

Case Study: Portuguese

A pluricultural and pluricentric language collaboration

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Learning new vocabulary through comic books and

Using songs to culturally engage language students

The 20th century witnessed the development of educational collaborations between Brazilian and Portuguese educators in the organization of cultural activities with the use of the Portuguese language. The 1960s marked a decade of significant presence of Portuguese migrants in the UK, which led groups of Portuguese parents to set up language lessons for their children in this country. Since the 1970s, the Portuguese government became responsible for running these lessons, nowadays organized by the *Coordenação do Ensino Português, Instituto Camões*. The Brazilian migration to the UK, becoming significant much later, had parents setting their first language lessons in the mid-1990s. Subsequently, the two Portuguese-speaking groups have engaged in mutual support. We highlight here two of the activities that have resulted from this successful partnership.

Learning new vocabulary through comic books

Turma da Mônica (Monica's Gang) is a Brazilian comic book which is an integral part of the childhood experience of growing up in Brazil. Therefore, a Brazilian educator was invited to explore a story from Monica's Gang stories with a group of 8-10 year-old pupils in the lessons organized by a Portuguese educator.

The session was divided into six sections. The images used in the story were used to engage the pupils and set the context of the story. The pupils were asked to describe what they could see in the individual frames of the story, and in this way, had the opportunity to use their language skills and knowledge, and to identify gaps in their vocabulary and learn new words. They were then asked to place the frames in the order they thought the story had happened. Following that, the original story was shown to the pupils, who had a chance to discuss in groups how the order they chose differed from the original one. It was only after this discussion that the Brazilian teacher read aloud the original story and its dialogues. At the first read, the pupils were asked to pay attention to the similarities and the differences between the two stories, i.e. the original one and what the pupils had imagined. After discussing the different stories and considering what the pupils thought of the varied versions, there was a second read of the original story. This time, the pupils were asked to note all the words that they thought not to be European Portuguese. This stage of the activity was followed by a discussion of the vocabulary diversity between different Portuguese varieties.

If you are not familiar with Monica's Gang stories, here is a sample:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8F7gVtQ-YA>

Using songs to culturally engage language students

Brazilian music has a strong presence in Portugal. With the aim of allowing teenagers of Portuguese descent to be exposed to this cultural experience in the UK, two Brazilian teachers, a male and a female, were invited to run a “dance workshop” with a group of 14-16 year-old pupils in the lessons organized by a Portuguese educator. The workshop had three components: a language focus, a dance demonstration, and a dance lesson.

In the language focus part, the students were presented with the lyrics of a song with gaps. They had to read the lyrics and try to complete the gaps with the missing words. This worksheet was presented in three levels of difficulty, and students were given time to complete the work individually.

The basic level version, besides having the lyrics with gaps, presented a table with a list of words. The students had to use all the words to get the full lyrics. The intermediate level version also presented a list of words for the students to choose from. However, in this case, there were extra words. So, the students had to choose the ones that would fit the lyrics and discard the extra ones. The advanced level version of the worksheet had the lyrics with gaps, but no words for the students to choose from. Instead, the students had to draw on their own knowledge to complete the gaps. The group teacher decided who should get which version of the worksheet.

After this initial phase students checked their answers with classmates who had the same worksheet. At a second stage, the students were put into groups of three, with each student having a different version of the worksheet. They could help each other again. Listening to the song to check their answers was the fourth step of the activity. After that, the teacher went through the students’ answers and dealt with any language doubts they had. The music was then played and the Brazilian teachers danced to it. To conclude the activities of that session, the students were invited to join the Brazilian teachers and try to dance *farró*. As a follow up lesson, the Portuguese teacher explored the history of *farró* and its different styles. The students had the opportunity to contrast it with typical dances from other Portuguese-speaking countries.

If you don’t know how to dance *farró*, here is a sample:

<https://edpuzzle.com/assignments/6259dfea3570d942ca4ce34c/watch>

Besides the two examples above, several collaborative activities have been developed by Brazilian and Portuguese educators, schools and organisations, such as the celebrations of 5th May, the date established by UNESCO in 2019 to celebrate the World Day of the Portuguese Language. You can learn more about this celebration on <https://pt.unesco.org/commemorations/portuguese-language-day>

Brazil in the School is a set of free online educational resources designed to be used in British schools to support the National Curriculum. Last updated in 2014, it can be accessed on <http://brazilintheschool.blogspot.com>