

## Luso-Hawaiiano: Accessing authentic historical texts for the L2 classroom

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**Abstract**

This paper highlights the development of Portuguese L2 language learning materials using the electronic versions of historical Portuguese language newspapers from Hawai'i from the late 19th century. It gives an overview of the design process from the theoretical conception of the materials through the in class piloting phase.

## Luso-Hawaiiano: Accessing authentic historical texts for the L2 classroom

### **Introduction**

While the internet has been lauded for being an abundant trove for authentic target language resources, very little has been mentioned about how online multimedia resources may also permit our students to explore obscure or often forgotten authentic texts from the past. Multimodal tools allow learners unprecedented access to a wealth of target language information and the use of supportive applications such as online dictionaries, translators, pictures and videos makes these authentic sources more accessible and approachable than ever before. With this in mind the following materials aim to connect students with the past and with the target language via multimedia online resources and applications.

Hawai‘i was once home to a vibrant Portuguese-speaking community that published at least nine Portuguese language newspapers throughout the islands (Pacheco, 2014). Whether aboard whaling ships or drawn by the need for laborers on the sugar cane plantations, most of the Portuguese coming to Hawai‘i were spurred by the economic hardships at home, particularly on the Azorean Islands and Madeira. Starting in 1878, Hawai‘i would witness the arrival of tens of thousands of Portuguese immigrants coming from the Azores, Madeira, mainland Portugal and Cape Verde (then part of the Portuguese Empire). By 1900, the Portuguese made up approximately 12% of the total population of the Hawaiian Islands (Felix and Senecal, 2009). Due to multiple factors such as the distance from Portugal, the relatively short period of immigration (1878-1913) and prevailing attitudes of assimilation at the time, Portuguese had pretty much died out as a language community in Hawai‘i by the middle of the 20th century (Proença, 2003). Understanding this history is necessary to fully understand the context of the materials which I have created.

The writer Carl Sagan famously said that, “You must know the past to understand the present.” One of the biggest motivations in designing these materials was to create something that would help connect students to the past and be not only a vehicle for language learning and reading comprehension, but also a way to deepen their cultural awareness and connection to the past. According to Keheller (2010) a heritage learner can be defined as a “person studying a language that has proficiency in or a cultural connection to that language” (p. 1) In this case, many of my students fit the later part of the definition; they are descendants of Portuguese immigrants who came to Hawai‘i generations ago and while they have no prior proficiency in or exposure to the target language they are drawn by the cultural connection. That is not to say that these materials were designed only with heritage learners in mind. They may be used in any context or classroom that may want to explore the language or the Portuguese communities of old Hawai‘i.

In 2013 the Hawaiian Historical Society, in partnership with the Ferreira-Mendes Portuguese American Newspaper digital collection at UMass Dartmouth, digitized issues of six different Portuguese language newspapers dating from 1885-1924. The rationale for the choice of using the Portuguese language Hawaiian newspapers as a main source was multifactorial; part of it was availability, accessibility and richness of linguistic and cultural content. The newspapers are accessible online, they are free, they are part of the [eVols collection at the University of Hawai‘i](#) (and the [Ferreira-Mendes Portuguese American Newspaper collection at UMass Dartmouth](#)). I wanted to highlight the history of the Portuguese in Hawai‘i and what Hawai‘i has to offer in terms of primary sources in Portuguese. While my inspiration, reasoning and ultimate goals were clear, it would take a lot of time, work and research to come up with the current version of the materials. I sifted through countless issues of various local papers before

the idea of what I specifically wanted to do and how I would do it began to take shape. Working with authentic texts is not easy; things are often much more sinuous than neat and straightforward. Moreover working with texts written over a century ago can be challenging. This is not to discourage teachers or instructional designers from doing it, rather it is merely a reality of the process.

I based these materials around the June 2, 1894 issue of a local Portuguese language newspaper called *União Lusitana*. I knew that I wanted to work with an older issue newspaper to help highlight the daily life of the early Portuguese community in Hawai‘i, but was uncertain which one. As previously mentioned I looked through countless issues, before the idea of what I wanted to do began to solidify. I chose the issue because it had many short, interesting, relatively easy to understand articles and ads. My rationale for choosing a single issue rather than multiple issues or rather than using a search engine like the one at the Ferreira-Mendes archives was that one issue would allow students to focus more on content and perhaps be less confusing.



Figure 1. Screenshot from front page of June 2, 1894 issue of *A União Lusitana*.

## Learner Context

These materials are designed for second semester (advanced beginner) adult Portuguese L2 learners in an American university setting. The objective of these materials is to provide learners with a structured way to explore authentic historical newspapers online in the target language. The materials are supplementary to the larger course curriculum, which uses the textbook *Ponto de Encontro* as the main text in a four semester progression (from 101-202). A subgoal of the materials is to have the students summarize and make comparisons of contemporary and historical news in Portuguese, which is part of the overall curriculum for 102 in which they explore (contemporary) online target language news sites and summarize information on their own websites (e-portfólio/notícias, Portuguese 102). Thus working with the historical newspapers fit nicely in line with the overall student learning outcomes of the course.

There were 16 (10 male and 6 female) Portuguese L2 learners at the University of Hawai'i. They ranged in age from 19-60 years old; one third of the students were of local Portuguese heritage and slightly over half were from Hawai'i.

### **Instructional Context**

The materials are designed for individual exploration by the students. These materials have the learner at the center as the navigator, while the instructor is there to play a more supportive, facilitating role. As previously mentioned, these are supplementary tasks that are part of a larger overall curriculum. The basic vocabulary and structures to complete the tasks are covered in prior class sessions. However, as these are online explorations, there are many different possible new words, structures, word uses, or phrases that the learners could encounter and this is where the role of the instructor as facilitator comes in. The instructor can address questions students may have; however the student has a considerable degree of autonomy during the tasks. In this role the instructor must trust what the learners know and that they possess the

ability to use this knowledge productively (Wright, 1987, p. 62). The instructor also must familiarize the students with the applications (Google Sites, Google Forms & Google Docs), going over the instructions, how to fill in the information, and how to submit the form once it is completed. However, in the case of my class, all of these applications had been previously used so the time spent on these instructions was minimal.

In total I designed four modules (módulos): 1) ads ([anúncios](#)), 2) local news ([notícias locais](#)), 3) a funny case ([um caso engraçado](#)), 4) language awareness ([consciência linguística](#)). The first two modules were focused on certain sections of the paper and exploratory in nature; the third module was a bit more along the lines of a traditional reading comprehension activity focusing on a specific article. The fourth module was to draw learners' attention to the language, in particular the different orthographic, lexical, and stylistic conventions of 19th century Portuguese. The modules were designed to be self-paced and roughly estimated to take 50-minutes (one class period) each to complete, with the writing assignment estimated to take 1-2 hours. While some students were faster, finishing a module in about 30-minutes, most took around 50. Unfortunately, due to time constraints and pre-scheduled assignments and events, only one class period was devoted to the modules. I required the students to complete one additional module for homework and to do the writing assignment at home. I did not tell them which modules to do and left it up to them. In future classes, I would like to use these materials over a 4-5 week period, devoting one day per week to working on the modules in the computer lab and allotting more class time for writing and opportunities for going over and comparing answers and perhaps giving peer feedback.

In terms of evaluation students were graded on the two modules completed and were given points for each question answered correctly. If it was an opinion question they received

credit for their response. For each incorrect answer students would lose a point and receive corrective feedback via email. They received feedback and comments on some correct answers as well, particularly on opinion questions. For the writing assignments students received credit if they completed the assignment.

### **Theoretical issues**

While there is a degree of debate as to what defines an authentic text, my pedagogical intentions when creating these materials most closely align with the idea presented in Kramsch et al (2000): authentic texts are those used by native speakers in culturally authentic contexts of use and that using authentic sources for reading and listening instruction should enable learners to acquire “usable skills” in real-life situations (Grellet, 1981, p. 7; Higgs, 1982; Nunan, 1989, p. 54; Rivers, 1983; Savignon, 1983 in Kramsch et al., 2000, p. 78).

There is much discord over the value of authentic texts and materials in the L2 classroom. On one side there is support for the use of authentic texts that allow learners to experience language as it is actually used and emphasis on the potentially positive effects authentic materials can have on communicative competencies, motivation, and attitude (Little et al, 1994; Bacon & Finneman, 1990; Kuo 1993; McGary, 1995; Wong, Kwok & Choi, 1995; Nutall, 1996; Gilmore, 2007; Rilling & Dantas-Whitney, 2009 in Tomlinson, 2012). On the flip side there are others who argue that authentic texts can be too frustrating and problematic for learners, favoring contrived material that will facilitate learning (Widdowson, 1984 , 2000; Day & Bramford, 1998; Ellis, 1999; & Day, 2003 in Tomlinson). While their use may be controversial, it is generally agreed upon that authentic texts provide a rich linguistic context. It is my view that if authentic texts are approached in a careful, structured, well-thought out way, this strategy can help mitigate some of the potential problems, frustrations and anxiety that they may cause.

## **Rationale & Use**

Framing the texts in what is known was an important theoretical basis for my materials design. Since they are beginning level learners, I wanted to find a way to incorporate authentic text and situations, without them being overwhelming. I needed to find a context that activated what they already know. As they are familiar with newspapers, ads, and reading articles in Portuguese in modern online news sites I decided to design the materials using that as a point of reference for the historical newspapers. Using an online medium to explore and deliver the texts can enable learners to have a more active role in activating, accessing and building prior knowledge. According to Huang (2012) using online reading materials can allow students to build schemata by referring to annotations and other web pages (p. 5). Both the homepage and each module begin with a brief description, “Today it’s difficult to imagine, but a little over a century ago Hawai‘i was home to more than six newspapers published in Portuguese. Currently, six of these publications are available online, opening a window to our ancestors’ past and daily life on these islands”. This text serves to help the learners connect with the content and activate their prior knowledge. I’ve included it on the homepage as well as on each individual module to give the materials more flexibility, in case I wanted to break the modules up separately or if another instructor wanted to use them. In modules 1-4 the pre-reading questions (antes de ler) also serve to help activate learners’ prior knowledge and to make predictions about the text content.

A União Lusitana: Módulo 2: Notícias Locais

Hoje em dia é difícil de imaginar, mas um pouco mais de um século atrás o Havaí abrigava mais de seis jornais publicados em português. Hoje em dia seis dessas publicações são disponíveis online, abrindo uma janela ao passado dos nossos antepassados e da vida cotidiana nas nossas ilhas. Abre a edição da União Lusitana de 2 Junho, 1894. Procure as seguintes informações e responda às perguntas.

\* Required

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*Antes de ler: Você costuma ler as notícias locais no jornal ou na internet? Você assiste as notícias locais na televisão?*

\*

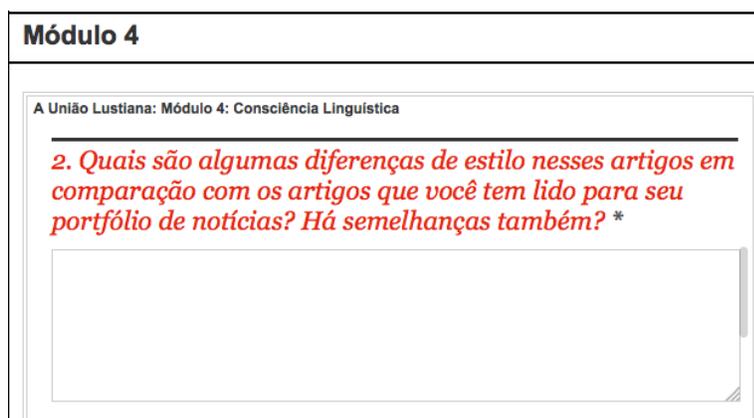
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*Figure 2.* Screenshots from the forms [Módulo 2: Notícias Locais](#) with pre-reading introduction and questions.

In terms of addressing reading skills, the activities were designed with multiple skills in mind such as locating information, recognizing the main idea, recognizing cause and effect, comparing and contrasting, and making judgements. Day and Park (2005) assert that different types of comprehension questions can help learners become better readers. In the present materials, there are several types of comprehension questions: literal, inference, prediction, and personal response. I further classify the literal questions into two categories -traditional and exploratory. In traditional literal questions the answer to the question comes directly from the text and there is one right answer. In the exploratory literal questions, the answer again comes directly from the text, but there are multiple right answers and the learner may choose which one s/he prefers. An example of a traditional literal question is in [Module 2](#), question 1, “Find the population statistics for Honolulu. What is the total? What is the ethnic breakdown?”. This question corresponds to a specific item of local news and has a definite right answer. In contrast an exploratory literal question such as in [Module 1](#), question 1, “If you needed a lawyer, which one would you choose?” has many possible answers and learners may choose which lawyer they

would contact. The exploratory literal questions give learners a stake in what information is selected and how they choose to answer the question.

According to Day and Park (2005) inference questions involve learners combining their literal understanding of the text with their own intuitions. In [Module 1](#), question 4 asks learners, “What is a steamship? Why were steamships so important?” The newspaper itself has several ads for steamships to different places as well as a few brief mentions of steamship arrivals to Honolulu; however there is no literal mention of why steamships were important in Hawai‘i in the late 1800’s. Learners must use the information from the text about steamships and their existing knowledge of 19th century Hawai‘i, the Portuguese immigrants etc. to infer the role of steamships in daily life. Interestingly, for their writing assignments two different students decided to write about steamships, so perhaps this question helped spark an interest in the text itself.



**Módulo 4**

A União Lusitana: Módulo 4: Consciência Linguística

*2. Quais são algumas diferenças de estilo nesses artigos em comparação com os artigos que você tem lido para seu portfólio de notícias? Há semelhanças também? \**

[Empty text box for answer]

Figure 3. Screenshot from the form [Module 4](#), example of an inference comprehension question

Aside from the predictions made in the pre-reading questions, post-reading prediction questions were included to combine learners’ understanding of the text with their existing

knowledge and predict what may happen next. In [Module 2](#), question 3 is a post-prediction question. It corresponds to a section in the paper with a long list of names of local Portuguese people who received letters. It tells how many letters they have and where they can pick them up. The question reads, “What are some of the names of people waiting to receive letters? Where are these letters? Do you think they will get them? Explain.” The last part of the question is asking the learners to make a prediction, there is no right or wrong answer, but it does permit the reader to synthesize the information with existing knowledge.

Personal response questions were chosen to close each module. These questions are personal in nature and allow the readers to connect to the text. Day and Park (2005) stress that while personal response questions have no right or wrong answer, they must relate to the content and demonstrate an understanding of the text. For example in [Module 3](#) after having read the “*A Funny Case*” article about the drunken antics of an Englishman in Lisbon who ends up in the wrong bed and eventually in the hospital, Question 8 asks, “Imagine that William Casey is one of your friends, and that he told you about what happened that night, what advice would you give him?”. Questions such as this one engage readers allowing them to make judgements and give their own opinions.

Módulo 3
A União Lusitana: Módulo 3: Um Caso Engraçado
<p><i>8. Imagina que William Casey é um de seus amigos e que ele lhe contou sobre o que aconteceu aquela noite, qual o conselho que você lhe daria? *</i></p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; width: 100%;"></div>

*Figure 4. Screenshot from the form [Module 3](#), example of a prediction comprehension question*

As mentioned previously the aim of [Module 4](#) was to draw learners' attention to the language and have them notice certain features like spelling differences or different uses in vocabulary. Question 2 was designed to get learners to compare and contrast the articles in A União Lusitana with contemporary articles which they had been reading throughout the semester from news websites and online newspapers in Portuguese. The idea is to get them to compare (and contrast) what they read to what is known.

Giving feedback on the modules was one of the most challenging aspects of these materials. While I like the flexibility and adaptability of Google forms they were not initially conceived as a learning tool, so there is no clear concise way to provide feedback with them. After some thought, I opted to screenshot the answers and give feedback via text bubbles inserted in the picture and send them to students via email. Needless to say this was a little clunky and very time consuming. Perhaps in the future if I have more time, we can examine the answers during class. For some of the comprehension-based items it would be possible to use a grading extension such as [Flubaroo](#) to expedite the process.

The next part of these materials Writing ([Redação](#)) was conceived as a way to allow learners to further engage with the text. Connecting reading and writing has been shown to assist in a deeper processing of the material and thusly, better comprehension (Craik and Lockhart, 1972 in Hudson, 2007, p. 282) According to Hudson (2007), combining reading and writing “provides for more focused teaching and learning with cross-learning opportunities” (p. 288). It grants learners the opportunity to create and construct meaning in relation to what was read. The writing prompt states, “Imagine that it’s 1894 and you have recently arrived in Hawai‘i and are working for a local newspaper, the Mānoa Union. Write a brief local news article or ad 150-200

words to publish in our Portuguese language newspaper. Please use Google Docs and add me as an editor”. The intention is to get learners to reflect on what they have read and to use the newspaper ads and articles as models for their own writing. This works particularly well as a culminating project because it also gives learners a tangible purpose for their work.

After the student writings were submitted I gave them feedback via the comments function on Google Docs. Feedback was focused on small lexical and grammatical errors, but also a general comment was given on the article content. As this was a language exercise there was no concern for minor historical inaccuracies. When the changes had been made I copied and pasted the articles into a new Google Doc, our newspaper [União da Mānoa](#), which is embedded into a page I created on the site. The reactions were very positive; the students were excited to see their article published on the site and excited to read each others articles and ads. I also did some formatting and interspersed old photos, sketches and actual ads from the newspapers to give it a more authentic look and feel.

The screenshot shows a newspaper page with a decorative title 'União da Mānoa' in a gothic font. Below the title is a horizontal line with two crests on either side. The text below the line reads: 'SEMANÁRIO INDEPENDENTE DEDICADO AOS INTERESSES DA COMUNIDADE PORTUGUESA NAS ILHAS DE HAWAII'. Below this is the date and location: 'Segunda-feira, 7 Maio, 1894 Honolulu, H.I.'. The page is divided into two columns under the heading 'NOTÍCIAS LOCAIS'. The left column features an oval illustration of a person surfing and a text block titled 'Concurso de surf' describing a surfing competition. The right column features an illustration of a steamship and a text block titled 'Notícias de última hora!' reporting on a steamship's arrival.

**União da Mānoa**

SEMANÁRIO INDEPENDENTE  
DEDICADO AOS INTERESSES DA COMUNIDADE  
PORTUGUESA NAS ILHAS DE HAWAII

Segunda-feira, 7 Maio, 1894 Honolulu, H.I.

NOTÍCIAS LOCAIS

**Concurso de surf**  
Hoje é o início do primeiro concurso anual de surf Duke Kahanamoku em Waikiki Honolulu, HI. Os surfistas competem está montando pranchas de madeira koa personalizadas feitas sem coleiras. Eles serão julgados em seu estilo e habilidades de seu surf e como grande de uma onda eles pegam. Há

**Notícias de última hora!**  
Ontem, acabei de saber que um novo barco a vapor estará entrando Havaf neste sábado com os bens da Inglaterra . O barco a vapor será utilizado para importação e exportação de mercadorias para fortalecer o status econômico do Havaf . Este barco a vapor também apresentará oportunidades para o

Figure 5. Screenshot from student produced newspaper *A União da Mānoa*, Google Docs

The choice to create the materials and have them in an online environment was a conscious one. Delivering content in a computer-mediated environment was intentional for ease of access and potentially positive benefits to learner confidence, motivation (e.g., Chun & Plass, 1996; Kern, 1995, 2000; Kern & Warschauer, 2000; Kramsch & Andersen, 1998; Thorne, 1999 in Kramsch, 2000). I selected Google applications for several reasons: they are free, user-friendly, available to all students and faculty at the University, and convenient. I liked using a website because it could easily house each module, the PDF of the newspaper itself and the final version of our class newspaper all in one place. The Google applications work together very seamlessly and it is quite easy to embed forms and docs into site pages.

Students were permitted to use online dictionaries or translators if they wanted to look up words or check something. Huang (2012) suggests, “To help students reading authentic online texts to cope with vocabulary problems, dictionary applications and online dictionaries can be introduced so that new words can be looked up conveniently” (p. 6). Knight (1994) found dictionary use beneficial to vocabulary recall for Native English speakers studying Spanish as a Foreign Language (in Hudson, 2007). While the use of these tools remains somewhat controversial especially in the area of FL teaching, I hoped that my students would feel relaxed and comfortable since the task was new and different. I also wanted to let them take advantage of the tools that an online environment provides.

### **Student response**

Overall the students responded positively and seemed to enjoy the materials and the computer lab sessions. They appeared to be very productive and engaged. Many were fascinated by the old newspapers and got a kick out of seeing place names and street names mentioned that still exist today. They also enjoyed writing their own articles and ads and reading the final

product. In future classes I would definitely like to spend more time on these materials, perhaps working on them over several weeks. I would also like to allow more time, drafts and peer feedback for the writing.

### **Conclusion**

These materials were many months in the making, sparked by an interest in using a rich local resource for language learning and a desire to connect my students with the past and the contributions of the Portuguese to Hawai'i. Overall, I think they were successful in their aim. While the juxtaposition of old and new is a bit unexpected, the online component of the materials is essential; these activities would be much less successful and time consuming in a paper-based mode. Working on these materials and applying the theory and concepts to my teaching proved to be a valuable and productive experience, marrying some of my varied interests such as L2 reading and Portuguese culture, CALL, and materials development into a unique and usable set of materials. I plan to continue producing materials from these historical, authentic sources. It is my hope that others will use these materials and be inspired to undertake similar endeavors.

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## Appendix 1

### Sample Lesson Plan for *Módulo 1*

Portuguese 102

Lesson Objective: Develop L2 reading skills through historical texts. Build scanning, main idea and reading comprehension skills.

#### Language Skills:

- Reading Comprehension
- Vocabulary in context
- Giving opinions

#### Other skills:

- Website navigation
- Use of Google Forms and Google Sites

#### Materials/Equipment:

- Google forms, Google sites
- Computer/tablet with internet connection
- Projector (helpful, but not necessary)
- Internet connection

#### Stages of the lesson:

- 1) Instructor presents form and shows students how to access it and fill it out. Goes over directions for the tasks. 5-10 minutes
- 2) Students work on the tasks (during this time instructor circles around the lab answering questions, checking on progress, addressing issues etc.) 35-40 minutes
- 3) Instructor reminds students of form submission process. 1-2 minutes
- 4) Evaluation done outside of class, instructor reviews student answers on spreadsheet, evaluates and sends feedback via email or via grading browser extension such as, [Flubaroo](#).