (1982) argues, there is not an oral/literate continuum itself, but a continuum of relative focus

on interpersonal involvement and message content. Ultimately, Tannen shows that speakers can change their communicative strategies for different effects, and defining those strategies should also be a focus in language classes in general. The range of choice empowers students not only in oral strategies, but also in terms of writing abilities, since s/he is prepared to interpret and incorporate features according to the effect s/he wants to produce in the interlocutor for specific purposes.

5. Examining the Curriculum

Having in mind the context of a university in the Southwest of the United States, a 15-week course was designed based on the previous assumptions discussed so far. Table 1 organizes the content for 14 weeks and saves one week for reviews and exams. Moreover, we will present the main course structure without specifying details about the activities. In this way, even though this paper's scope is providing theoretical assumptions underlying genre choice and progression in the curriculum, not providing a more detailed explanation of the articulation between components is one of its limitations. Such a fact certainly points to further development of making the relationship between features, content, and themes more explicit.

Additionally, before we examine the curriculum, it is important to mention two aspects that affect its design. First, writing is understood here as a process closely related to reading, since one informs and improves the other as a literate practice. Second, it is necessary to keep in mind what implications a curriculum designed specifically for Portuguese language classes pose, for example, the choice of genres relevant for Portuguese language contexts, and how the Portuguese language cultures understand their functioning. More specifically, these genres might not be relevant or might function differently in other cultures.

Kramersch (1996) presents, grounded in data, the broad diversity of definitions one genre can have. It

is common for instructors to require students to perform activities in a variety of manners, such as by oral response or through text analysis. Why does this happen? Certainly students have different available designs (Kern, 2000); however, Kramersch's examinations demonstrate that such a fact can express a deeper phenomenon. Each student performs an activity by making meaning from his/her available designs, and this includes one's assumptions of what a certain genre is. Nonetheless, different cultures (French, German, and English, as shown in the article) have distinctive assumptions of what a summary is, for instance, so it is evident that genre itself is a product of the sociocultural and historical relations within society. As genres are shaped by society, some genres addressed in the curriculum have specific use definitions in the Portuguese language that do not encounter equivalents in English, for example. In the classroom, the scaffolding process reveals the particularities of each genre.

Each theme presented in Table 1 is subsequently organized as the main topic throughout two weeks. The selection of themes follows the principles presented by Mittelstadt (2013) and attempts to follow some directions for advanced learners' lessons: a variety of topics, more and lesser known themes, social diversity, and a broadening of genre and theme repertoire, for example. The following paragraphs are going to describe the themes and sub-themes within the curricular progression.

The first theme is *Travel and tourism*, since most of the students have probably already travelled to one or more places and should be able to recollect, tell, and qualify experiences that are very familiar to them. If students have not already produced texts like post cards, trip reports, and trip diaries, the writing assignments for this module, they are or have been readers of these genres at some point. The interlocutors would be one's classmates in a first instance, with the possibility of later organizing pen pal exchanges with students in other classes and/or posting their assignments on a class weblog.

The theme *Food* is the next in the sequence. When discussing content and vocabulary about trips and tourism, food is certainly part of such an experience. Thus, traditional foods, favorite dishes, and restaurants can be incorporated as topics. The range of genres to be produced in this second module can be composed of food recipes and restaurant reviews. Linguistic features vary in both assignments. While one focuses on a list of specialized lexicon for a specific dish, which is directed to a wide scope of interlocutors, the other requires an evaluative description of a restaurant, which includes a different use of adjectives and grammatical features. The choice of what genre is more relevant for the class depends on the teacher's evaluation of the students' background, interests, and proficiency levels. Both assignments could be posted on the class weblog as well.

Moving from everyday topics—*Travel* and *Food*—to a more distant one in terms of interlocution and purpose, *Job market* is the third proposed theme. Nonetheless, this topic is likely still familiar to the students considering their age and profile as college students and, probably, as employees in different areas. In this module, students are required to write to an interlocutor who is more formal and distant: a company's director, a job interviewer, or a professor, for example. In order to write a cover letter, or a CV or resumé (which are both interchangeably defined as CV in Brazil), the student has to rhetorically position him/herself in the text as someone other than a student, traveler or customer. This means that the student has to take a professional stance when manipulating the linguistic features with the purpose of convincing the interlocutor about skills and qualities s/he possesses in order to be hired. Moreover, writing e-mails about the same topic for different interlocutors is relevant for analyzing and comparing how language registers change accordingly.

Technology is the next theme in the sequence, since it is not detached from students' everyday routine, and can be associated to *Job market*. An op-ed

discussing how technology affects professionals' skills and the working environment can be the main task for this module. Another possible writing assignment could be a product review, advice column or advertisement. Each of these genres is associated with technology in a different way. While an op-ed is published in blogs and magazines, a product review or advertisement is published on online retailer websites. Requiring these assignments fosters students' awareness about differences in terms of social purpose, register, and content knowledge, which are relevant for their participation in interactions using real media resources.

The theme *Health* provides an opportunity for students to reflect upon experiences in a context different from school or work. By evaluating the overall situation of public health systems, students are required to position themselves as citizens who make use of the system in order to criticize and come up with solutions for existing problems. The texts to be read could be comprised of news about the current situation of hospitals or particular situations that illustrate the current status of the system.

Truths and lies is a topic that might sound too abstract. However, the critical thinking developed in the previous units by writing op-eds about the reality of health systems and advertisements for new tech gadgets, for example, is expanded in terms of rhetorical strategies: how does the writer manipulate truth for specific purposes? Consequently, this module explores this theme by broadening students' reading and writing scope to literary genres. As the linguistic perspective underlying this proposal is based on linguistic features present in any kind of genre, the fact that this module includes literary genres does not denote that they cannot be incorporated in other modules. Nonetheless, as Mittelstadt (2013) points out, the presence of metaphors and figures of speech requires an advanced understanding of language use to be interpreted and integrated into writing. Thus, this theme should not be treated as abstract per se. Instead it should be anchored in situated experiences

related to telling the truth, for example, by exploring political pronouncements or the relationship between parents and children as portrayed in short stories and comic strips.

Environment is the last module of this curriculum. The required writing can be an open letter through which the student is required to position him/herself as the leader of a community's association to make complaints related to a problem. This is supposedly a situation far from the ones commonly

lived by students. It requires the use of expressions to persuade the interlocutor, adapting the linguistic resources to the status and power an interlocutor holds in society.

The following table displays a summary of what we have presented so far, organizing the curriculum by theme, subtheme, genres to be written, linguistic resources to be developed in the classes, and possible related genres to be added according to the students' interests and profiles.

Table 1: Progression of genres studied in the course

<i>Week</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub theme</i>	<i>Genres to be produced</i>	<i>Some linguistic resources and textual fundamentals involved</i>	<i>Possible related genres to be added/replaced according to students' interest</i>
1-2	Travel and tourism	Travel directions Touristic routes Travelers' profiles	Postcard Travel report Travel diary	Past Preterit Adjective agreement Descriptions Differences between spoken and written language Influence of English in Portuguese	Travel guide Informative brochure
3-4	Food	Traditional dishes in Brazil Influence of other countries' cultures in Brazilian cuisine My favorite restaurant	Recipe Restaurant review	Future and Past Subjunctive Imperative Compound Future Differences of spoken and written language Language expressions related to review (expressing opinion, organizing arguments, points of view)	Video-recipe TV show Menu
5-6	Job market	Profession choices Syndical work Workers' laws	E-mails to boss/ professor E-mails to co-workers/ classmates CV Cover letter	Preterit Conditional Expressions of politeness and compliments	Job interview Blog entry

7-8	Technology	Impact on society Technical skills Human development and technology	Opinion piece Advice column News report	Imperative Present, Past and Future Subjunctive Punctuation Direct and Indirect Speech	Product advertisement Product reviews Tutorial
9-10	Health	Health campaigns Health in Brazil and in my country Causes of death in Brazil and in my country	Opinion piece Article	Passive voice Present Subjunctive Conjunctions	News report Interviews with doctors, nurses, professors, patients
11-12	Truth and lies	Individual lies Social and political lies Morality and lies	Op-ed Short story Comic strip	Elements of narration and dissertation Types of arguments Metaphors and figures of speech	Article Novel News report
13-14	Environment	Urban ecology Recycling Cities planning	Open letter	Present, Past and Future Subjunctive Argumentation structure Description	Documentary Art exhibition Interview

6. Literacy and Assessment

The fact that our pedagogical principles are genre-oriented also brings implications for assessment. As Kern (2000) affirms, “like language use, the assessment and evaluation practices we choose both shape and are shaped by social contexts” (p. 298). Initially, writing is understood as a process of meaning making, so the assessment does not consider the text only as a product, but also as the consequence of a complex process of developing discursive strategies involving acquisition of structures and negotiation of identities. By the same token, as the curriculum also informs a literacy framework, reading and writing are seen as tightly interwoven. That is what Kern (2000) advocates about reading, but that we also connect to the writing process:

Assessing and evaluating reading in a literacy-focused program requires more than check-

ing students’ ability to arrive at a normative comprehension product. It involves paying attention to the progress by which learners design meaning. That is to say, we are interested in finding out about the particular ways that learners (1) make connections among textual elements, and (2) interpret those connections in terms of their own knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. (p. 275)

Based on these concepts, not only is a final version of a text evaluated, but also the previous drafts, since both processes are understood as progressive. This strategy encourages students to rewrite their texts, mostly guided by the teacher’s feedback not only on linguistic features per se, but mainly on how these linguistic resources play out in envisioning the text’s desired effect. Thus, the students revise their compositions in terms of style, register, rhetorical

organization, argument consistency, and clarity according to the genre's characteristics. Peer reviews and collective writings are noteworthy strategies for developing student abilities regarding the analysis of texts and their features.

As previously stated, becoming an active participant in a new community of practice involves understanding the dynamics of power relations among speakers. In order to reach this goal, students need to develop a motivated attitude as well as a reflective stance regarding his/her learning objectives and outcomes. Learning a foreign language is a continuous process that unveils social practices and reveals new meanings to be incorporated every day. Hence, reflection journals or diaries are options that stimulate students to self-evaluate their learning processes. This strategy follows Kern's (2000) principle that "literacy involves not only reflection about text meaning but also reflection on one's own reading and writing processes" (p. 280). In this way, by thinking critically about the material they produced, students are committed with a dynamic and engaging cycle of assessment and evaluation.

In order to elicit such critical thinking, the teacher can ask questions addressing students' perceptions about their textual and grammatical choices. The following questions are general, but they can be narrowed depending on the genre produced by the student: what difficulties did you experience while reading/writing the text? What did you learn from the reading? Which ideas were fostered after having read the sample text? What are the main points you chose to incorporate into your writing and why did you choose them? Did you look for different texts to inspire you to write yours?

As Kern (2000) argues, "[s]tudents often report that having to write about their own subjective experience of reading over time gives them a real sense of their own progress as learners and readers in the foreign language" (p. 281). In this sense, a diary written each week could address the students' reading and writing strategies too. For example, students

could reflect on how they managed to look up new words and how they incorporated these words into the text they wrote.

7. Final Considerations

Analyzing genres in the classroom requires reflecting upon the sociocultural contexts in which they are produced. It means looking at how people produce meaning within society, through texts formed for interacting in diverse contexts, and having their personal characteristics of genre, class, race, and accent, as embedded. Thus, the sociocultural context is envisioned in genres. Moreover, the dynamic function of genre is taken into consideration as well, since it is not only shaped by sociocultural patterns. Therefore, the genre itself shapes sociocultural context, in a movement that transforms language use in a negotiation of meanings in a situated practice.

Taking this into account, it is possible to state that Portuguese language culture is transversal to the entire curriculum, and not focused only on some texts dedicated to a special discussion on culture. The culture present in texts is in constant contrast with the students' own culture and identity as English and Spanish, and now, as Portuguese speakers.

Despite coming up with a series of assigned genres, there is a negotiation of the students' previous literacy practices concomitantly with the construction of their new foreign language literacy practices via language study and genre analysis and production. At the same time, instructors are negotiating how they understand that genre in their culture and how they are going to teach and also assess students' writing production. This negotiation process contributes to a critical literacy approach, a research topic yet to be deepened. Finally, even though this paper is directed to Portuguese language classes, this approach is a basis to inform any foreign language curriculum.

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