TEACHING PORTUGUESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: REFLECTIONS FROM THE WRITTEN PRODUCTION OF CHINESE STUDENTS

O ENSINO DE PORTUGUÊS COMO LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA: REFLEXÕES A PARTIR DA PRODUÇÃO ESCRITA DE ALUNOS CHINESES

LA ENSEÑAZA DEL PORTUGUÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA: REFLEXIONES DESDE LA PRODUCCIÓN ESCRITA DE ALUMNOS CHINOS

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ABSTRACT: When it comes to teaching Portuguese specifically to Chinese students, a discussion is raised about the methodologies and approaches used since Mandarin is a very different language from Portuguese. On the one hand, it still has been strongly argued that the teaching of Portuguese in this context should be based on teaching grammar as a priority. On the other hand, such focus is not on agreement with the pattern of linguistic proficiency, expected from learners of Portuguese as a foreign language in exams from CAPLE (Portugal) and in the CELPE-BRAS (Brazil) exam. Therefore, this article aims is to discuss these issues from examples of texts written by Chinese students at a university in Macau, China. From the analysis of textual productions, it was possible to verify that the teaching practice focused not only on grammatical standardization allows students to understand and produce texts in which communicative performance is achieved.

KEYWORDS: Portuguese as a foreign language. Text Production. Communicative performance.

RESUMO: Quando se aborda, particularmente, o ensino de Português para chineses, levanta-se uma discussão sobre as metodologias e abordagens utilizadas devido ao fato de o mandarim ser uma língua muito distinta do Português. Por um lado, defende-se ainda de maneira muito significativa que o ensino de português nesse contexto seja prioritariamente baseado em ensino de gramática. Por outro lado, tal foco destoa do padrão de domínio linguístico que se espera dos aprendizes de português como língua estrangeira nos exames do CAPLE (Portugal) e no CELPE-BRAS (Brasil). Diante disso, o objetivo do presente artigo é discutir essas questões a partir de exemplos de textos escritos por alunos chineses em uma universidade de Macau, China. A partir da análise das produções textuais, foi possível constatar que a prática de ensino voltada não somente à normatização gramatical permite que os alunos compreendam e produzam textos em que o desempenho comunicativo seja alcançado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Português como língua estrangeira. Produção textual. Desempenho comunicativo.

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RESUMEN: *Cuando se aborda, particularmente, la enseñanza del idioma portugués a las personas chinas, se levanta una discusión sobre las metodologías y enfoques utilizados, dado que el mandarín es una lengua muy distinta del portugués. Por un lado, se sostiene aún de forma muy significativa que la enseñanza del portugués en ese contexto se debe basar prioritariamente en la enseñanza de la gramática. Por otro lado, tal enfoque desentona del estándar de dominio lingüístico que se espera de los aprendices de portugués como lengua extranjera en los exámenes del CAPLE (Portugal) y del CELPE-BRAS (Brasil). El objetivo del presente artículo es discutir esos temas a partir de ejemplos de textos escritos por alumnos chinos en una universidad de Macao, China. Desde el análisis de las producciones textuales, fue posible constatar que la práctica de la enseñanza orientada no solo a la normalización gramatical les permite a los alumnos comprender y producir textos en los que se alcance el desempeño comunicativo.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Portugués como lengua extranjera. Producción textual. Desempeño comunicativo.*

Introduction

In recent years, the scientific production on the teaching of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PLE) has gained prominence due to a set of specificities that must be considered in this process (QIAORONG, 2008; BARBOSA, 2015; CHRISTIANO, 2017; SOUZA NETO, 2018).

It is consensual that the methodologies and approaches applied in the teaching of PLE should not be those adopted in the teaching of Portuguese as a mother tongue.

> When a native teacher of PLE tries to use the same exercises that he had while studying Portuguese as a Mother Tongue at school, he will probably expose his students to exercises that are too difficult, and that, in most cases, are not adapted to those who learn PLE (CHRISTIANO, 2017, p. 67, our translation).

Added to this, there is often the problem of lack of adequate teaching material. In the context of teaching Portuguese to Chinese students, the issue of scarcity of teaching materials has been widely discussed (ZHILIANG, 2019; YIXING, 2019; SHANPEI, 2019). Although bilingual teaching materials are already being produced in China aimed at teaching Portuguese as a foreign language to the Chinese, it is argued that the existing materials are still not enough.

According to Yixing (2019), "the development of teaching materials serves to facilitate and improve the teaching process, without a doubt. Therefore, it is as important as the method of teaching a foreign language" (p. 155, our translation). It can be seen, therefore,

that two questions are usually addressed: which resources the teacher will use in the teaching of PLE, and how to teach it.

Although both questions are relevant and intrinsically connected, this article aims to promote reflections on the second question. To this end, texts written by students from the University of Science and Technology of Macau, China, will be considered in the light of the guiding principles of the B2 level exam, Intermediate Diploma of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (DIPLE), applied by the Portuguese Assessment and Certification Center. Foreign Language (CAPLE) of the University of Lisbon, as well as the CELPE-BRAS exam.

How to teach Portuguese as a Foreign Language in China

The teaching of PLE in the Chinese context has raised discussions about what would be the most appropriate method due to the significant differences between Mandarin and[2] Portuguese, among them the absence of inflectional processes, prepositions, and determinants (articles) in Mandarin (LOPES; YIXING, 2018). Such linguistic distinctions have often served as a basis for defending teaching of Portuguese based primarily on grammar, and translation.

Barbosa (2015), when discussing his experience of teaching PLE to Chinese students, states that, given the linguistic, cognitive, and cultural distinctions, the possibility for Chinese students to anchor themselves in the mother tongue as a facilitating element in the learning of Portuguese is compromised. Because of this, the author defends that the strategy of stimulating metalinguistic knowledge be adopted.

In this sense, the author argues that teaching should be focused on the elements and rules of the language at different levels: phonetic-phonological, morphological, and syntactic. Furthermore, she maintains that the semantic and pragmatic levels must also be considered.

Also, according to Barbosa (2015), Chinese students are already used to teaching grammar, due to the teaching system commonly adopted in China. Thus, "the explicit knowledge of the elements, functioning, and rules of the language provides the security they need to venture into the field of communication, linguistic interaction" (BARBOSA, 2015, p. 121, our translation).

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[2]Although in China there is a great linguistic diversity with the existence of different dialects, in this text, reference is made to Mandarin, since the students who produced the texts that served as the basis for the discussion presented here are mostly Mandarin speakers.

Thus, the aforementioned author believes that the referential and pragmatic dimensions will be more easily achieved if students have solid metalinguistic knowledge. For Barbosa (2015, p. 122, our translation),

> [...] it is this knowledge, for all that it encompasses from the point of view of learning and the emotional relationship with the object of study, which creates the conditions for the exploration of the interactional or communicative aspect of language, and it is this that it aims to achieve in the teaching-learning process of a foreign language.

Although there is a strong argument about the need to improve students' metalinguistic knowledge as a way of supporting the development of other skills, in practice, what is seen in the context of PLE teaching in China is still conduct aimed primarily at the teaching of grammar.

According to Shang, Teixeira, and Silva (2019), although there is a current discourse in which many claims to prioritize communication in language teaching, "what is verified, however, is that practices continue to understand language teaching as a set of activities that privilege grammar, vocabulary, and translation" (p. 243, our translation).

In her Master's Thesis on Learning Portuguese in China, Mai (2006) states that Chinese students study Portuguese in an environment where effective use of the language is quite limited. About the methodology, the author says that it has the characteristics of the *Grammar-translation method*[3] (KONG, 2011, p. 76, our translation), which, according to her, is effective because Chinese students have a good memory and prefer to study written materials to express themselves orally, not being very active in class.

However, still according to Mai (2006), despite understanding what their Chinese teachers say in Portuguese, about 50% of the students investigated in their research[4] reported having difficulties in understanding Portuguese spoken by native speakers.

According to Zhang (2019), in the Chinese context of teaching and learning PLE, "learners' difficulties result not only from phonetics-phonology, syntax, and semantics but also from pragmatics, which will allow us to understand the speaker's implicit intention" (p. 310, our translation).

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[3]"The grammar-translation method is a traditional method for foreign language teaching [...] in which the target language is translated into the mother tongue, that is, grammar teaching and translation exercises are mainly relied on to teach a foreign language. Its core lies in that when learning a foreign language, its grammatical rule system should be learned and memorized and used when translating literature works and sentences from the target language to the mother tongue" (KONG, 2011, p. 76, our translation).

[4]The author's conclusions are based on a questionnaire applied in her research to students of the Licentiate Course in Portuguese Language and Culture at the Shanghai University of International Studies.

In this way, it appears that the teaching of grammar is important, but it should not be the only focus when teaching a new language, because, if so, it will cause difficulties for students when exposed to real contexts of language use. foreign. In this regard, Shang, Teixeira, and Silva (2019) argue that "grammatical competence is necessary for an interaction to occur, but it is not the only one in the genesis of the process of production and linguistic understanding" (p. 249, our translation). Also, according to them, "it is the pragmatic dimension that guides the production/understanding of meanings and even demarcates the constitution of grammar itself" (p. 249-250, our translation).

When dealing with the challenge of teaching Portuguese to speakers of other languages, Rosa (2012) emphasizes, based on the assumptions of the Geneva School, the importance of (i) action capabilities (genre production conditions), (ii) discursive (textual organization), and (iii) linguistic-discursive. Regarding the latter, the author states that

> [...] the linguistic-discursive capabilities are those that enable the language user to recognize and use textualization mechanisms (cohesive resources, lexical links and grammatical structures) responsibly, understanding the value that code structures have in the production of meanings and in carrying out social practices mediated by language (ROSA, 2012, p. 07, our translation).

According to Rosa (2012), "learning a new language is learning to mean in the new language, acting through a new code, a new culture, a new way of conceiving the world" (p. 06, our translation). Thus, it is inconceivable to think about the teaching of a language, whatever it is, without taking into account that this learning must encompass not only metalinguistic issues but also semantic, pragmatic, discursive, and cultural aspects.

Therefore, properly choosing the methodology or teaching approach is a key factor for students to achieve their main objectives, which, in the case of learning a foreign language, relate to being able to communicate and interact in the target language. Therefore, the teaching approach adopted must promote a communicative performance[5]*satisfactory* and not simply learning rules.

This communicative skill is also what is normally expected of students in official exams that assess foreign language knowledge. In the case of the Portuguese language, the existing exams, despite having peculiarities, require students to demonstrate competence and proficiency in the language.

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[5]In this text, the term performance is being understood as part of communicative competence. For more details on the debate on nomenclatures, we suggest reading Silva (2004).

Certification exams in Portuguese

Both Portugal and Brazil have exams for certification of proficiency in Portuguese. Regarding Portugal, there are different exams for each level, and they are carried out by the Center for Assessment and Certification of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (CAPLE) of the University of Lisbon. In this article, only the B2 level exam (Diploma Intermédio de Português Língua Estrangeira, DIPLE) will be analyzed, since this is the level expected of third-year Portuguese Studies students who have provided their texts for the analysis that will be presented in the next section.

According to CAPLE[6], its exams assess the competencies described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), at levels ranging from A1 to C2. Therefore, it is essential to understand which approach is adopted by the CEFR. In its official document, it is established that

> [...] the approach [...] adopted is, also in a very general way, action-oriented, in that it considers first of all the user and the learner of a language as social actors, who have to fulfill tasks (which are not only related to language) in specific circumstances and environments, in a specific field of action. If speech acts are carried out in linguistic activities, these, in turn, are part of actions in a social context, which give them a full meaning (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2001, p. 29, our translation).

Based on the CEFR guidelines, CAPLE presents descriptors of what is expected of language users at each assessed level. About level B2 (DIPLE)[7] specifically, language users are expected to exhibit a degree of independence that allows them to interact in a variety of communication situations. In addition, the description of this level provides for (i) use and understanding of common idiomatic expressions; (ii) understanding factual information in oral or written texts, so that the user can distinguish between primary and secondary information; and (iii) ability to produce different types of texts.

Although the descriptor for this level considers the possibility that there are still many difficulties in contexts where Portuguese is a working and communication language, it also predicts that the user has developed linguistic-communicative resources (identification and use of the main lexical-syntactic structures and syntactic-semantic aspects of the language), to be able to use the language in less predictable situations. Finally, the user must be able to

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[6] Information taken from CAPLE's official website. Available at https://caple.letras.ulisboa.pt/pagina/1/caple Access on July 30, 2021.
[7] Information taken from CAPLE's official website. Available at https://caple.letras.ulisboa.pt/exame/4/diple Accessed on July 30, 2021.

recognize the appropriate context for choosing a more or less formal record, and be aware of social conventions.

It can be seen, therefore, that, to qualify for level B2, a user of the Portuguese language must master different skills, ranging from more formal knowledge of the language to the understanding of mechanisms of sociocultural adequacy. Based on these assumptions, candidates for the CAPLE B2 exam must undergo an assessment of the following skills: reading comprehension, written comprehension, and production, oral comprehension, oral production, and interaction.

About DIPLE, Souza Neto (2018) states that, by separately evaluating oral comprehension, reading comprehension, and written production and interaction, the exam focuses on a notion of proficiency more focused on the linguistic structure, with an emphasis on competencies lexical, and grammatical for communication.

Apropos of Brazil, the exam carried out is the Certificate of Proficiency in the Portuguese Language for Foreigners (Celpe-Bras). In this case, students take the exam and, based on their performance, different levels of proficiency are assigned. According to its base document, candidates are evaluated based on a single exam, because it is believed that "situations of social interaction are not classified into levels: what distinguishes proficiency levels are the resources mobilized by the participant in the proposed interaction situations" (BRASIL, 2020, p. 33, our translation).

Regarding its structure, the Celpe-Bras exam consists of two parts: a written and an oral one. In the written part, oral comprehension, imagery, reading, and written production in Portuguese are evaluated in an integrated way. To do so, the participant must fulfill four distinct tasks that cover not only understanding but also production. The tasks involve oral comprehension and imagery (video) added to a written production, oral comprehension (audio) together with another written production, and two more activities that include reading (comprehension) and subsequent written production.

In the exam, a task is understood as an opportunity for candidates to "use language in different contexts, playing roles with different purposes and different interlocutors, producing texts of a series of discursive genres, which circulate in different supports" (BRASIL, 2020, p. 31, our translation).

Concerning orality, the oral part of the Celpe-Bras exam aims to assess the performance of the Portuguese language user in oral comprehension and production. In the exam, orality is understood as a social practice of interaction that manifests itself in different ways for communicative purposes.

What can be observed, therefore, from the description of the exams presented above is that, even with their specificities, both the B2 level exam (DIPLE) of CAPLE and Celpe-Bras have in their descriptors an evaluation that takes into account communicative competence. It should be noted that communicative competence is not limited to orality. Even in written tasks, the exams consider communication situations in which, to a greater or lesser degree, the production conditions are explained so that the user pays attention to the purposes of the requested task.

Working with the text in the PLE class in the light of the Certification Exams

Although the primary objective that leads a person to learn a new language is often not to undergo a certification exam, such exams should be considered, mainly, when their assessment method aims to assess the communicative competence of the user of the language, since, in general, achieving this competence is the goal of those who are willing to learn a foreign language.

With regard specifically to writing, it is necessary to consider that the production of texts should be one of the skills to be worked on when talking about teaching PLE. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the existence of different textual genres and it is important to offer the student the means to recognize and produce them.

According to Abaurre (2007), the texts, although different from each other, have points in common, as they can be repeated in the content, in the type of language, or even in the structure. When they have a set of similar characteristics, whether, in structure, content, or type of language, the textual genre is configured. For the authors, textual genre can be defined as the different ways of organizing linguistic information, according to the purpose of the text, the role of the interlocutors, and the situation.

According to Rosa (2012), when it comes to language learning, it is necessary that this learning prioritizes real practices of language use, that is, it is necessary to train "language users who know how to carry out their daily actions and conquer things and spaces". by mastering the genres necessary for their reality" (p. 05, our translation).

Because of this, some proposals for writing activities presented and discussed in a study group with Chinese students of the Portuguese Studies course at the University of Science and Technology of Macau, China, are taken as an example. The activities aimed to provide opportunities for students to practice writing from a variety of tasks.

As most of the students had as a later objective to take the CAPLE DIPLE (B2) exam, the proposals tried to follow the task pattern usually required in the Written Production and Interaction exam. As can be seen, tasks 01 and 02 presented below sought to obey the notion of discursive genre, in which there is a genre to be written (letter – personal or candidacy), defined interlocutors, and a purpose with writing.

Task 01

A good friend of yours moved to Portugal in 2019. Shortly after the move, the world began to face a major pandemic, causing your friend to be unable to return to their homeland. Write a personal letter to your friend to share your life and the situation in Macau. In addition, you want to know how their life is in Portugal, how is their situation with classes, and how is the fight against the virus in Portugal.

Task 02

You were browsing a job site on the internet and suddenly you came across a vacancy for the position of **Chinese-Portuguese translator**. So, you decide to write an **application letter** for the said post in a large multinational company. Introduce yourself, write about your qualities, mention any professional activity you have already had. If you have never worked in the field, refer to your studies in this field. Write the letter to the **Human Resources Director** of the company and be persuasive in such a way that whoever published the ad wants to invite you for an interview (Adapted from Pascoal; Oliveira 2012).

Before to the production of the texts, there was a previous moment of explanation about what would be the objectives of writing and what elements were necessary for the accomplishment of the tasks. A class discussion was promoted on the elements that characterize the letter genre, the interlocution (the student and a friend (task 01), and the student and the director of human resources (task 02), and the purpose of writing described in each of the statements. Finally, the students were asked to write the texts at home, under the guidance that they did not use dictionaries or translators.

In general terms, the students fulfilled the specific elements requested quite satisfactorily. In some texts, some characteristic elements of the letter genre were not included (such as the identification of the sender and the addressee with [fictitious] address), but in all letters, the interlocution relationships were correctly established. Furthermore, even if, at

times, one of the requested items was omitted, the overall purpose of the writing was fulfilled, as can be seen in the examples presented below. It should be noted that the names were omitted for reasons of guaranteeing the anonymity of the informants.

Figure 1 – Task 1 text

Macau, 24 de março de 2021

Cara XXX,

Com estás? Há cerca de 2 anos que ficas em Portugal. Tenho muitas saudades tuas. A pandemia global interrompeu o ritmo de vida das muitas pessoas. Ouvi que as aulas na tua universidade ainda não eram presencial. Enquanto as aulas na minhã universidade são presencial a partir do semestre passado.

Contude, a pandemia na China já é controlada pelo governo. Não existe grande diferença entre os dias agora e o dias antes da pandemia. Só devemos usar máscara fora e não podemos viajar. No festival da primavera neste ano, alguns colegas voltaram para a terra natal. Eu voltei também para a cidade natal. Acho que os dia durante o festival de primavera foram muito bons, acompanhando os meus pais. Espero que a pandemia acabe em breve.

E como está a tua vida? A pandemia em Portugal já é controlada? Já moravas em Portugal por muito tempo e adoptaste a vida em Portugal? Quando é que podes voltar para a China? Espero pela tua resposta.

Bejinhos,

XXX

Source: Author's collection

Figure 2 – Task 2 text

Macau, 6 de abril de 2021

Caro diretor de Recursos Humanos,

Estava a navegar pela sua página oficial na Internet para procurar emprego e, de repente, deparei-me com uma vaga para o posto de tradutor chinês-português. Este emprego interessa-me muito e é por isso que eu decidi escrever uma carta para você.

Sou uma estudante de terceiro ano da universidade. Apesar de a minha licenciatura não ser acabada, já ganhei o certificado de C1, o que faz com que eu tenha qualidade profissional. Além disso, ao longo do período de aprender português, sou uma estudante extraordinária com excelentes notas, nomeadamente, no curso de transição.

Eu nunca tenho trabalhado nesta área, mas acredito firmemente que tenho capacidade suficiente de resolver dificuldades no trabalho, porque estou sempre disposta a estudar ativamente. Adicionalmente, sou uma pessoa ativa e sociável, o que significa que eu possuo boa capacidade de comunicação. Parece-me que isso faz importante parte de transição. Como eu estudo e moro em Macau, o ambiente português é favorável à minha comprenção oral e com esta experiência, vou garantir a minha qualidade.

Se você tiver algum interesse em mim, pode ligar comigo. Aguardo ansiosamente a sua resposta.

Cumprimentos,

XXXX

Source: Author's collection

Such proposals are similar to those adopted by Celpe-Bras, although in this exam, "in the written part, tasks that address interlocution relationships linked to public uses of language are prioritized, to the detriment of private uses" (BRASIL, 2020, p. 30, our translation). Thus, instead of an e-mail or personal letter to a friend, a letter from the reader could be requested, since the latter circulates in a wider environment, for public use.

In addition to the two texts presented above, students were also offered a proposal in which they could choose between writing a text of narrative or argumentative typology, as in task 02 of the DIPLE Written Production and Interaction exam (B2). In this case, there is no specific textual genre definition to be requested. Activities of this type are not found in the Celpe-Bras exam, as, in this exam, there are no tasks that focus on typologies but textual genres.

Task 03

Write a text on one of the three topics presented below.

(Your text should be between 160-180 words).

A | There is one thing I will never forget...

B | The job market is increasingly competitive. Therefore, to be better and earn more, we work harder. Result: professional life increasingly enters personal life, which is not bad. Agrees or, on the contrary, believes that the lack of separation between professional and personal life is not positive.

C | In our society, new technologies have come to replace people and harm social relationships. Present your arguments for or against.

For this task, adapted from Pascoal and Oliveira (2012), the students previously received brief explanations about the typology requested. In the narrative case, the text should describe actions; in the argumentative, it should expose and defend a point of view. The production of task 03 took place in the classroom and the students did not use any resources such as a dictionary or translators. The following textual production is taken as an example.

Figura 3 – Texto da tarefa 03 (opção B)

Hoje em dia, o stress para os trabalhadores na sociedade está cada vez major. Há mais pessoas que querem ter uma vida mais rico ou oferecer uma vida melhor para a familia. Portanto, muita gente começa a trabalhar bastante duro a ganhar mais dinheiro. Algumas pessoas até trabalhar no tempe livre e deixar o "fronteira" entre a vida e o trabalho. No entanto, na minha opinião, isto não é uma ação positiva, poderá afetar a vida pessoal a uma maneira negativa.

Temos de admitir que podemos acabar mais tarefas se usamos o tempo da vida pessoal, e também podemos um emprego de que o chefe gosta. Mas acho que há muitas desvantagens. Primeiro, se use o tempo livre para trabalhar, não poderá ter o tempe para descansar. Então, o processo da sua trabalho pode ser cada vez mais inefciente e duro. Por outro lado, quando menos tempo tenha para a vida pessoal, menos tempo para ser acompanhado com a familia, a relação entre si e a familia provavelmente é afetado por isto.

Em conclusão, apesar de falta de seperação entre vida e trabalho pode ter alguns vantagens, é ainda mais negativa devido às influencias negativas possíveis que isto pode causar a sua vida pessoal.

Source: Author's collection

It would be appropriate here to discuss the framing of a task like the 03 presented above in comparison with what the official documents on certification exams say concerning the approach they adopt, that is, if they propose tasks through which linguistic activities are circumscribed in actions that take place in a social context, in real day-to-day situations.

However, what the objective was, in fact, with the exemplification of the tasks and of some textual productions of the Chinese students who gave them for analysis, was to show

that, if a work is done focused on semantic-pragmatic issues, students will be able to understand the purpose of writing, who are the interlocutors and in which genre/typology your text should fit.

This is not to say that the texts are free from inadequacies. From the reading of the texts transcribed in figures 01, 02, and 03, it is possible to verify deviations related to the agreement of nominal gender, nominal agreement of number, adequacy of lexical choice, verbal inflection, accentuation, punctuation, and spelling. Because of this, the PLE teacher must carry out work that aims to remedy these difficulties. However, if – when reading texts such as those exemplified above – the teacher highlights only the inadequacies, the student will judge that he has not done a good job and will hardly acquire the necessary confidence to become an independent user of the language.

Therefore, the teaching of PLE must increasingly involve oral and/or written texts in different communication situations, since students need to be exposed to tasks that simulate the real use of the language and not only those that aim at repetition or gap-filling for setting standards, for example. In a communicative approach to teaching, grammar must not be forgotten and deviation must not be ignored, but such issues must be addressed within a context in which students are encouraged to use the language and, consequently, a varied set of structures.

Final considerations

From the reflections proposed in this article, it is possible to point out some questions regarding the teaching of PLE. First, teaching Portuguese as a foreign language involves several specifics. Students do not master the language and, therefore, the proposed activities must be consistent with the level of knowledge they have. In this context, it is always important for the teacher to keep in mind that, almost always, the student's objective is to become proficient in the foreign language and not an expert in analyzing it.

Given this, it is argued that it is the role of the PLE teacher not only to work on issues related to grammar, as is commonly defended. If so, students will feel increasingly unprepared when faced with real situations of language use, in which skills of contextual adequacy and understanding of meanings, sometimes implicit, are required.

In the texts written by the Chinese students presented here, despite the deviations, it was possible to observe that there was an understanding of the requested task and an evident fulfillment of its objectives. In this way, it is expected that this text will contribute to the

teaching of PLE increasingly turning to semantic-pragmatic and discursive issues, so that, when asked to fulfill a task, students can identify its purpose, who are the interlocutors involved, as well as the genre in which it fits.

By using a communicative approach that considers the social practices of language use, the PLE teacher will be providing opportunities for their students to achieve, in fact, a satisfactory communicative performance that can be evidenced when they are inserted in an authentic situation of communication.

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