

VOICES OF LEADERSHIP

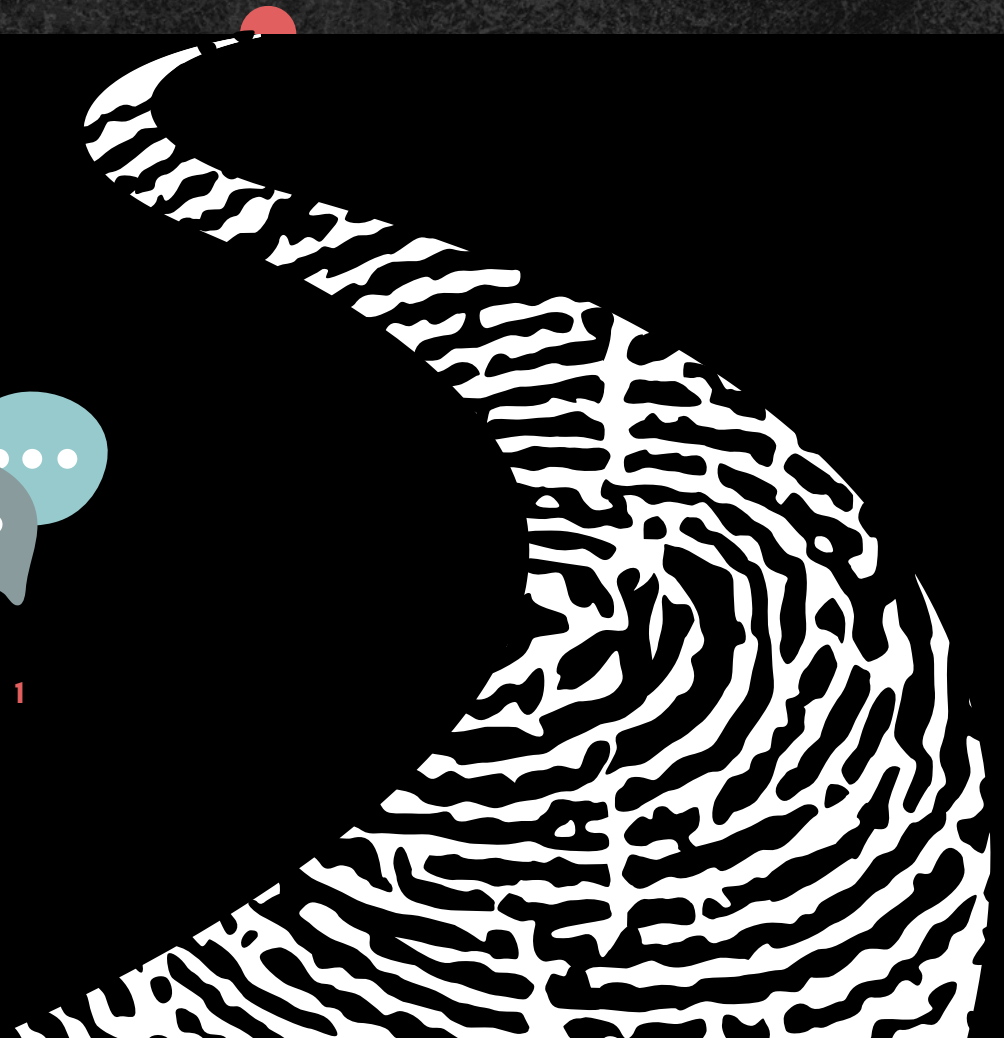
WOMEN IN PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS IN U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION

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American Organization of Teachers of Portuguese

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The American Organization of Teachers of Portuguese (AOTP) advocates studying the Portuguese language and the cultures of the Portuguese-speaking countries in the United States. Given the significance of speaking Portuguese in the world and the international cultural, economic, and political impact of the Portuguese-speaking countries, our mission is to promote the Portuguese language as a tool for communication in the United States and globally. As a professional organization, the AOTP represents Portuguese language teachers in k-12, higher education, and community schools. It supports establishing and sustaining quality Portuguese programs and Portuguese teachers' education and professional development. It promotes research on all aspects of teaching and learning the Portuguese language and Portuguese-speaking cultures.

AOTP is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization. It aims to enhance and promote Portuguese teaching in the United States and provide professional development to its members. PLJ was founded in 2006 to promote and improve Portuguese teaching as a world language. PLJ also aims to provide a venue to encourage collaboration, research, and exchange of ideas among Portuguese language instructors.

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PLJ invites the submission of original, unpublished manuscripts on Second Language Acquisition, Methodology of Foreign Languages Linguistics, Cultural Studies, Film Studies, Literary Criticism, Pedagogy, and also reviews of books, multimedia, and other pedagogical material connected to the teaching and learning of Portuguese.

The PLJ is a collaboration between the AOTP, the Center For Latin American Studies at the University of Florida, the Latin American and Iberian Institute at the University of New Mexico, and the Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University.

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Contents

Introduction: Nilma N. Dominique and Célia Bianconi	5 – 6
1. The Journey of a Lifelong Transformation Célia Bianconi, <i>Boston University</i>	7 – 10
2. A Teacher's Tale of Portuguese Language Advocacy Beatriz Cariello, <i>Florida International University</i>	11 – 14
3. Education & Heart Cassia C. De Abreu, <i>UC San Diego & San Diego State University</i>	15 – 18
4. Unnoticed but Persistent: A Life Dedicated to Teaching and Learning Nilma Dominique, <i>Massachusetts Institute of Technology</i>	19 – 23
5. Through Words, I Rise Eugênia (Lia) Fernandes, <i>Florida International University</i>	24 – 27
6. Resilience in Community When Building Self and a Portuguese Program Débora Ferreira, <i>Utah Valley University</i>	28 – 31
7. The Incidental Portuguese Professor Fernanda Ferreira, <i>Bridgewater State University</i>	32 – 36
8. A batida de um coração: Reflections on a Life of Teaching Megwen Loveless, <i>Tulane University</i>	37 – 39
9. Where Language Can Take You: My Journey from Learner to Educator Rachel Mamiya Hernandez, <i>University of Hawai'i at Mānoa</i>	40 – 45
10. Women's Journeys in the Profession: Teaching Portuguese in the U.S. Maria Luci De Biaji Moreira, <i>College of Charleston</i>	46 – 51

11. From the South Atlantic to the North Atlantic via the Corn Belt: A trajectory teaching Portuguese in the United States Gláucia V. Silva, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth	52 – 55
12. “Dear, this is too hard”: The journey of a Portuguese Teacher in the United States Cristiane Soares, Harvard University	56 – 59
13. My Inheritance: A Lifetime of Teaching and Learning Patricia Sobral, Brown University	60 – 64
14. Teaching Language and Deconstructing Stereotypes Sílvia Ramos Sollai, California State University – Stanislaus	65 – 68
15. Teaching Portuguese as Planting Trees: Cultivating Roots, Bearing Fruit, and Sowing New Seeds Ana C Thome Williams, Northwestern University	69 – 74
16. My Journey as a Portuguese Language Instructor in the United States Teresa Valdez, University of Rochester	75 – 80
17. A Personal Journey Lyrís Wiedemann, Stanford University	81 – 86

Introduction

Women are the real architects of society.

– Harriet Beecher Stowe

This special edition of PLJ honors the contributions of women who teach Portuguese in the U.S. It began with an inspiring conversation among women educators at a conference. As we shared our teaching experiences, it became clear that many of us were facing similar challenges: limited resources, insufficient support for smaller programs, and often being the sole faculty members in our departments. We juggle teaching, curriculum development, research, and administrative duties, often with minimal backing.

These discussions highlighted the fact that although many of us work in isolation, we are never truly alone. We are supported by a broad network of educators committed to teaching Portuguese and advocating for its place in education. Through collaboration and mutual support, we share resources, advice, and encouragement that help us grow both personally and professionally. This sense of community sustains us, enabling us to carry on with hope and determination. Thus, we continue to innovate, build strong communities, and offer students an education that goes beyond language learning.

In academia, we are frequently defined by the programs we lead, the courses we teach, and the projects we manage. As we reflected on our professional paths, we recognized the significant, yet often understated role of women in education. We bring our identities as women into the classroom; each of us carries personal histories that shape our approaches to teaching and mentoring. These experiences influence how we connect with our students and engage with the world. And yet, we seldom take the time to reflect on who we are or on how our quiet strength, steadfast commitment, and unwavering dedication contribute to advancing language education.

This compilation brings together the voices of 17 women teaching Portuguese at the college level in the U.S. While these stories represent only a small fraction of our community, they offer a glimpse into the resilience, diversity, and determination that characterize many women educators in our field. Despite systemic inequalities, these women's passion and dedication continue to shine through. We are driven by the belief that our work is vital - not only for the growth of Portuguese as a foreign language but also for fostering a deeper understanding of culture, history, and global citizenship.

Writing these narratives has been deeply personal for many of us. Reflecting on our journeys often means revisiting challenging moments and stepping away from the academic tone we usually adopt. Each educator sheds light on different facets of their experience, from building language programs to balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Together, these stories form a rich and varied collection of voices, each offering a unique perspective.

As you read these stories, we invite you to reflect on the diverse experiences shared by the authors. Some of us found our way to teaching Portuguese by chance, others by choice. What unites us is our unwavering belief in the power of language to bridge cultural divides. These narratives are not only for language educators; they speak to anyone who believes in the power of education to foster deeper connections to culture, history, and shared human experience.

For those beginning their careers in education, these narratives provide valuable insight into the persistence, creativity, and adaptability needed to succeed. Despite the aforementioned challenges, teaching is immensely rewarding. We hope these voices will inspire future educators and remind them that their work is essential in building a world where understanding and connection thrive.

We proudly celebrate that everyone involved in this edition - from authors to the editorial team - are women, and it would not have been possible without their support, collaboration, and shared wisdom. Their input has enriched this issue through written contributions, feedback, encouragement, and behind-the-scenes efforts, and for that, we are deeply grateful.

We hope these stories raise awareness about the vital role language educators play and help us advocate for the resources necessary to ensure the continued growth and sustainability of our programs. Together, we are not merely teaching a language; we are nurturing the future of global understanding.

Nilma N. Dominique

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Célia Bianconi

Boston University



**CÉLIA
BIANCONI**

Boston University

The Journey of a Lifelong Transformation

I believe students learn languages best in a classroom atmosphere that is both supportive and challenging, fostering motivation and engagement.

My journey as a teacher of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL) began not with a conscious decision to become a teacher, but with a deep-seated desire to stay connected to my roots. Born and raised in Brazil, I initially moved to the United States for a short stay before returning to my job in advertising in São Paulo. However, my plans soon changed. In addition to improving my English, I developed an interest in continuing my studies. I became acquainted with various academic programs and decided to pursue a master's degree in Brazilian and Portuguese literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where I was awarded a Teaching Assistantship. Under the mentorship of Professor Peggy Sharp, I began what would become a lifelong passion for teaching and cultural exchange.

In those early days, my primary goal was simple: to share my native language and culture with others. I still vividly remember the first time I stood in front of a classroom. As I approached the class, I felt anxiety starting to build up, and one of my professors reassured me, saying, "Celia, remember, you know more than they do." However, I quickly learned that effective teaching required much more than just fluency in Portuguese and the belief that "you know more." It demanded continuous study, a deep understanding of pedagogical principles, a strong awareness of students' needs, and the ability to create an inclusive and dynamic learning environment.

Moving from Illinois to Massachusetts marked the beginning of a new chapter in my life. In addition to offering private lessons, I worked for several years as a teacher assistant at a Montessori school. This experience allowed me to connect with the American education system by working with children. However, I soon realized that teaching in this setting was not my true passion. I wanted to teach languages—specifically, Portuguese language and culture. Fortunately, I was given the opportunity to teach at the University of Massachusetts Boston (UMASS). During my time there, I was able to refine my teaching methods. Shortly after I began teaching at Harvard University. The transition to Harvard was both challenging and rewarding, offering me a unique opportunity to grow professionally and push myself beyond my comfort zone. It was a time of deep reflection and development, where I began to truly believe in my ability to make an impact as an educator. Each experience, first at UMASS and then at Harvard played a crucial role in shaping my approach to teaching. I've learned so much from my students, colleagues, and the academic environment.

These experiences not only refined my teaching practices but also deepened my commitment to education. Over the years, I became increasingly inspired to expand my expertise and contribute more meaningfully to the field. I was motivated by the desire to be recognized as an educator dedicated to igniting a passion for language learning and developing programs that open new opportunities for students. This journey ultimately led me to pursue a Ph.D. in Education at Lesley University, where I specialized in the teaching and learning of Portuguese as a foreign language (PLF) in the United States. My experiences as an educator in the U.S. have provided me with a unique opportunity to bridge cultures, fostering mutual understanding both inside and outside the classroom. I've come to appreciate how language learning can serve as a powerful tool for connecting people. My students represent a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, each with their own personal motivations for learning the language. Some are heritage speakers looking to reconnect with their cultural roots, while others are newcomers to Portuguese, driven by academic or professional aspirations.

After my time at UMASS and Harvard, I moved to Tufts University as a part-time lecturer, where I was given the responsibility of building a Portuguese program from the ground up. It was a challenge that I embraced fully, and the program's early success opened new opportunities. Not long after, I was approached by Boston University (BU), where I was hired as a full-time lecturer to create their Portuguese program. This was another pivotal moment in my career. In 2010, I took on the role of Head of the Portuguese Language Program at BU, and just like in my previous roles, I dedicated myself to spearheading initiatives that bridged gaps between departments, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and engaging with the broader community.

My efforts have focused on reinventing and innovating courses, recruiting students, and connecting our program with Latin American, African American Studies and other departments offering studies that includes any Portuguese speaking countries. I organized Rio Study Abroad, supported by BU Study Abroad program in partnership with *Pontifícia Universidade Católica* of Rio de Janeiro (PUC), which, ran for three consecutive years, and even though students demonstrated interest in expending six weeks of their summer in taking classes in Rio, the program was interrupted indefinitely for lack of monetary investment. Thankfully the interest in learning Portuguese did not end for not having a study abroad. As

a mentor to students, I have teamed up with colleagues within and outside my department, both nationally and internationally. I have also created events to generate knowledge and interest in Portuguese and Brazilian language and culture studies, inspiring many students to pursue a minor in the language.

However, implementing a new language program is not an easy task, especially due to the lack of faculty and resources in the Portuguese program. It is always necessary to rethink and allocate resources to develop and grow a program. As the only full-time faculty member of Portuguese at Boston University, I strive to build connections with my colleagues both within the department and with others in the broader Portuguese teaching field. I collaborate on events, publications, and conferences related to motivation, inclusion, and best practices in teaching and learning in the U.S. I also served as the Chair of the ACTFL Portuguese Special Interest Group (SIG) for the Americas.

My research, publications, conference participation, and grant-writing activities are closely tied to my teaching and gave me the opportunity to work alongside with colleagues and friends who share my passion for teaching Portuguese.

Co-authoring the Third Edition of *Crônicas Brasileiras: A Reader* at the intermediate level was not only a rewarding experience but also a pleasure, as I had the opportunity to collaborate with distinguished colleagues who I greatly admire. I have also had the pleasure of collaborating with one chapter Capoeira: The Symbol of Resistance in the book *Designing World Language Curriculum for Intercultural Communicative Competence*. I also collaborate as Co-Director of Test Development, National Portuguese Examinations, from the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP), as well as Contributor Editor from *Crônica Section in Handbook of Latin American Studies*, from the Library of Congress.

One of my proudest and most rewarding contributions to the field was securing grants funded by the National Security Agency (NSA) and STARTALK over multiple years. These grants allowed me to offer professional development opportunities for teachers of Portuguese, helping them enhance their teaching methods and fostering a community of educators interested in exploring new approaches. The initiatives aimed to expand and improve Portuguese language strategically important for diplomacy, business, security, and global research. Portuguese, as a critical language, is highlighted due to its widespread use, geopolitical significance, and cultural importance. In planning and administering it I worked closely with both new and experienced teachers of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PLF) and Portuguese as a Heritage Language (PLH). Unfortunately, this opportunity was suddenly stopped without any explanation NSA decided not offer funds for Portuguese language anymore.

The most significant outcome of these initiatives is the creation of a much-needed collaborative network of Portuguese language teachers across the U.S. As an educator, I have enjoyed collaborating with colleagues and continue to do so to this day. Like many other colleagues I am still hoping for the return of Portuguese STARTALK.

Despite all the challenges, I am grateful for BU's support and funding of the *Indigenous Voices, Languages, Histories, and Cultures in Latin America* conference that I have been co-organizing. This event brings together a diverse group of Indigenous activists, poets, professors, and writers, offering students a valuable opportunity to learn from their unique perspectives and engage directly with the descendants of Brazil's native peoples. It also provides a platform for these speakers to share their stories, celebrate the richness of their heritage, and amplify their voices.

Teaching is more than a profession for me; it is a lifelong passion. It is about motivating language and culture learning, fostering critical thinking, and nurturing engaged citizenship. Each student I teach adds a new dimension to my journey, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of theirs. As I look to the future, I remain committed to creating a supportive, inclusive, and stimulating learning environment where every student can flourish.

Throughout my journey, I have been fortunate to be surrounded by a supportive network of colleagues, friends and family members who have played a vital role in both my personal and professional growth. Their guidance, encouragement, and shared experiences have enriched my work and inspired me to continue striving for excellence. I am deeply grateful for the collaborative relationships I have built with them, as they have not only helped shape my career but have also made my path more rewarding and meaningful. I feel truly fortunate to count on such a remarkable group of individuals, whose support has been invaluable in every step of my journey.

In sharing my story, I hope to convey the profound impact that teaching has had on my life and the lives of my students. It is a journey of continuous learning, endless possibilities, and boundless rewards.



BEATRIZ CARIELLO

Florida International University

A Teacher's Tale of Portuguese Language Advocacy

I have intimately experienced living in cultural spaces different from my origins, first as the daughter of a Lebanese immigrant in my homeland Brazil, and later as a Brazilian woman in the United States. These experiences, coupled with my career as a Portuguese language educator working with students from elementary school to higher education, have emphasized how transformative is the power of language.

This appreciation for the role of language inspired my professional journey, since 1990 when I graduated in Portuguese Language and Brazilian Literature from the State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

After a decade of teaching in Brazil, my family and I moved to the United States. With the novelty of the new place, came the frustration of language: Ma'am, what do you need? Could you please change this dollar bill for quarters? For what? Quarters. I do not understand what you're saying, ma'am. Quarters—four coins of 25 cents. Ah, quarters. Following this humbling experience at the supermarket, I became determined to help other immigrants avoid similar struggles or at least alleviate their frustration when attempting to express themselves in a foreign language.

I began taking free English classes at a local library and joining conversation groups for immigrant mothers at a nearby church, which also offered daycare while we practiced speaking with volunteer English teachers. It was only when my mother-in-law was able to help care for my children that I could enroll in a formal English class

It took me two years to gain confidence. In 2002, my journey with teaching Portuguese in the United States began. For someone coming from a country where volunteerism isn't a widespread cultural practice, embracing this activity allowed me to share my knowledge while gaining insights into the lived experiences of others. I volunteered with the Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) in Boston, Massachusetts, visiting Brazilian and Portuguese families with young children on a weekly basis. My role was to bring books and educational toys to these families, working closely with mothers and their young children in Portuguese. Together, we engaged in activities designed to foster literacy and prepare the children for success in American kindergarten. Although the books and activity instructions were not in Portuguese, we were encouraged to work in the family's native language. I learned how acts of service can uplift communities and break societal barriers. PCHP taught me that one doesn't need large resources to make an impact. This involvement with the Brazilian and Portuguese community in Massachusetts marked my first exposure to the concept of heritage language, albeit in a superficial way.

When the icy Boston winters became too much, my family moved to Miami. My experience as an educator laid the foundation for the activities that I developed in Miami starting in 2004. It was through this that I engaged in Portuguese as a Heritage Language (PLH) at the Fundação Vamos Falar Português (VFP), in Portuguese as a Foreign Language at Florida International University, and in teaching Portuguese for Elementary, Middle and High School levels in the Miami-Dade public school district.

My previous experience as a Portuguese teacher in Brazil allowed me to join the board of VFP, where I began my second volunteerism working towards bilingual and multicultural education. Our first project was the "Planning Day" in Portuguese, a monthly meeting for children on school planning days when there were no classes. Due to the limitation of meeting only one day a month and the high demand from Brazilian families, we developed weekly Portuguese classes. At the same time, various activities and events for the Brazilian community became part of our calendar, such as storytelling, traditional festivals, and a Book Fair. Since its creation, VFP has offered free activities and events for the Brazilian community, with the support of partners who provide spaces and funding from Brazilian entrepreneurs. Initially restricted to Miami, the project grew so much that today it has branches in other cities in Florida and, recently, in Dallas. As part of my contribution to the program I design the Portuguese as a Heritage Language curriculum, train teachers, and help the families on how to build at home (and far from their homeland) an affectionate relationship with the language and culture. VFP highlights how volunteering can be transformative not just for the individuals we serve but also for ourselves, especially when living in a different cultural context.

In addition to working with the heritage language, since 2006 I have been teaching Portuguese in the Miami-Dade public school system and I am an adjunct professor at the Department of Modern Languages at Florida International University. The part-time work as a university professor combined with a full-time work in public school gave me valuable insights into preparing my courses in elementary and high school to meet the demands of higher education. However, this dual role also highlighted some major challenges, such as the heavy workload and the uncertainty of securing the next contract due to the fluctuating number of students enrolling in language courses.

It is inconceivable to see a decline in language studies at a time when proficiency in foreign languages is an essential element for global competence, problem-solving, and the formation of multilingual citizens. The importance of language teaching seems obvious, but that is not what we are seeing. Therefore, I really hope there will be investment in language programs, encouragement for language teaching, and integration of language learning into various educational curricula not only in higher education but also in the early school years. Only then I see a future for the Portuguese language in the United States, without teachers constantly having to prove they are doing a good job, but the numbers do not increase; without teachers having to “sell their courses” to keep their jobs; without competition or fear from our colleagues who teach language of losing their students to us. It is a lot of effort to keep the Portuguese language in the spotlight.

Speaking of effort, the Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University (FIU) in Miami plays a fundamental role in the survival of the Portuguese program at the institution. The Program of Excellence in Brazilian Studies (PROBRAS) enhances academic and research work throughout the institution, strengthening the relationships between FIU, the Brazilian community in South Florida, and Brazilian academic, governmental, and private institutions in the United States. The Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center (LACC) leverages FIU’s intellectual and financial resources not only to create partnerships in Brazil but also to promote and deepen the understanding of Brazil-US and Brazil-Florida relations. Current collaborative projects support the training and professional development of elementary, middle, and high school teachers, curriculum development, purchase and donation of Portuguese collections for libraries, strategic hiring of researchers and visiting professors.

My 20 years of teaching Portuguese in the United States have taught me some important lessons that can help those starting their careers in teaching Portuguese. Create a positive learning environment, prepare meaningful activities that promote language and culture learning. Connect with your community to promote real language use experiences, which will create educational and job opportunities for our students. Attend meetings and conferences to stay updated and ensure the quality of your teaching practice and join professional organizations in your field to interact with colleagues who share the same interests and concerns.

I am part of some organizations that work for the teaching of Portuguese and foreign languages in general, and this strengthens my practice and drives me to seek excellence in my work daily. I am one of the co-founders of the American Organization of Teachers of Portuguese (AOTP), which started in Florida in 2007 but has members from all over the world. We organize many professional development actions, establish cooperations with other organizations in the field of language teaching, universities, consulates, and the community, which consolidates AOTP as an organization recognized for its work for the Portuguese language in diaspora communities.

My projects are directly related to my work at the *Fundação Vamos Falar Português*, in high school, and at the university. These initiatives include training teachers, developing and introducing innovative Portuguese language programs tailored to diverse learners, and offering ongoing support to enhance existing programs in Florida public schools. At *Fundação Vamos Falar Português*, I focus on fostering a

love for the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture through engaging activities, while also providing resources and mentorship to educators and families. In high school and university settings, I design curricula that bridge the gap between early language acquisition and advanced proficiency, ensuring that students are prepared for both academic and real-world applications of Portuguese. By aligning these efforts, I aim to create a cohesive framework for promoting bilingualism and cultural appreciation across all levels of education.

Educators' mission is simple yet profound: to inspire. I want my students to seek growth and excellence, to be creative and innovative, and to challenge the status quo. I strive to provide them with meaningful opportunities to use Portuguese in their lives, whether in professional or personal contexts. My hope is that they look back fondly on their time in my classroom, recognizing it as a space where they developed confidence, curiosity, and a deeper connection to the language and culture. This vision drives my dedication to designing programs and activities that inspire students and educators alike, ensuring Portuguese remains a vital and vibrant part of their educational path.

Reflecting on my journey, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunities and challenges that have shaped my career as a Portuguese teacher in the United States. The dedication to fostering bilingual and multicultural education, the support from the community, and the collaborative efforts with various institutions have all contributed to my growth. As I look to the future, I remain committed to advocating for the importance of language education.



CASSIA C. DE ABREU

UC San Diego &
San Diego State University

Education & Heart

My journey in the field of language teaching started early in my life. At age 12, I discovered my love for English language classes, and my family enrolled me in a private English as a Foreign Language (EFL) school so that I could take my passion for languages to another level. Consequently, when I started high school, I was invited to tutor English to my peers. By the time I began my undergraduate studies in Letras (Emphasis in Portuguese and English), I was offered a job teaching EFL. My career evolved from there.

It was also while I was in college that I first learned about Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL), or Português como língua estrangeira (PLE). During that time, I befriended an American girl from Illinois while she studied PLE at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) where I attended school, but at that time, I was more interested in practicing my English language skills with her than helping her with Portuguese. However, that was definitely a point of awareness.

After four and a half years of undergraduate work, I completed my studies at UFRGS. At that point, I had planned to study abroad in an English-speaking country. Following a program selection process, passing the TOEFL, and obtaining my international visa, I landed in San Diego, California, in January 1999. There, I initially attended an intensive certificate program for International Teachers of English at a local public university.

About two years later, I returned to California to continue my studies. I then earned an academic certificate in ESL teaching and Applied Linguistics, which was followed by a master's degree in Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching. Upon the conclusion of that graduate degree, opportunities to teach ESL and Portuguese in the U.S. began to arise. Initially, I started teaching PLE at a local community college. Shortly after that, I was hired as a lecturer at the four-year colleges I teach today.

When I think about the challenges I had to overcome when I started teaching, the lack of adequate instructional materials is the first aspect that comes to mind. I remember spending many more hours designing lesson plans and developing materials for Portuguese than I would ever do for ESL. Apart from that, I have had to work on promoting my courses. Portuguese is not always the first choice in World languages to be pushed through. Recently, there have also been changes to general education course offerings in public universities. Nowadays, World language courses are competing with a myriad of academic courses. Therefore, promoting and advertising the PLE courses I teach has become a necessity.

Despite all the challenges that teaching Portuguese may have posed, I have to say that my academic journey has also been extremely rewarding. I have seen inspiring stories through my former students' shared experiences. Some of my favorite memories are reports from my community college students. I can recall at least three impactful memories related to students' careers that took a turn for the better because they studied Portuguese.

I recall a student who started Portuguese at the community college. She had a goal of transferring to a four-year university to major in Genetics. She ended up pursuing a minor in Portuguese, followed by a master's in Spanish, a subsequent one-year-long Fulbright scholarship in Brazil, and a doctoral degree from a renowned university on the East Coast. Today, she is a tenured professor at a college in North Carolina, and I am enormously proud of her.

I also recall another story from a student who would commute from Mexico. He would travel for about three hours to cross the Tijuana border into the U.S. to attend classes at the community college. I recall this student sharing that he was interested in French studies. In the end, he transferred to a renowned university in northern California and earned his undergraduate degree in a major related to Literature and Portuguese studies. Subsequently, he applied and was accepted at several universities for a PhD. If I am not mistaken, he may currently be concluding his doctorate in a related field related at Harvard.

I also recall a student who took two courses with me at the local community college before transferring to a four-year university where he decided to pursue a minor in Portuguese. He ended up tutoring Portuguese for the department besides double majoring in two other areas unrelated to language. About three years after graduating, he contacted me. He shared that he had obtained an excellent job in which he used Portuguese regularly, and he believed that it was the fact that he spoke Portuguese that gave him an advantage over other candidates for that position. I love hearing how students use language skills to enhance their professional profiles. Particularly, I am fascinated to learn how Portuguese strengthens our students' world knowledge and communication skills, and how it enhances their odds of landing a better employment possibility.

When I think of how the Portuguese language and its cultures are promoted in the United States, its relevance is of utmost importance. When I started teaching PLE at the university level in the early 2000's, the core target audience was mainly International Business majors. They wanted to obtain a concentration in Latin America, with emphasis in Brazil. Nowadays, I see a much more diverse cohort of students coming through my classroom doors. Some are still majoring in International Business, but others come from majors such as International Studies, Spanish, Kinesiology, Nutrition, Biology, Mathematics, Music, Linguistics, Sustainability, Engineering, and Global Policy and Strategy, just to name a few. Also, there has been a small but continuous influx of heritage speakers of Brazilian and European Portuguese, and I attribute that to the growing Brazilian and existing Portuguese communities in southern and northern California.

Despite the fact that the Portuguese language was dropped from the list of critical languages for Startalk programs in 2019, one cannot ignore that the U.S. still houses two significantly large Portuguese flagship programs. These are the Portuguese Flagship Program at the University of Georgia at Athens and the Portuguese Flagship Program at the University of Texas at Austin. In addition, there are other scholarship programs students can apply to, such as the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS), Fulbright, and Boren Scholarships. Though I do not believe that Portuguese language programs will lose their spot in the sun anytime soon, I wish we could see more institutional support towards increasing their visibility. I also hope that the advent of new Brazilian and Lusophone studies programs will encourage more students to learn the beautifully diverse Portuguese language and its cultures.

As for my personal academic interests, I have been working with the theme of language and cultural diversity in the Portuguese diaspora through literature and music. I have done this with the project “Canções para Abreviar Distâncias” for the past five years. That is a language learning project I designed for intermediate-level learners based on the album, “Canções para Abreviar Distâncias: Uma viagem pela língua portuguesa,” by Brazilian singer Isabella Bretz. With this project, my students have an opportunity to delve a little bit further into the poetry and music of the Lusophone world while developing their language skills. The “Projeto Canções” is the culminating result of my love for music and poetry, married with educational technology integration. It promotes students’ awareness of the Lusophone world, its people, represented by the poems’ authors, and their countries of origin. In turn, students have opportunities to engage in negotiation of meaning, enhance their oral practice and pronunciation, and express their creativity. They do this by working on final cultural products and perspectives that allow them to shine and highlight their unique individual talents.

More recently, after completing required certifications to teach languages online, I was entrusted to develop two hybrid beginning-level Portuguese language courses. These courses were piloted during the 2023-2024 academic year, and the results have been very encouraging. I am currently assessing results and focusing on student feedback as I want to keep aligning content with student learning outcomes. Therefore, my goal is to continue specializing in hybrid and fully online course modalities to increase accessibility and boost enrollment even further.

As one may imagine, balancing out my teaching responsibilities and my personal life has proven to be challenging. Despite the fact that, as a lecturer, I do not have to publish or do research, I find myself engaging in other academic aspects of teaching more often than not. I always aim to attend at least one academic conference per year. This has become especially trying due to reduced or lack of funding for adjunct faculty, but I do not shy away from applying or asking for support from my departments. In addition, I have taught summer courses, which reduces my free time to prepare proposals and materials for conferences; yet I dare to persevere. Due to these impediments, I would love to see more opportunities for funding available to higher education language instructors since they need to stay abreast of the innovations in the field.

For those who may be considering teaching Portuguese in the United States, my word is: Be truly clear what your goal is and how you want to reach it. Do not expect to be spoon-fed job opportunities either. You may be pursuing a job in a small and tight niche. There are different initiatives for teaching Portuguese in the U.S., but they vary a lot as far as compensation is concerned.

As far as I know, they may only take place if you hold a valid U.S. work permit plus all the other academic titles and certifications. A teaching opportunity may happen in your neighborhood or your parish, but you may have to volunteer, which essentially means you will work for free. Teaching or tutoring at your children's elementary or secondary school may be the case, and you may be offered some sort of stipend or not. You may learn about part-time openings at a local language center, community college, or university, and that is typically compensated. Thus, opportunities are out there for you to put your teaching skills to the test if you pursue them.

If I could give anyone a piece of advice, it would be: be creative, inform yourself, seek training opportunities, consider getting a higher degree (if your plan is to teach at the community college level or beyond), and invest in your career— If that is what you so choose to do as a career. Teaching languages is a serious business, and it needs to be respected as such by both employee and employer, and do not succumb to the native speaker's fallacy! In sum, if that is what you choose to do as a profession apply your knowledge, professionalism, and academic skills. Bring your personal talent to the table and do it “com coração.”



NILMA DOMINIQUE

Massachusetts Institute of
Technology

Unnoticed but Persistent: A Life Dedicated to Teaching and Learning

"You look like a teacher," or "You should be a lawyer." I heard that many times, and for a long time, especially during my adolescence, I didn't understand why people associated me with these professions. Today, I realize that both have one thing in common: the power, or at least the importance, of words. But, neither teaching nor law was a profession I aspired to. In fact, I never had a clear vision of the career I wanted. The typical question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" never resonated with me. I now understand this lack of clarity as a matter of class. Only those who are privileged in Brazil can afford to make long-term plans for their children. For most people, the future seems too far away, and the focus ends up being on the present, or at most, the next day.

When you are a black woman, though, the lack of professional aspirations is not just a matter of class; it is also shaped by the weight of societal expectations and systemic limitations. These pressures make it harder to envision a future beyond simply surviving. Reality shapes choices so subtly that, looking at my professional past today, I don't know what I could have done differently - in a way, life chose for me.

I learned early on how important education is. My father, who started working at a young age, wanted us to have a formal education that went beyond his own, so our lives wouldn't be shaped by the inequality and injustice he had experienced. However, he believed that a woman should not pursue anything beyond high school, thinking that level of education would be enough for me to become a preschool teacher.

Contrary to his expectations, I chose to pursue two technical degrees in high school: one in Chemistry and the other in Accounting. I'm not sure how I managed to balance both at once, but I did. Although I interned in both fields, I never worked in them. What truly stood out to me, however, were the humanities courses - particularly Language and Literature, taught by inspiring teachers. This marked the beginning of my realization that my true calling lay elsewhere, even if I didn't fully understand where. It was a time when there was no career guidance. I had chosen these technical courses without fully knowing what I wanted, but I did know what I didn't want to do. My main goal was to secure a job and financial independence after high school.

It was around this time that my father enrolled my brother and me in an English course in Camaçari, the city where we grew up, in the metropolitan area of Salvador, Bahia. It was there that a preschool director asked me if I could teach children in the first and second grades. Having no knowledge of teaching, I accepted the challenge. My first experience in the classroom was harder than I imagined, and it didn't last long, but the feeling of having some financial freedom and the opportunity to share what little I knew motivated me to continue. I began to prepare more carefully, seeking better and appropriate materials, and more teaching opportunities came up, along with the discovery of the joy of being in the classroom.

Meanwhile, I wanted to go to university, but I knew it wouldn't be easy. I had attended public schools my whole life and had seen firsthand the difficulties of those who, like me, dreamed of continuing their studies, especially when competing with students from private schools, much better prepared. I didn't even have enough money to pay for preparatory courses, and what was worse, I didn't have my father's financial support. Even so, I managed to save enough money to apply for the entrance exam. Without him knowing, I applied for the Bachelor's degree in Letras - Portuguese Language and Literature - at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA). I convinced myself that it would only be a test, an experiment, so I wouldn't be disappointed if I wasn't accepted. At least, I thought, I would have the experience of trying. To my surprise, my name appeared on the list of accepted students. Now, going back was no longer an option for me.

Starting university was incredibly challenging. Although it was public and free, without financial support, I had to continue teaching to cover transportation, food, and material expenses. Even so, the money was never enough, and I had to prioritize. Skipping classes was out of question, so I woke up at dawn to catch the first intercity bus to Salvador, often arriving on campus before it even opened, as classes started at 7 a.m. Many times, I didn't have money for lunch and had to wait until late afternoon, when I got home, to have a proper meal. As for materials, since I couldn't afford the books, I borrowed them from the library or made photocopies. Without these resources, it would have been impossible to continue studying.

In my spare time, I took on teaching jobs at various levels - from preschool to high school. I also taught Portuguese for college entrance exams and adult literacy programs. The experience of teaching adults to read and write was transformative and, without a doubt, one of the most intense experiences of my professional life. Watching someone learn to read and realizing the power this knowledge had to change their perspective on life was nothing short of magical. I witnessed firsthand the profound impact that education can have on someone's life.

It was four years of hard work, but I didn't see it as a sacrifice. I simply accepted it as what needed to be done. Looking back, I sometimes wonder how much easier my path could have been with access to more support, such as career guidance, financial help, or a scholarship. Just a little more assistance could have made a world of difference. I often felt 'behind' my peers, who had the financial means to buy books, participate in extracurricular activities, or network with professors. I didn't have that luxury, as I was always rushing between classes and work. However, I recognize that I was privileged to live with my parents and not have to bear additional costs beyond my own education. I saw many adult classmates who couldn't finish their courses on time or who simply gave up because they had to support their families. Having access to free, quality public education was undoubtedly fundamental in getting me to where I am today.

As often happens, those who go ahead must pave the way for those who come after. Over time, my father, who initially did not support my studies, changed his mind and began supporting my sisters' education as well. Four years later, there he was, at my graduation, placing the cap on my head while my mother held my diploma.

I got married two months after graduation and moved to Salvador, where I continued teaching Portuguese and Literature. In addition, I began working as a consultant, teaching Portuguese and Spanish as foreign languages to professionals, providing teacher training, and collaborating with some universities. Teaching foreign students broadened my perspective on language education. It made me realize that language learning was not just about words - it was about culture, perspective, and understanding. At the time, there were few resources for teaching Portuguese as a foreign language, so I spent countless hours adapting materials and creating my own.

I completed a postgraduate course in Higher Education, but soon realized my true passion was in studying and researching language teaching, rather than pursuing administrative roles. As I mentioned earlier, I hadn't developed close ties with faculty during my undergraduate years, which made it more challenging to access postgraduate opportunities at my alma mater, where networking often plays a key role. It was then that I came across a Ph.D. scholarship for Brazilians offered by the Spanish government. I applied twice before being accepted on my third attempt. This marked a new phase in my life.

While pursuing my studies in Spain, I faced the challenge of living on a very modest scholarship. Despite the financial constraints, I dedicated myself fully to my research, which led to significant academic progress. A couple of years into my studies, I became aware of an opening in the Portuguese program at Harvard University. I applied, and this marked the beginning of a new chapter in my career. I ended up staying at Harvard for six years, which became my first major experience teaching languages within the U.S. higher education system. During this time, I gained invaluable insights into the intricacies of language programs in the U.S. and had the opportunity to contribute to the growth of the Portuguese language program. I was particularly inspired by many of my students, whose passion for learning and cultural curiosity added a rich dimension to my teaching.

This experience also made me more aware of the disparities within the U.S. academic system. I observed that resources were not always distributed equally across language programs. Some received significant funding and institutional support, while others, like Portuguese, faced greater challenges in securing necessary resources. Additionally, there was a noticeable lack of support for faculty, particularly for women trying to balance professional and personal responsibilities. One of the more striking realizations was how language education, especially for less-commonly taught languages, often seemed to receive less institutional attention compared to other subjects in the Humanities. Also in this context, my previous decade of experience teaching Portuguese in Brazil - both as a native and second language - and other academic work including publications, were acknowledged but not fully valued, even though my practical teaching experience was recognized and well-received by students.

Those observations resonated with me on a personal level. Growing up in a predominantly black and economically disadvantaged region of Brazil, I was familiar with systemic inequality. However, my experience in U.S. academia revealed a different set of challenges. I came to understand that even within some of the most prestigious institutions, there can be a disconnect between institutional priorities and the realities faced by many faculty members, particularly women. It made me aware of how pervasive and complex inequality can be, often remaining hidden within systems that strive for excellence and progress.

Despite all the challenges I've faced, I am aware of the opportunities I have been fortunate to have. Over the course of my career, I've had the honor of working at two of the most renowned institutions in the U.S. For the past 15 years, I've been part of MIT's Portuguese program, where I had the incredible opportunity to design its first curriculum from the ground up. It's been a lifetime dedicated to teaching Portuguese, not only as a language but as a gateway to understanding culture, history, and identity. The most rewarding part of this journey? Without a doubt, it's the students - their personal growth, curiosity, and the impact they had on me as an educator.

In the classroom, the learning process is always mutual. As I teach my students the nuances of my language and culture, I, too, learn from them - through their unique perspectives, their thoughtful questions, and their enthusiasm. It is a deeply fulfilling, reciprocal exchange. There is something profoundly gratifying about planting a seed and watching it grow. To see students immerse themselves in the language, connect with a culture, and develop a broader understanding of the world - this is where the true reward lies. While some students come and go, others leave an indelible mark, becoming lifelong friends, part of my circle for years, even decades.

As Clarice Lispector once said, "Liberdade é pouco. O que eu quero ainda não tem nome" ("Freedom is not enough. What I want still doesn't have a name"). For me, what I seek and desire also goes beyond freedom - it is true equality, because while the idea of equity is often discussed, it remains a distant dream in the system we live in. The work I do, the passion I pour into every lesson, is part of a larger mission: to create educational equity where opportunities are genuinely available to all. In this vision, recognition is not reserved only for accomplishments but also for the efforts and potential of everyone - regardless of race, gender, class, or any other form of marginalization. We need to build a system where equality of opportunity isn't just an ideal but a reality, and that's what drives my teaching and the connections I make.

Teaching Portuguese has been my life's work, and through it, I've had the privilege of contributing to the development of minds, opening hearts, and connecting individuals to a richer, more interconnected world. Each class I teach reinforces my belief in the transformative power of education. I approach every lesson with the same excitement I had in my first class, seeing my students not as numbers, but as individuals with unique potential. Teaching continues to bring me joy - not just because they learn my language, but because, through that, they practice critical thinking, develop empathy, and an appreciation for diverse cultures.

While I lead the Portuguese program on my own, I am far from isolated in this mission. I am supported by colleagues across institutions - many of whom are women - united by a shared commitment to teaching and advancing the field. The wisdom, resilience, and strength of these women who have shaped my path—whether as mentors, collaborators, peers, or family and friends - have been a constant source of inspiration and support. Their guidance and encouragement have been foundational in my journey, helping me navigate both the challenges and joys of teaching. Together, we plant seeds of resilience, empathy, and understanding - seeds that we hope will grow far beyond the classroom and continue to flourish in their lives and in the broader community.

As we instill these values in our students, we are also helping pave the way for the next generation of language educators. By advocating for more resources, opportunities, and institutional support, we aim to create an environment where new educators can thrive and their hard work and passion are truly recognized.

Looking back, I can proudly say that although I never dreamed of becoming a teacher, this profession has allowed me to fulfill a purpose far beyond a job. It has given me the opportunity to connect cultures, empower minds, and contribute to something greater than my own individual path. It's a mission - one that not only shapes the education of others but also nurtures a sense of shared humanity that transcends borders and unites us all.



EUGÊNIA (LIA) FERNANDES

Florida International University

Through Words, I Rise

Luziânia, Goiás, Brazil, 1987.

There, as a daughter of a mother from Piauí and a father from Rio Grande do Norte, I was born to embark on a journey that would take me to the other side of the hemisphere 25 years later. Maria and João gave me life; education, however, gave me a path and a way forward. I grew up in Ceilândia and Taguatinga, satellite cities of the Federal District. In the outskirts, I attended local public schools, where I found support after losing my father at the age of five. Maria Eugênia, beyond life, gave me the inspiration to dedicate myself to my studies; as soon as she became a widow, she pursued her dream of becoming an Art History teacher. Watching her struggle to provide for my brother and me taught me to appreciate books, which gave us both sustenance and comfort.

In second grade, I had the opportunity to study with Márcia Gondim, a teacher, unionist, and activist in transformative education. With her, I learned the words of Paulo Freire with sweetness, internalizing the dream of changing my reality through education. Through the literature she introduced, creativity took root in me. From Ziraldo to Esther Grossi, I discovered a world very different from my home life, which included a hardworking mother without a support network and a brother who, like me, lacked attention. I became a young writer, debuting with *The Girl with the Colored Lips*, a story about a girl whose lips were a color no one would ever know, as she always hid them. At the time, it seemed fun; today, with years of therapy, I realize the little book was an analogy for the array of feelings repressed during my orphaned childhood.

Years passed, and soon I was riding the bus with my mother to her college, where I began to see the vast world in Brasília: a thousand countries in the capital. Signs reading "Embassy of the Netherlands," "Embassy of France," and "Embassy of Venezuela" piqued my curiosity—how could there be pieces of countries that weren't in Brasília? I wanted to travel and see these places. At nine years old, after talking endlessly about these countries, my mother gifted me the book *Children Like You*, a UNESCO compilation representing various children from around the world—a book I still keep and read to my daughter.

It was in combining the dedication of my mother, Maria Eugênia, with that of Professor Márcia Gondim, that the desire to become a Portuguese teacher blossomed in me. This was the subject where I performed best and the one where I could express myself poetically in a safe environment. When I entered high school, I attended a University of Brasília (UnB) program for 14 to 17-year-olds, aimed at preparing students for higher education. I discovered a course titled Letters – Brazilian Portuguese as a Second Language (BPSL), a degree designed to train teachers for three distinct audiences: Indigenous communities, deaf students, and foreigners. I passed the university entrance exam and was admitted to the Languages – BPSL program at age 17. UnB was an enchanting yet intimidating world; there were so many excellent people there, and as a public-school student, I became aware of the disparities in access to higher education. I wanted so badly to attend classes on time, yet I often could not. There was only one bus from my neighborhood in Taguatinga to the campus, leaving at 6:30 a.m. Sometimes, it was so crowded that it would not even stop. I realized that my peers who lived close to campus or had cars were more likely to succeed. Sometimes, I went to campus with money only to arrive there. That was when I discovered university support for low-income students and received the “permanence scholarship,” which included a campus job. I could then afford to get to and from the university, have breakfast, lunch, and even pay for book copies.

I noticed that the disparities between myself and more privileged classmates were diminishing thanks to the assistance offered to low-income students, inspiring me to continue my academic career. I completed a research project with Dr. José Carlos Paes de Almeida Filho and attended my first conference, the *Conference of the International Society for the Teaching of Portuguese as a Foreign Congress* in Argentina, in 2008. With a keen interest in teaching Portuguese to speakers of other languages, I chose to specialize in this area and complete my mandatory internship with the Portuguese for Speakers of Other Languages Extension Program at UnB. I clearly remember my first students from the Venezuelan embassy's diplomatic corps. Teaching that first class was, in a way, like embracing that little nine-year-old girl again. After my demonstration class, the program coordinator invited me to join the team as an assistant teacher. I worked as a Portuguese as a foreign language instructor for about six years. Later, I advanced from assistant teacher to faculty member and coordinated the Celpe-Bras exam. I also led the Program for the Exchange of Undergraduate Students (PEC-G), a partnership between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and federal higher education institutions in Brazil. I welcomed students from Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, whose mission was to integrate into Brazilian federal universities by passing the Celpe-Bras exam. Noticing a particular challenge among these students, I used my experience in the UnB extension program as inspiration for my master's and doctoral research.

For my master's, I explored how idiomatic expressions were understood and internalized by learners of Portuguese as a second language. Delving into grammaticalization and lexicalization, I studied the degree of fixation of these expressions. Dr. Maria Luiza Ortiz Alvarez's work was incredibly inspiring, and I had the honor of benefiting from her contributions. She studied idiomatic expressions and was on my master's thesis committee. Her influence was also crucial to my decision to apply, in 2010, for a Ph.D. program in Linguistics at the University of Brasília. In my doctorate, my research interests shifted slightly as I noticed the challenges faced by my PEC-G students, prompting me to focus on acoustic phonetics. My goal was to understand how fluency was evaluated and impacted by the multilingual backgrounds of students, particularly those with Bantu linguistic heritage.

During my Ph.D., I had the chance to work in private institutions, teaching for Law, Human Development, and English language majors. I coordinated the English Language Program at the Evangelical College of Brasília and, with my colleagues Camila Almeida and Renata Oliveira, founded a Portuguese as second language school, the Cultural Institute for Teaching Portuguese to Foreigners (ICEPE). We moved from an extension initiative to a private endeavor, and ICEPE continues to thrive, now managed by other teachers and serving as a benchmark for Portuguese instruction in Brasília. The school has partnerships with the French Embassy and the International Bank for Development.

In 2014, during my fourth year of doctoral studies, I applied for the Portuguese Lectureship Program of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While I was happy with my career and the chance to explore various countries and cultures through my profession, the opportunity to live abroad teaching Portuguese greatly appealed to me, enabling me to accomplish the dreams of that nine-year-old girl. I was selected to teach at the University of California, Davis (UC Davis), which marked my first experience as an instructor in the United States. There, I encountered a vastly different reality, as I transitioned from an immersion teaching environment in Brasília to a foreign language community in the U.S., where Portuguese heritage language students had predominantly Azorean ancestry. Fortunately, I met open-minded colleagues who allowed me to develop a curriculum for UC Davis.

I joined a welcoming faculty and a well-integrated Brazilian community, who then benefited from a partnership with the *Science without Borders* program. UC Davis was the U.S. university with the highest number of Brazilian students participating in this program. Consequently, students formed a robust Portuguese Club, actively engaging in diasporic scientific discussions. These years at UC Davis allowed me to develop pedagogical practices that would later benefit the Portuguese teaching community in the United States. After my lectureship ended, I was hired in a permanent teaching position.

Two years after arriving in the U.S., I was blessed with my greatest motivation: my daughter. Without my husband's dedication to raising our little one, this journey would have been practically impossible, especially during the pandemic. In those years, together with Leonardo Silva, Camila Almeida, and Tatiana Dutra e Melo, I co-authored *Plural: Português Pluricêntrico*, a book dedicated to Portuguese instruction with a focus on social justice. The book was born from the desire to provide more equitable instruction for our students, free from reliance on commercial resources.

At UC Davis, I also continued coordinating the Celpe-Bras exam, where we welcomed students from various countries, including Mexico, Nigeria, Canada, and, naturally, many states across the U.S. Celpe-Bras provided me a unique opportunity to maintain close ties with the Consulate General of Brazil in San Francisco. My years at UC Davis were fulfilling, but my desire to conduct research and mentor future teachers remained strong. I continued publishing research papers on curriculum development, open educational resources, proficiency exams, and language policies for affirming Portuguese in diasporic contexts. In December 2023, I noticed that Florida International University had posted on LinkedIn a tenure-track Assistant Professor search in Portuguese and Brazilian/Lusophone Studies. I applied for the position and, after an exhaustive but rewarding process, was offered the position. Today, I am part of the faculty of the Department of Modern Languages at the Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs.

I consider this position my dream job. In addition to connecting with the Brazilian community and providing endless opportunities for my students, I now have the chance to lead an exchange programs in Brazil, something I had always envisioned. I am also closer to my roots in Brasília, as Miami is only a 6.5-hour direct flight away. Although this is a new context, I'm excited about all the opportunities this position offers, especially the chance to interact more closely with the K-12 education community. I hope to continue developing open educational resources and curricula focusing now on Portuguese for Specific Purposes.

I am also in close contact with the Consulate General of Brazil in Miami, and I have to admit that I am fascinated and thrilled by each opportunity to engage with the Portuguese language—both for my professional and family interests, as I have a daughter who speaks Portuguese as a heritage language. Recently, she had the chance to attend her first class at a community Portuguese school, and it all still feels surreal.

I have maintained a beautiful friendship with my colleagues from the University of California. Today, I feel I have a strong support network, especially with the bonds I've built over nearly 12 years of immigration. This journey, which seemed as though it would be lonely, was not, and I am immensely grateful to friends from the American Association of Teachers of Portuguese (AOTP) for guiding me through a process that was entirely new to me. Now, in a leadership role, I try to give back to my colleagues by emphasizing the importance of staying united in a solid community so that each of our professional successes resonates with administrators, allowing these individual stories to gain collective strength.

I am proud of my journey as a migrant woman and can say that the once-lonely child I was would be proud of the teacher writing this biography today. Education has been, for me, the greatest tool for social mobility that could ever exist. Today, whenever I start a course, I briefly share my story with my students. I remember Paulo Freire, Márcia Gondim, and Maria Eugênia Fernandes.

Miami, Florida, United States of America, 2024.



DÉBORA FERREIRA

Utah Valley University

Resilience in Community When Building Self and a Portuguese Program

As of today, it's been 33 years that I have been teaching Portuguese in the United States, 10 as a Teaching Assistant at the University of Georgia, where I have completed my Masters and PhD in Romance Languages, and 23 years at Utah Valley University, where I coordinate the Portuguese Program. I will never forget what my colleague Douglas Jensen once said: "The history of the Portuguese Program is Débora's history at UVU." It is true, the professor I am today has changed much from the graduate student that came to the USA in 1992.

Probably like many of you, who I am today couldn't have been imagined when I was starting my journey. Like many Brazilians surrounded by modernist imagery, my dream at first was to become an architect, inspired by the undulating lines of Oscar Niemeyer, and the Brazilianess of our beaches. In fact, it was an international exchange opportunity when I was 16 and came, coincidentally, to Salt Lake City, that redirected my future. Meeting the other, trying to understand and be understood by the other, became my focus – there was so much to know!

As an undergraduate in Letters at Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, I knew I wanted to be a professor, and with a view of future graduate admission, I looked for opportunities to engage with research. I tried different things: I remember copying poems by hand, from old magazines in dusty libraries, in support of Luzilá Gonçalves' research on XIX century female Brazilian writers (I knew I couldn't continue that, given my asthma); I also remember listening to cassette tapes to transcribe indigenous languages - but just couldn't see myself going in situ to collect more samples. For about 2-3

years I assisted Professor Antônio Marcuschi with transcribing and analyzing oral discourse – which ended up being my first area of studies, my first MA coursework.

I was married by then, with two little ones. With a supportive extended family, my professional mother, almost retired, encouraged us to drop the grandkids at her home while we focused on our careers. Family care is part of who we, female professionals, are. We support each other. I remember 3-4 kids at my mother's place, with all of us sisters helping with their care on weekends. Of course, in the Brazilian context, there was also a maid, sometimes a babysitter too, or each family would bring their maid to help the matriarch with all the kids. This was the time when cut, copy and paste meant exactly that. During the week of finals, I would be on the typewriter, and oftentimes my husband would help me with these – literally copying and pasting, for who had time to type and re-type from beginning to end?

I guess what I'm trying to say is that in pursuit of our dreams we must jump quite a few obstacles that come our way, and it's crucial not to give up. One of my biggest lessons was from Kenneth Pike, when he visited UFPE, who said, recalling the hare and the tortoise fable, that it's not the fastest or the best who wins, but the one who perseveres. Another thing that I didn't see then but now I find most relevant is the network you have. I have seen many graduate students have to give up their studies because of health or a death in the family, or unsupportive loved ones or partners, or the need and cost to care for children.

This also applies to your graduate school faculty and partners. It's a long and arduous journey, so surround yourself with people who truly care about you. To me, that was especially Professor Susan Quinlan, but also Anna Klobucka, Leslie Feracho, Carmen Tesser. Of course the topics of study were delicious, though challenging, but there will be crises, and that's when, for me, I found in Quinlan a home away from home. Not only was she a wonderful thesis and dissertation director, allowing me room to develop my ideas, but she was there for the little things, from a sweater when we first arrived, to being by me for a pity party when I was struggling at the end of my PhD. Because there will be times when you must make sure your spirit and mind are sound.

Another thing I didn't know when I first started this career, is that Portuguese, in the USA, is a critical language. Starting my graduate studies at a large Portuguese program such as the one at UGA then, I couldn't see how critical the need was to recruit students when I got my first job. A focus on maintaining a healthy program, with enough students enrolled in each class has been a constant for all these 33 years. One cannot carry a program by oneself, it's crucial to educate administrators – for example, to educate them I show them our numbers in comparison to nationwide enrollment from the MLA database, or tell them about the need for speakers of Portuguese based on federal grants and other initiatives. Another thing we had to educate administrators about is that because students taking intermediate Portuguese for example, can't really jump to intermediate French – in contrast with psychology or sociology classes, for example. Because language classes are sequential, the more that classes get canceled, the less students choose to pursue that language, in a cascading effect. To maintain a healthy Portuguese program, it's also important to build connections with colleagues from other departments, maybe create cross-listed courses as we did with our Cinema classes. Another strategy might be to make Portuguese visible around campus, by promoting events, maybe along with the Brazilian Club, bringing guests to campus, or connecting our students to the Brazilian community events around town. If on one hand we need to respond to administrators who insist on asking about our

numbers, on the other hand we have the joy of sharing our vibrant culture, language, and music with students who didn't know much about it.

My pedagogical practice has always been centered on the student in dialogue with their peers, multimodal with the inclusion of audio, video, music, but also getting students to include their bodies to support learning, such as gestures and role playing to enhance memory, grammar and reading games for engagement, and activities of Total Physical Response to show comprehension. As an example, one of these activities that work really for the subjunctive, is to have them up, and once I say a trigger, they'll step left for indicative mood, and right if it's the subjunctive – that always bring laughter, and I can immediately see how their decision making process is going.

As we all know, the internet today plays a huge role in the difference in accessibility of materials for use in the teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language. Where during my first 5-10 years it was necessary to collect physical materials from my trips to Brazil, such as pamphlets, grocery flyers, CDs, tapes and VHS videos, nowadays a large number of materials, even full textbooks, can be accessed online – though large is in relation to how few we used to have before, not in comparison with materials for dominant foreign languages like Spanish or English. Our relationship with these materials has changed too, going from being precious because they were rare, to overwhelming to go through, given how much is available. I have also created loads of materials as needed, and a full textbook of Business Portuguese for our third year students, which was made available to institutions nearby.

With my many obligations as sole full time tenure track/tenured Portuguese faculty, and program coordinator to the second largest Portuguese program in the state, I've never had much energy to pursue publishing that manuscript – currently it serves its purpose, which was a condition for my hiring, to offer a Business Portuguese class, as the International Business program is our strongest supporter on campus. They not only have a foreign language requirement, which helps us keep our classes (our institution has a very tenuous language requirement, even for BA students), and theirs was the initiative to promote a Business Language competition across the state, in several languages, Portuguese included.

Adapting to the location where you work also means interfacing with the many public immersion schools, given that Portuguese is taught at 9 elementary, 7 middle, and 8 high schools in 6 Utah counties. In fact, nowadays, Portuguese is the most spoken second language in Utah, if we exclude English and Spanish. The demand for teachers fluent in Portuguese is therefore high, and the state has created a partnership with the Brazilian Ministry of Education to bring teachers from abroad, mostly at the elementary and middle school level. At the high school level students take upper division university classes – that means, for example, that I have working with me two instructors that teach on campus, and two more teaching at the two high schools in our county that chose Portuguese as their immersion language. To create the curriculum for the HS classes, which was to be offered in rotation, I joined in a committee composed of Portuguese professors of the major institutions statewide. For about 3-4 years we worked together creating these classes, which are finally now being offered; their faculty come from the only higher ed institution that offers a MA in Portuguese, Brigham Young University.

As I'm nearing retirement age, I see many challenges and opportunities for Portuguese as a foreign language in higher ed. Enrollment numbers in higher ed correlate with historical moments we live. So, while the 2008 economic crisis increased the number of students in higher ed, we lost students around the 2020-2022 covid time. For the period of 2016-2021, the same trend repercuss, with a 16.6% average loss in total foreign languages enrollment and Portuguese losing 21.8% nationwide during the same time, according to data from the MLA Report. In my state of Utah, though, total foreign languages enrollment increased by 5% during the same period, and total enrollment in Portuguese in Utah remained the same. This appears to be due to the addition of Portuguese college classes at local high schools through the Bridge program, which brought us 44 new students, a 20% total increase at my institution.

On the upside, I agree with the MLA report that funding, dedicated faculty with the support of administrators, and innovative curriculum are key to increasing programs. Of these, faculty have control only of building supportive relationships across campus, fomenting cultural understanding, and connecting with the local community to make learning a language relevant. I'm always very thankful to my department for leading us into offering language for business, language for health sciences, minors, and now a new certificate with only two upper-division classes required, which might encourage students to later pursue at least a minor.

Thinking of those beginning their careers in Portuguese, I'd like to encourage they develop additional skills during their PhDs – such as an ability to teach both Spanish and Portuguese, supporting Latin American Studies efforts, or Music or Cinema or another field that you can tell your hiring institution you could teach if something happens not only as far as low enrollments in Portuguese, but also to make sure they'll have enough classes for you to teach. I strongly believe that in the end, once hired, you'll build a strong program once you determine what needs are specific to that program and student population.

The many cultures in Portuguese are beautiful and have much to teach students around the world. Our histories and stories are full of narratives of dialogues, inclusion, explorations, and how to overcome barriers, which can better grow global and ethical citizens. The world is changing rapidly, and we can contribute to building curricula and partnerships that foster students to thrive in it.



FERNANDA FERREIRA

Bridgewater State University

The Incidental Portuguese Professor

I was not supposed to be a Portuguese professor. I was hired as an Assistant Professor of Spanish in 2001 at the (then-called) Bridgewater State College, a public four-year undergraduate institution in Massachusetts. During the campus visit, the interviewers asked me if I had any interest in teaching Portuguese. Smiling, I gave a resounding yes, mentioning my personal background as a Brazilian and my academic research interests. I was definitely qualified: I had a Master's Degree in Portuguese from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a Doctorate in Spanish from the University of New Mexico. My dissertation was a comparative study of the plural morpheme in Caribbean Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese, looking into the claim that certain pluralization patterns revealed an African imprint (Ferreira, *The African Contribution to Brazilian Portuguese: to what extent did the speech of slaves influence the mother tongue?*, 13). So, the career opportunity before me was truly remarkable. Bridgewater was a small town, close to large Portuguese-speaking populations, as well as speakers of the Cabo Verde Language. My future students would be coming from cities such as Taunton, Fall River, and New Bedford, where communities of Azoreans, Madeirans, Cabo Verdeans and Brazilians have made their homes. As a freshly-minted Ph.D., I was thrilled.

I soon realized that all of this incredible linguistic diversity also meant that there was an immense pedagogical challenge. The department had to assess students' proficiency levels and determine their language placement. They were counting on me to help make those determinations. Certainly a Cabo Verdean who had arrived in the United States at 16 years of age, having gone through the literacy process in Portuguese, should not be enrolled in Portuguese 101. By the same token, a third-generation Azorean, who had only heard high-frequency words such as *malassadas* from her grandmother, might have some difficulty in completing Intermediate 102.

To make matters worse, the university was going through the complicated process of revamping its General Education Requirements, and “foreign language” was on the chopping block. Sure enough, by 2004, there was no such specific language requirement for graduation, not even a measly 3-credit class. Our enrollments went down significantly and remained low in subsequent years. However, students could still take a language class and have it count as their “Humanities” requisite. Our problem remained the same as far as language placement. In fact, it actually increased - it was even more critical to place students in the correct language class, since there was little incentive to take a language class to graduate. We did not want native speakers of Portuguese to enroll in Portuguese 101. If they were placed at a higher level, they could simply drop that class and take English or History to satisfy their Humanities requirement. We did not know how to encourage them to take a higher level of Portuguese. Without a language requirement, we opted to simply establish a language policy where any student with some experience in the language (i.e. previous high school study or familial background) had to move to at least the 102 level. This remains, to this day, a challenge for us, and we continue to find ways to address the issue.

Given this background, when I walked into my first elementary-level Portuguese class at Bridgewater State, I was faced with a multilevel, multicultural class. I had traditional students who had no experience with Portuguese or Portuguese-speaking family members; third or second-generation Azoreans with various levels of proficiency; Cabo Verdeans who had either been born here or had just arrived; and a few Brazilians for good measure. To top it off, it was not a huge class. There were maybe ten students, making it impossible to create a separate heritage learner track. So, I had to create language activities that challenged all of my students without, at the same time, discouraging them from taking Portuguese.

Despite all of those challenges, my institution supported my professional career and helped me create the Portuguese minor program, which is currently thriving with ten students from majors as diverse as Biology, English, Accounting, and Criminal Justice. I received tenure and was promoted to Associate Professor in 2007; later, I was promoted to full professor in 2013. Since then, I have successfully completed two post-tenure reviews. Throughout the years, the Global Languages & Literatures Department was able to hire highly trained Portuguese lecturers and part-time instructors to work alongside me in teaching Portuguese. Viviane Gontijo and Analia Tebaldi, to name two of them, received their doctorates from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and were innovative instructors. Additionally, as a full-time professor, I was able to teach at convenient times which, in my estimation, helped enrollments. In 2020, two colleagues from the College of Education and Allied Studies (Drs. Emily Spitzman and Melissa Keh) and I were awarded an NEA - National Education Association grant to teach a dual-enrolled course in Portuguese at Brockton High School. One of the students, a Cabo Verdean, went on to apply and be accepted at Bridgewater State University as a computer science major. In addition, I was given the opportunity to take students abroad. I travelled with students to Cabo Verde twice (in 2012 and 2013), once on a fully-funded undergraduate research trip. I was the faculty leader on two short-term travel courses to the Azores (in 2019 and in 2020, just before the pandemic hit). I am delighted to affirm that students who travelled with me in these study abroad trips were able to connect with their familial origins and came back even more committed to studying Portuguese.

One of the most interesting anecdotes that happened to me, early in my career, was when I was teaching a typical vocabulary lesson in Portuguese. At one point, one of my Azorean students blurted out “well, that’s not how my grandmother says it!” After taking a moment to reflect, I said “well, that’s interesting because that’s how my grandmother says it - let’s embrace linguistic diversity!” Because of that experience I was able to write a scholarly article (Ferreira, *That’s not how my grandmother says it: Portuguese heritage learners in southeastern Massachusetts*, 848) about my insights into teaching Portuguese to heritage language learners.

What I can impart to my students is precisely the fact that the Portuguese-speaking world is indeed *pluricêntrico*. There are even more ways of expressing concepts in Portuguese than there are Portuguese-speaking grandmothers! Most importantly, sometimes students come into language classes having a very negative, distorted view of their language variety. In my experience, heritage learners regularly refer to their own language (or the language of their parents and grandparents) as “street Portuguese,” “slang” or “broken Portuguese.” They repeatedly tell me that they are very bad at writing, even though they can understand some words. They report to us that when their relatives speak to them in Portuguese, they respond in English.

Thus, one of my goals as an instructor is to switch this mindset, because it is a language myth that “some dialects are better than others” or that their way of speaking is somehow substandard. Indeed, to those who spouse a prescriptive framework of language, an expression such as *se tu quiser* (“if you want”) is incorrect Portuguese. But from the point of view of descriptive linguistics, this conditional verb phrase is perfectly correct in colloquial Brazilian Portuguese (Pires & Rothman, 6). In fact, it would be strange if such speakers were to use instead the standard Brazilian Portuguese inflected infinitive *se tu quiseres* with their co-workers and friends. They would suddenly sound “hoity toity” or arrogant. The question for us, as teachers, is to inquire as to the goals of heritage language instruction, based on the aspirations of students. Are they interested in attaining an additional stylistic register, to use in more academic and professional settings? Or are they motivated to gain insights into their familial connections? (Carreira & Kagan, 62). The answer to those questions will determine our curricular decisions.

My pedagogical methods are all guided by this overarching sociolinguistic approach, that sees every variety as valid and correct. Secondly, in all of my language classes, I implement innovative activities that include the use of the latest technology. I have used online platforms such as *Flipgrid*, and currently I use *Padlet* to help students learn vocabulary and express themselves. I believe that creativity is a driving force in language learning, one that we sometimes ignore. Students are truly talented, and given more leeway, they can create videos that showcase their language proficiency.

In the past, I used to ask my students to do an oral presentation at the end of the semester to show what they had learned. For example, 101 students were required to do a presentation of daily activities, to show correct usage of present-tense verbs. The 102 students would be required to show pictures of a recent trip, to demonstrate their knowledge of past-tense verbs. However, speaking in front of the classroom was anxiety-producing for some and the result was at times an overly rehearsed speech, read directly from the PowerPoint slides.

Thus, I realized that this assignment did not showcase the students' speaking skills or the knowledge they had acquired. So, more recently, I have asked 101 students to get together in pairs and create a "show and tell" video of the items they have in their dorm rooms or a comparative "day in the life" using Padlet. For the 102 students, I have asked them to produce a video of their recent trips, making sure to include comparative and evaluative statements. The results have been truly stunning, for their level of creativity, humor and language gain. In short, I have been amazed at how much students are able to accomplish when given clear guidelines and the freedom to express themselves, using today's technology. The fact that they are able to show this level of fluency in just one semester, in a class that only meets twice a week, sometimes virtually, is truly remarkable.

My ongoing research project is focused on vocabulary learning in the context of heritage language learning, considering the realities of heritage learners in general and those with a background in Portuguese specifically. Researchers in the field of language acquisition have realized that building vocabulary is central to developing second language proficiency (Nation), and when students learn words that are relevant to their needs and interests, that increases motivation and retention (Graves). When students reach a certain level of vocabulary acquisition through reading, their involvement with the text increases their vocabulary knowledge, leading to better reading skills and overall language development (Laufer & Hulstijn, 14). I propose that the same is true for heritage learners: once they develop ways to learn more vocabulary, including words from different varieties, they are able to increase their proficiency in the heritage language. I am currently on sabbatical leave, so I hope to produce a scholarly article of my research on vocabulary acquisition and heritage learners by the end of the academic year.

My hopes and dreams for the future of Portuguese language education in the United States is that we all realize the strategic significance of learning Portuguese. Brazil is an economic powerhouse, and Portuguese is still the official language of many African nations. But the continuous exportation of numerous cultural products from Brazil to the world, such as the telenovelas and capoeira, to name a few, does not necessarily translate into Portuguese enrollment numbers in American higher learning institutions (Milleret, 35). I have always wondered why Portuguese is still not as popular as other second languages in the United States, given those realities.

The advice I would give to educators who are starting their careers in Portuguese language teaching is the following: learn your craft, ask questions whenever you can, and get advice from more experienced colleagues. Admit that sometimes you will need to look up some words, and let your students know in the very next class. After all, some of your students will most likely be speaking a different variety than you! But more importantly, be proud of your work. If you are teaching heritage learners like me, know that you are serving a community who genuinely wants to recapture their ancestral language. That is critically important work.

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MEGWEN LOVELESS

Tulane University

A batida de um coração: **Reflections on a Life of Teaching**

I never spent too much time studying palm-reading or astrology or even pondered how different spiritual approaches to the universe might guide my life. But so many joyous coincidences have come together in my professional trajectory that I sometimes wonder if some greater force might not be at play. For sure, it's worth noting that the field of Portuguese language teaching is a small and intimate community where colleagues remain enmeshed in one another's successes over decades and distances. But there is also a serendipity that seems knit into our very classrooms. It extends to our students, who arrive and depart on such diverse paths and yet come back into focus at regular intervals throughout our careers.

My journey to the language classroom began my first year of college and unfolded somewhat magically, leaving me rather bewitched and thoroughly smitten. Like I've seen time and time again with my own students, I took an elective course as a fun distraction from my required classes and found myself caught in a current of fascination and joy. From the very first day, Brazilian music was the soundtrack that kept me on this unexpected path. When I waltzed into class, the professor had set a small black boombox on the front desk. Always a good sign. (Spoiler alert: he appears again and again in my professional story, usually with *mpb* playing in the background.) That first day he played "O samba e o tango" and set the tone for the semester; next he handed out dubbed mixed tapes for every student so we could continue listening in the Language Lab and start to develop our own *portunhol*.

After that, my pre-med aspirations slowly melted away, as multiple semesters abroad opened the door to a certain infatuation with the language. Vocabulary quizzes led the way to essays, then a thesis, then graduate school. All the while I nursed a compulsion for blowing my spending cash on music: first cds,

then an *ipod* and eventually a subscription service. For a moment, it looked like I would veer into cultural anthropology, but then I ended up right back at music and language with a dissertation on *forró*. The activities I developed for my Portuguese students usually necessitated an audio system of some kind.

Fifteen years later, I remained firmly ensconced in a career teaching language. I leaned on and learned from colleagues; I found my rhythm waltzing around the classroom. Then the melodic juju flowed again. I felt myself wanting to spread out and explore a bit. I came to a campus interview at my alma mater, excited to enjoy a few days in the Southern U.S. as the Northeast still tried to shake off winter. I knew it would be a short visit, but nonetheless looked forward to tracing my feet between landmarks that are forever linked to many long-ago undergraduate antics. It didn't seem like a particularly high-stakes project, because I already had a fairly stable position alongside dear colleagues where I interacted daily with the best and brightest students.

Campus interviews are not for the feeble. After shaking dozens of hands and holding court in seemingly infinite formal and informal sessions, each with its own set of faculty and polemic questions, I was whisked away for my class demo. Already the day's proceedings had left me highly nostalgic, since decades prior I had taken many of my own undergraduate classes in that very same building. Imagine my surprise, though, when I was led to a basement classroom, the closest to the west-facing stairwell, and recognized it as the same space where my first Portuguese class had met so many years prior. The carpeting was new (surely replaced after Katrina), as were the chairs and white board and media set-up. But I knew at some intense level that it was in this room that my professor had first introduced me to *Tropicália*.

Back in Newcomb Hall (while I adjusted the sound on the built-in speakers as students got themselves situated in that oddly familiar space), the metaphysical Portuniverse continued to send surprises my way: that very same professor who had introduced us to the melodies and lyrics of MPB greats from the 1960s and 1970s had just taken over as chair of the hiring committee. He and I switched our old roles: he sat in the front row near the students while I bustled about and shuffled reams of photocopied song lyrics behind the podium. None of Caetano's songs had occurred to me for this lesson on the simple future and future subjunctive tenses (that would have been lightning striking the same tree three times), but Tom Zé was queued up on youtube, ready to launch us into my planned activity. With some cajoling, the students uncovered his creative ode to the most common vowel in the Portuguese language, and we proceeded through all of the items that wouldn't exist without the letter 'a.' I like to think my job offer stemmed from my teaching that day, or at least my earnest answers about innovative pedagogies; but perhaps I was just the last person standing, with the unsung letter 'e' connecting all of the consonants in my name.

Even while music is a driving motif in my career, I also want to sing my praise for the community of teachers I have worked beside. Indeed, I must underscore what a small world we are: as huge as our passion for teaching, the Portuguese language community is small, almost miniscule if we consider the educators who work exclusively above the equator. And not only are we a close-knit clan of largely like-minded educators, all devoted to our craft, we also hold each other up. We inspire one another inside as well as outside the classroom, and we collaborate with a warmth that I don't always see in other academic spaces.

It's somewhat ironic, then, that my own professional successes have largely grown on the periphery of academia, with limited resources for institutional growth. At my current institution, as in so many language departments, Portuguese holds a somewhat precarious spot on the margins of Spanish or other Romance languages. Our enrollments are tender and always at risk, our faculty stretched too thin and our resources far too bare. I labor to boost enrollments in our program; I call my recruitment my *PORpaganda*. But even after multiple petitions, our superb offerings don't have enough matriculations to justify a course release for administering additional initiatives.

I realize, though, that it is due to our positionality as LCTLs that I have been able to push for innovation and re-invention in my courses. The fact that so few students are at stake (at least compared to our cousins in Spanish) has allowed me to flourish under the radar of academic authority. Though they don't provide me with copious funding for my initiatives, my department has looked on with a mixture of curiosity and appreciation as I've incorporated telecollaborations, community engagement, service learning, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, ungrading and digital OER platforms into our offerings.

Innovations bring failures, of course. A semester wouldn't be complete without having to stand up and dust myself off at least once. I imagine that for university leadership it might seem overambitious to incorporate so many changes to our program in so little time. But the motto of my institution is "Only the Audacious," and indeed, I get infinite joy from being able to manifest audacity in the classroom. More recently, a new administrative team in my college has brought forth new resources and enthusiasm for fresh perspectives on language learning. And all the while, I've found champions for innovative methodology in pockets across campus.

It hasn't been easy to be one of the few *gringas* teaching Portuguese at the university level. Some mornings I wake up to find the language completely clunky in my mouth, stuck for words or the right idiomatic expression for the occasion. Other days I lament how my very presence on the North American continent erodes what native-like pronunciation I ever had. Yet in wistful moments when I get caught up in metaphors and symbolism, I dream that my career was indeed written in the stars, and that the massive string of successes, hard work and coincidence that led me to Newcomb Hall in April of 2015 were predestined. But so much is also due to an unrelenting zeal for learning. My career has undoubtedly been, as Gonzaguinha wrote, *um eterno aprendiz*. The privilege to strive for professional actualization is indeed, *bonita, bonita e bonita*.

As I look back on my failures and successes, I recognize how indebted I am to colleagues in our field. From teaching workshops to sharing lesson plans, from proofreading to brainstorming, my peers in Portuguese language teaching have buoyed me through infinite iterations of pedagogy. I have all the *carinho* in the world for Tom Zé and his lost letter 'a' when I write, with a conspiratorial wink, that *meu projeto - e nosso futuro - é português*. Thank you to all of my *companheiros*, be they students, peers or mentors, for starting me on this truly unexpected journey and for supporting my professional growth and evolution.



RACHEL MAMIYA HERNANDEZ

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Where Language Can Take You: My Journey from Learner to Educator

Interestingly, despite being American, my teaching career actually began in Brazil. Shortly after I graduated from college, I was a bit lost and not quite sure about what I wanted to do with my life. I was living in New York City at the time and there was a lot of pressure to go into a business or Wall Street career, but that just didn't feel like me. Somewhat impetuously, I took an English teaching job in the town of Teixeira de Freitas in Bahia that I had seen posted on a Columbia University online message board. It was indeed a bit of a culture shock, I had arrived in this small, dusty town with two paved roads and one traffic light. I earned two minimum salaries per month, which even back then was not much, but the job did include room and board with a host family. Life there was so very different from the Brazil I had experienced during my junior year abroad in Salvador, BA. It certainly was a learning experience. I knew nothing about language teaching and admittedly was not very good at it. This said, there was and is something magical about teaching. It is simultaneously both extremely challenging and rewarding and this drew me in. Deep down, I wanted to be a better teacher and this is what pushed me to further my education. I ended up going to the University of Hawai'i for a Master's degree in Second Language Studies with a focus on language teaching. While I was there, they had begun a small Portuguese language program in the Spanish Division and fortuitously, when I finished my degree a friend introduced me to the Division Chair, Dr. Paul Chandler. In 2008, I began teaching Spanish and Portuguese at the University. I taught both languages for fifteen years and recently moved into a new role as a Language Technology Faculty Specialist at the Center for Language & Technology also at UH Mānoa.

While I like to be an optimist, it is a difficult time to work as a language professor. The reasons are manifold. In terms of the demands of the job, in my experience faculty are often asked to do more and more with less and less. Zooming out, there is an alarming trend of divestment from languages and the humanities more broadly. There seems to be little will on the part of most universities to make the needed investments in language education. For instance as tenured professors retire, they are often replaced by adjuncts or lecturers or never replaced at all. Further challenges like the exorbitant cost of higher education in the US weigh on us; for most students it's simply not economically feasible to take on the burden of loans for a major in languages which often does not yield high returns. I have had students say things like, "I want to major in languages, but I need to choose a major that will guarantee a higher salary when I graduate".

That said, there are indeed bright spots. The Language Flagship Programs, which are federally funded by the Defense Language and National Security Education Office, are an excellent model for implementing high caliber language education programs. They allow students access to quality instruction and tutoring, as well as to study and internship experiences abroad. Scholarships like the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS), Boren, Fulbright, and Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) are also wonderful opportunities for Portuguese language students who want to go abroad.

Another bright spot is the amazing work going on in the State of Utah. The Portuguese Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs there are amazing! The state has really made investments into language teaching, research, and professional development. It's exciting to see how their programs have grown and the articulation they've been able to make between their K-12 and higher ed language programs. This is another excellent example of how real investment in language education can make an impact. I think both the Utah DLI and Language Flagship programs could serve as models for creating high quality, sustainable language programs. But we need to really invest in our language education programs. There needs to be support for programs at all levels not just from the university, but also from the community, state, government, and private sector.

Being both a student and later a professor of Portuguese has gifted me with so many incredible experiences and opportunities, it's hard to choose just one. I believe one of the most impactful experiences for me and my students was working on a book writing project with students from the Federal University of the Recôncavo of Bahia (UFRB). In December of 2019, Dr. Kelly Barros Santos, an English language professor from UFRB, and I were at the 1st Continental Conference on Afro-Latin Latin American Studies (ALARI) at Harvard when we started to talk about the idea of having our students work together on a project that documented the lives and lived experiences of important Afro-Brazilian figures in history. Initially we were thinking along the lines of a website or Wikipedia pages, but we weren't quite sure. We also faced the added challenge in that we were both teaching face-to-face classes at our respective universities (thousands of miles and half a dozen time zones apart). The seeds of the idea were planted, but we ended up not pursuing it due to the logistical challenges and other professional and personal demands.

Then, in a matter of months, the whole world changed. The COVID-19 virus shut everything down. Both of our universities pivoted to online classes and we started to return to our project idea and postulated that it may be able to happen since we were now both teaching online. Dr. Barros brought in her colleague from UFRB, Dr. Julia Vasconcelos Gonçalves Matos, and we began to plan the project in earnest. Since we were all working with intermediate level language learners, we thought that a children's book would be appropriate given that it could have shorter, less complex texts. We also decided to expand the focus to include Black heroes from all over the world and not just Brazil. At a time when we were all going through the stress and isolation of the pandemic, working together on the project together helped foster a real sense of purpose and community to our students. The students from UFRB and my students worked together and created a beautiful, multimodal bilingual e-book in Portuguese and English about Black heroes. At the end of the project we were able to have a Google Meet session with a group of kindergarteners from Bahia who had read the e-book. It was a wonderful experience for our students to be able to connect with the young readers and share their work. To date the e-book has been read over 1300 times in 22 different countries with very high usage in Brazil. This is particularly notable, because I think we often view language learners in terms of deficits or limitations. Instead, we should focus on the amazing things that they can do with the language they are learning and the impact they can make.

I've been in the field long enough to know that interest in the language waxes and wanes, as do enrollments. However, I think long term there are three key factors that will continue to make Portuguese an important language in the United States. Firstly, it is what we term a "Critical language" which means that we do not have enough proficient speakers to fulfill the Nation's economic and global interests. That means there are many government sponsored programs that offer support for studying the language like the CLS program, Boren, Flagship, Fulbright, among others. This can have tangible benefits for students who reach a high proficiency. It's well known that military and government jobs often offer increased remuneration for bilingual employees; however lesser known is that many private sector jobs in areas like healthcare or business frequently offer similar benefits.

The second key factor that I see sustaining academic interest in Portuguese is in the area of Portuguese for Spanish-speakers. From my perspective, culturally and linguistically there is a lot of draw to studying Portuguese for Spanish-speaking students. This has long been an area of support for the language in areas like the Southwest and Florida, but as the Spanish-speaking population expands to other parts of the country, hopefully the trend of Portuguese for Spanish-speakers will continue to grow.

The third key factor lies in the rich and diverse heritage communities with ties to Lusofonia. Whether it's first generation students polishing their language skills or those who are reclaiming ties to the language spoken generations ago, as is the case for many of my students here in Hawai'i, heritage communities are a source of strength for our language and often ardent supporters of our programs. While in the past many immigrant communities tended to focus on assimilating, nowadays there appears to be increasing interest in maintaining linguistic and cultural traditions.

There are two approaches that I feel have really helped transform my teaching practice: the first is telecollaboration and the second, project-based language learning. In 2013, I attended my very first American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) Conference in San Antonio. In one of the sessions, Dr. Robert Mosner from the Portuguese Language Flagship Program at the University of Georgia (UGA), presented about a project called Teletandem Brasil. As part of this project students from his university would Skype with students from the Universidade Estadual Paulista - Assis (UNESP). It sounded like an awesome program and I noted down the name; however at the time I thought that there must be some cost associated with it and that it would be out of reach for a tiny program with no funding like mine. Fortunately, I was mistaken. As I was going through my notes from the conference, I saw what I had written about Teletandem and looked it up. It was a free program coordinated by Dr. João Telles at UNESP and they were looking for more international partners. I emailed them and in less than a week, I was on Skype with Dr. Telles arranging for my students to take part in the program. Talking to people thousands of miles away on a computer may seem unremarkable now, but we have to remember that this was over a decade ago. My students were extremely nervous, but also palpably excited. It was amazing to hear them talking to their partners in Portuguese. While it was exciting, as a teacher it was also a bit unnerving; I had to really relinquish control. This was a huge learning experience for me personally. I think it pushed me to be less planned and prescriptive in my teaching and more open to spontaneity, curiosity, and unpredictability. We participated for many years with students from the Assis, Bauru, and Araraquara campuses. Some of my students even became friends with their Teletandem partners and visited them in Brazil.

Project-based learning has also been an approach that has deeply influenced my teaching practice. In 2015, Dr. Julio Rodríguez, Director of the National Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC) encouraged me to apply for the Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) Intensive Summer Institute and I did. It was an intense, yet rewarding, professional development experience which provided opportunities to learn from and with an incredible group of language educators. Projects can help provide a framework for inquiry around a challenging problem or question. Learners engage with this challenge for an extended period of time ideally producing some sort of tangible or digital product and sharing it with a public audience. And they do all of this in the language they are learning. I have found PBL to be one of the most compelling and motivating approaches for learners. My students have done some amazing projects focused on literacy, social justice, community-based learning, among others. In my role now, a big part of what I do is help language teachers from all over the world design and develop PBL projects for their classes.

Currently, in my work with the Language Flagship Technology Innovation Center (Tech Center), I'm working to help support the Portuguese Language Flagship Programs at UGA, Arizona State University, and their overseas partners at Universidade Federal São João del Rei. At the Tech Center, I'm also going to be working with my colleague, Dr. Aitor Arronte Alvarez, on including Portuguese in our Podcast Discovery system which uses machine learning to help curate podcasts so they can be more easily discovered and accessed by learners.

In terms of PBLL, I will continue to work with Portuguese teachers in the US and collaborators in Brazil to help support and develop high quality Portuguese language PBLL projects. I am now in a faculty specialist position, which technically does allow me to teach. Currently, I'm not teaching language classes, but I hope that someday I may be able to do so again. A saudade bate forte, I really miss teaching Portuguese and interacting with students, so I hope that one day, I'll be able to do it again.

Navigating the world of academia can be daunting. Being a professor is extremely time consuming and the work never ends; there is always something to grade, revise, prepare, etc. It can be extremely challenging to find work life balance. My advice would be to find time for your passions outside of work. About twelve years ago, I started doing yoga and meditation and this has really helped me in all aspects of my life both personal and professional. I know that yoga is not for everyone, but you need to make time for whatever it is that helps fulfill you.

My other advice would be to always make time for your family, friends, and loved ones. I know the demands of an academic career can be overwhelming, but it's important to remember that our professional lives are only a part of who we are and that what truly matters in life is loving and being loved.

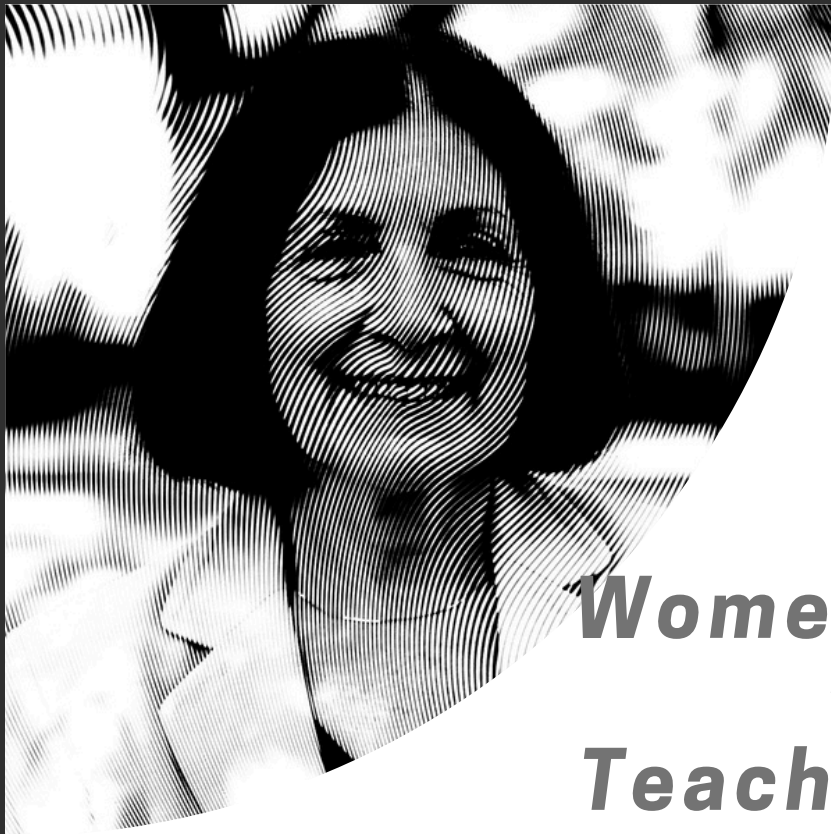
I hope interest in the Portuguese language and its related cultures will continue to grow and thrive. While we are faced with many challenges, we are also very blessed. We have the most amazing and inspiring teachers. Since it is a relatively small community, many of us know each other, collaborate, and support each other's work. I work with instructors from many different languages and I may be biased, but I really do think that we have so many innovative and exemplary Portuguese language teachers. There are so many impressive projects, programs, and initiatives going on in our language programs; it's really invigorating to see. And I definitely think that this energy and enthusiasm is transmitted to our students. However, as I mentioned before, we do need to push for more investment in languages from our institutions, communities, government, and the private sector.

My two biggest pieces of advice to those starting in the field are to believe in yourself and invest in yourself. It can sound trite, but for many years I was plagued by self-doubt and did not think academia was for me. I had somehow convinced myself that it was the provenance of others and that I didn't have anything to contribute. A turning point for me was when I began attending professional conferences. I remember going to my first American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) Conference. It was exciting to meet other Portuguese teachers and hear about the things that they were doing. I was inspired and energized by the presentations I saw and the connections I made. It made me see the value in what we do in a different light. That experience pushed me to actively participate in professional organizations like the AATSP, American Organization of Teachers of Portuguese (AOTP), and ACTFL. And those professional learning experiences pushed me to further my education and pursue my PhD. I think being a Portuguese teacher can be very lonely; save for a few big programs, many of us are the only one teaching the language in our school or department. This can be quite isolating professionally, which is why having a professional community is so beautiful. We have the chance to share, connect, empathize, and collaborate together. When I meet another Portuguese teacher, we just

have that instant connection. Our university and teacher prep programs can only do so much; there is far more to learn from our professional communities. My advice to new professionals is to believe in yourself and in what you have to offer and invest in yourself professionally.

Unfortunately, there is not solid support for the language at my university. There is little will at the departmental level to really support it and see it grow. For instance, enrollment is often a challenge, to help address that about eight years ago I redesigned the core program to be an intensive, hybrid one. This helped stabilize and grow enrollment. Lamentably, after I left the department last year, they decided to abandon that model. That said, there are some positive opportunities like the Knowlton-Coito scholarship which Dr. Paul Chandler helped establish. It supports University of Hawai'i students in summer study abroad programs in Portuguese-speaking countries. Additionally, the Portuguese heritage community in Hawai'i has been very supportive of the program. They often help with arranging guest speakers and get students involved in cultural events.

I feel honored to be part of the Portuguese teaching community. While we are small, I think we are dedicated, innovative, and inspiring! We have such a vibrant and amazing community. By continuing to invest in ourselves and each other through our professional organizations and collaborative networks, we can create pathways to ensure that the teaching of the language and its related cultures continues to thrive.



MARIA LUCI DE BIAJI MOREIRA

College of Charleston

Women's Journeys in the Profession: Teaching Portuguese in the U.S.

Looking back at my professional life, I think that many women who teach Portuguese in this country may have faced similar challenges, balancing personal life and career in an environment often marked by unequal treatment.

I never saw myself doing anything other than teaching Portuguese. My love of Portuguese, though, started with the books my father would bring home from Érico Veríssimo, Machado de Assis, José de Alencar, and many others. Reading can open new worlds; it certainly did for me.

I studied Portuguese as an undergraduate at the Universidade Estadual de Maringá. Three professors in college inspired my life's trajectory and moved me forward in my life's mission. My Linguistics professor transformed my conception of language into something I never thought possible. My Literary Theory professor gave me the platform to think independently and critically. My Portuguese professor inspired me to look for all the seemingly-impossible grammar questions in the Portuguese language! He and I had numerous debates about things like comma usage and subject-verb agreement. His respect, as an 18-year-old student, helped me see the possibilities of my own contributions.

Still as an undergraduate student, I started teaching Portuguese for second grade children in a school of German nuns. It was an innovative program: teachers would teach only one discipline, mine being Portuguese. I still remember how cool it felt! Then, while I was still his student, my Portuguese teacher invited me to teach in the best public middle school in town, an event that changed my life forever.

Not long after graduation, I moved to Recife, Pernambuco, where I spent a good decade. Born to Italian immigrants in a rural area of Paraná and having studied and started my professional life in nearby Maringá, I found myself in a completely new region. While getting an M.A. in Linguistics from the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE), I was invited to substitute a Portuguese instructor in an atypical class. These were law students who had already graduated but needed one more Portuguese credit to receive their diploma. This was my first college-level teaching experience, for students older than I was! It was an unbelievable experience that propelled my belief and my career forward.

My good luck sent me to São Luís, Maranhão for one year, almost a thousand miles from Pernambuco! When I learned of openings to teach Portuguese at UFPE, I decided to apply. The application included a written grammar exam and a public class, so I flew to Recife with my two-year-old son, rented a studio-type apartment near a nursery, and prepared for a month. Without my other half, who remained in Maranhão, and family living in Paraná, I was on my own; studying possible topics for the exam during the day and taking care of my son at night. I passed the exam and taught in Pernambuco for several years. With a small child and a full-time job, I finished my M.A. thesis. At UFPE I had the great honor to work with legendary figures, including Ariano Suassuna.

Recife, four decades ago, was very different. The city had a regional charm, a unique linguistic variant, exotic flavors, food, and fruits that I hadn't even heard of before, and the *nordestino* pride of 500 years of history behind that rich culture and unequal society. My southern accent and Italian last name always revealed that I was not from there. I was 'the foreign girl'; one must overcome regional biases as well! Nowadays, Recife still has its unique features, but has become a mega globalized city.

From there I transferred to the Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), accompanying my husband, a civil servant. At the time, we had two children - eight and four years old - and a baby who was born eight days after arriving in Niterói, Rio de Janeiro. With good fortune on my side, I lived three years there and taught at UFF. How different that world was from Paraná, Maranhão, and Pernambuco! In bright and charming Rio de Janeiro, I had to learn how to be a *carioca*, a way of life that has little to do with the Northeast or my upbringing in the South. Life is full of discoveries, especially in the busy streets of Praia de Icaraí, with the Marvelous City of Rio de Janeiro in front of my eyes. It was there that I started my Ph.D. in Linguistics, with a secondary focus on Portuguese and Philology, at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), as a full-time student, full time teacher, three children, and a husband often away traveling for work. While writing my dissertation in Pragmatics at UFRJ, I was accepted to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and my world took another direction.

The US was a new learning experience, both the language and culture. I was a full-time student and teacher, as well as the mother of three beautiful young children who became partners in my discoveries and whose English became better than mine in just one year in the US. When a person is young, focused, and has dreams and determination, challenges exist but don't knock one down. The differences to what I was accustomed to are hard to understate: long nights in the winter, white fields covered with snow, short summers, miles of soy and corn fields, and flowers of all types and shapes in the exuberant spring and summer; but also, the magnificent and sprawling campus of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and its great library's eleven million books.

Four years went by fast. My experience at UIUC allowed me to grow professionally much more than most Ph.D. students. I was a full-time student and instructor and became interim director of Portuguese for some time. I recorded an entire trilingual book of Portuguese, Spanish, and English for a blind student; I directed two study abroad programs in Recife; I received a Ciber grant to develop materials for Business Portuguese; presented my first paper at a professional conference; created original teaching activities; and was a parent-coordinator in a local preschool. My horizons expanded, but those were difficult times for Portuguese teachers to find a permanent job. I spent three years at the University of Georgia as an instructor. The following three years were with the University of California, Berkeley, after a long truck trip from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast. So much happened there! I had the privilege of meeting or working with Raduan Nassar, João Gilberto Knoll, Ana Maria Machado, Moacyr Scliar, Rigoberta Menchú, Ruth Cardoso. Unforgettable experiences! However, the dream place for a non-American teacher in the US could also become a nightmare without a Green Card. That search led me back to the Atlantic coast, to the warm and beautiful Charleston, South Carolina, where each brick has a story, and where my professional career flourished the most, despite the challenges along the way.

I'll never forget my job interview: five male professors from various departments across campus, interviewing me. No women representation? I joined as the sole Portuguese professor, which gave me tremendous autonomy and immense responsibility at the same time. I soon realized how little support I had for things like materials, guest speakers, and conferences, from my department, college, or even from outside and government funding. The area had few Brazilians or Portuguese-speakers, and the College of Charleston had no related graduate program, all important elements to develop a program. I was trying to build a program against the odds while trying to publish enough to receive my tenure. I helped introduce capoeira to the area, where it is still being taught. I was teaching four classes per semester, three or four different preps, in Portuguese, Spanish, and English, and teaching language, literature, culture, and linguistics. And a family. Time passed quickly; my children grew up fast, but my career and personal life had always been intertwined.

The book *Ponto de Encontro*, which I am co-author of, came out in 2007. It became a bestseller, with features that other Portuguese books didn't have — and many still don't have (hard cover, online materials, with European and Brazilian versions, audio and video components, test bank). During the 2020 pandemic, Portuguese programs in the US relied on *Ponto de Encontro*. The second edition came in 2013, and now we are working on the third edition. This is certainly one of my best contributions to Portuguese teaching in the United States. The writing team, composed by Anna Klobucka, Amélia Hutchinson, Patrícia Sobral and Clémence Joüet-Pastré, was amazing, and even our disagreements worked out beautifully. I salute Clémence, who is not with us anymore. That the book is still relevant and respected 17 years later gives me much pride.

For thirteen years I went to Brazil with a summer study abroad program (two years with the UIUC and eleven times with the College of Charleston). My destinations included Fernando de Noronha, Iguaçu, Ilha Grande, Recife, Salvador, Belo Horizonte, Ouro Preto, Mariana, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, Manaus, Belém, Marajó Island. These fascinating trips had diverse and exciting itineraries and approaches and created life-long experiences for my students and for myself.

Together we explored landscapes, history, smells, food, dance, music, forests, cities, buildings, beaches, and museums. Most importantly, though, these trips were opportunities for students to interact with Brazilians, and this was the most beautiful part of the trip. Life in Brazil is interpreted differently, and experiencing that difference is an important part of the personal growth and interconnectedness that the collegiate experience can foster.

For many years at the College of Charleston I was stuck in an eternal vicious cycle: not enough students to create a Minor; and no Minor to attract more students. Through perseverance I managed to create a Minor in Portuguese, fulfilling one of my dreams as a teacher. Like ocean waves, interest in Portuguese fluctuates in the US, with public perception swaying on things like the current Brazilian government, economy, stock market, and violence. Likewise, a Portuguese program's support can waver between department Chairs and other leadership. Sometimes we are forgotten, and sometimes we're even seen as competitors. Recruiting students and developing small language programs demand enormous effort and commitment from parties and work best when all facets are aligned.

From 2007-2022 I lived three lives at once: Brazil; Charleston, SC; and Middlebury, VT. During that time I served as Director of the Portuguese School at the Middlebury Language Schools, Middlebury College, while still teaching and leading study abroad programs. The Portuguese School was an honor and privilege for me. The Language Pledge®, a requirement of the immersion program, is a symbol of commitment from those students who have the motivation to speak only the target language during the program, always. And most usually continue speaking, after departing the school. In addition to the Language Pledge®, the Portuguese School was well known for being both fun and rigorous at the same time, adjectives that I coined as representative of our truly interdisciplinary program during my administration. The Portuguese School's 2008 writer-in-residence, Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta, described Middlebury in a chronicle as "Montanha Mágica", inspired by the 1924 Thomas Mann novel of the same name. The Portuguese School had the honor of hosting several other writers-in-residence: Lira Neto, João Almino, Laurentino Gomes, Ana Maria Gonçalves, Miriam Alves, Conceição Evaristo, Rui Zink, Daniel Munduruku, as well as so many other artists, musicians, teachers, professionals who came to the EP in my 15 years there. Musicians Stacey Kent and James Tomlison were the two of my most extraordinary students I ever had in my four decades of teaching, luminous and bright minds, courageous, and with unforgettable voices and music.

The Portuguese School became a mission that I embraced under the inspiration of exemplary students and dedicated teachers, building a little Brazil for seven weeks in the mountains of Vermont. I consider this as another great contribution to Portuguese in the US because the Portuguese School touched hundreds of students who learned about the language and culture of the Portuguese-speaking world and will never forget their experience immersed in the Portuguese language. I am proud that I helped train a generation of scholars and professionals whose interest in the Portuguese-speaking world will reap dividends for the profession.

It was in Middlebury that I fully put into practice a curriculum with interdisciplinary courses. It is there that I truly learned that “life does not come with subtitles”. Students learned that geography, history, literature, numbers, equations, philosophy, sports, arts, and more are as much a part language as reading, writing, listening, speaking, and becoming culturally competent in the target language.

I have had unforgettable moments in my career but would like to touch on just a few. While working at the University of California, Berkeley, I had the privilege to meet Rigoberta Menchú, Guatemalan activist and 1992 Nobel Peace Prize laureate. It was humbling to interact with her, and I have never forgotten her commitment to Indigenous rights. A fun moment took place at the same university, when I was at lunch with seven or eight Portuguese personalities, including the main guest, Mário Soares, at the time the President of Portugal. When he asked us to introduce ourselves, I mentioned my full name, including my Italian ancestry. He immediately asked me about my Portuguese last name. When I mentioned it was my husband’s name he replied: “Ah, tens bom gosto!” [Ah! You have good taste!], to our laughter. Many times in Charleston people would ask my husband what had brought him to the city. His answer was that it was his wife—his wife’s job. South Carolinians were always surprised.

As a professional, seeing the circle closing, I remember Pedro Meira’s words: “amoldar-se sempre que necessário, mantendo intacto apenas aquilo que nos parece negociável.” (Cf Pedro Meira, PN, fall 2020). I also recommend making healthy connections, reinventing yourself, being open to new challenges, and being a team player. It is clear that Portuguese won’t be a dominant foreign language in the US, but the academic community can still be strong and vibrant. Students will continue choosing Portuguese because they want to learn the beautiful culture of the Portuguese-speaking world, because of their self-motivation, rather than a continuation of what they studied in high school or only to fulfill college requirements. We’ll continue having a small group of highly interested students and teachers who will work hard for their right place in the academic world in the US.

My experiences living in Paraná, Pernambuco, Maranhão, Rio de Janeiro, Illinois, Georgia, California, Vermont, and South Carolina showed me diverse angles of humankind, landscape, and labor. They shaped my life as a mother and a professional. I tried to instill in my children the adage to not be afraid of challenges and to never let opportunities pass. Contrary to what K. David Jackson said in his interview “The best accomplishments, one can hope, are still to come”, I would say that I have already had so many accomplishments! From the personal point of view, I am a fortunate mother of three children who are good citizens of the world, following their passions, living for what is just and correct; my two precious gifts are my beautiful grandchildren. My husband — friend and ‘accomplice’ — is the one who always supported my career and the deeds of our journey together for more than four decades. I followed him, as wife, many times. He followed me, as husband, many times. And this worked beautifully and in its own time.

Professionally, the great joys of my life are when I read about former students or when they send me messages years after graduation, telling me where they are, what they are doing, remembering details of classes and interactions, thanking me, or publicly acknowledging that I made a positive impact in their lives; some are now professionals in the same field. Another great joy is when my students, when studying about Brazil or the Lusophone world, learn about themselves and their own country.

I would say that the book *Ponto de Encontro*, the creation of a Minor in Portuguese, teaching Portuguese language and its culture for almost four decades in five universities, having studied and worked in two of the world's best universities, being Director of the Middlebury Portuguese School, and being recognized in 2024 for my three decades of service to the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese Association (AATSP) with its Lifetime Achievement award are great accomplishments for a person who started studying in a Brazilian village's small, two classroom elementary school with no running water or regular bathroom. I've accomplished more than I could have imagined. And finally, this reflection on my life shows me that though we pass on, our good actions remain in the hundreds of people whose lives we touched with our words and teachings.



GLÁUCIA V. SILVA

University of Massachusetts
Dartmouth

From the South Atlantic to the North Atlantic via the Corn Belt: A trajectory teaching Portuguese in the United States

The “teacher game” is very common: children pretend to be teachers as they play with dolls or with friends, and I was no different. Little did I know, at that point, that I would actually become one.

My very first (and very part-time) job in the early 1980s was as an English language teacher at the same school (“curso de inglês”) I had attended in a bedroom community just outside Rio de Janeiro. Towards the end of the 1980s, I had graduated with a BA in Letters from a federal (and free) university and was tutoring a few people on top of working three jobs: teaching English in two language schools and working as a civil servant at a federal agency. However, even with all those jobs and gigs, the economic crisis in Brazil at the time was so profound that I didn’t make enough money to move out of my parents’ home. I understand that I was privileged: the consequences of hyperinflation were much more serious for most Brazilian families than they were for me. After all, I had a place to live, zero debt, and no worries about paying rent or buying food. Still, in my mid-twenties I wished to be able to rent a small apartment, but the chances of that happening were slim to none—and slim had left town. So, I thought of a different option: if I couldn’t leave my family’s home, I might be able to leave the country. And how would I do that? By continuing to study, of course!

In thinking about where I could go to pursue an MA in Linguistics (I hadn’t exactly been a stellar student in literature courses in college...) with a scholarship, I turned my attention to the United States and off to the U.S. Consulate I went to get a list of schools that had higher degrees in Linguistics.

I wrote to many different universities, and they all sent me their shiny brochures with lots of details about campus life, and, of course, information on costs, including the first one: the application fee. I knew that I should apply to more than one university, but many of them charged \$50 just to apply—and two of those would be \$100, which was a prohibitive expense at that point (remember, late 1980s and hyperinflation). So, I chose two schools that had lower application fees. One of them was the University of Iowa, which offered me not only a scholarship that would cover tuition, but also a teaching assistantship. I was to study Linguistics and teach Portuguese. At that point, the extinct PanAm offered students free tickets to the United States. I took advantage of that program and flew into Chicago, where I arrived in the evening and had to find out how to buy a plane ticket to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, lugging two big suitcases all over O'Hare. Good times... And so, in August 1989, I started studying linguistics and teaching Portuguese in the Corn Belt.

Fast forward 10 years. In 1999, after a PhD in Hispanic Linguistics and a 3-year stint back in Rio, I was hired as a Senior Lecturer to teach Portuguese and Spanish at the Ohio State University (I had learned Spanish in Iowa, improbable as that may sound). In 2002, I became an Academic Program Specialist in the same department. That position gave me some stability and more work, but it was enjoyable: I oversaw the Portuguese language program as well as part of the Spanish language program, supervising and helping to train graduate teaching assistants (TAs) and coordinating several courses. I worked closely with two people who, like me, were staff, not faculty (even though we taught several courses). I learned a lot from those two colleagues about course coordination, TA supervision, and all sorts of administrative tasks related to the department and beyond—and how to overcome hurdles that were occasionally in the way of our ideas and projects. For that, I am forever indebted to those two colleagues. Also, like them, I didn't just do what was in my job description, which was to teach and carry out administrative duties: I also did research, presented at conferences and published papers. (Incidentally, my revised dissertation was published by DeGruyter during my second year at Ohio State.) However, many professors in the department did not think of us as their peers, even though we did what they did (teach and research) on top of our many administrative responsibilities. We were definitely “second-class department citizens”.

In late 2004, I received an email from a colleague at a different institution about a tenure-track position at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. The ad seemed to have been written for me, even though they had no idea I existed. They were looking for a linguist who would coordinate the Portuguese language program and supervise graduate TAs. I did not necessarily want to leave Ohio, but of course I applied. It seems that the interview went well and in 2005 I was hired as a tenure-track faculty member in the Department of Portuguese.

Having come to UMass Dartmouth with three years toward tenure, I became an Associate Professor in 2008. With clear expectations related to publications, my partnership with Denise Santos, which had started when I was at Ohio State, solidified. We co-wrote several articles as well as four Portuguese language textbooks. Partnerships offer wonderful opportunities for exchange; my collaboration with Denise has been invaluable and I am grateful to work with such an accomplished researcher and textbook author.

A relatively small campus such as ours offers opportunities to branch out, which I embraced early on, with the support of my department colleagues. Almost as soon as I arrived, I became involved with what was then the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), given my interest in teaching and learning. Later, after the CTE had become the Office of Faculty Development (OFD), I was invited by the director to work as a faculty fellow for one semester. After that, the director suggested that I apply for assistant director, a position I held for three years, followed by another three years as OFD director. At the same time as I started as OFD director in 2013, I started a 5-year term as department Chair. Much later (2022), I was elected vice-president of our local faculty union, a position I still held at the time of writing. These different roles have not only kept me busy; they have been instrumental in helping me understand the dynamics on our campus and some of the challenges those of us working with languages face—including, and perhaps especially, Portuguese. While our department is one of two “stand-alone” departments dedicated to Luso-Afro-Brazilian studies in the country, that privilege comes with its own challenges, as one might imagine, including constantly having to reaffirm our *raisons d’être*.

Our department is separate from Global Languages and Cultures in great part due to our geographical location: our region is home to a large Portuguese-speaking population. Portuguese and Cape Verdeans have come to Southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island since the 19th century and have continued to migrate here during the 20th century (most Cape Verdeans’ home language is Cape Verdean Creole and Portuguese tends to be learned in school, not at home). More recently, immigrants from Brazil have joined the Portuguese and Cape Verdean populations in the area. Considering this regional history, my research at UMass Dartmouth has focused mostly on Portuguese as a heritage language. In that field, besides Denise Santos, I have collaborated with Everton Vargas da Costa both in writing and in offering workshops for community school teachers, after the late Clémence Jouët-Pastré first invited me to work with her on a workshop series sponsored by the Brazilian Consulate in Boston. Several of my colleagues in Massachusetts, including the editors of this special issue, have also collaborated with the Consulate in providing professional development opportunities to teachers working with the Portuguese-speaking community in our region.

On our campus, my colleague Anna Klobucka started organizing workshops on Portuguese language education in 2002, with the support of Camões, I.P. and the Consulate of Portugal in New Bedford. In 2006 I took over the organization of these events, which still happen regularly. I also developed a course sequence designed specifically for heritage learners which was first offered in 2009-10 and ran for several years. However, a decline in overall enrollments at the university made that sequence untenable. Currently, enrollment is by far the biggest challenge we face. While our graduate program has many more applicants than we can offer assistantships to, our undergraduate program has seen the number of students dwindle. For several years, we have offered online asynchronous Portuguese language courses, which attracts students from all over the United States. In 2023 we started accepting applications to an online certificate in Portuguese language and cultures, which so far has enrolled quite a few more students than we initially expected. While the online offerings help our program, they too have been affected by the demographic changes that have impacted enrollment in colleges and universities around the country.

Even facing many challenges at the undergraduate level, our department still has a robust graduate program. I have been fortunate to oversee ten PhD dissertations and six MA theses so far, as well as take part in fifteen thesis or dissertation committees from both U.S. and Brazilian universities. Working with graduate students has given me the opportunity to learn more about many different topics, from the application of the noticing hypothesis to Portuguese pronunciation by learners to designing online materials for Portuguese language courses; from communication strategies in online courses to dynamic assessment of young heritage learners; and so much more. I have presented papers with several graduate students and one such partnership has been particularly fruitful: since 2015, Cristiane Soares and I have been working on aspects related to gender in Portuguese. We started looking at the production of grammatical gender by different groups of Portuguese language learners. That line of research evolved to issues related to (non)binary gender and our most recent work, a co-edited book published by Routledge in 2024, discusses inclusiveness in teaching Romance languages.

It is always a pleasure to work with graduate students and learn with and from them about their chosen topic; it is a privilege to witness these younger colleagues find positions in higher ed and in schools where they follow our footsteps and disseminate the love for our language and our cultures. Some of our graduates (BA, MA, MAT—Master of Arts in Teaching—and PhD) are now Portuguese language instructors both at the college level and in schools. With the increase in bilingual/dual language programs in the U.S. (and their resurgence in Massachusetts since 2017) and the continued need for language classes in schools, students who graduate with a degree in Portuguese may not only pursue a career in education, but often be able to choose which school they wish to work at. I am often contacted by school administrators looking for Portuguese language teachers, which means that our students will most likely be able to find a job when they graduate. I am thus optimistic about the future of Portuguese in the U.S.: with public and private schools offering the language, with bilingual/dual language programs in different parts of the country, and with community schools serving children of immigrants, I feel encouraged about the prospects for a language that has been in the U.S. since at least the 17th century. However, I would encourage everyone who wishes to work with Portuguese in the United States to learn Spanish as well. While many schools have been looking for Portuguese teachers, several still want to hire someone who can teach both languages. That is also the case in many, if not most, colleges and universities around the country. I am not the only one who started her career teaching Portuguese and Spanish; many of our colleagues around the country still do. Therefore, graduate students who specialize in Portuguese language and/or its related cultures and literatures would do well to learn Spanish.

Younger colleagues starting their careers as instructors of Portuguese language and related literatures and cultures may benefit from technological advances that many in my generation (me included) have not fully kept up with. For example, instead of thinking of AI as an opportunity for students to plagiarize, younger colleagues should familiarize themselves with AI tools that can help them prepare classes, create engaging activities and provide opportunities for students to develop their linguistic and cultural abilities more readily. For educators in less commonly taught languages such as Portuguese, it is important to understand the opportunities that recent technologies such as (but not only) AI can bring to both instructors and students. For a language, such as Portuguese, that is associated with different cultures around the globe, smart use of AI and other technologies will aid in presenting and practicing the diversity that characterizes speakers of this beautiful language. The future of Portuguese in the U.S. appears to be full of possibilities waiting to be embraced by younger colleagues who are beginning now.



CRISTIANE SOARES

Harvard University

“Dear, this is too hard”: The journey of a Portuguese Teacher in the United States

I vividly remember my grandma’s words when I started college to pursue a degree in Portuguese: “Dear, this is too hard!” The oldest daughter of German immigrants living in Brazil, she witnessed her parents’ struggle to learn Portuguese. German was the only language spoken by the family at her childhood home and the preferred language of the elderly members of the community in the little town in Rio Grande do Sul where she lives and where I grew up. Fluent in her parents’ dialect, she would tell me, many times in her life, about her inability to speak “Brazilian” well. My grandma quit school when she was 12 to take care of her sick stepmother and two younger siblings. German, however, seemed to be natural to her.

It was with great excitement that in sixth grade I received the news that my school was starting a German language program. I enrolled thinking I would finally be able to talk to my grandma in a language in which she felt completely confident to speak. I took a couple of years of German but was never able to have a conversation with my grandma. For some mysterious reason, the language I learned in school was not the same language I heard at home. She would try but could never figure out the right answers in my textbook. I would try but could barely say a few sentences to her in German. On one occasion, I asked my teacher why that happened. He explained my grandmother and her parents spoke a dialect that, in many instances, was not very “adequate”; it was too distant from the language we learned from the book. My conversation skills would flourish with time, he guaranteed, but, at that moment, it was imperative to learn grammar.

I quit German in eighth grade and never went back. Why learn a language if I am not able to speak it, especially to those who make the language meaningful to me? My grandma agreed, but I could see the sadness in her eyes. I believe this experience taught my grandma she could not speak “proper” German

either. I know it certainly made me believe I was not fit to learn foreign languages, a feeling I still carry with me today. Later, however, it would serve me as a reminder of what the learning (and teaching) of a foreign language should never feel like.

Between my experience as a German learner and my first year in college, I was fortunate to have wonderful teachers who taught me to love language and literature. So, in 1995, I started my degree in linguistics and Brazilian literature at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). After graduation, in 1999, I was accepted into the master's program in Brazilian literature at UFRGS and started to teach at public schools in Porto Alegre. Then, after studying Paulo Freire throughout my graduation and having had the privilege of seeing him speak in person, I had the opportunity to enter a classroom that used Freire's method to literate adults. Some of our youngest students were homeless teenagers who had never had the chance to go to school. Others were middle-aged and seniors who had to leave school early in life to help provide for their families. In that classroom, I had some of the most gratifying experiences in my professional life. I still remember the watering eyes of a 67-year-old student who told me that, that day, for the first time, he was able to read the name of the bus he had taken for 40 years. In that classroom, I realized the impact of teaching and, more specifically, the impact that learning a language can have on one's life.

In 2000, my life took an unexpected turn. I met my then-boyfriend, now husband, and fell in love. He was finishing his master's degree in Boston and had plans to stay for another year. So, in 2001 I quit my job and requested a leave of absence from my master's program to join him for six, maybe twelve months in Boston. (We always come to stay only a year!) That was my first chance to explore the world and I jumped at the opportunity with open arms and an (almost) empty pocket. I arrived on September 1, ten days before the 9/11 attacks. Living in the United States at that time was chaotic, to say the least, for everyone. For foreigners, it was frightening, unsafe, and surreal. I was staying on a tourist Visa, I didn't speak English, and we barely had money to pay the rent. But despite the tumultuous times, we got married, my husband found a job, and we decided to stay. In 2002, I began a process to change my Visa status and officially became an immigrant in the United States. Due to changes to the immigration laws at the time and the intensification of the scrutiny procedures that resulted from the terrorist attacks, a process that supposedly would take a year took four. I started to take ESL classes, but the only jobs I could find were those that didn't require English. So, I started working at Brazilian hair salons, first at the front desk, later learning how to do nails and waxing. That job was going to help me pay for my master's degree four years later. I was also proofreading Brazilian newspapers, and, between those two works, I was able to immerse myself in the Brazilian community in Boston, learn about its dynamics and struggles, and meet some of the community leaders with whom I still work today.

I am very grateful for those years. I truly believe they helped to shape the professional I am today, but I desperately wanted to go back to school, to teach and to learn. My first challenge was to educate myself about graduate programs in American universities and how the licensing for teachers worked here. I had no idea where to start, so for a couple of hours every day my homework was to search online trying to understand what was possible for someone like me. I quickly realized I could not afford an out-of-state

tuition (nor the in-state tuition, to be honest), so I had no other choice but to wait for my residency status. Waiting was difficult, but even worse was not being able to understand how I could continue my education: Would a Brazilian undergrad degree be valid in the US? How could I have my diploma evaluated? Who would be willing to give me an academic recommendation if no one knew me here? How could I afford a master's program? Was going back to the classroom as a learner or a teacher even possible for me?

After months and countless hours, a stroke of good luck: In 2005, I found a master's degree in Applied Linguistics at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. That program spoke to my heart; maybe by learning more deeply about language acquisition, I would be able to understand my struggles as a language learner. Finally, in August I attended one of the department's open houses and learned I could take classes as a non-degree student. Plus, due to the great influx of Brazilian immigrants and Portuguese-speaking students at public schools then, Massachusetts was offering Title III funding for Portuguese teachers. I took two classes as a non-degree student and, a year later, was accepted into the program at UMass-Boston. It was in that program that I would finally understand what I experienced decades before as a German learner. Language is identity. Language is power. Language is also a social construct embedded in history and culture. Language informs the way we understand the world and the way the world understands us. In Gloria Anzaldúa's uncontested words, we are our language ("I am my language"). As language teachers, we should never forget that. My education and career were finally moving in the right direction.

In 2006, I was hired as a teacher's assistant at Olá, a two-way bilingual program in English/ Portuguese at King Open School, in Cambridge, MA. There I taught preschool and kindergarten children, many of whom had Portuguese as their native or heritage language. Then, in 2008, another fortunate turn of events. One of my colleagues at King Open School told me about a teachers' training workshop for Portuguese teachers at Harvard University. Led and organized by our late and dear colleague Dr. Clémence Jouët-Pastré, this workshop would be much more than professional training to me. That day, I met three lovely people who would help me change the path of my career. Clémence, with her care and generosity, embraced and supported me as I am sure, she had done with many of you who are reading these pages now. That day, I also met two other wonderful women: my dear friends Dr. Gláucia Silva, who would become my PhD advisor at UMass- Dartmouth in 2013 and with whom I continue to collaborate in many projects to this date, and Dr. Célia Bianconi, who ultimately made my career as a college instructor and program coordinator possible. I vividly remember Célia telling me about the scarcity of Portuguese instructors to teach at college and asking me to call her when I finished my master's degree. That was exactly what I did and, luckily for me again, Célia was leaving the Portuguese program she had started two years prior at Tufts University to take a position at Boston University. I was hired to teach at Tufts in January 2010, where I stayed for 10 years as an instructor and Portuguese coordinator. In 2021, I joined Harvard as a senior preceptor and Portuguese coordinator at the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, the same position previously held by Clémence when I first met her.

I wanted to share these personal accounts because I feel my trajectory as a Portuguese teacher, starting with my grandma, has been an experience of sorority, and because I am forever grateful for these and many other women who have paved the way before me and who continue this journey with me

today. In that same sense, I share my trajectory as a teacher and an immigrant in the United States hoping it will help Portuguese teachers out there who want to go back to the profession but don't think they can do it or don't know where to start. Reach out, find your sisterhood, and look for opportunities that might be available to you where you are.

My earliest experiences as a foreign language learner and teacher were not easy, but they truly made me the professional I am today. I will never forget the disillusion my grandma and I shared when I was young. For that reason, every time I start a new semester, a new course, or when I meet a new group of students, I am committed to creating a safe and welcoming environment where every person learns. My purpose is to ensure that my students, especially heritage speakers of Portuguese (and their families consequently), never share my grandmother's experience or mine. In my 15 years teaching Portuguese in the United States, I have seen students learning Portuguese because they want to impact the world, because they want to be able to speak to their families and loved ones, because they want to be part of a culture they appreciate and value, and because they recognize that any language has its place in the world. They want to learn Portuguese so any Portuguese speaker will never feel ashamed of their native or heritage language. They learn Portuguese because they have decided they also want this language and its culture to be theirs. Therefore, every time I create a new course, start a new semester, or meet a group of students for the first time, my goal is that they will leave my classroom feeling part of that community, feeling proud about what they can do with the knowledge they have attained. My goal is that they will leave feeling and seeing themselves as Portuguese speakers.

I chose not to talk about the many difficulties we face daily as Portuguese teachers and program directors in the United States- I am sure other wonderful chapters in this book will address these struggles. The fight to keep our programs existing, to get new positions or new programs in our school's districts, and the tortuous path to get degrees and licenses to teach Portuguese are real and constant. My grandma was right: Portuguese, especially teaching it, is hard. What my grandma didn't know is that we are definitely not alone. Portuguese will not leave the United States anytime soon, if ever! And we and our students need you!



PATRICIA SOBRAL

Brown University

My Inheritance: A Lifetime of Teaching and Learning

My dad would come home every week with his pockets sprinkled with clouds of white. As a child, I thought the white puffs were magical fairy dust. I didn't realize how magical they were until I saw my dad teaching a classroom full of engineering students at a Brazilian university over five decades ago. I was hooked. Something happened between the students, my dad, and the love of learning. At that age, I had no idea I would become an educator and teach in the United States. Still, I knew I wanted to be part of a community of learners. Exactly how and in what capacity remained to be seen.

I got my chance in Brazil during my last year of high school. A wonderful person in Campinas, who owned a language school, allowed me to teach English. I had a course supervisor who spent three hours with me every Monday afternoon reviewing each class activity and discussing its purpose. I taught on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. My parents had to drop me off and pick me up because I didn't have a driver's license yet, but that didn't matter. I just wanted to teach.

Thus began my journey. My path was rarely straight, yet it makes perfect sense in hindsight. I started my college career in economics at Unicamp in Brazil, attending the required courses for my major and participating in various classes and lectures outside my field of study. I was transfixed during a memorable lecture led by Paulo Freire. We sat in the aisles, leaned against the walls, and absorbed every word. I can't recall if it was during this lecture or others that I was privileged to attend when I heard Freire say, "If one day you walk into the classroom and don't feel that combination of excitement and trepidation, stop teaching. Do something else. Your time is up." Every year, I enter the classroom and check for that excitement and trepidation; thus far, they remain. Therefore, I continue teaching.

In January 1984, I transferred to a college in the United States and changed my major five times. I have always been interested in the humanities, exploring languages (Russian, French, and a bit of Italian), literature (anything and everything!), anthropology, human development and family ecology, and education. I took courses that intrigued me, spending at least one semester or more deeply immersed in those subjects.

The university finally informed me that I had to graduate. I sighed because I only wanted to keep reading, writing, and taking courses. Graduate school would allow me to continue this pursuit. Equally important—or even more so—was the opportunity to step into a classroom and teach again. My heart raced at the thought. The university would give me access to an extraordinary library, offer a mouth-watering selection of courses, and provide a classroom filled with curious and eager students. I felt like I was in heaven, which hasn't changed since my first day in a college classroom.

I earned an M.A. in Comparative Literature and a Ph.D. in Portuguese and Brazilian Studies. During my graduate years, I taught every semester, covering language, literature, and culture, often in the summer as well. Each teaching experience allowed me to learn from other instructors and my students, helping me develop my teaching practices. I have maintained a student mindset beyond graduate school by frequently taking classes that enrich my teaching. Being in the student role enables me to recognize my students' challenges, as I sometimes struggle to understand or lack the vocabulary to express my confusion. Staying connected to the student experience is essential since we teach Portuguese exclusively in the target language from day one. The Portuguese language presents an initial barrier and signifies the journey students undertake to learn it and become culturally competent—our ultimate goal. This perspective has prompted me to reflect on my pedagogy continuously, expand my teaching methods, and enhance my awareness.

While the joy of teaching remains unchanged, teaching Portuguese and Brazilian studies—whether in the United States or elsewhere—requires significant effort. Many educators must justify the importance of teaching a language other than English and convince others that Portuguese is valuable. Substantial barriers exist for teaching non-English languages in the United States, making Portuguese instruction quite challenging. Regardless of the number of students in our classrooms, we continue to teach Portuguese. Our passion for education and our role as ambassadors of Portuguese-speaking cultures are crucial for connecting with these cultures.

To support Portuguese teaching in the U.S., I have co-written several textbooks and frequently led workshops on arts integration, language acquisition, and cultural comprehension at various institutions both across the country and abroad. These workshops help instructors reshape their teaching practices to suit their educational contexts. They also connect educators to a larger community of Portuguese instructors, enabling them to reach out to each other and engage in meaningful conversations about teaching methods. I always respond with an enthusiastic "yes" when asked to lead a workshop because I value my time with educators and learn from them.

Teaching and learning are interconnected. The Welsh word "dysgu" (pronounced "dusk-ee") encompasses both concepts, allowing learners and educators to engage in dual roles. This approach

transforms the classroom into a space that embraces the constantly changing dynamics of teaching and learning from one another.

My courses incorporate two interconnected narrative threads: community building and the arts. Creating an environment where students can collaborate is essential to my teaching practice. To learn together, we must unite as a community. Building and maintaining this community throughout the semester is vital for learning and for students to feel a sense of belonging. Classes are sacred spaces that offer everyone an equitable seat at the table.

We all teach and learn content in exciting, innovative ways. However, there are many ways to access content today. I want students to take away more than just the content; I want the experience of being together and focusing on learning to stay with them. This experience matters and holds lasting significance beyond the verbs they learn to conjugate and the complex texts they read, as it is essential for individuals and the community. Imagine if they could carry the experience of being in a sacred space beyond the classroom walls and their time at university. In my vision of education, this is the heart of the educational experience that influences their lives and the lives of those they encounter in professional and other settings. Ultimately, the lasting impact of this experience is what truly matters.

The other narrative thread in my courses is the arts. I began focusing on the performing arts and soon realized that visual and literary arts also belong in the language and culture classroom. In 2005, I taught "Performing Brazil: Theater, Language, and Culture" for the first time. Students in the course wrote their plays in Portuguese and produced, directed, and acted in them. The class became a think tank for arts integration, language acquisition, and cultural understanding. Many students from that class have worked in community-based organizations and the education field. When I teach the course, students write 10-minute plays; each student produces and directs one play while acting in several others. At the end of the semester, we invite our university community to the 10-minute Portuguese Play Festival. If I have ten students, we have ten plays; if I have twelve students, we have twelve plays. Everyone's original play is staged.

Since 2005, I have moved beyond the performing arts. Students in our Portuguese courses also engage with visual, literary, and digital arts. The arts play a significant role in our lives; therefore, teaching students Portuguese through object creation, creative writing, and performance makes sense. This pedagogical approach helps them embody the language and culture, enhancing their understanding of their identity within the culture they acquire through creative assignments and projects.

My courses integrate community building and the arts in various ways. It is essential to build and maintain a community in each class. Students form a learning community, supporting one another throughout the semester and often beyond. They collaborate on projects in Portuguese, which helps them learn about themselves and each other. My teaching practice incorporates universal design, backward design, project-based learning, and experiential learning. These practices occur within a relationship-rich educational culture (see "Relationship-Rich Education" by Peter Felton and Leo Lambert). Assessments are often project-based, experiential, and untimed, allowing students to engage in diverse and transformative learning experiences.

It seems odd to articulate my experiences teaching Portuguese and Brazilian Studies at the college level without including student voices. The following student, Chelsea Sokolow, from the class of 2011.5, encapsulates my ever-evolving teaching practice over the last three decades in her own words.

"I have been thinking about you recently and reflecting on my time in your classes many times since graduation. I may have mentioned this before, but my experiences in your classes were the most impactful of any I took at the university. Over the years, I regularly reflect on why that is the case. Beyond the intellectual, creative, and social engagement, which was plentiful, what truly impacted me was the quality of the relationships you built with your students and the encouragement you gave us to build connections with one another. I remember how much you invited us to engage somatically, to be present in our bodies as well as our minds. One significant aspect that continues to stick with me is the feeling, within your classroom, that I was (we were) held in unassailable high regard.

From my perspective, this nurtured creativity, growth, and learning while inviting playful challenges without shame. This classroom experience should not be a radical concept. Through this bright, inviting, creative, and delightful relational experience, I felt so free and empowered to learn, play around, experiment, make mistakes, and learn from them. It was the most collaborative, creative, and least competitive academic environment where I thrived the most. Those experiences were fundamental in shaping my worldview, political convictions, and personal theory of sociocultural change. Along with meaning-making from the experience, I developed a rock-solid foundation in Portuguese in a relatively short time. I never could have anticipated how important that would be." (Chelsea Sokolow, class of 2011.5)

Chelsea Sokolow took several of my courses while in college. The message above is from an email sent in July 2024, so it has been over a decade since Chelsea and I last shared a classroom. A relationship-rich education is vital to the experiences Chelsea describes and has lasting power. Students are more than just brains walking across campus and into our classrooms; they enter the classroom daily with their whole selves—their histories, dreams, trials, anxieties, and joys. We must commit to creating a teaching and learning environment that supports students as complete individuals, giving them room to grow and develop in a sacred space. These experiences take root, stay with students, and unexpectedly influence their lives. They remember how it felt to be in the classroom, which holds immense significance and lasting impact. More of Paulo Freire's words come to mind: *Eu nunca poderia pensar em educação sem amor. É por isso que eu me considero um educador: acima de tudo porque eu sinto amor.*

These words are on a drawing of Paulo Freire that a student gave me nearly two decades ago. It sits in my office, constantly reminding me of a pedagogical practice carried out with love.

A relationship-rich education requires time spent with students, both inside and outside the classroom. Much of my time is dedicated to discussing their envisioned futures beyond university. I also join them in their spaces. I've been invited to attend ultimate frisbee matches, plays, dance performances, basketball games, senior honors thesis defenses, and countless other moments from their lives outside

the classroom—sometimes many years after graduation. Being present during these moments is essential; it allows me to see them in different contexts, enriching our conversations. After graduation, I have met with students in Brazil, Portugal, Mozambique, the Azores, Ecuador, Ireland, Cyprus, and many states in the U.S., thanks to the bonds we created and the community we formed. I am fortunate to maintain connections with students for decades after graduation. Our ongoing conversations cover new career paths, family life, and professional life balance, and we always enjoy a good meal together. Our commitment to students lasts throughout life. Perhaps that is why I am still in touch with my 3rd-grade teacher from Brazil. I can still feel what it was like to be in her classroom as an 8-year-old—a magical, enduring experience. When we establish strong bonds, it leads to a mutual commitment, which I both receive and give equally.

I receive exceptional support from my university. Over the years, I have obtained funding for research, teaching, and learning, including developing new courses and furthering my education. I have had opportunities to attend conferences, take classes, and collaborate with other faculty members. The people at my institution are open to new ideas and willing to collaborate across disciplines. This support has allowed me to continuously reshape and enhance my teaching and learning practices.

Many years ago, during a conversation with a recent graduate, I discussed how I differentiate between a job and work. You can and should have many jobs throughout your life, which should be as varied as possible. Some jobs help you pay the bills, while others contribute to your development or allow you to read for hours (my favorite job in college!). Each job has its reason, time, and place in your life, but a job is different from work. What is work? Or, as I say, what is your life's work? It's something you do with your whole being, fully immersive. While it can change over the years, whatever you are fully engaged in is your work. What is my life's work? The answer slides off my tongue—teaching, learning, advising, and mentoring. I am grateful to be involved in my life's work and for the sacred spaces, shared community, and relationship-rich experiences I have had over the past several decades. May this gift, this dádiva, continue to be present. Lastly, to all my students, both past and present, I extend my heartfelt gratitude for everything you have given me throughout the years since I first stepped into a classroom. Thank you.



SÍLVIA
RAMOS
SOLLAI

California State University -
Stanislaus

Teaching Language and Deconstructing Stereotypes

I like to think that teaching chose me, not the other way around. I was only 13 years old when I started teaching English at a school named after what was (and still is, unfortunately) believed to be the suitable, culturally expected color for girls and the color for boys. So much for a language school as a cultural product! No one can deny *Pink and Blue* was a highly illustrative way of making a genderizing statement back in the day. Neither lessons like the one on Mother's Day always depicting a woman with a tear rolling down her right eye in a very stereotypical dress and an apron nor the highly heteronormative color-coded school name make any sense, even then. I feel compelled to mention that it was early 1980's, when such cultural practices were rarely questioned. Yet, it is naïve and irresponsible not to acknowledge the fact that our class dynamics are not free from evolving around social conventions still today, reason I choose to plan classes with the mindset that humanity is a (de)constructive continuum of making role assumptions, learning from mistakes, questioning hierarchy, and going back to prescribing roles. Surely, this was rather intuitive decades ago, but I have turned this and the next empirical evidence I am about to share into optimization protocols to embrace diversity.

It was the beginning of the end of the dictatorship in Brazil. Times were harsh. However, as a typical household of *retirantes nordestinos* who left the barrenness of the drought in pursuit of life betterment twenty years before, this was a no-brainer for my parents. After all, my dad had outlived a 2-day bus ride from João Pessoa to São Paulo in the baggage compartment, and my mom had started cleaning houses at the age of 6. In our quiet, middle-class existence, we only needed to cut down anything superfluous and to keep on leading our mediocre, no-questions-asked, anarchy-free lives. My English course was the first one to go. I was devastated. 'Better safe than sorry. At some point, they may say that a girl wanting

to study that much can only be for subversive purposes, blah, blah, blah', my parents pleaded. 'Who's they, anyways?', I kept thinking.

Somehow, I managed to break the news that I would not be able to continue my course. Instead, the owner offered me an assistantship in exchange for my tuition. She asked if I could help around the kindergarteners' class with coloring their books, and practicing cursive handwriting (a big thing, back in the day). I was in seventh heaven! It did not matter whether we were just another family trying to make ends meet. I felt special, I was chosen. To be able to play school regularly and make some money out of it was the best thing that could happen to me. I took it very seriously. I spent my whole first salary on fondant-filled cookies. The rest is history: I worked for that very same school for the next twenty years of my life. There, I had my first mentor, my model role, and a visionary. Her school offered technology-enhanced classes before anyone else did. We had a language lab with individual booths, and tape recorders eventually replaced by PCs. The children could start studying English at the age of 4! The day she brought a couple of TV sets with built-in VCRs from a trip to Orlando was a major event. Together with the *Sing Along* series and animated movies with English subtitles we used in class, we always had a blast. We got to be known as the novel school with very, very popular prices. Something simply unheard of. The closest thing was our rich cousin, the competitor school in some fancy neighborhood that cost an arm and a leg. Faculty and staff were often offered career development courses and study-abroad opportunities.

The enduring evidence from past experiences applied into my current teaching is that Portuguese retention is a synonym of sustainability. My first boss always said, 'if they learn something, fine. If they pick up a nursery rhyme, even better. If not, that is fine too. Each learner has their own pace. The most important thing is to have them like our school, to feel welcomed here, so they come back. After all, they are 4-, 5- or 7-year-olds, whose parents are spending money and time on an extra-curricular activity.' The same happens to our Portuguese as a critical/less commonly taught language US reality: our jobs are chronically vulnerable. Our classes are constantly prone to be cancelled as the minimum number of students to form a group keeps on being increased unachievably. Whilst researching how to build a pipeline into higher education, implications have shown that a sustainable Portuguese education in the long run may be attainable if we pop the Latino student population bubble. We may grow steadily when we fine-tune our retention discourse to target beyond the Spanish as First or Second Language student population in a top-down approach, that is, local institutions counting on district and federal measures as a support network.

At some point in my life, I applied for a teaching position at one of the top schools in São Paulo and got the job. It was defiant and fresh at the same time. There too and today, I have had stellar mentors who believe in me unconditionally, but I felt like I need to brush up and learn more. Resuming studies at an adult age is nearly impossible. How is anyone able to reduce working hours, stop making an income, and become a student again after 30 years teaching? I could not care less about the fact that I was completely outdated, academia-wise. Well, until someone called me 'the other late student' standing in line for registration. Ouch, that sounded ageist. I confess I did not get it until a native speaker of English cleared the air. One more time, I simply brushed it off my shoulder and went about doing my things.

I was determined to ace at graduate school. I am obstinate. Determination combined with a supportive partner put me back on a learner's seat for the next eleven years.

Every now and then in my career, I wonder if I am too sure of my teaching. I need to be constantly put to the test. I may have had the privilege of starting to work at something I love at an early age. Nonetheless, I have always been fully aware that my skills must be questioned somehow. I learn from being challenged. I thrive from keeping on being humble and open to new views. So, I am always looking for opportunities or exploring options to be challenged - be it my Master's Degree, the invitation to pursue my Doctorate here in the US, or the chance to show off some effective inclusion of foundation models into my teaching at California State University, such as ChatGPT, GPT, DALL-E, Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, GitHub Copilot, and Diffit, with which I design accessible, relevant, and authentic class material as well as research sources for relatability and interculturality for remote Pluricentric Portuguese as World Language courses.

The less I know about how to get through something successfully in the classroom, the more excited I am. I often feel lame and feeble too. I have found myself in numerous episodes when the impostor syndrome simply kicked in badly when I just wondered if I am unfit to teach. Don't get me wrong: this has nothing to do with teaching *per se*, assessing language skills, aligning teaching competencies, focusing on performance-based instruction and proficiency-oriented targets, yada yada. My most recent memory of a massive failure as a Portuguese teacher was when I developed what I call 'high school classroom phobia caused by the lack of exposure to viral posts', or 'the cringe vibes', for short. It is that feeling of knowing it is a question of time until I put myself into a predicament for not having any influencer media value (IMV), the infamous ROI in business.

Just like you and any other fighter, I may not have the slightest idea how I am going to sort out something. I take chances, I fail. Then, I research, I stay up for endless hours of study, and I figure it out partially or entirely. That is how it felt during the pandemic times, the first inclusion of artificial intelligence tools in class, and whichever difficulty we face next. We make it work at top quality level because we accept no less than grade A. My teaching assistantship at Florida State University, under the supervision of Dr. Peggy Sharpe, taught me that interculturality and relatability work as a rapport tool for my learners. I craft my lessons to promote harmonious communication. My classes are tailored with diverse audiences in mind. Foundational to diversity inclusion is equity-mindedness curriculum design. I advocate for social justice-oriented foreign language education, in which teachers bring in marginal voices to cultivate a sense of intellectual responsibility in every phase of the teaching-learning process.

The genuine experience of working as a K-6 Portuguese curriculum specialist at the Portuguese Acquisition Linkages (PAL) Project at University of Georgia equipped me with collaborative authorship skills. After conducting a mixed-method survey with 117 K-12 schools, I located 10,000 students receiving Portuguese instruction nationwide. After coding and analyzing data on material selection, professional development, capstone courses, participants' biodata, language and culture integration, and technology in class, we created replicable curricula frameworks for Portuguese Year 1 with unit themes and sample maps based on the survey results. We shared our findings online so that everyone has unrestricted access. PAL's third deliverable was to train teachers from various regions in the US to

pilot the curriculum that aimed at preparing students to reach ACTFL Intermediate Mid to Advanced Low proficiency levels. Finally, the fourth deliverable was to recruit undergraduate students for the Portuguese Flagship Program.

On top of my duties as a translator at Duolingo, I was also responsible for checking the quality of the original sentences, accuracy, tone and cultural appropriateness of the translations, taking into account not only the Brazilian audience but also those from other Portuguese-speaking countries, which represented a small share of our client base in the English-to-Portuguese speaker course, but it granted pluricentric representation and inclusivity. I was always committed to delivering quality content for every client, and to doing so in a timely fashion. I also performed a number of technical processes such as proofreading certain kinds of sentences that followed a special set of guidelines aligned with the Common European Framework of References for Languages. Out of our own volition, teachers of Portuguese face daily difficulties and the need to enhance the quality of outdated texts, or to supply shortage in authentic material.

My most significant takeaway in the aftermath times of health and civic reconstruction is that only equitable education can help us restore diplomacy, and foster dialogue about underrepresentation. I dedicate my life to advocating for cultural humility, equity-minded curriculum, and tolerance towards ambiguity in Pluricentric Portuguese Language Education and Lusophone Culture classes and beyond. Having an opportunity like this one to share my narrative with you is also a way to revisit backward design approaches more closely by revisiting my overarching goals, planning for collecting corroborating evidence, and developing purposeful instructional samples.

Starting with purposefully designing for equity to critically rethinking privilege positions, equity-minded pedagogy legitimates minority representation within the group. I encourage investigation of the world beyond one's immediate environment, and recognition of others' perspectives. Education must always empower. According to the dictionary Merriam-Webster (2024), the term humility means "freedom from pride or arrogance: the quality or state of being humble." Inherent to being culturally humble is our acceptance of being limited, in the sense of being ignorant, more constantly uninformed. This continuing openness to cultural humility is a lifelong learning process of addressing underrepresentation, fighting power imbalances, and modeling institutional principles of equity. As an educator, it is in my hands to address such needs in the curricula.



ANA C. THOME WILLIAMS

Northwestern University

Teaching Portuguese as Planting Trees: Cultivating Roots, Bearing Fruit, and Sowing New Seeds

It is always necessary to look back to understand our choices, our preparation, and the enthusiasm that guided us to teach a language. In doing so, we realize that if we have borne fruit in our journey, it is because we germinated from a seed that fell on fertile soil. As teacher-planters, it is up to us to continue this cycle. I have been teaching Portuguese in the U.S. for almost 25 years, with the last 17 years at Northwestern University. Before that, I coordinated the Portuguese course at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and started the Portuguese program at the University of Louisville, Kentucky, where I also taught French and Linguistics. Reflecting on the beginning of my journey, I ask: what were the greatest challenges and accomplishments, and what are the plans still to be fulfilled? It is a valuable exercise to reflect on the path we have taken on this journey, where we sow to reap and reap to sow.

My story begins with the seed planted during my childhood by the influence of one woman, also a Portuguese teacher: my mother. From an early age, I was influenced by her, who, besides being an enthusiastic teacher, was an admirable poetry reciter. In her youth, poetry recitals were major events in the state of São Paulo, and she won several awards for her impeccable recitation. The sound, rhythm, and beauty of the Portuguese language constantly echoed from my ears to my heart. Like my mother, I developed a passion for languages, especially for teaching Portuguese. This inspired me to pursue a degree in Portuguese and French at the University of São Paulo, from which I graduated in the late 1980s. As soon as I graduated, I began teaching Portuguese to high school students at the Colégio Batista Brasileiro.

My enthusiasm for language education led me to found, in 1989, the “Centro de Estudo de Línguas do Colégio Batista Brasileiro” (CEL-CBB), where I served as director and taught French, English, and Portuguese as a foreign language until 2000. In 1993, I completed my Master’s in Linguistics at USP, focusing on foreign language teaching. From 1995 to 2000, I had the great pleasure of teaching French at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP). Both at PUC and CEL-CBB, I also organized numerous academic and cultural activities, research, and created various courses for university students, pre-university students, children, and the elderly.

In 2000, I got married and moved to the United States. At that time, I was pursuing my Ph.D. in Linguistics at USP, focusing on cross-cultural communication between French and Portuguese in soccer broadcasting on radio and TV. Moving to a new country and starting over wasn’t an easy decision. However, I was confident that with determination and perseverance, I could once again find a place at a university in my new home. Teaching Portuguese would not only help me stay connected to my roots but also allow me to nurture them. This commitment transformed the seed that had germinated years ago into a thriving tree, capable of providing shade and bearing fruit.

In 2001, while living in Louisville, Kentucky, and teaching French at the local Alliance Française, I was delighted by the opportunity to start the Portuguese program at the University of Louisville. The university experience I had gained in Brazil allowed me to navigate the academic reality of the United States. Three years later, having completed my Ph.D., I was ready to broaden my horizons by taking on the role of Coordinator of the Portuguese Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where I served for an additional three years. In 2007, I accepted the offer to teach Portuguese at Northwestern University. Today, after more than a decade and a half at this esteemed institution, I have reaped some rewards of my dedication. Throughout my career at the university, I have achieved the highest rank, “Professor of Instruction”, and currently I serve as the Director of the Portuguese Language Program.

The career of a university professor of Portuguese in the U.S. is both stimulating and challenging. In addition to a primary focus on teaching—which requires regularly updating pedagogical projects, conducting constant material reviews, attending conferences, and preparing engaging classes—it is essential to create visibility and generate ongoing interest in the language. To achieve this, professors must undertake a range of actions both within and outside the classroom, from raising funds for curricular initiatives to promoting frequent extracurricular and interdisciplinary activities, as well as establishing partnerships with regional and international institutions.

This effort demands significant time, dedication, and sacrifices, yet it is crucial for sustaining programs that often face high dropout rates, particularly in advanced courses. In the U.S., Portuguese is classified as a “LCTL” (Less Commonly Taught Language) due to the relatively low number of students studying it compared to other languages. Consequently, it is essential for teachers to promote language learning through dynamic and updated courses that not only attract students but also ignite a passion for continued education. While courses in Brazilian culture tend to be popular, Portuguese language courses do not always receive the same level of interest. Generating interest that encourages students to

transition from culture courses to language courses is a significant challenge. Many students pursue the language out of enjoyment or curiosity, but they may choose to drop the course at any time. This fluctuation in enrollment compels us to balance short-term administrative decisions with long-term educational goals, including the difficult choice of whether to maintain or cancel courses within the program. Therefore, it is essential to help students recognize the value of their language skills, which enrich not only their academic curriculum but also their professional careers and personal endeavors.

Enthusiating experiences in Portuguese can be provided through innovative and inspiring activities that could offer students unique opportunities. Brazil, Portugal, and the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa or Asia boast a rich and diverse cultural heritage that remains inaccessible without knowledge of the language. Emphasizing the cultural significance of these countries is critical. Moreover, proficiency in Portuguese is vital for breaking stereotypes and fostering authentic interactions with its speakers. When individuals acquire linguistic knowledge, everyone benefits. When seeds are sown, they can find fertile ground; let us sow them with care.

The seeds I have been planting aim to promote cultural and linguistic diversity with native speakers of the language. To this end, I often recruit university students from various regions of Brazil to serve as conversational partners for my students through online platforms. Through these connections, partners explore intercultural communication and discover how they can build bridges through shared knowledge. This project not only enhances language skills but also transforms partners into lifelong friends.

I frequently invite writers, artists, colleagues, and acquaintances from Brazil, Europe, and Africa to engage in dialogues with our students on Zoom. We have had the privilege of reading texts by the Cape Verdean awarded writer Fátima Bettencourt and then conversing with her directly, each from our respective countries. This opportunity was also extended to Brazilian indigenous writer Márcia Kambeba, Brazilian historian Paulo Rezzutti, and many others. Last year, we had the exceptional chance to interview Brazilian muralist Eduardo Kobra who, in between projects around the world, recorded a video answering questions of our students (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SK7lpnSbJSk>)

Northwestern University's location near a large city like Chicago enjoys a huge advantage. We can easily invite Brazilian musicians, writers, capoeiristas, and other talented artists and entrepreneurs from the diaspora to campus, offering our community an enriching and immersive experience in the diverse cultural traditions of Brazil.

It is important to let our students express themselves through language and art as well. They can practice Portuguese in a very original way. The "Poetry Project," where beginner students are encouraged to write poems based on their photographs of the campus during different seasons, showcases both their photographic and poetic talents. Learning should be fun. For instance, having students "invent" an object or device and then write an advertisement for it not only helps them practice using imperatives and other verb forms but also creates memorable, creative moments that make the learning process meaningful.

We explore short stories in Portuguese from different perspectives, analyze, dramatize, and rewrite them. We visit museums on campus or in the city and relate the art in the museum to language learning and writing. Advanced students write blogs, short stories, newsletters, and produce printed or digital booklets like this one, where they composed surrealistic stories illustrated by book trailers and images created by artificial intelligence: <https://issuu.com/anaclo/docs/encantamentos>.

Creative and unconventional activities help elevate the profile of language courses and inspire students in their learning. These initiatives are a cornerstone of our Portuguese programs. For nearly 12 years, we have collaborated with two other universities in Illinois, University of Chicago and Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, to promote the "Illinois Portuguese Language Connection," an annual event where students from all three institutions come together for a day of cultural program centered around a previously chosen theme. This major event requires extensive planning, promotion, and logistical coordination, including transportation, catering, and other details—especially when hosting a special guest. Last year, through a joint effort involving the participating universities, the Consulate of Brazil in Chicago, and Brazilian companies in both the U.S. and Brazil, we successfully raised funds to bring Chief Tapi Yawalapíti from the Upper Xingu to our campus. We also secured sponsorship from Copa Airlines, which provided round-trip tickets to Brazil for two students who won a video contest. Further details about this and previous events can be found on our website (<https://sites.google.com/view/xiiplc2024/home>). These projects are challenging but invaluable to students of Portuguese, offering them enriching, real-world cultural experiences.

Integrating cultural activities into the pedagogical framework for promoting Portuguese consistently yields positive results, despite challenges at various levels. Occasionally, one of these activities extends its impact further and lasts longer than expected—like a seed, carefully cultivated, that produces surprising and meaningful outcomes. One such example is what I will present next.

In the course "Port 202: Portuguese Reading and Writing", students are encouraged to explore the language by reading stories and crafting their own. Two years ago, I have developed the idea of organizing a book of stories that would involve the participation of adults and children from around the world. So, we read works by Brazilian authors who shared stories about their ancestors. These readings inspired the students to write their own stories, based on those passed down in their families.

The title chosen for the book effectively reflects its purpose: "What They Left for Us: The Lasting Power of Stories from Generation to Generation." Once the stories were completed, they were read by parents, grandparents, and other relatives of Portuguese-speaking children around the world. Inspired by these readings, the children illustrated the stories with colorful drawings. As a result, we received 17 illustrations from kids across the U.S., Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, and Mozambique.

After organizing, compiling, and printing the book, we hosted a launch event featuring a book signing. Attendees included our students, their friends, relatives, professors from various departments, the dean of the college, and notably, the Consul of Brazil in Chicago. On the day of the launch, we dedicated the book sales to the Brazilian NGO "Salvar Vale." This NGO cares for children in extreme vulnerability in

the Vale do Ribeira in São Paulo and provides them with schooling. We also held an online launch with the presence of the authors, the child illustrators, their tutors, the director of Salvar Vale, and other guests. It was a very inspiring moment.

The Portuguese language acted as a bridge between our students and Portuguese-speaking families worldwide. We enhanced this connection by turning the project into a fundraising initiative for children in need. The books were sent to the NGO “Salvar Vale” in Brazil, which subsequently shared videos of their students reading the stories. The project grew to encompass much more than we had anticipated. Learning the language became a transformative experience, impacting not only the students but also the children and the families involved. The seeds we planted here soon blossomed. As one can see on this link: <https://sites.google.com/view/oquedeixaram/home>

Teaching Portuguese always motivates us to seek opportunities that can, in turn, create further expectations for personal or professional growth, both for those who teach and those who learn. Thus, I have undertaken many academic projects. The question I always ask myself when starting a project is: What is the objective of this particular project? And what is its reach? The reach is always related to the ultimate goal: effective communication in Portuguese. And this is not confined to the classroom; rather, it exists within an infinite spectrum, capable of generating a variety of positive outcomes that extend far beyond our expectations.

I will mention here some of the opportunities that I have sought, both for the students and the teacher. I have been working hard to encourage more students to study in Brazil and Portugal as part of the Minor Degree in Portuguese. When they go abroad, they return more enthusiastic and ready to engage even more through the language, often taking on leadership roles in the Portuguese student body.

We must also think of opportunities for partnerships, even with other languages. At Northwestern University, through the Council on Language Instruction (CLI), 19 foreign language programs work together. Of these, 11 are run by only one or two instructors and face many of the same situations we do in the Portuguese program. It is very important to establish joint projects that allow our students to interact with other students in different languages. Interdisciplinary opportunities foster new encounters to overcome similar obstacles. At the CLI, I co-organized a committee dedicated to LCTLs, fostering collaboration to address shared challenges, define common goals, and explore strategies for increasing program visibility. After several years as co-chair of this committee, I helped organize another committee which focused on outreach. In this committee, I proposed a Festival of Languages and Cultures to last an entire week during the spring. This festival allows us to promote cultural activities in Portuguese to all university students. Over the past two years, I have been an active member of the Language Curricula and Gender working group at the Buffett Institute for Global Affairs. Together, we have been implementing proactive strategies within our curricula to promote gender equity across the wide range of languages offered at Northwestern. Moreover, being part of a of Spanish and Portuguese department, we cannot miss opportunities to work together with these two sister languages. Most of our students know Spanish, and promoting joint activities has greatly benefited our program.

I am grateful to have reaped recognition from seeds planted in the past, including Northwestern's Excellence in Foreign Language Teaching Award (2014); the Portuguese University Professor of the Year Award for Excellence in Teaching Portuguese in the United States, granted by the American Organization of Teachers of Portuguese (2018); the Faculty Honor Roll by NU's Office of Undergraduate Research (2022); and the T. William Heyck Award (2023) for my commitment to fostering community and student learning. Yet, sowing remains necessary, as the work is ongoing and ever evolving.

We plant seeds because we are already the fruits, but when it comes to Portuguese, how do we cultivate more trees that will bear even greater fruit? The answer is related to the meaningfulness of our teaching. No one can plant or harvest alone, which is why my most important project will always be "building partnerships". I believe that collaborations—whether between colleagues, departments, schools, or external institutions, both academic and business-related—are essential to fostering innovation and opening new doors. Despite the obstacles and budget constraints we often face, we can still grow, blossom, and bear fruit, extending the impact and the scope of our Portuguese language programs.

With this in mind, I would like to share what may appear to be a very ambitious dream: that Portuguese programs become indispensable in their institutions, enabling students to fully achieve their aspirations. While the future may not resemble a forest, when roots intertwine, plants grow stronger and protect one another. For this reason, I must underscore the importance of collegiality among Portuguese language educators, particularly through these three North American organizations: the American Organization of Teachers of Portuguese; the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese; and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, which includes a Special Interest Group dedicated to Portuguese teachers. These institutions strengthen our community, facilitate the exchange of knowledge, support us in our challenges, and celebrate our achievements.

When new Portuguese teachers begin their careers, it is because the fruit is ripe for sowing. I congratulate the teachers who came before them. To the new teachers: never stop learning, for our journey of growth is continuous. Embrace new technologies rather than be intimidated by them. Be creative, and let challenges fuel your growth rather than discourage you. Most importantly, build connections—no one can cultivate a forest alone.



**TERESA
VALDEZ**

University of Rochester

My Journey as a Portuguese Language Instructor in the United States

My personal journey as a Portuguese instructor at a university in the United States is a path I never expected to walk when I first enrolled as an undergraduate student at the University of Lisbon. In fact, very few people know that my childhood dream was to become a veterinarian. However, after facing some setbacks, I decided to pursue my second passion: the Portuguese language.

Despite these challenges, my time as an undergraduate student at the University of Lisbon, and as a student in the Department of Portuguese Language and Culture, shaped my path to becoming an instructor of Portuguese. During my years as a student, I had the unique opportunity to teach Portuguese to immigrants arriving in Portugal from Eastern European countries for a private school in Lisbon that was striving to find ways to support the growing arrival of these citizens in search of a new life in Portugal. This classroom experience—where there was no shared language—was one of the most challenging but rewarding moments in my career.

These classes were taught at night to groups of people that mostly spoke Ukrainian, Russian, or Moldavian and with whom we couldn't connect in French or English, for instance, or for what it matters, in any of the languages we could speak. It was an experience that shaped me in my teaching methodologies and approaches in the classroom. Teaching in an immersive context where we relied solely on our ability to build understanding based on movement, images, and expression, was for many what we aim to achieve in a true immersion classroom but that it is so challenging to all, regarding the years of experience. In the early 2000s we didn't have access to technology that could support us in ways that

we have nowadays, and that was the true lesson of a lifetime: to succeed we needed to make use of every tool available for the classroom and work collaboratively between us and with those that had already some vocabulary or phrases to build understanding and fluency in Portuguese.

We were more than a group of people volunteering in a private local school to teach Portuguese to these people that oftentimes were desperate to find a job and start a life in a country that was totally unknown to them. Without noticing we rapidly became their support to essential services in the country, such as social security, department of labor, housing authorities, and local support organizations. If it wasn't for this experience, I wouldn't have discovered my passion for teaching Portuguese as a foreign language.

From a failed dream profession, to enrolling in a degree in a field that had always been a second passion to my current role in the U.S. wasn't something I had planned, it was the result of a series of fortunate events that led me here. That decision ultimately brought me to where I am today and where I have the privilege of sharing my love for this beautiful language with wonderful undergraduate students that at times have connections to a Portuguese-speaking country, but that more often than expected enroll in the course for a passion for the language that nothing has to do with their family roots.

After earning my undergraduate degree in Portuguese Language and Culture as a foreign, second language from the University of Lisbon, my first job was with Instituto Camões. I was given the opportunity of teaching Portuguese at the University of Rennes 2 in Rennes, France. As you can imagine, moving to a different country immediately after graduation is simultaneously a scary and marvelous experience.

My time in France teaching Portuguese and representing Instituto Camões, was a lifetime experience that taught many lessons regarding the role and relevance of the Portuguese language in the world and, in particular, within the French context. During my time at the Department of Portuguese at the University of Rennes 2, I had the opportunity to teach for the first time in an institution of higher education and to collaborate and learn from a experienced and kind group of faculty members. The history of the Department of Portuguese in this institution is vast and rich and it is reflected in the classes offered.

In my role at the University of Rennes 2 teaching Portuguese, I taught both language and cultural courses for the Portuguese department. The department was vibrant, and classes ranged for smaller groups for offerings for masters and specialization classes, to others where we filled a large classroom. Outside the classroom, the department was composed of wonderful faculty that guided me and with whom I learnt lessons that I carry with me until today. The students were highly motivated and came from diverse backgrounds, each with unique reasons for pursuing a degree in Portuguese. I recall that at the time we had several students that were pursuing a degree in Portuguese to attempt applying for a position as a Portuguese teacher after successful completion of the CAPES.

Alongside my volunteer experience teaching Portuguese during my undergraduate years, this experience allowed me to solidify my passion for teaching Portuguese, and for the first time, experience a different

teaching context, where the classrooms were a mix of heritage speakers with others that had different motivations to pursue a degree in Portuguese.

Upon returning to Portugal, I decided that it was time to experience something different while deciding the next steps in my career and academic life. I taught privately for a few years and had the opportunity to teach individuals in many different roles in Portugal that had a professional interest in the language. I also had the opportunity to teach in major companies and sport clubs that are iconic in the country, which allowed me to experience the role of teacher in a variety of settings that are uncommon to many.

It was during these years that I simultaneously decided it was time to go back to school and pursue my master's. I returned to my alma mater, the University of Lisbon, and focused on the study of textbooks published both in Portugal and in France for teaching Portuguese as a non-native language. Simultaneously, I was selected for a research grant project funded by FCT (Foundation for Science and Technology) for a European Portuguese Dictionary of Orthographic and Pronunciation, under the leadership of Professor Malaca Casteleiro. All these experiences and opportunities to explore and expand my abilities were fundamental for my personal and professional growth. Upon the successful completion of my master's at the University of Lisbon, it was time for a new adventure abroad, this time in the United States.

As so, in 2010, I moved to the United States to pursue my PhD at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth. Under Professor Gláucia Silva's supervision, I formally explored for the first time in a formal setting into the teaching of Portuguese as a heritage language. These were transformative years where I had the chance to combine my previous teaching and research experiences with my academic research interest. I was, for the first time, able to name and devote time to research the Portuguese heritage language. As a PhD student I was given multiple opportunities to explore, experience, and learn more about the context of the Portuguese language in the United States. I taught Portuguese-language classes to groups of students that, for the first time in my career, had a strong connection to the Azorean islands. I was given the opportunity to observe the Portuguese-speaking community of Massachusetts and with them learn more about the importance of heritage languages in the United States.

This experience directly led to my current position at the University of Rochester, after the completion in 2014 of my PhD with a dissertation focused on the benefits of the online textbooks for heritage speakers of Portuguese. My initial appointment was as a Language Coordinator for the College. I was simultaneously responsible for leading the Portuguese Program and for teaching all Portuguese language at the college.

The University of Rochester, located upstate New York, was my first experience teaching Portuguese in the United States in an area where there isn't a strong presence of a Portuguese-speaking community. Despite that, and the fact that there is no language requirement, I was immediately surprised by the number of students interested in learning the language and so motivated that forced me rethinking the content, the strategies, and ways to meet their expectations both inside and outside the classroom. Our

students, although most are not heritage speakers, are highly motivated to excel in the language, a fact that has not changed over the course of years.

In my role as an instructor, I strive to create an engaging, dynamic, and fun environment that connects learning to real life. I integrate topics that are trending and technology that students use daily, such as social media, trending Apps, Adobe and Google tools, and even artificial intelligence (AI) tools, as Virtual Reality Apps or Chat GPT.

In past years, I've had students use Adobe Spark to create videos showcasing their daily routines as university students. In another instance, I had a class interested in comic books, so I incorporated an App that allowed them to create their own comic strips. These activities help students relate to the language on a personal level, increasing their motivation to use Portuguese outside of the classroom. I've also embraced the growing popularity of AI tools in my classes, not as a final product but as part of the learning process. These tools allow students to explore language structures and vocabulary in context and make comparisons that promote self-awareness for structures, vocabulary and sentence structure. Additionally, I've incorporated virtual reality to take students on "field trips" to Portuguese-speaking locations, allowing them to experience the culture and language in new, immersive ways.

For next semester, I will be introducing a new class that will rely on 3D content created by me and VR with the support of our Studio X at the university. This content will allow students to explore and connect to their topics of research some of the most representative street art of Lisbon and surrounding areas. We will include Virtual Reality Apps and tools to promote similar experiences in Brazil, Cape Vert, or Angola. And we will supplement our materials and readings, with content and virtual tours available within Google Arts and Culture to explore areas and exhibitions on the topic. It's essential to recognize the importance of these tools but be cognizant of the ethics involving the incorporation of such tools in the classroom without disregarding the need for clear rubrics for its uses.

Outside my role as instructor of Portuguese, my main role when I first started working at the University of Rochester was as a language coordinator where I had the opportunity to collaborate and support all language programs, students, and faculty. Not long after my first few weeks in my new role, I was invited by my supervisor at the time, and Dean of the College, to think about the setting and establishment of a Language Center. This lifetime and unexpected opportunity led me to the position I hold today as the Director of the Language Center and Head of the Portuguese Program, a position that gave me so many opportunities to explore and grow as an instructor of Portuguese.

In my current role, I have the privilege to work and engage with a diverse student body that looks for languages as a professional avenue to boost their resumés in ways that make them unique to the job market. I also collaborate with different units, faculty, language programs and departments to find best approaches and ways to continue to present languages in avenues that are productive and useful to our students. This is a rewarding career path that allows me to expand on my role as Portuguese language instructor and connect with others in ways that are enriching and professionally rewarding, despite the lack of balance between my roles at the university and consequently balance between my professional and personal lives.

I am proud of the progress we've made in promoting Portuguese at the University of Rochester. We offer it as part of the Latin American studies minor and as a cluster program. I'm especially excited about the new course launching this spring, *Words on the Street: Language, Street Art, and Performance in Portuguese-Speaking Cultures*. This class will combine technology, readings, documentaries, and hands-on projects to engage students with Portuguese-speaking cultures in a vibrant way.

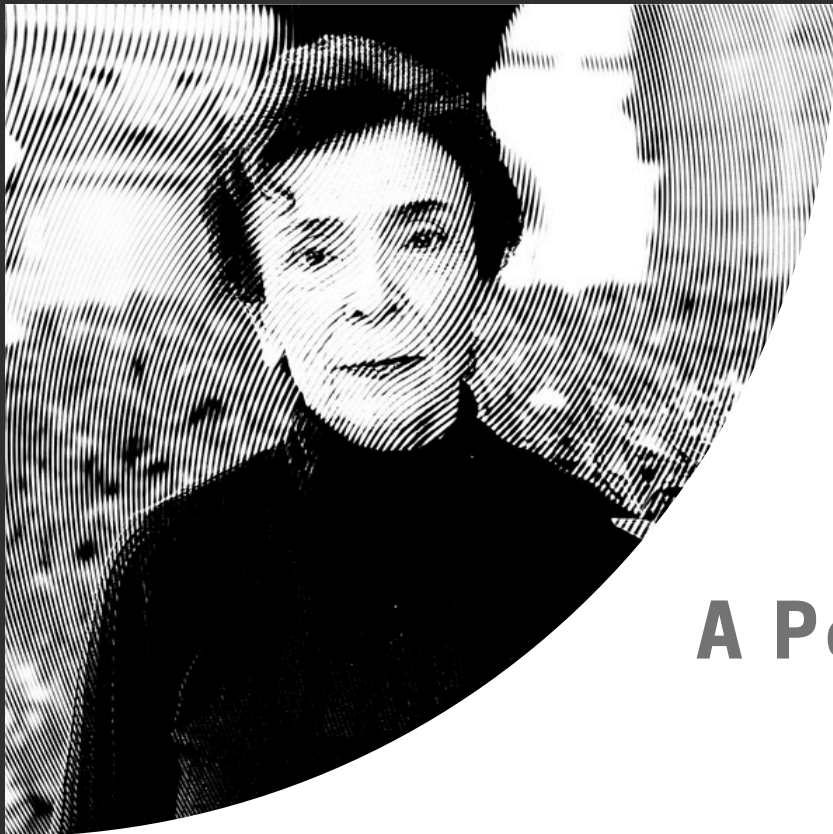
While I am fortunate to have the support of both administrative and departmental structures for the maintenance of Portuguese courses at my institution, like many others in this profession, I have faced challenges. Teaching Portuguese anywhere in the world presents unique challenges and opportunities. In France, we had to motivate children of immigrants to continue learning Portuguese and help them see the value of maintaining fluency for their future careers. The same is true in the United States. Additionally, the recent decline in language enrollment as noted in the MLA report poses an even greater challenge for the Portuguese teaching community, particularly in areas far from Portuguese-speaking communities. For many, the challenge is also to engage students in learning Portuguese, a language often overshadowed by Spanish, which is perceived by many as the more important language to learn.

Moreover, it is seen by many to be difficult to access Portuguese-speaking communities in a country as vast as the United States. Personally, this has been the greatest challenge: the feeling of isolation of being an instructor at an institution where the nearest university offering Portuguese is over two hours away and where the Portuguese-speaking community is not easily recognized and is challenging to connect, resulting in a teaching environment that is somehow distant from those teaching in areas of vibrant communities where students have multiple opportunities to engage with the language and culture(s) outside the classroom.

Despite all the challenges that are common to many teachers of Portuguese, when I arrived in the United States in 2010, I witnessed a growing interest in learning Portuguese. Students were enrolling in language courses for professional reasons, personal interests, and to communicate with their families in their parents' or grandparents' home countries. This trend continues today, especially among heritage speakers. It is rewarding to see that nowadays at my institution every year we have a number of students whose parents or grandparents are from Portugal, Brazil, Cape Vert, or even Mozambique, and they see value in learning the language. Outside the classroom I witnessed and supported the establishment of the first student organization devoted to the Promotion of Brazilian Culture and the Portuguese Language, which has been pivotal for the maintenance of student interest in our classes.

Looking forward, I believe that Portuguese has a future in the academic context if we, as a community, come together as agents of change. It is vital to collaborate in supporting parents who wish to teach their children Portuguese from a young age, as well as those who continue their language journeys at the university level. Portuguese holds a significant place in the United States, not only due to its history with Portuguese-speaking communities but also because of its geopolitical and social relevance in the world. Beyond personal motivations, Portuguese plays a crucial role in shaping global citizens, which is essential in our society(ies). Finally, the Portuguese diaspora and the study of its language offer valuable academic opportunities for research across numerous fields in the United States.

Reflecting on my journey, I realize I never could have imagined the life I am so fortunate to lead. Over the past 20 years, teaching Portuguese has brought me countless opportunities and experiences that have been deeply fulfilling. Many of these moments were unplanned and unexpected, but they have led me on an incredible adventure. Looking ahead, I remain hopeful about the future of Portuguese in the United States. Although we face challenges in promoting our classes and highlighting the relevance of the language, the support from cultural clubs, governmental units, and local organizations is essential. As educators, it is crucial to continue building communication bridges among us, collaborating, and learning from each other to sustain Portuguese language programs across the country.



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Stanford University

A Personal Journey

My journey to become an instructor of Portuguese as an additional language, referred to as Portuguese for Foreign Speakers (PFS), was not a straightforward path, and if anyone had suggested that this would be my longest and most cherished professional occupation, I would probably have dismissed the idea as nonsense. Even though Brazil is a land of immigrants, and my state and my hometown, Porto Alegre, have a rich history of immigration and cultural heritage, in addition to significant interaction with Uruguay and Argentina, PFS was not an established professional field when I began my studies in Letras - Línguas Neolatinas. While learning and teaching foreign languages were highly valued, universities did not include PFS as a specific area of focus in their Language Bachelor's programs. I suppose that foreigners seeking to learn Portuguese would have relied on tutoring.

It was in my last year of high school that I made the decision not to be a Mathematician or a Chemical Engineer but to pursue my passion for the Portuguese language. This was a shock that took some time for my family and my Math and Chemistry teachers to process, as everybody had anticipated a different path for me. However, I remained firm in my conviction that Portuguese was my true calling. From the moment my university classes started, I knew I had found my place. I was especially captivated by a Portuguese first-year class, which provided support and avenues to deepen my knowledge of Portuguese and explore my fascination with language itself, and how people use it to convey meaning. Teaching PFS was not an immediate interest, although it was somehow present in various ways.

For instance, in my third year at PUC, the Director summoned me to his office and persuaded me to accept “a mission” -- a request to substitute for Prof. Mercedes Marchant at short notice for a period of two months. I learned that Prof. Marchant had been teaching an innovative, experimental PFS community course for a couple of years and had just published what is now widely acknowledged to be the first Brazilian book in the field. I was instantly intrigued by the fact that the book followed the structuralist linguistic model, which emphasized speaking rather than the traditional focus on grammar and reading/writing found in most books used by my previous foreign language teachers. I left the Director’s office with a copy of the book and spent the entire weekend immersing myself in its fascinating approach to language teaching. Ten days later, however, the “mission” was canceled due to a change in Prof. Marchant’s plans.

Despite the job not materializing, the ten days I spent preparing were not wasted. Although teaching PFS was not in my plans, the experience reinforced my desire to concentrate on language acquisition, and provided my first experience with applied linguistics, showing me how abstract linguistic concepts could generate teaching-learning language activities. Later that year, I tutored a couple of Prof. Marchant’s students who wanted additional time to review and practice her classes. During the winter vacation of my last undergraduate year, the school where I was interning as a Portuguese instructor for native speakers and striving to be hired for a permanent position the following year, informed me that accepting a 5-week “polishing” course for the first five US students of a new exchange program would greatly enhance my image as an efficient instructor. I immediately accepted the challenge.

After graduating, I concurrently taught Portuguese at middle and high school levels in both an elite private school and two public schools serving very diverse populations. This combined experience allowed me to witness firsthand the disparity of language proficiency among native speakers from different backgrounds, focusing my interest on bringing up the language level of the lower socioeconomic population. During this period, I also pursued part-time graduate studies in the first PUC-organized specialization course in Linguistics, primarily taught by visiting professors on weekends. The linguistics course further fueled my desire to see these concepts applied to teaching, something that none of the instructors felt equipped to address. This led me to apply to a new master’s program in Education at the local federal university, which offered a Teaching track.

Two years later, while teaching Introduction to Linguistics at PUC-RS, I began my career as an entry-level professor at the School of Education of UFRGS. I had also developed a marginal interest in English as a Second Language (ESL) by following the theoretical linguistics developments (from structuralism to generative grammar to sociolinguistics) and their effect on ESL, the first foreign-language field to incorporate these new approaches. However, my focus remained on applying these concepts to teaching language to native speakers. Although there was no comparable development in PFS, it continued to be a part of my life, as I occasionally assisted some visiting professors both at PUC and UFRGS with private Portuguese lessons and supervised the teaching practice of at least two graduating seniors in PFS, an emerging field at the time.

I then found myself ready to pursue doctoral studies. At that time, Ph.D. programs in the Humanities were just emerging in Brazil, and we were encouraged to seek our degrees abroad. Guided by a senior

faculty member in my unit, and driven by my primary interest in teaching, Stanford University was my first choice, due to its top ranking in Education and its excellent Linguistics Department. Without delving into the details of my wonderful experience there, I will mention that it was the first time I was able to integrate theoretical linguistics, foreign language teaching, and language arts. With a growing interest in bilingual education and language acquisition by immigrants, I focused my dissertation research on the differences in school and linguistic performance between two local groups of Azorean Portuguese Americans.

Upon completing my U.S. studies, I returned to my positions in Brazil, teaching Linguistics and Research Methodology at both graduate and undergraduate levels, while continuing to supervise Portuguese Language Teaching Practice of students getting their BAs in Letras. I also reconnected with my previous Linguistics and Education research groups. Time went by, and everything appeared to be set for a traditional academic life in Brazil. That life and focus on research changed completely when, for family reasons, I decided to resign my position, return to the U.S., and restart my career there, a transition that was not without its challenges.

Preserving my connections with Bay Area friends, professors, and former colleagues proved invaluable on a personal level. Professionally, while my husband resumed his work, I found no immediate opportunities available for me. Positions in Linguistics or Portuguese were scarce in California, especially in the Bay Area. I discovered that the few existing jobs were not only taken but fiercely defended against newly-arrived “invaders.” Moreover, it was quite a shocking realization to learn how little my previous experience in Brazil, the positions that I held, and even publications were valued. I got some sympathy, but little else. My only assets were my U.S. degree and my skills in research and statistics.

As relocating was not a viable option for my family, I began looking for employment in education. My first job was working part-time as a research associate for a school district, evaluating bilingual schools. This was extremely convenient because my son was quite young at the time, and the tasks, statistics and reports, allowed me to work mostly from home. I continued in this role for almost three years, first as an independent consultant, and later as part of a larger group in a well-known office that served as an external evaluator for short-term U.S. government educational programs for Central America. The work was interesting, and, like my high school days with Math and Chemistry, it was something that I could do well, although I missed teaching and Portuguese.

During this period, in my quest for opportunities to work with language, I obtained my English -into-Portuguese credentials from the American Translators Association (ATA). My relationship with ATA was incredibly exciting, and I even became involved with their Accreditation Process, serving on their Portuguese Accreditation Committee. This was uncharted territory for me, translating technical materials from very diverse sources, ranging from medical and juridical documents to marketing materials for Disney World and Universal Studios, as well as manuals from companies like Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard, and other Silicon Valley giants. It was a great experience, not only because it allowed

me to interact with a unique group of Portuguese translators in the US, but, more importantly, it gave me a chance to refocus on language forms and expand my Portuguese, as I had to deal with lexical fields far beyond my day-to-day experiences. Although I was busy, working from home still allowed me to relish being an active part of my son's growth into elementary school age. However, I continued to miss the congeniality of the classroom, the interaction with developing minds and other language-oriented colleagues, and, especially, teaching Portuguese. This yearning for the classroom was reinvigorated whenever I substituted for my close friend Karin van den Dool, who taught at Stanford, when she occasionally left town for training and conferences.

Fate intervened once again when the University of California, Berkeley opened a national search for a career lecturer in Portuguese, with a focus on designing a Portuguese-for-Spanish Speakers track. Learning about it through a research colleague, I decided to investigate further. It was only then that I grasped the dimensions of a national search. Frankly speaking, I had doubts about securing the position, but the stars aligned, and that fall I embarked on my career as a university instructor of PFS.

At that point, my perception of American universities was limited to my own experience at Stanford: small classes, a relatively homogeneous student body, and the tranquility that characterized the university's doctoral students' environment at the time. Landing on a city campus with more than twice the number of students was one of my most exhilarating experiences. I simply loved the diversity, the vibrancy, the informality, and the challenge of developing a new curriculum and facing large classes with students who were taking Portuguese as a newly required course. To complement my enthusiasm, I had the immense blessing of counting on Karin van den Dool's incredibly generous assistance whenever I encountered obstacles in curriculum design or classroom materials. Her more than a decade of experience in doing what I was just beginning was instrumental for accelerating my learning curve.

My family and friends were all expecting that the honeymoon stage with this new experience would be short-lived, but it never truly faded. It endured throughout my more than eight-year association with Berkeley. Naturally, there were better and worse days and years, but my love for the sheer magic of the experience remains to this day. In retrospect, I realize part of it was the strong representation of Linguistics and Brazilian Literature in the Department, and the concentrated effort to increase enrollments in Portuguese. It was also the first time that I oriented the Portuguese practice teaching of doctoral students, the majority of whom were Brazilian, leading to friendships that I cherish to this day.

After all those years, however, an unexpected opportunity arose to return to Stanford. What attracted me was the announcement of the creation of a genuine integrative Language Center, whose newly hired Director proposed bringing all language programs together. Rather than being a branch of a corresponding literature department, as is the case in most colleges, Portuguese would share the same teaching philosophy, general guidelines for objectives, curriculum, and, naturally, assessment and evaluation with other language programs. Moreover, the Center would be established with an emphasis

on the new tests developed by ACTFL and on its integrative Guidelines, to whose basic concepts I had been introduced through training by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL). I wanted to be a part of this, even if it meant leaving Berkeley. And that is how I arrived at the port where I find myself today.

Upon arriving at a new place, it is natural to reflect on the high and low points of the journey and compare them to the new environment. As I engaged in this reflection, I increasingly felt that the entire journey had prepared me for the new challenges that lay ahead. This was an environment where I could safely seek answers to my original questions, and test and evaluate different solutions, not in isolation, but as a part of a group of like-minded professionals. It was as if all the pieces were finally falling into place. As a member of my new teaching “family,” I obtained my certification as a tester/rater of different ACTFL tests and actively participated in the creation of the Proficiency Objectives and Curricular Documents, the Stanford SOPs, and Placement Tests for Portuguese, as well as in the training of new instructors, TAs, and Portuguese Conversation Partners. Like other languages, our program incorporated the gradual acquisition of interculturality. Teaching in accordance with the Center’s focus on “doing”, rather than “knowing,” I refocused the program on Portuguese for Spanish Speakers, as I had done at Berkeley, and with the invaluable support of colleagues from other languages, worked on generating new approaches to learning vocabulary and bringing intermediate learners to higher levels of proficiency in different communication contexts.

An additional highlight of my new post was the significant increase in my involvement with external organizations, as the Center made me more aware of and more able to attend a larger number of meetings, leading me to the establishment of meaningful relationships with other like-minded scholars. One example of which I am particularly proud stemmed from collaborating with Ana Maria Carvalho, a former Portuguese TA at Berkeley who had become a talented Assistant Professor of Linguistics at the University of Arizona, to organize a session on Portuguese for Spanish Speakers at the 1998 AATSP conference. The response was so overwhelmingly positive, that the original idea germinated and subsequently gave rise to five very successful research-exclusive symposiums (University of Arizona (2003); Stanford (2006) UNICAMP, São Paulo (2008, hosted by Matilde Scaramucci); Georgetown, DC (2011, hosted by Michael Ferreira); and UNAM, Mexico City (2014, hosted by Marianne Akerberg). These meetings resulted in two volumes of selected writings (published by Editora Pontes, Brazil) and one special edition in this academic journal.

Looking back, I see that my journey to this port was not without turbulence and setbacks. There were challenges, some of which persist to this day. Examples worth mentioning include the lack of knowledge and recognition of the Portuguese language and literatures in the U.S. compared to other traditionally studied Romance languages; the almost universal U.S. universities’ unfair hiring of language instructors as lecturers, not professors; the dependence of Portuguese language programs on the presence of a strong literature program or strong interest from other departments, such as Economy, Business, Biology, History, among others; and, above all, the difficulty in obtaining funds for new classes, a classic catch-22 situation. We are getting more support through some initiatives, such as the U.S. government’s classification of Portuguese as a critical language, the increase of scholarships to study

Portuguese (e.g., FLAS and Boren), the presence of lecturers sent by Brazilian and Portuguese governments and foundations, more departments of Literature and Latin American Studies making Portuguese a required class, and two strong Flagship programs geared at bringing competence in Portuguese to higher levels to support professionals in fields like law, administration, medicine, health care, etc. This has already had a significant impact, but the battle continues.

However, as I reevaluate this long journey, it is primarily positive memories that come to mind: the expression on the face of a first-quarter student telling me that she had been able to talk in Portuguese to a Brazilian sitting next to her on her flight back home for Thanksgiving; the email from a 2nd-year graduate student reporting that he had not only delivered his Biology conference paper in Portuguese, but understood and answered questions; the picture of a third-year Law student looking very cozy with Clarice Lispector's statue on her bench in Copacabana; the moving note from a formerly monolingual, US-raised heritage speaker elated with a newfound closeness with her Brazilian family; a video clip of a news program in which a 2nd-year student interning in Rio's TV-E announces a new exhibit in a museum all by herself; a 3rd-year student interpreting for a visiting former president of Brazil in a department discussion; the letter from an ESL instructor who had not used her Portuguese for 14 years but found out that the language foundations were still there and enabled her to help a group of Congolese refugees who spoke different languages and for whom Portuguese was the only common means of communication.

As I revisit these special memories, a persistent image keeps coming to mind, that of ripples on a water surface. This is what I have done, this is what we all do as language teachers. We generate circles that form even larger circles than the original one -- and most times we are unaware of the impact of that first circle, except when a kind-hearted person takes the time to tell us. But does it truly matter whether we know it or not? My own journey is the result of other circles initiated by all the people who contributed to my love of our language, the sense of wonderment to discover new solutions, the overwhelming desire to find ways to apply this to learning tasks, and the wish to transmit it to others. Therefore, my message to professionals in the area of PFS is this: discover where your heart lies and strive to keep it as your guiding light and ultimate goal. It may be a long voyage, the water will not always be calm, and the route may take you to unforeseen shores. But what matters is realizing, at the end of the journey, that you fought the good fight, you enjoyed your course, and that the ripples you started will continue and speak for you.



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