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# LANGUAGE LEARNING

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## LANGUAGE SCHOOLS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDYING PROGRAMS IN PORTUGAL

**Iryna Hritchenko**

*Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University, Uman, Ukraine*

*ORCID: 0000-0001-9695-9010, e-mail: 29121986@gmail.com*

*The article is devoted to the description and characterizing of language schools and foreign language studying programs in Portugal. The relevance of language learning for professional, mobility, self-developing means is shown. The main courses and programs are observed and the advantages and disadvantages of each of them are given. It is stated that Portuguese courses mostly follow the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. A small synopsis of the abilities for each level is presented. Numerous language schools for foreigners to learn Portuguese (Iberlínguas, Languages Abroad, Amerispan, Nikitas Language Abroad School, Portuguese Connection Language School, Eurolingua Institute, CIAL Centro de Linguas, Apple Languages, Escola Europeia de Línguas (EEL), Fast Forward Language Institute, International House Portugal, Margarida's School, Mundilingua) are described. It is pointed out that along with language courses Portugal also offers different language programs for people of all ages with various communicative needs. The description of budget, adventure, family and medical programs is given. The additional opportunities for foreigners learning Portuguese (surf classes, guided excursions and sightseeing, international parties, Fado nights, tile painting workshops, cooking classes) are shown. The private tuition advantages are presented. The free language studying with teachers' volunteers is shown. The main advantages and disadvantages of this method of learning are emphasized. It is pointed out that the choice of any course and program should be made considering the following characteristics: place, intensity of the course, language level, purpose of studying and cost. The further investigation which can include the analysis of language courses and programs for Portuguese people, their pros and cons, main purposes of teaching foreign languages is mentioned.*

*Key words: language programs, language schools, mobility, foreign language tutor, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, language level, communication, communicative approach, trainees.*

### **Introduction**

Languages have been the main precondition for mobility. This is not only the requirement of time, but also features of a versatile personality development. Foreign languages are important for everyday and business communication. When learning a language, one also finds a lot of interesting and new. For example, the culture and

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history of a people and country. As for work, knowledge of foreign languages is a great prospect device to work in a serious company or working abroad. Language offers many advantages to people. For example, knowledge of foreign languages while traveling will help in any situation, because knowing the language one can talk to the locals, learn something, or ask for any service.

The problem of foreign languages training was a subject of interest of such scholars as A. Andrienko, A. Pavlenko N. Prudnikova, Yu. Fedorenko, S. Kozak, N. Gez, N. Chernov and others. Usually, in order to quickly and easily learn a foreign language, one must choose the right method to study the chosen language in the easiest and most pleasant way. To our mind, the most effective way to learn the language is individual sessions with a tutor. However, language schools and foreign language studying programs can be also very useful.

Doing internship in Porto (Portugal), we were offered several options to study the Portuguese language for everyday communication, and later to participate in conferences and other scientific events that took place at the university. Observing these offered courses and programs we have seen their advantages and disadvantages. So the aim of the article is to describe and analyse main Portuguese courses and language learning programs. Portuguese courses mostly follow the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. A small synopsis of the abilities for each level follows.

A1 level. Learner can understand and use familiar and daily life expressions, as well as very simple sentences, that aim to satisfy concrete necessities. He can introduce himself and introduce others and is capable of making questions and giving answers on personal aspects, such as, the place where he lives, the people he knows and the things that he has. He can communicate in a simple way, if the interlocutor speaks slowly and distinctly it helps.

A2 level. Learner can understand isolated phrases and frequently used expressions within areas of immediate importance (simple personal and family information, purchases, recent activities). He can communicate on simple tasks and routines that demand only one exchange of simple information and on subjects that are familiar and common. He can describe in a simple way his education, past and relate them to his immediate necessities.

B1 level. Learner can understand the ultimate issues, when a clear and accent free language is used and to speak of subjects that are familiar (topical subjects in work or school and in free time). He can deal with the majority of the situations found in the region where a standard language is spoken. He can produce a simple and coherent speech on subjects that are familiar or of personal interest. He can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions, as well as automatically display reasons and justifications for an opinion or to present a project.

B2 level. Learner understands the main ideas in complex texts in concrete and abstract subjects, including debate technique – these are the areas of specialty. He can communicate with a certain degree of spontaneity with natives, without tension between them. He can express clearly and with details on a great variety of subjects and can explain a point of view on a present subject, displaying the advantages and the disadvantages of some possibilities.



C1 level. Learner understands a vast number of long and demanding texts, recognizing their implicit meanings. He is capable of stating spontaneous fluent forms without needing to take too long to find the right words. He is capable of using the language in a flexible and efficient way for social, academic and professional ends. He can express on complex subjects, with a well structuralized and clear form, revealing his understanding of the mechanisms of organization, cohesion and gelling of the speech.

C2 level. Learner understands, without effort, practically everything that he hears or reads. He is capable of summarizing the information collected in diverse verbal sources and writings, reconstructing arguments and facts in a coherent way. He is capable of speaking spontaneously, in a fluent way with precision, being careful to distinguish fine variations of meaning in complex situations [1].

Portugal provides numerous language schools for foreigners to learn Portuguese. They are situated mostly in the biggest cities, located in the city centers or near metro stations for easy reachability. Most of the schools have highly qualified teachers with a degree in language teaching. The classes' capacity varies among different schools but mostly includes 5-15 people. The following language schools are the most attended and successful.

**Iberlínguas.** Instituto Ibérico de Línguas is a specialized private school that teaches Portuguese as a foreign and mother language and Spanish as a foreign language. The Iberian concept and the idea of Iberia, in the scope of modern commercial and business relationships has gained greater visibility in the European market and the world-wide market-space [1]. This school provides extensive (10 weeks, 40 hours) and intensive (2 weeks, 30 hours) courses. They follow the general programs and at the end of the course provide students with the certificate.

The main advantage of these courses is main focus on one language learning, work with native speakers, and great learning atmosphere on classes. The teachers are friendly, eager to help with not understandable words and expressions. The communicative approach is mainly used here.

**Languages Abroad.** Students learn more about the culture of the country as well as its people's way of life as they attend intensive language classes. They are taught by native speakers, many of which have graduated from University or have already gained years of teaching experience. The schools are situated in two cities – Lisbon, a remarkably safe capital city and a perfect place to learn Portuguese in Portugal, and Faro, a charming walled city with and fascinating old town and historical monuments [2].

The Lisbon school is located in the city center and also has another two study locations across the city, all located around the Saldanha Square area and close to the beautiful Eduard VII Park. It offers a friendly yet professional atmosphere and has taught Portuguese to foreign students for over 20 years! The program is open to all students of all language skill levels and adjustments can be made if necessary. There is a maximum class size of 8 students which allows teachers to get up close and personal with each student's needs and language abilities. All students are required to take a placement test on the first day of classes to ensure they're enrolled in the appropriate fluency level and class. [2].



In Faro the courses have additional cultural excursions where students can learn a lot about the city and Portugal. All of courses start on Mondays and end on Fridays, each class is typically 50 minutes. The school is recognized by the «Instituto de Cultura e Lingua Portuguesa» the official entity for Portuguese language programs and institutions [2].

The advantages of Languages Abroad courses are following: the classrooms are equipped with audio visual equipment, computers, and a social area for students; teachers often use interactive materials in class to enhance the learning materials. In addition, there are also excursions students can go on and explore the city with their classmates.

**Amerispan.** Being one of the leading agencies in North America, this program has helped the students with great experience in study abroad education for almost 20 years. The program offers the best available and realistic options among the many and makes it easy to reach a conclusion in a short period of time. The quality of the language course is the most crucial feature for a student. The experience of the school, the educational materials they provide and the international credibility are the top three features for a successful study abroad experience [3].

The advantages of the above mentioned program are the following. Amerispan gives students all details about the climate, culture and socio-economic life of the country. The teachers are native speakers. The classes are held for 3 or 5 hrs/day. Portuguese Group classes contain maximum 8 students that give an incredible opportunity to really start communicating. The program also includes cultural and organized activities. At the end students get the Certificate.

**Nikitas Language Abroad School.** The standard Portuguese course is offered in either Faro or Lisbon and comes with an optional internship program. The distinctive feature of this school is learning Brazilian and African Portuguese. These courses are available in one-on-one lessons or in a private group [4].

**Portuguese Connection Language School.** The courses are offered to beginner, intermediate, advanced, and professional students with specific needs. Classes start any Monday, and are held Monday through Friday. Choosing individual classes has, of course, its own advantages. Students can benefit from a private teacher, one-to-one lessons, focusing on their special needs more easily, identifying the areas for improvement, and constant feedback on their language progress. The teacher can actually tailor his or her teaching style to the abilities of each student, who can learn at his own pace and in a more effective way [5]. This is the private course of 4 classes of 50 minutes recommended for those who want a more personalized and individual approach and faster paced learning. The teacher will be focused on individual language learning, ready to help a student to improve and overcome any difficulties he or she may have. Besides, learners can choose the subject they want to work on themselves. Some students prefer to have a class outside the school, for example, to go to the market, a cafe, a bookshop or elsewhere.

**Eurolingua Institute.** Eurolingua offers students of all ages and levels an opportunity to learn Portuguese in Portugal and benefit from one-to-one tuition in some of the most unique locations. Students live in the homes of highly-qualified private tutors. They experience authentic Portuguese lifestyle while sharing meals



and all aspects of social and cultural life with local family. They also benefit from lots of conversational practice by meeting people in the local community while exploring the beauty of the country [6]. This homestay program ensures language fluency in the shortest possible time and is open to students between 16 and 75 years old, from beginner to advanced levels. Students choose between 10, 15 or 20 tutorial hours per week. The remaining time may be spent in private study, on planned excursions in the local community or conversing informally with the tutor, family and friends. At the end of studying all students receive an attractive and validated Eurolingua Diploma to complement their CV or display in their home or office.

The main advantage of this program is that students gain valuable language experience in a range of every day situations, participating in tutor's social, family and cultural activities. The tutor takes a student on excursions, providing opportunities to practice his skills in real-life situations.

The other advantages are the following:

- personalized one-to-one tuition for spectacular results;
- the best way to learn or improve the spoken language;
- all ages 16-75 years welcome and all levels beginners to advanced;
- for business, pleasure, travel or examinations;
- available 52 weeks year round;
- guaranteed complete immersion in the language and culture;
- participation in family life, with social, cultural and leisure activities;
- meeting of tutor's friends, neighbours and professional colleagues;
- guided excursions to places of historical and cultural interest;
- attendance diploma validated by the Eurolingua Institute [6].

**CIAL Centro de Linguas.** This is the pioneer school for Portuguese in Portugal. Founded in 1959, CIAL is the oldest language school in Lisbon that is still in operation. Every year, more than a thousand students follow courses with the school, which boasts 20 classrooms in two different buildings. CIAL also has a campus in Faro with six classrooms. Apart from regular and intensive Portuguese language courses, CIAL Centro de Linguas also offers special programs such as Portuguese plus Surf, Portuguese plus Volunteering, and Portuguese plus Professional Internships [7]. The main advantage is that students are encouraged to use CIAL's audio, video and library facilities in order to practice language skills. Another plus is employment of only qualified, friendly and highly professional teachers. Refresher courses are held regularly to bring staff up-to-date in techniques and materials.

**Apple Languages.** This Portuguese language school in Lisbon is ideally located in the centre of Lisbon, close to the Saldanha Square. The school occupies a building with 18 classrooms, and is equipped with TV and audio-visual facilities, a student room, and kitchen where learners can make drinks and snacks during lesson breaks. Free wireless Internet access is available throughout the school [8].

At this school, students can learn Portuguese on a «Semi-Intensive» Portuguese course (15 lessons/week), or on a «Super Intensive» Portuguese course (25 lessons/week). Or, they can choose a «Combined» Portuguese course, which is a combination of the «Intensive» course plus 5 or 10 private Portuguese lessons each week. The maximum class size at the school is just 8 students per class, providing



lots of personal attention to each and every student. The main distinctive feature of this school is that in addition to the Portuguese language courses, it also offers a «Portuguese for Teachers» course which is aimed at those teaching Portuguese as a foreign language. The other distinctive feature is that the school also offers a «Portuguese and Surfing course» which combines 15 language lessons with additional surf lessons, which can be taken in the afternoons, after language lessons have finished for the day. The cost of the Portuguese and Surfing course includes transportation to and from the surf beaches and equipment (wetsuit and surf board).

**Escola Europeia de Línguas (EEL).** Escola Europeia de Línguas is a Portuguese language school base in Lisbon that specializes in providing Portuguese and multinational companies, as well as professional individuals of all nationalities with Portuguese courses that combine teaching quality, flexibility and individual attention [9].

**Fast Forward Language Institute.** Since 1991, Fast Forward has been devoted to providing high quality and personalized instruction in Portuguese for foreigners. All of their teachers are professional and experienced native instructors, university graduated and trained in Fast Forward's direct approach to language teaching. These flexible course programs accommodate anyone who wants to learn, revisit or perfect their Portuguese. They also offer intimate access to culture through language immersion in four different locations [10].

**International House Portugal.** The first IH school in Portugal was set up in 1963 in Lisbon with specific, clear-cut objectives: to offer the highest quality at all times, to ensure constant professional and teaching development and to respond to all customer requirements in an efficient and friendly manner. Since 1963 IH has spread to nine more cities in Portugal, employs over 150 people and has trained more than 200 000 students of English and other languages [11].

The main advantage of International House schools is that they only employ teachers with universally recognized qualifications, many of whom are specialists in particular teaching fields and renowned authors. Their teaching methods are highly respected and International House has become the leading provider of teacher training to the language industry.

**Margarida's School.** Margarida's School was started in 1981 by Margarida Alberty. Margarida has dedicated 20 years to making Portuguese lessons enjoyable for newcomers to Portugal. Going beyond the textbook material is what makes learning at Margarida's School unique. Everything started with her passion for mastering many languages; she is fluent in seven. At age 17, influenced by her mother, a Latin and French teacher, Margarida started to give Portuguese lessons to foreigners. She continued teaching while taking a licenciatura in Germanic Languages at the Faculdade de Letras in Lisbon. Over three decades later, Margarida's School has around 600 students a year, and 20 teachers teaching 18 different languages [12].

Creative teaching tools, such as board games and flash cards are used to reinforce grammar as well as vocabulary. Among the advantages is also learning about Portuguese history, poetry, music, customs and culture. The school also organizes guided excursions and sightseeing, international parties, Fado nights, tile painting workshops, cooking class (Portuguese and international cuisine).



**Mundilingua.** Mundilingua was founded in 1987 and is located in Portimao, Algarve. The diversity of methods and flexibility in meeting the individual needs and interests of the students are the foundation of this successful language courses. They teach the Portuguese language both for private needs and for professional purposes, for both beginners and advanced students [13].

Their main concern is to familiarize the student with the different aspects of the language in a pleasant, private atmosphere: understanding both the spoken and the written word, systematic acquirement of the necessary grammar, and the ability to speak and use the language with confidence.

Along with language courses Portugal also offer different language programs for people of all ages with various communicative needs.

**Budget Academic Programs in Portugal with CSA.** This is high quality, non-profit programs held at Universities, Colleges, and Institutes.

Specific dates are given upon request, and in confirmation documents. The participants of these programs are college students as well as adults [14].

The program's length can cover a year, a semester, a quarter (trimester) or summer. It also can be held monthly or weekly. The language levels are Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior. Director and staff are available to assist all students. Students can stay at campus residences, nearby flats, local host families, or arrange their own accomodation. They are able to experience different cultures and languages and gain a global perspective. They also learn to adapt to other cultures and become more diverse minded.

Another option of learning a language is *private tuition* and accommodation in the home of a language teacher. This is the most intensive language immersion. Perfect for those individuals who do not want a classroom setting, would like private tuition and enjoy the experience of living with a host family abroad [14].

Student can learn chosen language at his own pace, each day living in the language, chatting with locals, enjoying lessons in the teacher's home speaking only the language he is learning with family members. Students are free to make their own travel arrangements. They arrive independently into the location (mostly on Sunday). Language courses start on Monday and finish on Friday. The advantages are: immersion on language environment, learning of basic things for communication, making new friends abroad, knowing about country life style and traditions from locals. Study takes place in the teacher's home. Family provides orientation on first day. All of the teachers have a university degree (or equivalent) or a recognized teaching certificate. The disadvantages are: the choice of the family is made by agency, lack of learning time (though the course can be extended depending on the payment possibility), not affordable for everyone.

**Adventure Programs.** More and more students are participating in adventure programs. They take a full schedule of language classes. Outside of class they have the chance to take options such as surfing classes or get a SCUBA certification. The advantages of such programs are: great exploration experience, participating in walking tours, sports events, improvement of communication skills directly after classes.



**Family Programs.** Most of the locations can accept the entire family into their programs. Adults study with other adults, and the teens or juniors study with others their ages or in a private class setting. The advantages of such programs are: traveling and studying together, practicing new language skills with family members, great way to learn something new while on vacation.

**Medical Programs.** A2Z Languages offers a variety of innovative medical programs. Students take a language course focused on medical terminology. After classes and based on location they can visit hospitals, shadow medical personnel, help at local clinics, etc. It helps quickly improve the language proficiency and find a job abroad [14]. The third and last aspect is learning language for free with a help of a volunteer.

**Studying Portuguese with volunteers.** The universities and colleges also offer free courses with volunteer-teachers. They are native speakers but may not have a degree in teaching languages. The classes are held twice a week, each class takes 1 h or 1 h 30 min. The topics vary due to students' needs and mostly cover general language knowledge.

### **Conclusions**

The advantages of such courses are: free language learning, involving less time for studying, interesting and individual approaches of each volunteer, different excursions and field trips for knowing country life better. To disadvantages we can include: no grammar rules, lack of a particular training program, chaotic studying process, no language certificate at the end of the studies.

Having observed each of the courses and language learning programs as well as working with volunteer teacher gave us opportunity to see advantages and disadvantages of each of them. In general, it can be stated that the choice of any course and program should be made considering the following characteristics: place, intensity of the course, language level, purpose of studying and cost. The further investigation can include the analysis of language courses and programs for Portuguese people, their pros and cons, main purposes of teaching foreign languages.

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