

The Observatory of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (Observatório PLE-PL2): a milestone in language policies for training Portuguese as a Foreign Language teachers from a pluricentric perspective/

O Observatório PLE-PL2 como um marco nas políticas linguísticas para a formação de professores de PLE/PL2/PLNM por uma perspectiva pluricêntrica


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ABSTRACT

Portuguese is an official or co-official language in nine countries and is present in science, the internet, media, the economy, politics, and the lives of over 260 million people across four continents, encompassing diverse cultures and languages. While Portuguese is enriched by its linguistic and cultural diversity, its teaching as a foreign language from a pluricentric and intercultural perspective has faced both significant challenges and advancements in recent decades. To address this demand, the Observatório PLE-PL2 (The Observatory of Portuguese as a Foreign Language) was created to integrate various researchers to promote the Portuguese language. This article aims to describe the Portuguese as a Pluricentric Language Teacher Training Course offered by the Observatório PLE-PL2, as well as to analyze its context of influence based on the Policy Cycle Approach proposed by Ball and Bowe (1992). To this end, we draw on bibliographic research about the situation of Portuguese from a pluricentric perspective. We then analyze the context of influence that led to the creation of the course, based on a historical overview of actions and contexts both nationally and internationally. We conclude that the Observatório PLE-PL2 plays a pioneering role in training Portuguese as a Foreign Language teachers from a pluricentric perspective.

KEYWORDS: Pluricentrism; Portuguese as a Foreign Language; Language Policies.

RESUMO

Língua oficial ou co-oficial em nove países, o português está presente na ciência, na internet, nos meios de comunicação, na economia, na política e na vida de mais de 260 milhões de pessoas, espalhadas em quatro continentes, compartilhando diferentes culturas e línguas. Se de um lado o português se mostra rico pela sua diversidade linguística e cultural, por outro o seu ensino como língua estrangeira, sob uma perspectiva pluricêntrica e intercultural, perpassa por desafios e avanços significativos nas últimas décadas. A fim de atuar nessa demanda, é criado o Observatório PLE-PL2, uma rede que integra diversos pesquisadores para atuar na divulgação da língua portuguesa. Sendo assim, este artigo tem como objetivo descrever o Curso de Formação de Professores(as) de Português como Língua Pluricêntrica (Curso PLP) oferecido pelo Observatório PLE-PL2, bem como analisar o seu contexto de influência, com base na Abordagem do Ciclo de Políticas (ACP), proposta por Ball e Bowe (1992). Para tanto, recorremos a pesquisas bibliográficas sobre a realidade do português sob a ótica do conceito de pluricentrismo. Na sequência, analisamos o contexto de influência que resultou na criação do curso, a partir de um panorama histórico de ações e contextos em âmbito nacional e internacional. Concluímos que o Observatório PLE-PL2 tem um papel inédito na formação de professores de PLE/PL2/PLNM por uma perspectiva pluricêntrica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Pluricentrismo; Português Língua Estrangeira; Políticas Linguísticas.

1 Introduction

The term "pluricentric language" was first coined by the American sociolinguist William Stewart in a 1968 article, as noted by Auer (2013, p. 18). However, other scholars argue that Kloss was the first to use this term in 1978, subsequently popularizing it. According to Clyne (1995), citing Kloss (1978), a pluricentric language "is a language with several interacting centers, each providing a national variety with at least some of its own (codified) norms" (Clyne, 1995, p. 20). In contrast, a monocentric language has only one standard variety with a single codified norm.

For Muhr (2016, p. 20), a pluricentric language is

a language that is used in at least two nations where it has an official status as state language, co-state language, or regional language with its own (codified) norms that usually contribute to the national/personal identity, making the nation a norm-setting centre by the deliberate use of the norms native to this specific nation” (Muhr, 2016, p. 20).

This is undoubtedly the case for the Portuguese language, which is official or co-official in the nine countries that make up the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP): Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Portugal, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste, as well as the Special Administrative Region of Macau, China. For this reason, it has been considered a pluricentric language, given its use in different countries with diverse norms and varieties, across various social, political, scientific, and academic spheres, and its ideological representations, which vary according to their respective countries' geopolitical positions in the globalized world.

Mendes (2016), corroborating Muhr's definition (2012), highlights that different norms do not always coincide in terms of their usage. In addition, according to Muhr (2012), linguistic pluricentrism arises from the relationship between language and identity, and between language and power, so that different language varieties do not carry the same social prestige or economic and political power.

This discrepancy arises from the opposition between dominant and non-dominant varieties, which highlight the asymmetrical power relations between different national varieties of a pluricentric language. Thus, even in pluricentric languages, there is a certain hierarchical order (Clyne, 1992, p. 455), so that dominant varieties tend to exert more influence over non-dominant varieties, not only in terms of the prestige of their linguistic norms, but also in terms of legitimizing the management of all other norms. As a result, dominant varieties assume the leadership as primary centers in the codification of norms, while non-dominant varieties become secondary centers, almost subordinate to the dominant ones.

Historically, the management of the Portuguese language has been marked by a Brazilian-Portuguese bicentrism, but European linguistic norms have long been regarded as the most prestigious. As a result, the PFL teaching, whether as a first or foreign language, has always been normatively oriented towards European Portuguese, leading to practices of exclusion, linguistic prejudice (Bagno, 1999), and glottophobic behaviors (Blanchet, 2016).

This article aims to describe the teacher training course offered by the Observatório PLE-PL2 (The Observatory of Portuguese as a Foreign Language) as well as to analyze its context of influence, based on

the Policy Cycle Approach proposed by Ball and Bowe (1992)¹. The next section proposes a discussion about the conflict and asymmetry between dominant and non-dominant or peripheral norms, categorizing this reality through historical and political criteria that led these Lusophone nations to different codification realities and representative roles of the language. In the second section, we highlight language policies developed to promote the diffusion and promotion of the pluricentrism of the Portuguese language. Next, we describe and analyze the Observatório PLE-PL2 and the Teacher Training Course in Portuguese as a Pluricentric Language, developed by the observatory. In the following sequence, we analyze its context of influence (Mainardes, 2006) through a contextual overview based on a literature review. Finally, we conclude the article by highlighting the importance of innovative language policies, such as this training course.

2 Divergent Pluricentrism and the Democratization of the Portuguese management

The linguistic diversity of Portuguese is characterized by conflicting and asymmetrical relationships between the national varieties of each Lusophone community, given that "they are based on the competition between the dominant or central norms, the Brazilian and Portuguese norms, and the isolation (or even symbolic erasure) of the other non-dominant or peripheral varieties, from the other Portuguese-speaking countries" (Mendes; Piris; Ribeiro; Melo-Pfeifer, 2022, p. 330).

According to Pinto (2022), the historical, political, and linguistic conditions that distance the different Lusophone realities can be divided into five categories:

- The bicentrism of Brazil and Portugal, whose national norms are fully codified and consolidated, exerting influence over the others, especially the European norm. Only these countries have a network of teaching their norm abroad, as well as international certification exams. While the Brazilian norm has a greater weight due to the expressive number of speakers, the European norm is the only one that is not stigmatized.

¹ This article is a result of a graduate-level course at the State University of Londrina in 2023, titled "Language and Educational Policies in Contexts of Language Teaching and Teacher Training". The course's evaluative instrument was writing an article that analyzed a language policy based on the theoretical framework of the Policy Cycle Approach.

- Angola and Mozambique are similar once their norms are in the process of development and internal legitimization. In both countries, the number of speakers is growing, so that demands to validate their codification are increasing. However, European Portuguese is still the reference norm for both countries.
- São Tomé and Príncipe is the only country where Portuguese is spoken by more than 90% of the population, and where the codification of the national norm has been under development since the mid-21st century.
- Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Macau, and Timor-Leste are countries where the emergence of the codification of a national norm does not appear to be imminent.
- Equatorial Guinea, where Portuguese is the official language but without an indigenous community of speakers of the language, which makes its codification unlikely

Although Portuguese is present as an official or co-official language in the Portuguese-Speaking African Countries (PALOP) and Timor-Leste, it lacks management in some of these countries, as there are no language policies that value the Portuguese language as a representation of their own national diversity. This is why movements towards pluralizing the management of the Portuguese language are seen as important advances in democratizing the management and decision-making in pluricentric language policies. As a result of these demands, the International Institute of the Portuguese Language (IILP) was created in 1989, and the CPLP, entities crucial for strengthening language policies that value linguistic and cultural diversity in the Portuguese-speaking world.

The pluricentric perspective of the Portuguese language became clearer in the 2010s, at the initiative of the CPLP, with the first International Conference on the Portuguese Language in the World System, organized by the IILP. At the conference, the conception and planning of the Brasilia Action Plan (PAB) was discussed in 2010, which dealt with the need to think about strategies and actions for the internationalization of the Portuguese language, based on its promotion and dissemination.

Later, in 2013, the Lisbon Action (PALIS) recognizes the existence of different varieties or variants of the Portuguese language. Following this, the Dili Action Plan (PADÍLI), in 2016, uses, for the first time, the concept of pluricentrism, which should be integrated into educational policies, such as teacher training,

production of teaching materials, and curriculum development. Finally, in 2021, we have the Praia Action Plan (PAPRAIA), which highlights the importance of pluricentric management for the promotion and dissemination of Portuguese language teaching, emphasizing the need to create national teaching structures in all CPLP countries.

The great challenge, therefore, is, based on these actions, strategies, and initiatives born within the IILP, to reposition the teaching of Portuguese in a global context that is neither exclusive nor indicative of divergent standardization, but rather promotes the different norms and codifications of the Portuguese language (Oliveira, 2013).

Following this reasoning, Oliveira (2013) stresses the importance of conducting language policies and teaching practices towards a convergent standardization that

to the benefit of the speakers, expands the vehicularity of the language, allows for better circulation in an expanded linguistic market, with evident political advantages, and finally includes, instead of excluding, the countries that until now have not been able to participate in the management of their own official language, that is, the PALOP and Timor-Leste (Oliveira, 2013, p. 69).

In general terms, the linguistic diversity of Portuguese requires a continuous effort to promote a pluricentric management that respects and values all varieties of the language. With the creation of the IILP, the CPLP initiatives, such as the PAB, PALIS, PADÍLI, and PAPRAIA, represent important steps to ensure that the management of Portuguese and actions to promote its teaching occur in an inclusive and democratic manner, overcoming the centralization of the norms of Portugal and Brazil.

3 The Observatório PLE-PL2

Focusing on studies related to the pluricentrism of the Portuguese language, the Observatório PLE-PL2 (ObsPLE-PL2) is composed of more than 40 researchers, professors, and managers from CPLP countries and other parts of the world. These experts develop research, projects, and political and pedagogical initiatives in teaching, teacher training, and policy development aimed at promoting and disseminating the teaching of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL) in different teaching contexts. In

addition, it aims to "diagnose, monitor, and guide actions within and from the field, in order to collaborate, in different ways, with institutions and society."² .

ObsPLE-PL2 thus works on many fronts, including the development of research and pedagogical action projects, sharing experiences and research, promoting the mobility of researchers and students, advising institutions, postgraduate programs and various organizations in the field of PFL, publicizing actions and events, publishing, promoting seminars, online courses and lectures for teacher training, developing digital platforms and resources, among others.

Interested in the demands and challenges of the 21st century, the network's research focuses on an intercultural, decolonial and inclusive perspective, in which the Portuguese language is understood for its pluricentric aspect "which plays the role of a language of intercultural mediation in the multilingual and multicultural scenarios that characterize contemporary societies"³. Research into PFL teaching is carried out along five lines:

1. Intercultural and critical approaches and methodologies;
2. Intercultural teacher training;
3. Constituent dimensions of teaching and learning: curricula, reference frameworks, planning, teaching materials and assessment;
4. Digital technologies and the development of Open Educational Resources (OER);
5. Language policies for the promotion, dissemination and projection of Portuguese as a pluricentric language for global communication.

With regard to lines two and five, ObsPLE-PL2, since 2022, has played an important role in meeting demands with regard to teacher training, with the offer of an unprecedented teacher training course, entitled Projeto Português Pluricêntrico - Curso de Formação de Professores(as) de Português como Língua Pluricêntrica, which we will analyze later and call, from now on, "PLP Course".

Methodology

² Cf. https://observatoriople-pl2.org/cursos_info/cursos_detalhes. Accessed on: Aug. 28, 2024.

³ Cf. https://observatoriople-pl2.org/cursos_info/cursos_detalhes. Accessed on: Aug. 28, 2024.

In order to investigate this language policy, we used the Policy Cycle Approach (PCA) proposed by Ball and Bowe (1992), which allows for a critical analysis of the trajectory of educational policies from their conception to their implementation, from a post-structuralist and pluralist perspective. This approach is characterized by its interpretation of the political process based on the definition of its contexts. In this sense, it will be possible to analyze the "disordered realities of influence, pressure, dogmas, conflicts, agreements, intransigence, resistance, errors, opposition and pragmatism" (Mainardes, 2006, p. 56).

We consider language policies as public policies (Souza, 2018), not only in terms of the State's role in their planning but also in terms of their broader scope, which involves the organization of civil entities and their process of influence. In this sense, the field of public policy studies currently "seeks to explain the nature of the policy analyzed and its processes, focusing on understanding its consequences and the issues that emerge from government decisions" (Ozga, 2000, apud Souza, 2019). Thus, language policies encompass actions arising from social practices that can motivate official language interventions (Souza; Pereira, 2016). This approach allows for a complex analysis of language situations, considering the interventions of individuals, conflicts, demands, and real needs within a specific linguistic reality, which makes it possible to understand the role of the actors involved in this dynamic process (Souza, 2018).

According to the authors, the PCA is understood as a continuous cycle made up of five contexts, which are neither linear nor temporal: 1. Context of influence: when public policies are initiated and political discourses are constructed, in which there are disputes over interests to influence their purposes and actions; 2. Context of text production: refers to the textual representation of the policy; 3. Context of practice: is the policy in progress, which can result in possible transformations and adaptations; 4. Context of results or effects: are the impacts of the policy on the public. Context of practice: this is the policy in progress, which is subject to reinterpretation and re-creation, and may result in transformations and adaptations; 5. Context of results or effects: these are the impacts of the policy with a view to social justice and equality; 5. Context of political strategy: these are the strategies for identifying inequalities created or produced by the policy under investigation.

For the purposes of delimiting the corpus, in this article we will focus on the context of influence, in order to analyze the course as a language policy within the scope of PFL teacher training. As far as the context of influence is concerned, "it can be investigated through bibliographical research, interviews with

policy makers and other professionals involved" (Mainardes, 2006, p. 66), in order to investigate the articulation between global/international and national/local influences. At first, our intention was to interview a key name in the course's creation, who volunteered to answer a few questions. However, due to her time constraints, we resorted to bibliographical research to investigate the context of influence.

Following Mainardes (2006, p. 66), based on Vidovich (2002), we considered the following questions as starting points:

1. What influences and trends are present in the politics under investigation? Why has politics emerged now?
2. Are there global/international influences? Are there national and local influences? How are they related?
3. How has the discourse of politics been constituted over time? Is it possible to trace the complete genealogy of the discourse of politics?
4. In the development of political discourse, is it possible to observe the configuration of different versions of politics (conservative versions, progressive versions, etc.)?
5. Where do global and international influences come from?
6. Who are the political elites and what interests do they represent?
7. What other groups have exerted or tried to exert influence?
8. What are the most powerful interests and interest groups?
9. Were there global/international, national or local influences operating even before the policy formulation emerged?

Mainardes (2006, p. 66) suggests that the policy under investigation can be shaped by a series of influences and trends reflecting both global dynamics and national and local contexts. Its emergence may be linked to changes in the international scenario, such as new geopolitical alignments or global crises, or changes in the configuration of power and political and economic interests.

It's important to note that this analytical framework is dynamic and flexible (Mainardes, 2006), allowing for adaptations to the proposed questions based on the specific reality of each policy. Thus, in order to analyze the context of the course's influence, we adapted Mainardes' questions, considering that

the training course is a recent policy with no published studies and the impossibility of tracing its complete discourse genealogy. Instead, we focused on understanding the international and national factors that created the demand for Portuguese teacher training from a pluricentric perspective. Then, we synthesized the nine questions into a single question in order to adapt them to this peculiarity of the course's emergence and to the aims of this article. Therefore, this section focuses on answering the following question: What are the global and local influences that determined the creation of the course and how are they constituted?

4 The Pluricentric Portuguese Project - Training Course for Teachers of Portuguese as a Pluricentric Language

ObsPLE-PL2, in partnership with the IILP, the Guimarães Rosa Institute, and the Division of International, Cultural, and Portuguese Language Affairs (DCLP) of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE), has offered two editions of the PLP Course for the PFL teacher community up to the publication of this article. This is a language policy strategy aimed at promoting the training of teachers of Portuguese as a pluricentric language, "based on contemporary theoretical and pedagogical discussions and approaches to foreign language/second language/non-native language teaching, considering the great diversity of the Portuguese-speaking countries' community" (Praia, 2022). In addition to this general objective, the call for applications also presents nine specific objectives:

- 1) (Re)recognize the importance of Portuguese in the contemporary world, as a global language of communication and as an economic and cultural asset of Portuguese-speaking countries;
- 2) Reflect on the different teaching contexts and the role of Portuguese as a pluricentric language: specificities, challenges, and perspectives;
- 3) Understand the relationships between language, culture, and identity in the teaching and learning process of Portuguese as a pluricentric language;
- 4) Discuss the linguistic and cultural diversity of Portuguese-speaking countries, with a focus on the analysis and discussion of their varieties and linguistic norms;
- 5) Analyze and discuss the characteristics of teaching Portuguese as a pluricentric language, particularly regarding course planning, the development of teaching approaches, the selection and the development of teaching materials, and assessment;
- 6) Provide opportunities for experimentation through the development of course plans, the creation of teaching materials, and the evaluation of Portuguese as a pluricentric language teaching practices;
- 7) Address different topics related to Portuguese as a pluricentric language teaching: grammar in the classroom, teaching reading and writing, developing oral skills (comprehension and production), among others;
- 8) Discuss and practice the use of digital technologies for Portuguese as a pluricentric language teaching;
- 9) Develop

strategies for the development of competencies of Portuguese as a pluricentric language teachers in the contemporary world (Praia, 2022).

The first edition, in 2022, was aimed only at teachers from the PALOP and East Timor, with 70 places, half of which were reserved for IILP national committees. We believe that this restricted offer is due to the eminent demand for pluricentric teacher training for this community, not only because of the lack of codification of their norms but also because of their timid international positions regarding language policies as a representation of their national identities. As a result, the first edition made it possible to ensure that the representatives of their respective national committees became replicator trainers at the local level.

For the second edition, in 2023, 150 places were initially offered to the entire community of PFL teachers who already had teaching experience in some of the CPLP countries. However, demand exceeded expectations, so it was necessary to offer another 50 places and open a waiting list for another 50. Of those who applied, 139 were working professionally in Brazil, 32 in Spanish-speaking countries, nine in Portugal, three in PALOP countries, and 17 in various other countries around the world.

These numbers highlight that there is a demand for teachers seeking continuous education in teaching PFL from a pluricentric perspective in various parts of the globe, but especially in Brazil, so that ObsPLE-PL2 is surgically addressing this need. In this sense, the PLP Course "represents a watershed in the field of training teachers of Portuguese as a foreign language / second language / non-native language"⁴

Offered in a Moodle Virtual Learning Environment in a self-paced learning mode, the course has resources, activities, and tasks based on active methodologies, valuing the diversity of the audience and promoting critical and intercultural reflection, through interactive activities that allow the sharing of knowledge in discussion forums. In addition, three online live meetings are held, which guarantee interaction, exchange of ideas and reflections, as well as clarification of questions.

Divided into three modules, the course is organized from 18 thematic mini-courses, totaling 48 hours of workload to be completed over 45 days. The training addresses theoretical aspects and experiences of the pluricentric teaching practice. It is therefore structured as follows:

⁴ Cf. https://observatoriople-pl2.org/cursos_info/cursos_detalhes. Accessed on: Aug. 28, 2024.

Module 1

- Mini-course 1: Portuguese in the world: geopolitical scenarios, linguistic, cultural and economic potential, language of science and creative and technological innovation.
- Mini-course 2: Conceptions of language, culture and identity.
- Mini-course 3: Teaching and training contexts for PLE-PL2.
- Mini-course 4: Language varieties and norms in a pluricentric context: definition, challenges, perspectives.
- Mini-course 5: Multilingualism, discursive genres and the teaching of Portuguese as a pluricentric language (LP).
- Mini-course 6: Language policies in a pluricentric Portuguese language.

Module 2

- Mini-course 7: Portuguese and its dialog with neighboring languages.
- Mini-course 8: Portuguese as a heritage language from a pluricentric perspective.
- Mini-course 9: Digital technologies and teaching Portuguese as a pluricentric language.
- Mini-course 10: Intercultural and critical approaches in teaching and training in Portuguese as a pluricentric language
- Mini-course 11: Portuguese for the deaf from a pluricentric perspective.
- Mini-course 12: Literature and teaching Portuguese as a pluricentric language.

Module 3

- Mini-course 13: The Portal of Portuguese as a Foreign/Non-Native Language Teacher (PPPLe).
- Mini-course 14: Teaching materials and teaching Portuguese as a pluricentric language.
- Mini-course 15: Teaching approaches and course planning.
- Mini-course 16: Assessment in Portuguese, a pluricentric language: concepts and practices.
- Mini-course 17: Language teaching axes: reading, writing, speaking, and linguistic analysis.
- Mini-course 18: Competencies of Portuguese as a pluricentric language teachers.

The thematic axes of each mini-course reveal a focus on contemporary and innovative theoretical and pedagogical approaches that, to a certain extent, have not yet been fully integrated into language

curricula or many continuing education courses in foreign language teaching. This allows teachers, regardless of their experience, to engage with new perspectives on their own pedagogical practices and teaching contexts from a pluricentric perspective.

It is at this point that the retroactive nature of the PFL teaching comes into play, in the sense that, through more explicit and instructive training, in which the trainee is assessed during their training process in a critical-reflective manner, they have the potential to convert monocentric teaching practices into pluricentric, intercultural and contextualized ones. This creates a kind of virtuous cycle, whereby the PFL teaching as a pluricentric language feeds back into pedagogical practices, fostering a new sense of inclusion and openness to diversity, thereby empowering teachers from countries that were previously subject to an exogenous norm (Mendes, 2016).

In the words of Nelson Viana, during his presentation at the I Seminar of the Pluricentric Course⁵, this training course is a way of transposing the concept of pluricentrism from the political and academic sphere to teachers' pedagogical practices, allowing the experience of pluricentrism to penetrate society in general. With this, the notion of pluricentrism has the potential to evolve from an eccentric idea to a commonplace ideal.

5 The Context of Influence for the Teacher Training Course in Portuguese as a Pluricentric Language

In this section we seek to answer the following question: What are the global and local influences that determined the creation of the course and how are they constituted?

In order to answer this question, we analyzed and commented on the panorama of the institutionalization of PFL teaching in Brazil, the neoliberal economic conjuncture and how Brazil fits into it, the initiatives for the internationalization of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which intensify intercultural relations, the most important language policies for teaching, such as the Idiomas sem Fronteiras (REDE IsF), the Certificate of Proficiency in Portuguese for Foreigners (Celpe-Bras), and the Portal of the Teacher of Portuguese as a Foreign/Non-Native Language (PPPLE), and their relationship with teacher training in Brazilian universities.

⁵ Cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAoDz92uaAM&t=5216s>. Accessed on: Aug. 28, 2024.

Finally, we emphasize that, for us, the context of influence that underpins the creation of the PLP Course is fundamentally the creation of the IILP in conjunction with CPLP initiatives, such as PAB, PALIS, PADÍIL and PAPRAIA, which represent the guarantee of democratic management of Portuguese, without which it seems to us that actions such as the idealization of Celpe-Bras, the proposal of the PPPLE and the promotion of training courses would be empty, if they existed at all.

5.1 The challenges in institutionalizing PFL teaching

Between 2006 and 2012, Brazil experienced a period of remarkable growth that attracted the attention of investors, economic blocs and various international organizations. This prominence culminated in the country's selection to host the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. At the same time, interest in the Portuguese language grew, as Brazil came to be seen globally as a rising nation, promising for solid business and investment, especially among the member countries of the Southern Common Market (Mercosur). With the emphasis on South-South foreign policy and the formation of the BRICS, new opportunities have arisen for foreigners to learn Brazilian Portuguese in order to visit, study or work in the country.

It is in this scenario that important factors have led to an increase in the demand for teaching Portuguese to foreigners. These initiatives, which are academic or humanitarian, include the creation of courses, partnerships and inter-institutional cooperation projects, academic mobility programs, the production of teaching materials, teacher training proposals, actions to welcome immigrants, etc.

Despite this growth, the formulation of official and institutional language policies that centralize PFL teaching in an organized planning within the strategic decisions of responsible bodies is timid. That said, in order to be implemented, language policies require initiative, interest and recognition of their importance on the part of academic and government authorities, so that these initiatives can be officially incorporated into institutions. In this context, "institutional" is understood as the opposite of "personal", i.e. actions must be coordinated broadly between institutions, rather than depending on individuals who move through them, which has happened on many fronts, especially in HEIs. In the words of Almeida Filho (2011),

Neither in this decade nor in the one we are currently living in has there been the formulation of a deliberate and comprehensive official policy for the Portuguese language, both domestically and internationally, to support the offer of Portuguese as a

Foreign Language teaching that takes into account (1) the training of new teachers based on contemporary standards, (2) the coordinated continuing professional development of these teachers in their posts worldwide, and (3) the establishment of guidelines for new curricula, programs, materials, and proficiency exams. (Almeida Filho, 2011, p. 16)

Almeida Filho (2011) underscores the importance of fostering the development of these professionals and setting guiding principles for PFL instruction as strategic elements in the formulation of language policies. To this list, we can further add the need for specialized training within universities, coupled with incentives and funding for the creation of teaching materials and academic research, as well as the promotion of dedicated events and conferences in the field. We thus stress that the fulfillment of these demands hinges on substantial investments in institutional public policies within HEIs.

5.2 Advances and emerging demands in a globalized and intercultural society

Given the demands and competitiveness imposed by the neoliberal economy, whose production chains and labor relations intensify due to a globalized market economy, it becomes increasingly necessary to invest not only in knowledge but also in capital, with the aim of developing research, training qualified labor and creating new technologies, which presupposes international cooperation, especially between educational and research institutions around the world, thus promoting the internationalization of HEIs.

Listing all agreements between partner institutions at each Brazilian HEI would be an impossible task. However, we will now highlight the main internalization programs at the federal level, in order to demonstrate how the demand for Brazilian HEIs has influenced, in a two-way manner, language policies in favour of PFL teaching.

According to the 2022 Higher Education Census, Brazil has 19,735 foreign students enrolled in HEIs (Inep, 2023), a 24.9% increase compared to 2017, even with restrictions on student mobility due to the Covid-19 pandemic and massive budget cuts in higher education. These numbers evidence an unequivocal expansion of academic mobility as a result of some measures aimed at internationalization, such as student mobility programs.

The main student mobility program, since 1965, is the Brazilian Program for Exchange Students (PEC-G - at the undergraduate level and PEC-PG at the postgraduate level), which are federal government programs aimed at international cooperation with developing countries, with the objective of promoting

technical, scientific, and cultural training with 25 countries in Africa, 25 in the Americas and nine in Asia, through the mobility of foreign students. As a result of this policy, the Brazilian Student Program for Exchange Students - Portuguese as a Foreign Language level (PEC-PLE) emerged, with the aim of offering Portuguese language classes to students applying for the PEC-G program.

Given the significant increase in international students at Brazilian universities, the demand for PFL teaching in HEIs has also grown. In this sense, the IsF Program, which became the REDE IsF in 2019, provides not only teaching for these students but also support and guidance for teachers, through teacher training by language centers in the Institutions, which have been gaining reach over the years.

Outside Brazil, PFL teaching is also growing. Not only does economic interest in Brazil attract the teaching of Brazilian Portuguese, but also the personal relationships built with Brazilians living abroad. According to estimates from the MRE, there are approximately 4.6 million Brazilians living outside Brazil in 2022⁶. Today there are communities of Brazilians in Tokyo, Luxembourg, Paris, Dublin, New York etc. This number has a medium- and long-term impact on language policies as the need to teach Portuguese as a Language of Heritage emerges substantially, creating more demand for specialized teachers around the world.

From an academic standpoint, the teaching of Brazilian Portuguese abroad seeks to establish its place in international universities through the Guimarães Rosa Lectureship Program, in partnership with the MRE, which promotes Brazilian language, culture, and literature by selecting professors/lecturers to meet this teaching demand. The program is in 24 countries, distributed across Africa (6), the Americas (13), Europe (3), and the Middle East (2).

Within Latin America, with the introduction of Portuguese language teaching in the public education systems of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela, new public policies have emerged on the part of the Brazilian government to allow educational cooperation between Brazil and Latin American countries, intensifying inter-institutional partnerships and strengthening the ties between Portuguese and Spanish.

Another front in Portuguese language teaching is Portuguese as a Welcoming Language, whose expansion is due to the significant increase in the influx of refugees, reflecting the growing instability in

⁶ Cf. <https://www.estadao.com.br/brasil/onde-vivem-os-brasileiros-no-exterior-e-quis-os-paises-preferidos-veja-lista-nprm/>. Accessed on: Aug. 28, 2024.

various regions of the world. According to data from the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE)⁷, by 2023, 50.2% of refugee applicants in Brazil were from Venezuela, because of the humanitarian and political crisis in the country. In addition to Venezuelans, Haitians constitute a significant portion of refugees, accounting for around 10.9% of refugee applications. Other nationalities include Cubans (6.6%), Bengalis (3.5%), Chinese (3.1%), and Angolans (3.0%). Syrians and Ukrainians also make up the statistics. This growing flow reflects both Brazil's strategic position as a destination for welcoming in Latin America and the challenges faced by these populations in search of protection and better living conditions.

Finally, the role of the Celpe-Bras is essential when it comes to language policies for PFL, considering that it is not only one of the requirements for access to Brazilian universities but also for the naturalization of immigrants. The exam, designed based on innovative theoretical constructs, such as the notion of language and proficiency, has a retroactive effect on teaching practices and contexts, generating social impacts in the environments that surround it (Schoffen, 2009), which imposes the need for training based on these constructs. In this way, the good consequences of the exam can be potentiated if its theoretical foundations are also used as guidelines for teacher training (Scaramucci, 2012).

From the exposition of these policies, we can perceive that, although there have been advances in the implementation of actions aimed at the cultural integration of Brazil with the international network, initiatives to position PFL teaching as a strategic priority remain fragmented, with no clear and well-defined language policies in place (Reis, 2018).

Furthermore, we point out that these changes in the context of Portuguese language teaching require the academic community, especially teachers, to engage in intercultural experiences, as understanding how to deal with otherness is also a demand of the pluricentric teacher. For this, "it is necessary that our country recognize this plurality and what it means in order to perceive and assume Portuguese as a language of political, scientific, cultural and economic interest, sought after by nations that do not have Portuguese as their mother tongue" (Gondim; Leurquin; Silva, 2020, p. 198).

⁷ Cf.

https://portaldeimigracao.mj.gov.br/images/Obmigra_2020/OBMIGRA_2023/Ref%C3%BAgio_em_N%C3%BAmeros/Refugio_em_Numeros_-_final.pdf. Accessed on: 28 ago. 2024.

Finally, we believe that the offer of Portuguese language teaching in a coordinated and strategic way, in many sectors of life, combined with efforts to promote the training of these teachers, can attract even more interest in Brazil from the world and become an influential player in the globalized economy.

5.3 The PPPLE as an instrument for training "pluricentric" teachers

When discussing pluricentrism in Portuguese language teaching, we cannot disregard the central role played by the PPPLE in this scenario. Under the responsibility of the ILLP, aiming to fulfill the strategies proposed within the framework of the PAB, the creation of the PPPLE stands out as a significant strategy for the dissemination and strengthening of PFL teaching, from a decolonial, pluricentric, and intercultural perspective. As a common online platform that provides teaching resources based on information and communication technologies, the Portal breaks with the Brazil-Portugal bicentrism in linguistic policy decisions and in the promotion and production of PFL teaching materials by offering and sharing, free of charge to the teacher community, materials and resources for teaching and learning, encompassing the eight linguistic varieties of the Portuguese-speaking countries in both general and specific teaching contexts.

This cooperation allows for the promotion of the different varieties of Portuguese, giving visibility and participation, especially to peripheral or non-dominant ones, such as those of the PALOP and Timor-Leste. Therefore, the Portal has "a very important role in the strategies for promoting, disseminating, and projecting Portuguese in the world, creating an internationalized system for managing PFL teaching" (Furtoso; Araújo; Killner, 2017, p. 210). This occurs to the extent that teachers themselves, together with the community of experts, are the authors of their teaching materials.

Thus, the Portal acquires an unprecedented potential for teacher training, as it not only provides such teaching resources but also allows teachers to learn, through practice, contemporary theoretical and methodological principles for language teaching, such as the concepts of language in use, relative proficiency, pluricentrism, interculturality, and authentic materials, as starting points for the production and adoption of teaching materials (Furtoso; Araújo; Killner, 2017, Mendes, 2016, Reis, 2015).

In this sense, the Portal also has the potential to promote a retroactive effect on teacher training, allowing teachers to critically reflect, based on the principles and guidelines of the platform, on their own pedagogical practice, and, consequently, the creation of new teaching resources, which, to a certain extent,

manifests itself positively in the different contexts of PFL teaching (Reis, 2015). In this sense, we understand that the PPPLE represents a turning point in the promotion of PFL teaching from a decolonial and pluricentric perspective, opening up paths for teachers to "become managers and promoters of the language they teach" (Reis, 2015, p. 74).

Therefore, the Portal is one of the steps towards the consolidation of the training of pluricentric teachers, but not the only one. It is necessary to have language policies of investment and promotion of PFL teaching from a pluricentric perspective, such as mini-courses, workshops, events, dissemination of publications, research, and, above all, training courses, with the potential to reach and impact hundreds of teachers, as is the proposal of the course offered by ObsPLE-PL2.

5.4 The training of PFL teachers in universities

The training of PFL teachers is a strategic issue that becomes increasingly clear with internationalization efforts and the advent of the Celpe-Bras exam. These teachers are capable of contributing to the development of language policies promoting the Brazilian language and culture. That said, training them is not only desirable but necessary, when it comes to establishing new intercultural relations.

Historically, the training of PFL teachers was relegated to methodological proposals focused on the teaching of the mother tongue. Many teachers did not have adequate training. At best, "they were foreign language teachers who, transferring their knowledge of foreign language teaching, began to dedicate themselves to Portuguese, learning self-taughtly which aspects of Portuguese would be focused on a second language teaching" (Grannier, 2001, p. 5). Furtoso (2015) further adds that

[...] few studies have sought to investigate how people learn to teach Portuguese as a foreign or second language, as well as to propose ways for the knowledge already produced in the field to reach the teacher and/or future PFL teacher, through programs and courses for initial or continuing education (Furtoso, 2015, p. 26).

The creation of the first undergraduate degree in Portuguese as a Second Language at the University of Brasília (UnB) in 1988 marked a milestone in language policies aimed at promoting the training of PFL teachers. Since then, only two other institutions have joined the same initiative: The Federal

University of Bahia (UFBA) offers a degree in Languages with a major in PFL, and the Federal University of Integration of Latin America (UNILA), in turn, offers a degree in Languages with a major in Spanish and Portuguese as foreign languages.

Beyond the offer of elective courses within the curriculum of some universities, such as the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), the State University of Londrina (UEL), the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), the São Paulo State University (UNESP), the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), among others, there are some certifications in private institutions, such as the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) and others. Regarding free or continued education courses, there is a wide range of offerings, with different costs, from those offered by specialized bodies, such as SIPLE or some HEIs, to those by private groups.

Significant strides have been made in the training of PFL teachers in recent years, especially in response to the specific teaching needs within HEIs. However, the demand for free and accessible training courses remained unmet until the creation of the PLP Course.

Therefore, we believe that for PFL teachers to be prepared to operate in the dynamics of a globalized world, capable of engaging with intercultural experiences in the face of the challenges of internationalization, from a pluricentric perspective, it is essential to not only hold a degree in Languages but also have robust additional training in PFL that addresses innovative cultural, linguistic, and pedagogical aspects.

Final considerations

This article aimed to describe the teacher training course offered by the Observatório PLE-PL2, as well as to analyze its context of influence, based on the Policy Cycle Approach (PCA) proposed by Ball and Bowe (1992). From the discussion about the conflict and asymmetry between dominant and non-dominant norms in Portuguese-speaking countries, it was possible to understand the need to catalyze actions in favor of the democratization of Portuguese language management, as well as to emphasize the crucial role that language policies play in the training of pluricentric PFL teachers.

Next, in order to identify the context of influence for the creation of the course, we summarized and adapted the questions proposed by Mainardes (2006) into a single one: What are the global and local

influences that determined the creation of the course and how are they constituted? Based on a panoramic bibliographic analysis, we can conclude that the creation of the IILP, linked to the CPLP initiatives such as the PAB, PALIS, PADÍIL, and PAPRAIA, are founding actions that consolidate the justifications for the creation of the PLP Course, not only because they represent the guarantee of a democratic management of Portuguese, but also because they structure the pluricentric character of language policies managed in the wake of these demands, such as the PPPLE. In addition, we also add as a background the central role that Celpe-Bras and the PPPLE play as retroactive language policies for teacher training, insofar as they not only meet certain demands but also create others.

Additionally, the contexts and practices of institutionalizing PFL teaching, linked to the neoliberal economic context in which Brazil is inserted, to initiatives in favor of the internationalization of HEIs, which intensify intercultural relations, as well as to the most important language policies for the teaching and training of PFL teachers, have had a predominant influence on the emergence of the PLP Course, creating a fertile ground for the promotion of initiatives that meet local, national, and international needs.

We believe that we will soon be able to measure the impacts of the course in numbers. However, what we can clearly say is that, due to its unprecedented nature, the PLP Course has the potential to empower teachers committed not only to strengthening and disseminating the Portuguese language internationally, but above all in promoting a political space that aims to subvert social injustices and forms of discrimination through critical, culturally sensitive, and pluricentric approaches. Thus, the role of the PFL teacher is to be a cultural mediator, an integrator of other Portuguese norms and a deconstructor of monolithic views of language and culture, aware that diversity is a driving force for education in a cross-border century.

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