

1 An inclusionary open access textbook for Portuguese

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Abstract

This case study describes the development of an e-textbook for first-year Portuguese classes. This pedagogical initiative strives to provide an inclusionary and open textbook for Portuguese, including the collaboration and feedback from Portuguese speakers of several economic and cultural backgrounds. In this context, ‘openness’ means listening to the language of a given community and the commitment to reproduce it in a textbook format. Inclusion of minority groups in the textbook is perceived not as ‘curiosities’, but as an integral part of the cultures being represented so that a wider range of communities and language registers (from formal to informal) is portrayed. In addition, openness applies to the articulation of gender narratives in an inclusionary format. For instance, the masculine gender is supplemented with female and other non-binary genders. Above all, this textbook is adaptive and open to all, regardless of economic background. By promoting language teaching and quality free education to all, it is our intention to contribute to a better understanding of each other and to the reduction of the divisions among communities. In this project, the authors decided to create materials in an open platform (Creative Commons CC BY), available to any student with access to the Internet. In order to be inclusive, the authors worked in partnership with language professionals and students from several institutions in the US and in Brazil. Through a collaborative effort, the authors produced an inclusive e-textbook created from the bottom up.

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1. Context of the project

The curriculum of Portuguese as an additional language has been dominated by a few textbooks, most of them published in Brazil, Portugal, and the US. In general, the textbooks are expensive and in the case of the US, the market is controlled mainly by one publishing house which charges a fee for temporary access to the online workbook, substantially raising the costs to students. Given the limited demand for Portuguese – it corresponds to less than 1% of the foreign languages taught in the US (Looney & Lusin, 2018³) – publishing houses tend to limit the publication of new textbook editions, which is visible in the outdated material.

According to our experience, introductory language books for Portuguese are mostly written by language specialists who do not teach introductory level classes. In the end, most of the activities in the textbooks have not been tested with students before, and sometimes do not work in a class setting. Finally, language textbooks printed outside Portuguese-speaking countries are written by language professionals who generally have not been in contact with everyday and current Portuguese for many years, which is noticeable in the word-choices and the outdated usage of language expressions. The writing process of printed textbooks for Portuguese follows a top-down approach, which limits the representation of cultural aspects to those experienced by the authors. It is not uncommon to sense a unifying cultural voice throughout a language textbook, instead of multiple voices. The representation of minority groups is often left to readings and blurbs instead of being an integral part of the material (for a discussion on the underrepresentation of minorities in English textbooks, including women, people of colour, low-income people, and the disabled, see Hilliard, 2014; Kubota, Austin, & Saito-Abbott, 2003).

3. In the 2016 Modern Language Association of America report, Portuguese corresponds to 0.69% of the enrollments in foreign languages in institutions of higher education in the US.

The idea of developing an open e-textbook for Portuguese grew from the experience of the authors who have taught entry-language classes at university level for over 15 years each. Having developed several class activities over the years tailored to their classes and having to adapt most of the textbooks' content in order to provide a more natural usage of Portuguese, the authors decided to work with colleagues and students in order to create an open e-textbook. The goal of this project is to provide language learners with an e-textbook that is current, free of charge, and available to anyone with access to the Internet. This material is tailored to university students, however, most of the book could also work with high school students and with adults in general. Furthermore, this e-textbook is also a tool for other Portuguese language teachers. The development of this material is a collective effort. It involves the participation of several language students and Portuguese instructors in Brazil, the United States, and Portugal (and in the future, Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa). Most of the writing has been done in Brazil and Portugal, taking into consideration the result of surveys with students and instructors. Overall, the material reflects several voices and gives prominence to minority groups and gender equality throughout the text, including the representation of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI) community and other disenfranchised groups, such as immigrants in Brazil and Portugal, for example.

2. Intended outcomes

Current Portuguese as a foreign language books do not offer a sufficient range of real language, despite the fact that they make an effort in taking the language outside the classroom and making it more real. There is the need to take a step further by presenting everyday language spoken by Portuguese speakers from several backgrounds. This real use of language is a learning outcome that many instructors struggle to achieve in their classrooms. Realness and openness occur when listening to the language in use in a given community, taking into consideration all of its sociological variables such as economic standing, ethnicity, origins and citizenship, and the willingness to reproduce such language in the textbook format (Pérez-Leroux & Glass, 2000). To include

these variables entails a shift in paradigm from teaching and learning languages believing that only a speaker who speaks really ‘well’ a language can produce meaningful input versus believing that any speaker can produce meaningful input acknowledging the effectiveness of their message according to a specific social situation (Mendonça, 2012). In other words, the input in Portuguese produced by a speaker in a *musseque* (slum) in Luanda is as valid as the input in Portuguese produced by a speaker brought up in the middle class, holding a university degree in Lisbon, or by a speaker who speaks Uruguayan Portuguese on the border between Brazil and Uruguay. All of them should be included in the classroom so that students understand why and how they can use the target language and what to do with it.

The inclusion of minority groups in the textbook is then to be perceived not as ‘curiosities’ but as an integral part of the country being represented so that a wider range of communities and language registers (from formal to informal) is exemplified. Also, openness applies to the articulation of gender narratives in an inclusionary format. In Portuguese, gender is expressed through two classic forms, -a for feminine and -o for masculine. So both should be alternated with non-binary grammatical uses (namely *tod@s*, *todxs*, *tod_s*, *todos*, *todas*).

In regards to technological tools, discussion boards, such as the ones on Blackboard, Canvas, and Moodle, are a great tool for addressing complex concepts in a language class, like the definition of ethnicity, colour, citizenship, gender, and sexuality. A Romani student may encounter difficulties in a classroom whose majority is non-Romani, so a blog functions as a safe stress-free environment for that student or any other to choose or express her/his origins. Also, the definition – and even the explanation – in the classroom of a group other than the majority may cause confrontation and anxiety, so an educational blog is a less heated environment for a larger discussion, rather than utilising standard definitions given by a ‘normal’ or ‘classic’ discourse of a language and a culture which leaves out everyday important and real expressions of the self.

Another outcome in this project is the application of inclusive language. When dealing with race, the classic explanation of Black culture in Portuguese-

speaking countries is given by saying that *preto* and *negro* refer to the same colour, but *negro* should be used for Afro-Brazilians or Afro-Portuguese and *preto* for objects. Nonetheless, what do instructors say to students when their Brazilian and Portuguese friends do not call themselves *negro* but *preto* and when the characters of the videos, movies, and documentaries they watch address their African origins using words such as *caboclx*, *negrx*, *pretx*, *morenx*, *morenx clarx*, or *cafusx* to express their different shades of blackness? An inclusive material should provide other words besides *negro* and *preto* so that an African descendant student can express her/his identity in the target language more properly (and, more importantly, as one chooses to). This concept applies as well for a lesbian student, for example, who chooses to reveal her sexual preferences or identity not in a classroom but rather in a blog.

Finally, language textbooks frequently create a deceiving narrative of inclusion and equality. The perpetuation of a single voice throughout language textbooks, the voice of privileged writers, is many times confused with false ideas of equality. The authors of the Portuguese textbook – *Bate Papo* – strongly believe that in order to include authentic perspectives of minorities in textbooks, the members of the minority groups should participate as collaborators in the creation of the teaching material. There is an eminent risk of creating clichés and reinforcing stereotypes when a textbook author creates the ‘voices’ of minorities without being a part of the given minority group.

3. Nuts and bolts

This Portuguese textbook *Bate Papo* was created as an electronic text with a Creative Commons license (CC BY), which allows anyone to share and adapt the material as long as the appropriate credit is given. The textbook is available online, on Word, and on PDF as well, so students can print it at home. Since it is an electronic textbook, the authors are able to make changes and review the material on a regular basis, keeping it up-to-date, reflecting the changes in the language, and including current cultural manifestations as well. The text is

available through the PressBooks platform from the University of Washington: <https://uw.pressbooks.pub/batepapo/> – which is currently under construction, as the authors are releasing the chapters once they are piloted with their language classes. The selection of images represents the book’s intention of being truly inclusive. The sample below from Unit 2, which focusses on physical descriptions, has the image of Marielle Franco (Figure 1), an Afro-Brazilian politician and activist, who was assassinated in 2017.

Figure 1. Introduction to Unit 2

<small>CC BY Viana da Silva Bate-Papo - Unidade 2- Parte A- vol 1</small>	
Bate-Papo – Unidade 2 – Parte A	
By the end of this lesson, you will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• List basic colors.• Describe physical appearances and personalities.• List some daily and leisure activities.• Ask simple questions about daily routines.• List modes of transportation.• List the months.• Propose simple plans for the weekends/ future months.	 <p>Marielle Franco Ativista Social e Política carioca</p>

In the same unit about physical descriptions, other images include iconic figures in the Portuguese-speaking world who are not generally portrayed in traditional language textbooks, such as the Afro-Brazilian reporter Glória Maria, the Brazilian iconic transsexual, Gilberta Salci Júnior, and the Guiné Bissau politician, Amílcar Cabral (Figure 4). One other activity is the celebration of Afro Lusophone History Month (Figure 2), in which students are asked to search information about individuals who have been important for Black history in the Lusophone world and how they might relate these people’s accomplishments to their own cultures (Figure 3). For example, Paulina Chiziane, one of the first women writers from Mozambique; Mamadou Ba, head of the SOS Racism

Association in Portugal; and Brazilian Geanine Escobar, activist for the Black Lesbian Women rights in Portugal.

Figure 2. Cultural activity



Figure 3. Activity prompts

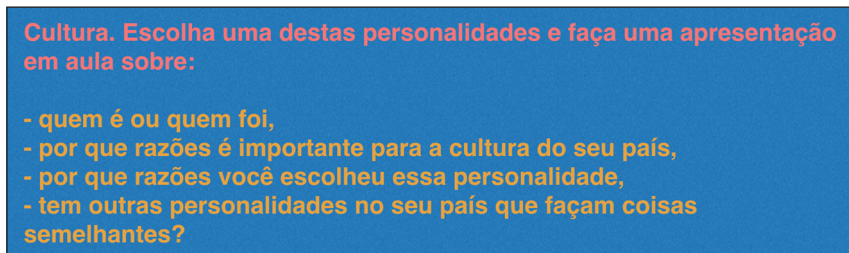


Figure 4. Vocabulary for physical descriptions

1 - Descrições		
		
<p>Glória Maria, repórter brasileira, tem cabelo preto e crespo, olhos pretos e pele negra.</p>	<p>Gisberta Salci Júnior, transsexual brasileira sem-teto, tem cabelo castanho, liso e comprido, olhos pretos e é magra.</p>	<p>Amílcar Cabral, político da Guiné Bissau, é calvo, tem pele negra; um pouco de barba e usa óculos.</p>
<p>Glossário: curto - <i>short</i> longo - <i>long</i></p>	<p>olhos grandes - <i>big eyes</i> olhos pequenos - <i>small eyes</i></p>	<p>Gramática: Spanish speakers - <u>do not say</u> "pelo"; "Pelo" means "body hair"</p>

In addition to the iconography, a series of short videos were produced portraying everyday life from different ethnicities people in Brazil in several situations, such as greeting each other and purchasing an item in a store, for example. Besides the diversity shown in the videos, the material presents a series of Portuguese dialects from several regions of Brazil and from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Since the content of the book is built from the conversation in the dialogues, the language being studied is the language used in everyday Portuguese. The authors worked carefully with the contributors for the videos by giving them the freedom of choosing the words that they would use normally, without a rehearsed transcript. The result is a more natural language. The expressions and language structures introduced in the dialogues are then explained through a Portuguese/English glossary and by focussing on the task at hand, allowing students to complete simple tasks despite the complexity of the language. It was clear to the authors that the conversations recorded on video brought a range of expressions, accents, intonations, language structures, and vocabulary that would not be represented otherwise.

As for the online workbook that accompanies the e-textbook, the exercises are currently available as Creative Commons on the Canvas platform. In the future,

the online workbook will also be available on the Moodle and Blackboard platforms. Although this Portuguese e-textbook is innovative and inclusive, the authors recognise the importance of also offering the traditional automated online exercises as language practice, especially at the lower levels of proficiency. The online exercises range from controlled exercises to open ones.

One challenging aspect of the online workbook is the series of exercises that are corrected by the online platforms (Moodle, Canvas, and Blackboard). There are limitations in the correction system due to the capabilities of the technological tools. For instance, when a student misses an accent, the whole answer is considered wrong, despite it being a single accent missing. It will probably be the case that in the future, these online platforms will be more refined and able to detect different kinds of answers and scale the grade according to the number of inaccuracies.

Another aspect that contributed to the development of this e-textbook in Portuguese is the use of other open educational resources, especially the podcasts *Língua da Gente*, produced by Orlando Kelm and available at the Centre for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning at the University of Texas at Austin (<https://linguadagente.coerll.utexas.edu/>). The podcasts focus on a short dialogue between two Brazilians and are listed according to the level of proficiency being targeted: beginner, elementary, and intermediate. Another important open source is the grammar book *Português para Principiantes* (<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/portuguese/>), available through the University of Wisconsin-Madison, on their PressBooks platform. Their grammar explanations were incorporated in *Bate Papo*. At the end, thanks to the open educational resources, *Língua da Gente* and *Português para Principiantes*, the e-textbook *Bate Papo* is richer and more complete. The authors can then focus on interactive class activities and aspects not yet covered or not dealt with well by previous textbooks in Portuguese, such as the inclusion of LGBTQI voices and the representation of indigenous and Afro populations from the Portuguese-speaking world, for example. The reusing and remixing of digital open educational resources works as an advantage to educators who are constantly looking for ways to improve their teaching materials.

The book *Bate Papo* is designed into two versions. In the first stage, the language focus is on Brazilian Portuguese. All the videos and most of the collaborators in this first version of the book come from Brazil, including professors and students in applied linguistics. In a second and future stage, the book will focus also on European Portuguese. The plan is to reproduce the majority of the content from the Brazilian Portuguese textbook contextualised in an European Portuguese version. The e-textbook will then be offered in two versions: Brazilian Portuguese and European Portuguese. The fact is that Brazilian Portuguese and European Portuguese are linguistically and culturally very different. A third proposal is an African Portuguese version of the textbook, which should come from collaborators in Mozambique and Angola.

Finally, the authors will provide a print-on-demand version of the material on a low-cost option (around USD20) for those who prefer to have the printed material on hand during class time, even though there is the possibility of printing a PDF or Word Copy available online. The collaborators in language schools and higher education institutions in Brazil have already signaled their intentions of adopting this e-textbook. It comes as no surprise that schools with immigrant populations in Brazil find this material very helpful with its grammar explanations and glossaries in English, according to Nildicéia Aparecida Rocha, from the Universidade Estadual Paulista (personal communication, June 21, 2018). Programmes for immigrant students in Brazil have struggled with teaching material that lacks a common language for their target audiences.

In practical terms, to make the e-textbook *Bate Papo* available to a larger audience and to make it truly open will involve massive promotion with Portuguese language instructors, students, universities, colleges, public and private language schools, non-profit organisations, and the social media. The intention of having this e-textbook as an open educational resource is also to give an opportunity to underprivileged students to study Portuguese with a quality material that represents the diversity of the Portuguese-speaking world and which is also free. Since platforms such as Canvas and Blackboard⁴ are

4. Canvas is a free and open platform, whereas Blackboard charges a fee.

normally used at universities and colleges in the United States, the possibility of having a Portuguese Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) using the resources in *Bate Papo* will also be considered as the project takes its form. The advantage of using a MOOC is that they provide access to students from all over the world for free.

4. Conclusion

When creating new foreign language materials, one should have in mind the ever more diverse audience they are addressing so that a more fruitful, effective, engaging, and real environment is achieved⁵. In addition to the paucity of studies and approaches devoted to the inclusion of marginalised groups in Portuguese language activities, the inclusion of sociological categories such as dialect, sociolect, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion, among others, in current textbooks is sometimes not acknowledged or, if so, accounted for in a side note (for a more in-depth discussion on queer pedagogy in Portuguese language materials, see [Neto, 2016](#)). This case study is meant to open the dialogue in terms of the representation in the classroom of sociological groups other than the majority and far from the idea of a unified non-real language. Being more accessible, open, real, and free, the new e-textbook is not so much concerned with how to speak proper Portuguese in one way, but how to use Portuguese in different settings and allowing one's individuality.

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5. [Otlowski \(2003\)](#) stresses this same need in the case of English as a Foreign Language (EFL): “the teacher and the textbook are the two most important and immediate cultural links between the student’s native culture and the target foreign culture. If the influential roles of the teacher and the textbook are accepted, then the way the textbook portrays the various people in the target society and the way those people are shown to communicate will directly affect EFL students’ choices of language when communicating with native speakers. This has important implications for the EFL teacher and for textbook selection” (p. 2).

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