

Research in Media Education

Chi-kim Cheung
Editor

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EDUCATION IN A COMPETITIVE AND GLOBALIZING WORLD

**RESEARCH IN MEDIA
EDUCATION**

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**RESEARCH IN MEDIA
EDUCATION**

**CHI-KIM CHEUNG
EDITOR**



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Chapter 9

TEXTING: A WAY TO LEARN MATERNAL LANGUAGES. A PORTUGUESE CASE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

A case study carried out in Portugal, at a Secondary School in Silves (a small city in the southern Algarve region), with the collaboration of Portuguese language teachers and students, and which is currently being extended to the St. Tiernan's Community School in Dublin, Ireland, enabled the development of a programme that uses txtng (the abbreviated writing form used mainly by young people to communicate through mobile phones and IM – Instant Messaging services, such as the MSN), which is still being tested and improved, with the aim of teaching some basic maternal language grammar rules.

The idea of working with these two schools came from the fact that one of the investigators was a communication teacher at the Portuguese school until 2006 and had a good knowledge of the local teaching system, as well as the school's environment and students/teachers profiles. A contact with the local headmaster and the group of Portuguese teachers was easy and the school supported the project from the beginning, facilitating the access to classes. The Irish school came on to this project also because it was involved in other

initiatives of the Portuguese school and made sense to the investigators to work with it. Besides, it was a school teaching the same levels/ages, from a place with the same demographic characteristics (small town, concentrating pupils from rural areas and urban areas) and the contact with its headmaster was also facilitated through the Portuguese school leadership.

This project is being developed in two stages: the first is at the Portuguese school, involving local language teachers and students from the 10th, 11th and 12th grades (between 16 and 21 years old), and a second stage will involve another group from that same school with the same characteristics in terms of age, grades and classifications, as well as a group from the St. Tiernan's Community School, where testing will also be done with exercises prepared for the teaching/learning of their maternal language process. These groups of students were chosen mainly because they already had studied their maternal language for a number of years and had the tools to better understand grammar concepts as well as the idea itself of application of rules in languages. This knowledge should facilitate the comprehension of correct or incorrect use of language (and the level of conscientiousness pupils had of it) and, therefore, allow the investigators to draw conclusions on the key subjects of their work. At the same time, this age group had daily contact with mobile phones, computers and instant messaging softwares, mastering their use and their codes, which was detrimental to pursue the goal of this project. This last fact was also known because of the teaching experience of one of the investigators already mentioned, since signs of *txting* were frequently seen in texts made in her communication classes and comments from other teachers showed that the same happened in their classes.

The application of such a programme improved the relationship between teachers and students, since they had to share non-conventional knowledge somehow seen as «softer» (many of the teachers had never done *txting* before and by engaging in this experience, they became closer to the students; the transmission of «harder» subjects became much easier after that). But it also improved the student's critical judgment and analysis competences, potentiating the building of individual tools/strategies for coping with different situations, whether related or not to the use of *txting*. As Paulo Freire, the Brazilian pedagogue, said (1995: 83 and 1988: 83), it potentiated the application of a «Dialogical Education»: «I defend a critical-dialogical pedagogy (...) the critical grasp of significant knowledge through a dialogical relationship (...) where one proposes the building of a collective wisdom articulating both popular and critical knowledge, scientific knowledge, mediated through experiencing the world». He concludes: «Only dialogue that

implies critical thought is capable of generating that same critical thought. Without it, there's no communication, and without communication there is no true education1».

Observing the appearance of many marks of txtng in the textual productions of young students, the constant remarks of teachers about this and the reference in press articles about the bad consequences of mobile/chats/MSN usage by young people led us to question ourselves about the necessity of understanding if pupils are able to distinguish communication situations, using the adequate code/language level. Is it possible to learn with/from something so used by young people and yet so disapproved by educators in general? This investigation has two clear concerns: first - using student's experience as txtng users, then referring to examples of this code to teach them some basic grammar concepts of Portuguese (and, later, some grammar concepts of English); second – improving the Media Literacy levels of both students and teachers.

1. Learning with Things that are Close to Us

Learning with things that are close to us is not a new idea, but what is new is using txtng as a valid pedagogical strategy to teach/learn, especially themes related to languages. The use of one's experience in the teaching/learning process is a common notion among many researchers, mainly those who support constructivist theories of education. Jean Piaget talked about a continuous process of assimilation and accommodation that led children to different development stages, until they reached a fully complex knowledge about a particular situation/theme (gestalt). Vigotsky cited the influence of social interaction in the learning process and Bruner (J. Bruner apud M. K. Smith) believed that a new, better understanding of things was built on present and past understanding of facts, resulting from different stages: first, the process of transmission of knowledge had to concern itself with the experiences and contexts that contribute to building the student's will to learn; secondly, the learning process had to be structured in such way that the concepts could easily be learned by the students through the creation of «spiral curricula» (repetitions of themes with increasing complexity and relating them, just as the learner's capability of understanding gets bigger). Bruner proposes that teaching must facilitate the student's search for solutions, driving them to explore subjects beyond those given/presented by the teachers, and valuing ideas such as «intuition» and «analysis». Therefore, the Situated Learning

Theory (developed by authors like Lave and Wenger (1991), Schuman (1996) and Clancey (1997), and more specifically, the Situated Action Theory (proposed by Artman and Wærn, 1995) provide a theoretically relevant framework to justify the use of txtng in classes and in the teaching/learning of maternal languages, since this use implies the clear perception that the world, relationships and, consequently, identities are permanently changing, involving each one of us in that process, as learning is the result of belonging to a certain place (Duncan, 1998 y Leander, 2003), as well as the result of interacting and communication (Artman and Wærn, 1995: 12). The idea of using and valuing the student's self-experiences, of bringing to the classroom their daily practices and their personal «libraries of knowledge» inherent to this theoretical framework could enhance motivation and interest. In addition, it would promote a better adaptation of teaching methodologies to each student's profile and rhythms of learning.

On the other hand, the Media Literacy concept has been much debated in the scientific community that studies media education as well as in international organizations, but it is still being shaped by the many contributions made by scholars and investigators, because of its numerous implications and nuances. In our opinion, there is an idea that is central to understanding this concept: media literacy can only be a reality if educational programs are built and applied to enhance specific competences in citizens in general and younger generations in particular (Aguaded, 2005), since the latter are much more aware of and sensitive to the questions concerning the use of new media and are, therefore, much more exposed to the good and bad consequences that might arise from them. Educationally responsible people are, naturally, an important part of this process, as the agents in the developing strategies and motivational actions leading to a better understanding of information societies.

Many people use mobile phones to communicate, as well as IM. Several studies in different countries reveal this reality: communication industry regulators (OFCOMs in Great Britain, for example, or ANACOM, in Portugal), non-profit organizations and marketing studies enterprises (Kaiser Family Foundation and Pew Internet and American Life Project, in the USA), as well as investigational projects led by universities or other institutions, like the European Union (Pérez Tornero, 2007) and the UNESCO or the Göteborg University and its International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media (Nordicom), or "Grupo Comunicar" in Andalusia/Spain, just to cite a few, reveal how media are being appropriated, specially by young people. Still, some areas remain unexplored, such as the pedagogical use of txtng.

2. Using Txting to Learn

Regarding this case study, there is currently a clear perception that the introduction of txting in language classes allows the possibility of preparing both teachers and students to be constantly aware of these questions. Besides, in terms of the teaching/learning process we can surely affirm that this experience enhances the student's comprehension of language structures, thus improving their use of lexicon, semantics and grammar. On the other hand, this improvement leads them to reveal a much more assertive identification/correction of their own mistakes (and the mistakes of others), gaining better quality of expression and demonstrating a better level of use in their maternal language.

According to the experts of the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona to become a media literate citizen one has to master a different set of competences related with different areas of knowledge: semiotic competences (to code and decode messages), technical-instrumental competences (to use the technological tools used in the message construction process), interpretative and cultural competences (to relate the different communication products and their contexts). The 3 C's model for media literacy, standing the C's for Cultural, Critical, Creative use of media, proposed by the main European investigators in this field is being explored in this investigation (namely, David Buckingham, 2002, 2006; Nelson Zagalo and Ana Torres, 2008; Pier Cesare Rivoltella, 2008; Reia-Baptista, 2008 and 2010), promoting language teaching/learning through a constructivist process. Using students' experience enhanced their awareness towards new media; it made them realize that language is a code and codes have rules. Breaking the rules is a possibility, but it can lead to misunderstanding or, if well done, can lead to a creative process and to language evolution. According to the young participants in the first phase of this study, understanding made them become more aware to these questions and, above all, more "competent" to deal both with maternal language issues and txting use. They became more critical about their own use of languages and more resourceful in using aesthetic and grammar tools. Their perspective about the IM/SMS/CMC technology was challenged and changed, since they understand now, in a conscientious way, the reasons to utilize it (economy of time and money, synchronous communication, speed, among others, as we can see in figure 1), items they had never thought about before their participation in this project. They gained a comprehension about the cultural differences resulting from age gap, as well as from geographical placement, such as the introduction of regional language expressions (in

Portuguese, “regionalismos”) or even resulting from time changes in language conventions (vide p. 8 example). They even realized that the correct use of maternal languages promotes a more creative use of txtng. In what concerns the decoding process of messages, it seems interesting that students use their capability of expressing themselves using emoticons, therefore, they are being able to recognize different levels of significance and complexity in a sign, putting to use skills that involve a semiotic analyses, even if it is at an unconscious level (for example, when they face an exercise that proposes the “translation” from maternal language to txtng or vice-versa, they use emoticons to express emotions). Recognizing the main syntactic elements in a sentence and being able to establish a parallel with what happens in txtng allows them to understand the functions of all language rudiments and take advantage of that comprehension in the use of both codes, promoting equally language and media literacy. These two levels of understanding previously mentioned give students the possibility of integrating this new understanding in the aesthetics they apply on both codes, giving their texts a new found profoundness and grace, as well as a new assertiveness. So, a critical, cultural creative look on this subject is being reached.

At the same time, teachers acknowledged the presence of txtng in students’ lives (see figure 2), and the influence this has on their mental organizational schemes (for example, in creating shorter sentences and going straight to the point in their texts). David Buckingham (2007:3), talking about computer games and internet, refers to these processes: «young people's everyday uses of computer games or the internet involve a whole range of informal learning processes, in which there is often a highly democratic relationship between 'teachers' and 'learners'. Children learn to use these media largely through trial and error - through exploration, experimentation and play; and collaboration with others - both in face-to-face and virtual forms - is an essential element of the process. Playing a computer game, for example, involves an extensive series of cognitive activities: remembering, hypothesis testing, predicting and strategic planning. While game players are often deeply immersed in the virtual world of the game, dialogue and exchange with others is crucial. And game playing is also a 'multi-literate' activity: it often involves interpreting complex three-dimensional visual environments, reading both on-screen and off-screen texts (such as games magazines and websites) and processing auditory information. In the world of computer games, success ultimately derives from the disciplined and committed acquisition of skills and knowledge».

Besides, grasping these new media and how they can influence the teaching/learning process improves teachers' media literacy skills, since the largest majority of them only looked suspiciously to these tools. They reflected on the use, the characteristics, the functionalities and the influence of media, rather than just using them to convey other kind of contents. Therefore, teachers understand not only the construction process of txting messages and its "rules", but they are putting in action something far more important: the difference between media education and education through media by being directly involved in this process, both as teachers and also as "learners", since the majority of them didn't exercise/comprehend the technological potentialities of IM/SMS/CMS. Media were used not only as tools, adjusted for education through media, but they were used as subjects as well, allowing all involved to be media educated. As David Buckingham (2007) suggests, this work allowed us to join these two aspects, at least in the sense that approached teachers and students to a better understanding of media possibilities and of each other and brought students also to the role of teachers and teachers to the role of students, ending a passive attitude towards the learning process (for students) and towards the ongoing media culture (for teachers) and the informal learning processes it involves (and that the use of txting implicates). The first step to learn is to use and teachers are using these tools nowadays (one of the teachers from the Portuguese group told me only a week ago that she is using MSN to communicate with her classes, from her house; she answers questions, corrects homework or just chats). When we use the media, we can analyse contents (think about the quality of what's being produced) and build them, we can focus on our own experiences and reflect on our own uses, becoming media literate, since action is the key element in social/intellectual change. Just as Cary Bazalgette (2004) said: «We have to get away from the idea that media literacy is separate from literacy and will represent an additional burden to teachers. We also have to get away from the perception of media literacy as an extension of media studies, dependent on heavy theory and specialist jargon. (...) What we do need is an acquisition model of media literacy, which offers essentially desirable experiential and learning gains, that promises to develop children's individual potential, and that can be seen as a positive benefit to our culture and to society».

Summarizing, we can say that students and teachers' media literacy can be improved with this experience, by:

- Knowing how media work (in this particular case, knowing how txting works, its characteristics and the features of the specific media

using txtng, just as Nelson Zagalo (Zagalo and Rivoltella, 2009) said: «The task of media literacy is more related with the knowledge to decode technologies than with content, because content varies constantly depending on who is on the other side of the communication tool»);

- Knowing the differences between txtng and maternal languages and their rules, as well as their evolution and changes (this also promotes language literacy);
- Knowing that txtng can be used as a leisure tool as well (all students refer their uses to communicate with friends);
- Knowing how txtng and CMC work - this prevents people from being manipulated or being “formatted”, empowering them;
- Knowing when to use txtng, which improves all sorts of communication and the knowledge about the communicational process itself, allowing users to distinguish informal from formal communication situations (like a daily conversation from an essay) and managing the introduction of subjects, according to the level of formality and also being able to apply different language levels and skills (students are aware of differences and mention even their opinions about the introduction, or not, of txtng in classes/books—vide figure 1).

Being aware of all the above mentioned facts allows students and teachers to:

- Select the right media to communicate in a certain situation, as well as the right code;
- Use these media in their daily communication, for example, to share homework assignments, or notes from classes, or just to solve some doubts with teachers, or class mates;
- Analyze the messages and better understand them, or build them;
- Structure their texts and organize their ideas, being more objective and direct, or using aesthetic tools to give another dimension to their messages;
- Know that txtng emerged as a consequence for the need of a faster, cheaper, shorter way to communicate, since CMC and mobile phones’ use implicates also a connection to a network/enterprise, providing the

access to a service; in other words, every time we use txtng, we are spending money and being part of a business;

- Know all these tools – both from texting and maternal languages -, and become active and efficient users of media;
- Discuss the use of txtng and CMC, a debate that improves awareness both to the risks involved in the use of media (manipulation, abuse, grooming, bullying and others), to the influence of media in modern societies and to the consequences of globalization, as well as to the effects that these new forms of communication may have in the traditional media, such as books, newspapers, letters, cinema, or in maternal languages themselves.

As David Buckingham argues students usually are only concerned with the uses they make of technologies and they do not reflect on them; at the same time, the school proposals limit their skills, so much to what teachers expect them to be and the distance between what happens outside and inside school is significant. With this group, above all things, media literacy arose from the possibility of thinking and debating all of these subjects. The sole fact that students stopped and reflected on their practice/use of media, as well as the teachers, made them become much more aware of the wrong gestures as well as the enormous potentialities of their skills regarding media usage. Once again we reaffirm that this experience promoted critical analysis of media, as well as the use of media, leading to media literacy.

Therefore, in terms of Literacy, there are two major benefits: first – knowing how to use the language, students can better understand the meaning of words and texts, and this ensures a better comprehension of messages, the necessary basis for being a media-literate person; second – analysing the specific characteristics of txtng and thinking about the CMC provides them with the tools to make more advanced use of those new technologies and foment in students, and teachers, increased «abilities of identifying, accessing and analysing, as well as to interpret, evaluate and communicate/select competently» the media (OFCOM, 2006: 1). Consequently, we can expect them to become media literate; that is to say, people «able to exercise informed choices; understand the nature of content and services; be able to take advantage of the full range of opportunities offered by new communications technologies; and be better able to protect themselves and their families from harmful or offensive materials». Hopefully, they will be engaged and competent citizens in a society already demanding them to be media literate «as a result of the media convergence – that is the merging of

electronic media (mass communication) and digital media (multimedia communication) which occurs in the advanced stages of development of information society. This media literacy includes the command of previous forms of literacy: reading and writing (from understanding to creative skills), audiovisual, digital and the new skills required in a climate of media convergence» (Pérez-Tornero/Barcelona University, 2008). These students are becoming more Critical, more Creative and they are gaining a better knowledge of their language tools; this conscientious analysis allows them to master, also, all the concepts involved in this process, improving their Cultural background and their desire for a more personal involvement in the teaching/learning process. On the other hand, teachers are much more aware and relate to the concept of media literacy, something that did not occur before. The use of technology is empowering them and allowing the establishment of stronger relationships and it is building the conscience that they are all receivers, actors and authors. More than just mastering functional competences/skills, they understand the concept of «transgression» (going beyond basic rules) and by doing so, they improve the communication process. Now and in the future, students and teachers will also all be able to carry on the message of media education proposed by UNESCO (1982), the Council of Europe and the European Commission.

This analysis of txtting usage by young people also allowed us to improve our understanding of the characteristics of this specific «form of communication». Txtting is a code; not a completely original one, since it has characteristics common both to the dominant codes used by its writers (their maternal languages), as well as characteristics of iconic and signifying codes. It's possible to identify some basic rules and understand, as Noam Chomsky said that their users have to develop competences, leading to an acceptable performance. It's a hybrid code, mixing characteristics of maternal languages with others specific to Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and it is clearly possible to classify it as a new textual genre, with specific lexical or other linguistic features, just as Marcuschi (2002) defend, more than considering it a dialect (geographical variation of languages). Lévy (2000) defends this, mentioning that txtting already integrates some visual/iconic elements, such as emoticons and smileys (graphic symbols or combination of symbols used to convey emotional content).

More than a «fashion item», txtting tends to establish itself as a characteristically CMC form of expression, with such particular and equally signifying singularities as cinema or television language, initially the object of so many doubts, suspicions and fears and, these days, an integral part of

everyday life. Even handwriting (once seen as a new technology) was disapproved of by many, as Umberto Eco (1996) often mentions in his papers and conferences. Writing, as a means of transmitting ideas using a code and a physical support (the paper), took on the role of social distinguisher, since it was the preserve of a few for many centuries (priests, nobility, scholars) and is still the «barometer» of social and economic development in our societies. Hence, the press has accused txtng of being responsible for being the cause of dramatic changes in language, bad learning and incorrect usage in maternal languages, especially as young people are the main users. Some go further and say txtng is destroying languages as we know them. Nevertheless we, as well as many others (Segerstad, 2002: 262, Thurlow, 2003; Aiello and Thurlow, 2006; Tagliamonte and Denis, 2006), believe languages will not be structurally affected by the use of these new forms of communication, even though we find examples of them in young people's written work, such as abbreviations, shorter sentences, acronyms, among others. This is natural in living languages, which progress and modify themselves constantly, as living organisms do (Lavoisier and Darwin demonstrated this principle), without being destroyed in the process. This possibility is even more evident in languages, which are products of conventions, accepted and transformed at the rhythm of societies and mentalities as they themselves change.

Curiously, the case study underway in Portugal shows that students understand this plasticity of languages and relate it to examples in Portuguese: in the 19th century, the word now spelt «Farmácia» (pharmacy/chemist) was written «Pharmácia». This study also shows that students (at the Secondary level, between the ages of 16 and 21) with difficulties in learning maternal languages had a more significant tendency to integrate these marks of txtng in their productions, especially in inappropriate contexts/situations, in formal communication situations such as exams, reports, etc. They also reveal fewer skills in its use, that is, a poor mastery of the aesthetic and grammatical features of the Portuguese language, as well as a meaningful lack of creativity, equally present in the use of txtng productions. RAT (the MSN nickname of one 17-year-old student in 7th grade) found it so difficult to express himself in Portuguese that when he used txtng he could not decode the basic sentences or its signs. This bad use of both codes causes further confusion and faulty learning of languages. Since txtng is a hybrid code, based on maternal languages, this fact seems to be connected with the way students deal with and learn language skills, which is being further analyzed. At the same time, all pupils recognize and distinguish the communication situations in which it is appropriate to use txtng

This being established, why not take advantage of this reality to do exactly the opposite: improve the knowledge of one's maternal language and motivate problematic students to learn it?

As a result of this case study a small book of exercises is being edited (supervised in a first stage by Professor Vitor Reia-Baptista and in a second stage by Professor I. Aguaded), taking in consideration the Board of the Ministry of Education's guidelines and the goals/available time of participating teachers. Later, the book will incorporate exercises for the English language tested by the Irish group. Many other experiences in the field of developing strategies to create programmes of media literacy were also analysed (CLEMI, France, and Instituto de Inovação Educational, Portugal, for example). Therefore, each exercise proposal contains: the objectives to be reached; it indicates the public it was prepared for; the material needed to do the exercises; suggestions on the work methodology (group/individual work, for example); key words and concepts, subjects to look into, articles/web sites to consult (with references), the activities themselves and notes. Much thought went into the graphics of the book so that they are appealing and easy to use.

The teachers were permanently consulted in the process of building and testing the book, and they carried out these tests on classes of 10th, 11th and 12th grades (on students aged between 16 and 21). Following that, several focus groups of both men and women with different characteristics are still being established (both in the Portuguese and Irish schools): a group of teachers to analyse the exercises and reactions of students; one of students with higher marks in Portuguese classes; another of students with poor marks in Portuguese classes. This choice of samples is justified by the need to understand if poor Portuguese language students would reveal more txtng marks in their textual productions or not and if they would have the same understanding of this code, as good Portuguese language students. The definition of good or bad students was made only by taking into consideration the marks obtained in the Portuguese subject. Bibliographical research, the gathering/analysis of texts (close reading), e-mail enquiries to teachers and students who are IM/SMS users (a total of 15 people: six teachers and nine students, both men and women) were other methods used to obtain information. In the second stage of this investigation, all these proceedings will be repeated, both with the Portuguese group and the Irish group, producing data in both synchronically and diachronically perspectives.

| | FOCUS GROUPS | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| | Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Group 4 |
| Focus Group characteristics | 7 elements 12 th grade Average classification in Portuguese: 11, 8 | 4 elements 11 th and 12 th grades Average classification in Portuguese: 9.75 | 2 elements 11 th grade Average classification in Portuguese: 18 | 4 elements 12 th grade Average classification in Portuguese: 16.5 |
| Who uses txtng: students with good or bad Portuguese? | Students with bad Portuguese | Students with good Portuguese | Students with bad Portuguese | Students with bad Portuguese tend to use it more, but good students use it too. |
| How is txtng learned? | With friends, through experience. | With friends, through experience. | With friends, through experience. | With friends, through experience. |
| Why do young people use txtng? | Because it's fast, simple and fun. Because it's easier to communicate with peers and allows group integration. | Because it's fast, simple and fun. | Because it's fast, simple and fun. Because it's easier to communicate with peers and allows group integration. | Because it's fast, simple and fun. Because it's easier to communicate with peers and allows group integration. |
| Is txtng damaging the use of Portuguese? | No. | Yes. | No. | No. |
| Should txtng be used in the classroom as a way of teaching/ learning? | Yes. | No. | Yes. | Yes, but with certain precautions. |

Figure 1. The Main Opinions of the Student Focus Groups

This experience is one of broad collaboration, and it is successful too, since all those involved have proffered their appreciation, and suggestions and contributions on how to perfect the prototype exercise book and on how to continue the investigation, including the previously mentioned second stage, in which a different language, country and school will be involved.

| | FOCUS GROUPS | |
|--|---|---|
| | Group 1 | Group 2 |
| Focus Group characteristics | 3 elements Between 35 and 41 years old | 1 element 46 years old |
| Who uses txtng: Students with good or bad Portuguese? | Students with bad Portuguese use it more often | Students with bad Portuguese use it more often |
| How is txtng learned? | With friends, through experience. | With friends, through experience. |
| Why do young people use txtng? | Because it's fast, simple and fun. Because it's easier to communicate with peers and allows group integration; Because they don't want adults to understand what they are saying. | Because it's fast, simple and fun. Because it's easier to communicate with peers and allows group integration; Because they don't want adults to understand what they are saying. |
| Is txtng damaging the use of Portuguese? | No. | No |
| Should txtng be used in the classroom as a way of teaching/learning? | Yes, but always as part of a work of contextualization, and with the close participation of teachers in the process. | Yes, but always as part of a work of contextualization, and with the close participation of teachers in the process. |


Figure 2. The Main Opinions of the Teacher Focus Groups

| Age | Sex | Geographical location in the country | Socio-economic situation | Academic level | Knowledge /mastery of the technology |
|-------|--|---|---|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 12-26 | M/F (Some girls have a bigger tendency to use it) | Countrywide, coastal and large urban centres. | Situation that allows payment for an internet connection and the acquisition of a PC. | Any level. | No special knowledge requested. |

Figure 3. Characteristics of Txtng Users Mentioned in the Students' Questionnaires

But mainly it has created a debating space around questions of media literacy, regarding CMC, Chats, SMS and MSN in particular, promoting awareness in all those involved that will lead to empowerment through knowledge.

Possible images to use (examples of exercise work sheets):



PONTUAÇÃO/ACENTUAÇÃO 2

OBJECTIVOS:

- Os alunos devem:
- Compreender a importância da pontuação e acentuação para a transmissão correcta de ideias através da escrita;
- Relembrar as regras gerais de utilização da pontuação/accentuação;
- Esclarecer algumas dúvidas que possam existir.

→ Melhorar a expressão oral e escrita dos alunos;

→ Promover/melhorar a utilização da Gramática e do prontuário Ortográfico como ferramentas de trabalho e de esclarecimento de dúvidas;

PUBLICO-ALVO:

→ Alunos do 10º Ano.

MATERIAL NECESSÁRIO:

→ Excerto de uma gramática ou de um prontuário ortográfico a escolher pelo docente (podemos sugerir:

FERREIRA, A. Gomes e FIGUEIREDO, J. Nunes de, s.d., *Compêndio de Gramática Portuguesa – 7º, 8º e 9º Anos*, Porto: Porto Editora;

BERGSTROM, Magnus e REIS, Neves, 2004, *Prontuário Ortográfico e Guia da Língua Portuguesa*, 23-24, Lisboa: Editorial de Notícias, 46ª ed. [1997.1ª ed.];

→ Dicionário SMS;

→ Excerto da obra de José Saramago

(SARAMAGO, José, 2005, *Memorial do Convento*, Col. Obras de José Saramago, nº5, Lisboa: Editorial Caminho, 36ª Ed.).

ORGANIZAÇÃO DO TRABALHO:

- Trabalho de Grupo;
- Trabalho Colectivo;
- Duração: 1 ou 2 blocos de 90 minutos.

De forma geral, todas as línguas incorporam sinais de pontuação e acentuação nas suas produções escritas. Eles têm diversas funções, como indicar ao leitor o ritmo de leitura, permitindo-lhe dar maior expressividade ao texto ou separar frases/orações.

Não se "escreve bem" se não se souber fazer um uso correcto destes sinais; a pontuação ou a acentuação podem mudar o sentido do discurso, alterando o seu significado.

Assim, antes de elaborar relatórios, requerimentos, regulamentos, declarações, vamos relembrar algumas regras básicas sobre pontuação e acentuação.

ACTIVIDADE (trabalho na sala de aula):

"CAÇAAO PONTO EAOACENTO" VERSÃO 1:

1

Distribui-se em papel pelos alunos (ou visiona-se através de acetato ou videoprojector) o texto que se segue, escrito em "chatês". Divididos em grupos de três alunos, os jovens vão, rapidamente, identificar os erros de acentuação e pontuação que existem neste texto.

[00:44:50] *D1zzY* » te: kdo é k vens a portugi!?

[00:45:06] Mariana: num sei

[00:45:17] Mariana: mas acho que so vou em agosto

[00:45:29] *D1zzY* » te: ok.. 😊

[00:45:43] *D1zzY* » te: entaum e jah tax a preparar o teu birthday?

[00:46:48] Mariana: eu vou fazer so no principio de agosto pq tenho um monte de amigos meus que viajaram

[00:47:00] *D1zzY* » te: iiiii 😊

[00:47:06] *D1zzY* » te: max assim n vais adiar mto?

[00:47:53] *D1zzY* » te: 😊

2

Em seguida e colectivamente, corrigem o texto, passando-o para o Português padrão e introduzem-lhe a pontuação e acentuação correcta.

ACTIVIDADE (trabalho feito como TPC):

"CAÇAAO PONTO EAOACENTO" VERSÃO 2:

1

Dividem-se os alunos em grupos. Cada grupo deverá encontrar um texto, na Internet, escrito em "chatês", que considere ter o maior número possível de erros de acentuação e pontuação.

Fichas de Trabalho

7



PONTUAÇÃO/ACENTUAÇÃO 2

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

- Pontuação;
- Acentuação;
- Sinais de pontuação (vírgula, ponto final, etc.);
- Palavras graves, agudas, esdrúxulas;

TEMAS QUE PODEM SER PAROFUNDADOS:

- As orações coordenadas e subordinadas (ver o Manual do 10º Ano, "Ser em Português", pp. 325-331);
- Correntes/autores que não usam pontuação na sua produção literária;
- José Saramago: a vida e obra do Prémio Nobel da Literatura portuguesa;
- As diferenças de acentuação entre o Português do Brasil e de Portugal (ver, por ex., a WIKIPÉDIA: <http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ortografia> -consultado a 14/10/2005);

ARTIGOS/MATERIAIS A CONSULTAR:

- Vida e obras de José Saramago: Manual do 10º Ano, "Ser em Português", pp. 37-39 e 108; <http://www.caledia.pt/saramago/> (consultado a 14/10/2005); <http://www.cii.pt/cultura/literatura/romance/saramago/> (consultado a 14/10/2005); <http://alfarrabio.um.ueira.pt/verci/saramago.htm> (consultado a 14/10/2005);
- SARAMAGO, José, 2005, *Memorial do Convento*, Col. Obras de José Saramago, nº5, Lisboa: Editorial Caminho, 36º Ed. [1982];
- Ver WIKIPÉDIA: <http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Categoria:Portu%C3%A7%C3%A3o> (consultado a 12/10/2005);
- Português.com.br - Gramática da Língua Portuguesa, em: <http://www.portugues.com.br/> (consultado a 10/09/2005).

2 Cada grupo identifica os erros do texto que encontrou e corrige-os, passando-o para o Português padrão. Depois entrega-o ao professor, que o analisará cuidadosamente.

3 O grupo de alunos que efectuar a melhor correcção do texto, sem falhas de pontuação, acentuação e ortografia, recebe um prémio: um mini-dicionário de SMS.

SINAIS DE PONTUAÇÃO ...«Quando escrevemos, devemos ser claros e expressivos, se queremos que nos compreendam. Os sinais de pontuação são um dos meios mais importantes para tal. (...) Com os sinais de pontuação, ou separamos por pausas os conjuntos significativos, isto é, as palavras que formem grupo pelo sentido, como acontece com o ponto final (.), a vírgula (,), o ponto e vírgula (:), os dois pontos (:), ou indicamos a entoação com que a frase foi proferida ou deve ser lida, como acontece com o ponto de interrogação (?), o ponto de exclamação (!) e as reticências (...), ou assinalamos outros factos, como acontece com o parêntese ([]), as aspas (« ») ou o travessão (-).»

FERRERA, A. Gomes e Figueiredo, J. Nunes de, s.d., *Compêndio de Gramática Portuguesa* – 7º, 8º e 9º Anos, 29-20, Porto: Porto Editora.

ACENTOS ...«Quando pronunciamos uma palavra com várias sílabas (polissílabo) distinguimos normalmente uma delas, que se destaca em relação às outras, sendo percebida como mais «forte». Esta sílaba é chamada sílaba acentuada ou tónica, por oposição às restantes, que são não acentuadas ou átonas. (...) Palavras agudas ou oxítonas são as que têm o acento tónico na última sílaba: café, perdiz, pagão, mulher, rapaz, etc. Palavras graves ou paroxítonas são as que têm o acento tónico na penúltima sílaba: bola, fácil, mala, provável, etc. Palavras esdrúxulas ou proparoxítonas são as que têm o acento tónico na antepenúltima sílaba: fantástico, hálio, incoala, lágrima, lúdico, etc. (...) A ortografia do português prescreve a utilização de alguns sinais, chamados acentos gráficos, cuja função é assinalar, na escrita, a vogal tónica, evitando possíveis erros de leitura.»

BENJAMIN, Magnus e Reis, Heves, 2004, *Prontuário Ortográfico e Guia da Língua Portuguesa*, 23-24, Lisboa: Editorial de Notícias, 49ª ed. [1997] *

NOTAS:

- ✍ Se o professor assim o entender, poderá preparar alguns exercícios ou usar sugestões de uma gramática para que os alunos os resolvam como TPC;
- ✍ Poderá, igualmente, sugerir materiais a consultar posteriormente.



3. Conclusions and Discussion

The virtual space of txtng to understand a conversation or text is, in our opinion, not about studying either the syntax or the grammar understood as structures that require a description in terms of rules and categories (Van Dijk, 1991: 19). We agree with Van Dijk, that grammar should not be made out to be the basis of problematical linguistic intuitions, but rather for observations of the real use of language.

In this sense, we believe that the grammar of texts is grammar, but that it is not a theory of the use of language. The same Dutch researcher says: «speech is an observational block, which means the block that we interpret when seeing or listening to a broadcast. This means that grammar can only describe texts, and is therefore only an approximation to the true empirical structures of the speech delivered» (Van Dijk, 1991: 20).

Conversations via texts are shaped by a series of observational or meaningful elements that shape the speech of a person and the communicative exchange (this phenomenon is much clearer in the case of the «chatter» (subject that «chatters»)).

For practical reasons, due to the speed and immediacy imposed by the media, speakers should express their ideas in short texts. This allows a quick reading, a faster perception and a greater possibility of attentiveness on behalf of the recipient. We could say that these types of texts are characterised by: lightness, speed, precision and accuracy.

ICTs are, in this sense, strongly shaping contemporary culture, producing and communicating fragmented, fast, exact, light and accurate messages that each person completes with their own previous information and cultural knowledge. Young people, despite being educated by means of a «learned culture», are developing perceptual and cognitive ways of thinking that allow them to create a type of agile, mobile, self-assured thought. This enables a form of writing free of digressions and able to jump from one argument to another, therefore able to reorganise a fragmented and broken thought.

The society of information characterised by ICTs is suffering a substantial change in the written language that adolescents use to express themselves. These new ways of writing have turned into a social phenomenon that is being accompanied by no fewer apocalyptic debates or integrated into the different areas of social life.

We think that in the Internet there exists an emerging culture that is characteristic of the adolescents that are users of txtng and that this culture does not oppose that of digital arrivals. The appropriation and new

characterisation of the written register (txting) on behalf of adolescents does not constitute a cultural disaster, it is not detrimental for learned culture, but on the contrary it opens up new educational and didactic possibilities that we have yet to explore.

We are without doubt experiencing the birth of a subculture typical of the new means of communication, which is characterised by the use of different types of language and the recreation or creation of new forms of social interaction, appropriation, new characterisation and the beginnings of new standards and values. This subculture, together with the creation of new communicative registers, predominantly influences the current generation of adolescents.

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