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Holistic assessment in Portuguese as a Foreign Language at UWI St. Augustine: A case study of the introduction of CELPE-BRAS correction grid

Miriam Kurcbaum Futer -
Miriam.Futer@sta.uwi.edu

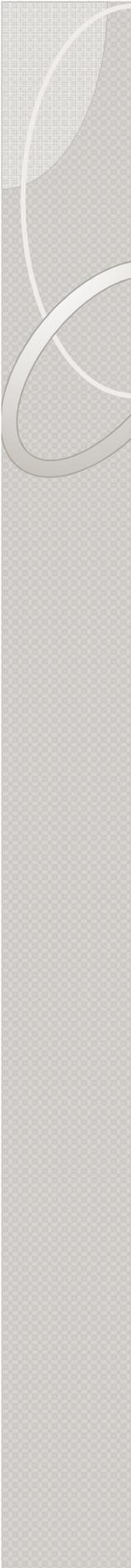
Eliete Sampaio Farneda -
Eliete.Sampaio@sta.uwi.edu

Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics
The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine
Campus

Introduction

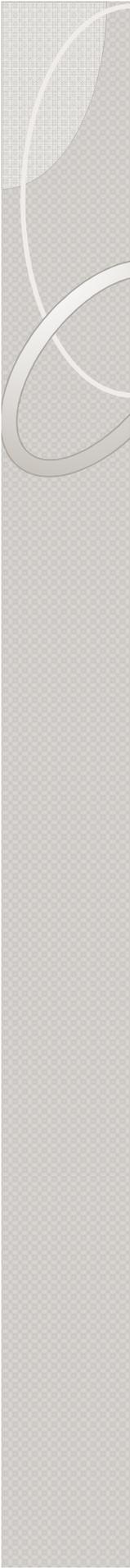
✓ Celpe-Bras

- Proficiency Exam in Portuguese (Brazilian variety) for Speakers of Other Languages.
- What is a proficiency exam?
 - “the one that has content and assessment objectives defined based on usage needs of the target language.” (Celpe-Bras Application Manual, 2012)



Celpe-Bras Application

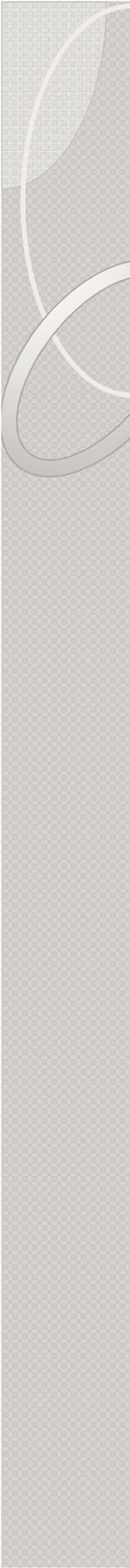
- It has been regularly conducted since 1998 (created in 1993)
- Twice a year (April and October)
- Who is in charge?
 - Nationally
 - Internationally
- Examination Centres:
 - 67 centres → Brazil: 21; abroad: 46 (INEP, 2013)



Importance:

Required or accepted by:

- undergraduate and graduate candidates to study at any Brazilian university;
- foreign professionals in order to have their diplomas recognized;
- companies and educational institutions as proof of competence in Brazilian Portuguese.

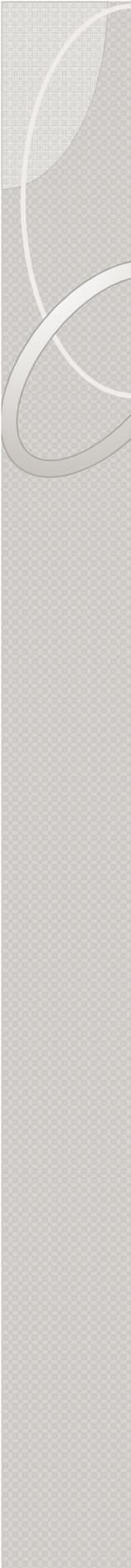


✓ Corrective Feedback (CF)

- “an indication to the learners that his or her use of the target language is incorrect” (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

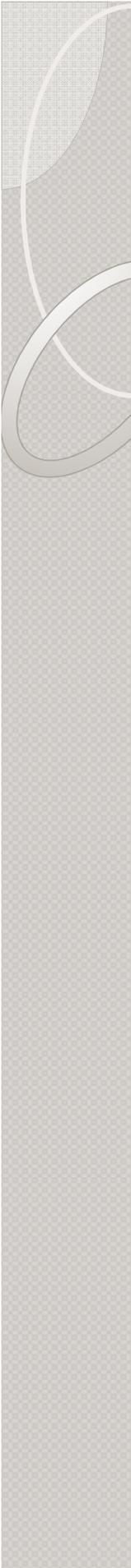
➤ **In L2 writing**

- Against CF – learners’ errors: eliminated in a subsequent draft but no effect on accuracy in a new piece of writing; grammar correction may be harmful and should be abandoned (Truscott, 1996, 2007);
- For CF – “L2 student writers are both willing and able to benefit from simultaneous feedback on content and form on the same draft.” (Ferris, 2002).



✓ Focus on L2 writing
(Hyland, 2003)

- Language structures
- Text functions
- Creative expressions
- Composing processes
- Content
- **Genre and contexts of writing**

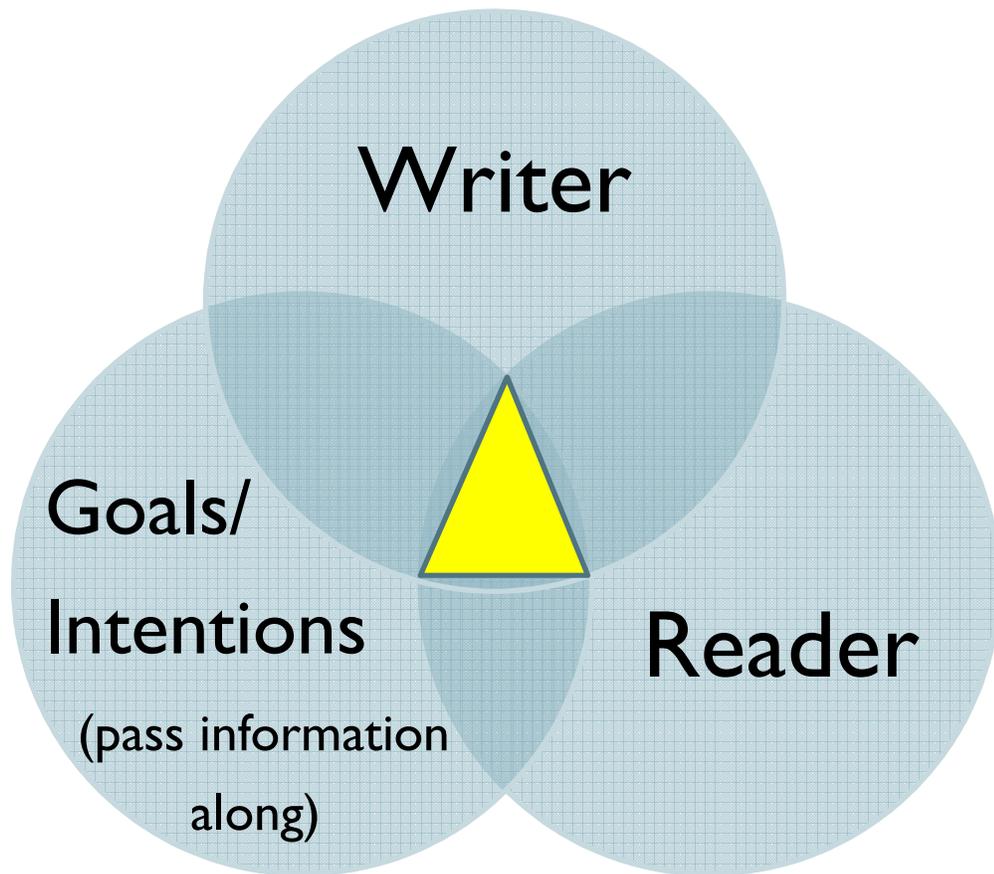


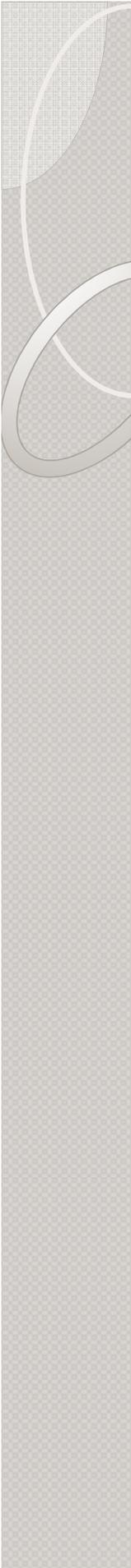
✓ **Genre and contexts of writing**

- Writing serves a purpose: “it is a way of getting something done.” (Hyland, 2003) → learning how to write involves learning how to use a language.
- Importance:
 - “Genre teaching involves being explicit about how texts are grammatically patterned, but grammar is integrated into the exploration of texts and contexts rather than taught as a discrete component. This helps learners not only to see how grammar and vocabulary choices create meanings, but to understand how language itself works, acquiring a way to talk about language and its role in texts.” (Hyland, 2007)



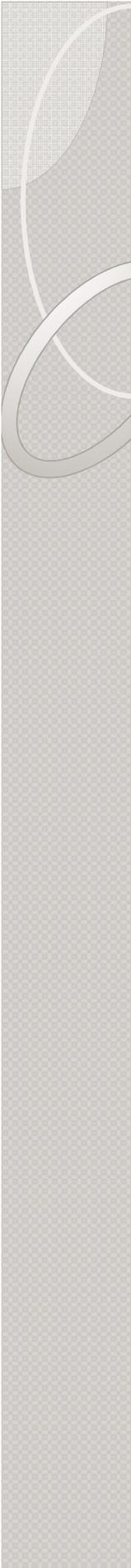
Types of text – resource used to accomplish a purpose





✓ Sources of stimulus

- Texts
- Videos
- Graphic materials
- Audio materials
- Internet materials
- Realia
- Lectures



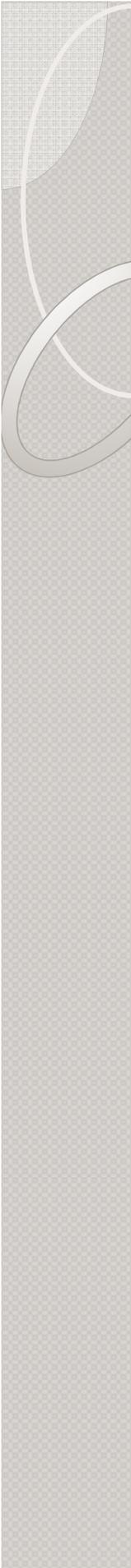
✓ Holistic assessment

- Luckesi (2006): wishing new forms of assessment X traditional pedagogical system with assesment tools that verify and examine learning only.
- “Para que se tenha uma avaliação centrada no desenvolvimento é necessário também um currículo centrado no desenvolvimento e construção do aprendiz.” [In order to have an evaluation focused on development, the curriculum must be also focused on the development and construction of the learner.] (Luckesi, 2006)
- It is centered in the student development.
- Emphasizes what the learner can do well instead of dwelling on their deficiencies. (White, 1994)
- Studies suggest that reliability improves when two or more trained readers score each paper. (Hyland, 2003) → Encourages teachers’ discussion and agreement.

	LEVEL	Advanced	Advanced	Intermediate	Intermediate	Basic
G						
						*Inappropriate or
E	Enunciator	*Appropriate	*Appropriate	*Appropriate	*Appropriate	not identified
N						*Inappropriate or
	Interlocutor	*Appropriate	*Appropriate	*Appropriate	*Appropriate	not identified
R						
	Purpose	The main idea	The main idea	The main idea is	The main idea is	The main idea is
E	and	is	is	is indicated but	hard to identify or	missing.
	Information	stated clearly.	fairly clear.	not clearly.	unrelated to the development.	
Coherence and Cohesion		The essay is	The essay is	The essay is not	The essay is	The essay is
* use of articulators (conjunction & adverb)		well	moderately	very well	poorly	poorly
* subject-verb agreement		organized and	well organized	organized and is	organized and	organized
* Reference - pronoun		coherent.	and	somewhat	relatively	generally
			relatively	lacking in	incoherent.	incoherent.
			coherent	coherence.		
Appropriate use of Lexicon and Grammar		Excellent choice of	The vocabulary is good	Vocabulary is average. There are	The use of vocabulary	The use of vocabulary
		vocabulary and very few	and only minor	some major and	is weak and	is very weak and
		grammatical	grammar	minor grammatical	grammatical errors	grammatical errors appear
		errors.	errors	errors together with	appear frequently.	very frequently.
		Good spelling and	A few spelling and	a number of spelling	There are also	There are many
		punctuation.	punctuation	and punctuation	frequent spelling and	spelling and
			errors.	mistakes.	punctuation errors.	punctuation errors.

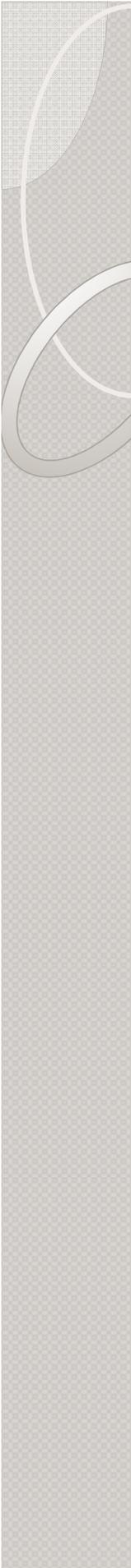
Challenge:

- Possible failure to provide an obvious basis for scoring:
 - E.g. a text with a clear thesis statement and appropriate staging for the genre but with numerous significant grammatical errors.
 - Score 4 or 3?
- “In such circumstances scorers might choose to make finer distinctions with + and – subdivisions.” (Hyland, 2003:228)



Research Questions

- How did the approach adopted in the Celpe-Bras assist students to be more confident in the usage of the Portuguese language?
- How did the adoption of the Celpe-Bras correction grid affect students' writing production?



Methodology

✓ Instruments of data collection

- Class observation (2012-2013)
- Questionnaire

✓ Participant

- Students (N=7) who joined the Portuguese language courses in the academic year 2011-2012 and continued the course during the academic year 2012-2013.

Findings

- **Feeling more confident in the usage of the Portuguese language:**
 - ❖ “Well since the assessment change, I’ve been scoring higher grades, and since the components are joined I have to push to learn everything at once.”
 - ❖ “Yes, I think that it did have a positive effect on my motivation, because sometimes I feel like I have more space to be a bit more creative with my writing assignments.”
 - ❖ “Yes, as previously stated, the new formats have made me increase my level of knowledge in the language. We were required to be more flexible in our writing and it has improved me as a student.”
 - ❖ “To be honest, not sure.”

Findings (cont.)

- **Affecting students' writing production**

- ❖ “It assisted to an extent as it was similar to an immersion. I did not have an extensive vocabulary and it helped find new ways to say what I needed to say. It also helped put the grammar rules that we learned into play.”
- ❖ “More complex writing tasks have improved my learning process. It provided greater challenges and in turn, pushed me as a student to raise my own level in the language.”
- ❖ “(...) we learnt different writing styles (...) we've been able to expand our writing now that we're learning about things such as *cronica* and *conto* etc.”

Conclusion

- **Holistic assessment:**
 - increased students' motivation in writing;
 - boosted students' self-esteem as language users.



- **More and more varied samples of writing production;**
- **Improvement of communicative and linguistic goals.**

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