

This review originally appeared on the *LINGUIST List* website on February 8, 2020:  
<https://linguistlist.org/issues/31/31-561.html>

EDITOR: Christian Koch & Daniel Reimann

TITLE: *As Variedades do Português no Ensino de Português Língua Não Materna*

SERIES TITLE: *Romanistische Fremdsprachenforschung und Unterrichtsentwicklung*

PUBLISHER: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag GmbH + Co. KG

YEAR: 2019

REVIEWER: Enrico Torre, Università degli Studi di Genova

## SUMMARY

‘*As Variedades do Português no Ensino do Português Língua Não Materna*,’ edited by Christian Koch and Daniel Reimann, is a collection of essays on the teaching of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL, henceforth). The volume, entirely written in Portuguese, situates itself in the context of the increasing awareness of the importance of multilateral management of the so-called ‘pluricentric languages,’ i.e., “languages as with several interacting centers, each providing a national variety with at least some of its own (codified) norms.” (Clyne 1992, p. 1; see Soares da Silva 2018 for a recent overview of the pluricentricism of Portuguese). Following a short introduction jointly contributed by the editors, the book is divided into four parts.

In their brief prologue, Koch and Reimann concisely introduce the problem of dealing with language variation in the teaching of pluricentric languages generally and of Portuguese more specifically. The authors start from the assumption, nowadays largely shared, that teaching a modern language means to anticipate the actual encounter with such a language, using exposure to authentic materials as well as promoting informal contacts with native speakers. This implies that too strict an adherence to a standard norm would never be a good practice to teach a pluricentric language. As a result, finding ways to include variation in the classes of Portuguese becomes a matter of necessity.

Part I is entitled ‘*A polifonia do português*’ and contains a single chapter provided by Benjamin Meisnitzer, entitled ‘*O português como língua pluricêntrica: Um desafio para a didática do Português Língua Estrangeira*.’ After mentioning the properties typical of pluricentric languages, the author underlines that Portuguese falls within the category with at least two standard varieties: the European norm (EP, henceforth) and the Brazilian norm (BP, from now on), emphasizing the independence of BP from EP as a diaphasic, diastratic, and diatopic system. With regard to African and Asian countries, Meisnitzer points out that the situation is far less clearly defined, as the spread of the use of Portuguese is a recent phenomenon and in most countries most speakers speak it as a second language (Angola seems to be a counter-example, though, see Heigemeijer 2016). However, it is important to

highlight that endogenous standards seem to be on the rise at least in the case of Angola and Mozambique. Concerning teaching, the author observes that the pluricentric status of Portuguese is still marginally considered as variants are not systematically addressed; rather, teaching materials tend to focus on either BP or EP, only.

Part II, 'As variedades do português na formação universitária em Portugal,' is made up of three chapters. The first chapter, contributed by Isabel Margarida Duarte, is entitled 'Português língua pluricêntrica: Formação de professores de PLE na Universidade do Porto.' After defending the importance of considering language variation in the teaching of PFL, Duarte presents the measures which have been adopted, in this direction, within the M.A. course in PFL of the University of Porto. First, she outlines the compulsory modules which focus on the pluricentrism of the language that students need to attend in the first year (Varieties of Portuguese, Topics in Literature of Portuguese-speaking Countries, and Topics in Culture of Portuguese-speaking Countries), and the research lines they normally pursue in their second-year internship with regard to language variation (the language and culture of students from Lusophone countries other than Portugal, the polycentrism of Portuguese in non-European and non-Brazilian contexts, the status of Portuguese in the context of teaching Portuguese abroad, and the discussion and criticism of the concept itself of 'Lusophone world'). Then, she provides a few guidelines on how to include pluricentrism in the teaching of Portuguese as a non-native language.

In the third chapter, entitled 'Português língua estrangeira no ensino superior: Dar voz às vozes dos estudantes,' Dulce Melão evaluates the situation of the teaching of Portuguese in secondary school. First of all, the authoress introduces the theoretical framework of her study, namely the theory of social representations (Castellotti & Moore 2002). Then, Melão presents her empirical study in detail, clarifying its objectives at the onset: i) reflect on the contribution of the theoretical framework of social representation to the teaching of PFL; ii) identify, describe, and understand the students' representations of PFL. Eighteen secondary-school students were presented with a questionnaire at the beginning of their course, and then again at the end. The author obtained the following results: i) most students decided to study Portuguese because of their need to communicate in everyday life and to understand academic contents; ii) at the beginning, most students consider the Portuguese language difficult or complex; iii) most students indicated grammar as their main source of problems; iv) the vast majority of students consider the use of language in everyday life as the greatest advantage of learning Portuguese; v) at the end of the course, most students would describe Portuguese as interesting and useful to find work; vi) their main source of problems would still be grammar, along with writing; vii) the best advantage of learning Portuguese would be an increased level of employability and the understanding of Portuguese culture.

In the fourth chapter, 'Usos que criam vozes: Divergência pragmática na aprendizagem de Português Língua Não Materna,' Anabela Fernandes and Joana Cortez-Smyth briefly reflect on the inclusion of pragmatics in the teaching of PFL. First of all, the authors describe pragmatic competence in a foreign language in the domain of listening, reading, speaking and writing. Then, they argue for the need to include pragmatics in the teaching of foreign languages, due to the need to understand i) the variation of cultural norms in terms of appropriateness; ii) regional and individual differences; iii) grammatical and lexical complexities; iv) discursive subtleties; v) non-verbal behavior. Then, the authors show that the inclusion of the pragmatic dimension of Portuguese in the courses enables the development of the awareness of linguistic plasticity, favoring autonomy and freedom in the creation of one's own voice, starting from the reception of different voices and varieties.

The third part of the book is entitled ‘As variantes do português no material de ensino’ and comprises four chapters. The first chapter, contributed by Thomas Johnen, is entitled ‘As variantes do Português em manuais de Português Língua Estrangeira.’ The author provides an overview of the presence and representation of the variants of Portuguese in PFL manuals, based on the analysis of nine manuals published either in Portugal (eight) or Macao (one), nine published in Brazil, and fifteen in non-Lusophone countries (namely, twelve in Germany, two in the United States, and one in France). The author observes that the manuals published in Brazil tend to focus on the variant spoken in this country, mostly ignoring other variants. The volumes published in Portugal show a similar tendency, privileging EP but some of them are keener on treating other varieties. Then, the author reports that, in Germany, different manuals are published for the two established norms of BP and EP, although mentions of the other variant are not too rare in the same book. The volumes published in France and the United States seem keener to include materials from different varieties, but – importantly – the author notices that (at least concerning Jouet-Pastré et al. 2013), examples are often presented as peculiarities of a variant while they are also possible in the other). As a general conclusion, Johnen observes a general lack of metalinguistic reflection on the similarities and differences between variants, and a virtually total lack of information on diastatic and diaphasic variation.

In the second chapter, entitled ‘PE com PB e PB com PE? Abordando o desenvolvimento de competências em duas variedades nos manuais *Ola Portugal!* e *Beleza!*, Christian Koch compares two volumes, ‘*Ola Portugal!*’ and ‘*Beleza!*’. The former is published in Portugal, whereas the latter is published in Brazil. Both volumes aim to include both variants throughout the A1/A2 course, offering a range of activities. Contrary to the general tendency to focus on a single variant, restricting the treatment of the other one to a specific, self-contained unit, these two books consistently approach both variants from the beginning to the end. Based on his comparison between the two books, Koch observes that the approach to BP in ‘*Ola Portugal!*’ is more anecdotic, whereas ‘*Beleza!*’ includes a more systematic treating of some grammatical aspects of BP. As a result, the author argues that teaching and learning EP with BP implies above all transmitting impressions of BP and practicing oral comprehension, above all. On the other hand, teaching BP with EP implies the study of grammatical structures of EP, given that these still serve as a model for the prestigious registers of BP.

The third chapter, contributed by Leonor Paula Santos, is entitled ‘Sugestões práticas para a integração das variedades da língua portuguesa na aula de PLE,’ and consists a series of proposals to integrate different varieties of the language in the classroom. The authoress, starting from the case in point of the teaching of PFL in the German state of Baden Württemberg, whose school curriculum aims to develop the students’ intercultural competence. The authoress emphasizes that including regional variation in the teaching of PFL is not necessary a confusing factor for learners, as long as it is worked out with awareness and organization. Then, Santos proposes a series of activities which may be adapted to the scope of including variation in the classroom.

The fourth chapter, contributed by Teresa Bagão, is entitled ‘PE and PB – duas variedades em dialogo: Contributos para a compreensão do oral em PLNM/PLE.’ This chapter presents a set of authentic materials that empower an integration of the two established norms, EP and BP, in the context of teaching and learning of oral understanding skills. After proving a brief outline of linguistic variation in the Portuguese national school curriculum and the official programs of Portuguese in Portugal as a native and non-native language, the authoress

concisely systematizes the difference between EP and BP in terms of morphology and syntax, phonetics, and the lexicon. Finally, keeping in mind all these distinct levels of language, she puts forward a proposal for the adoption of a selection of publicly available authentic oral materials downloaded from the web: contemporary songs, conversations from the platforms Audio-Lingua and LingQ, and also the website ‘Say it in Portuguese’, and the level of proficiency will be, globally, B1-B2. At the end of her chapter, Bagão points out the necessity to organize a bank of oral documents, of different origin, easily available.

The fourth and last part of the book is entitled ‘As variedades no ensino de PLNM no mundo: Alemanha, Galícia e Timor-Leste.’ The first chapter is contributed by Maria Teresa Nóbrega Duarte Soares. It is entitled ‘Ensino do Português no estrangeiro: Alemanha – da língua materna a língua de herança’ focuses on the concept of ‘heritage language,’ i.e. the language used within a family, which is related to the origins of people who migrate abroad. It is a language restricted to social groups that coexist with a dominant language. The authoress addresses the phenomenon of linguistic xenophobia, which often leads Portuguese families abroad to neglect their language in favor of that of the host country, arguing that it is based on myths. Then, she introduces the courses of Portuguese language and culture, highlighting the heterogeneity of the students in these courses as a problem. The authoress suggests that manuals considering this issue would help resolve the problem and improve the quality of the teaching. At the end of the chapter, Duarte Soares criticizes the recent introduction of a 100-euro yearly fee, which led to a decrease in the number of students.

In the second chapter, entitled “‘Hai moitas palabras en Galego que pensas que son iguais no Portugués e isto non é así, pero como en Castelán son distintas que ao Galego, pensas que si”’: Diagnóstico de competências e indentificación de estratégias na comunicación oral do alumno galego-falante,’ Carla Sofía Amado presents an empirical study aimed to envision teaching methods and learning strategies to facilitate cohesion, coherence, and fluency in the oral usage of language, as free as possible from phonetic and lexical interferences. The author ran an experiment with a group of students of the University of Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, a bilingual (Galician/Spanish) region in the north west of Spain who were attending the second semester of the second year of Portuguese. Amado reports that the proximity between Galician and Portuguese cause the student to feel falsely fluent in Portuguese. However, she points out two other factors which may contribute to this situation: the inadequacy of the teaching methods, which mirror those used in the context of PFL (thus failing to address the proximity of the source and the target language), and the failure to explore the culture divergences between Galicia and Portugal.

The third chapter, contributed by Karim Noemi Rühle Indart, is entitled ‘Uma Abordagem Didática Plurilíngue para a Língua Portuguesa no Sistema de Educação em Timor-Leste,’ and it overviews the education system in East Timor after the country obtained independence from Indonesia (1999). In 2001, the country joined the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, receiving help from Portugal and Brazil to implement the language in education. The Portuguese cooperation mostly acted in the area of education, and helped the Minister of Education from the beginning, having a strong influence on its policies and plans. On the other hand, the Brazilian cooperation arrived later and in a more gradual fashion, engaging in projects of adult literacy and the education of professors and students with resources of distance learning. The only university in East Timor is the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa’e, which received the attention of the teaching programs of Portuguese from both Cooperations.

## EVALUATION

Overall, 'As variedades do Português no ensino de Português língua não materna' represents a valuable collection of contributions to the study of language variation in the context of foreign language teaching, focusing on a language which, despite counting 280-million speakers, is still to some extent underrepresented in the field of sociolinguistics, at least in comparison with other pluricentric languages such as English, French, and Spanish.

As a whole, the book provides a significant amount of information on several aspects of the (actually, very broad) field of the teaching of Portuguese as a Foreign Language, including information on teaching practices and policies both in Portugal and abroad as well as on teaching materials. One of the strongest points of these contributions is the identification of blind spots in the current language teaching practices and the suggestion of measures to improve the situation. In so doing, not only does this slim volume cover a sizeable range of topics but, perhaps even more importantly, it also provides stimuli to advance the debate. As a consequence, the present reviewer deems it safe to argue that it represents a fine contribution to the growing literature on language teaching as well as on the challenges presented by language pluricentrism. Each chapter can stand as a self-contained contribution but the volume as a whole is, overall, coherent. For all the above-mentioned reasons, this book represents a welcome addition to the 'Romanistische Fremdsprachenforschung und Unterrichtsentwicklung' Narr Francke Attempto series.

The decision to include contributions introducing a plurality of methodologies and/or theoretical perspectives provides the reader with an overview of the 'landscape' which can be observed in the four areas the book deals with, namely the polyphony of Portuguese, the varieties of Portuguese in university education in Portugal, the varieties of Portuguese in teaching materials, and the varieties of Portuguese in PFL teaching abroad, illustrating the current situation and collecting a number of proposals to find 'the way forward.' Although to a certain extent EP-centered (unavoidably), the volume does not fail to make relevant comparisons between the two established norms of the Portuguese language, and also, when possible, briefly characterizing the main traits of the other varieties.

Meisnitzer's chapter on the pluricentrism of Portuguese and its consequences for the teaching of PFL is complete, rich in detail, and represents a good overview of the situation of the language in terms of both its sociolinguistic map and language policies. Likewise, the three chapters on PFL teaching in Portuguese universities provide a clear, although necessarily brief, summary of the situation, approached from three different perspectives. The four chapters on teaching materials encompass a range of distinct types of materials, which include manuals, which are compared adopting both an in-breadth (Johnen) and a more in-depth approach (Koch), but also other written and oral materials (Santos, Bagão). Finally, the three ending chapters on linguistic varieties in the teaching of PFL abroad present case studies on three situations which are extremely different from each other, in terms of both the geopolitical and social setting and the specific focus of each study. As such, this part is less coherent and more miscellaneous, but this is due to the nature of the contributions; therefore, it does not detract from the value of the book.

While my overall evaluation of the book is positive, I will now point out three interconnected weaknesses of the volume. First of all, the chapters presenting empirical studies are sometimes somewhat vague concerning the data collection process and the methodology adopted: the database and the collection process as well as the methods adopted are often

presented only in a brisk manner. Likewise, the analysis and the discussion of the results are often only sketched. I do appreciate that this may be due to a two-fold reason: the nature of the studies themselves, which are often only preliminary, and length limitations. Still, I cannot help noticing that there is, a certain disproportion between the introductory/background sections and the analytical ones, as the balance is in general biased in favor of the former, while the opposite would be more appropriate.

Apart from leading to a relative lack of detail in the analysis and discussion of the results, this issue is also related to another less than ideal feature of the book, namely a certain level of redundancy, which could have been circumvented by making a more extensive use of internal cross-referencing, which instead is virtually never used in the volume. For instance, the peculiarities of different varieties are repeated almost verbatim in different chapters. These repetitions do not add anything valuable to the volume and, while they do not represent a serious flaw, they tend to slightly hamper the narrative flow. At the same time, this reviewer considers that the book would have benefited greatly from internal references among the distinct chapters, which would have fostered the cohesion of the volume, also providing the reader with a roadmap that could help them to fully appreciate the quality of the work.

With relation to more formal issues, it is possible to notice a certain lack of uniformity in the length and structure of the contributions, which, to some extent, detract from the general elegance and cohesion of the volume. Indeed, some chapters are relatively long and detailed whereas others are much shorter and their contribution only consists of an outline of the topic. While the latter generally still provide relevant information, they often run the risk of leaving the reader with a sense of incompleteness, which may be a somewhat frustrating experience. To be sure, despite these liabilities, the present reviewer believes this book represents a valuable contribution to the study of Portuguese as a pluricentric language and, in particular, to the search for solutions to face the challenges posed by the inclusion of language variation in PFL teaching.

In summary, the book provides a good snapshot of the polyphony of Portuguese, the teaching of PFL in Portugal, and the treatment of PFL in the teaching materials currently available. Moreover, it presents three case studies dealing with the teaching of PFL abroad, which provide information on very distinct contexts. The main limitation of the book is represented by the presence of a substantial amount of repeated information which, in the case of empirical studies, not rarely comes at the expense of a more detailed description of data and methodology as well as a more in-depth analysis and discussion of the results.

## REFERENCES

- Castellotti, Véronique, & Moore, Danièle. 2002. Social representations of language and teaching. Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe from linguistic diversity to plurilingual education. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Clyne, Michael. 1992. Pluricentric Languages – Introduction. In M. Clyne (ed.), *Pluricentric Languages: Differing Norms in Different Nations*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 1-10.

Heigemeijer, Tjerk. 2016. O português em contacto em África. In E. Carrilho & A.M. Martins (eds.), *Manual de Linguística Portuguesa*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 43-67.

Jouet-Pastré, Clémence, Klobucka, Ana M., Sobral, Patricia I.S., Moreira, Maria Luci de Biagi, & Hutchinson, Amélia P. 2013 [2007]. *Ponto do Encontro: Portuguese as a World Language*. Boston: Pearson.

Soares da Silva, Augusto. 2018. O Português no Mundo e a Sua Estandardização: Entre a Realidade de uma Língua Pluricêntrica e o Desejo de uma Língua Internacional. In H. Barroso (ed.), *O Português na Casa do Mundo, Hoje*. Braga: Centro de Estudos Humanísticos da Universidade do Minho.