

**ORAL HISTORY AS A DIDACTIC STRATEGY IN THE TEACHING OF
PORTUGUESE AS A HERITAGE LANGUAGE**

**A HISTÓRIA ORAL COMO ESTRATÉGIA DIDÁTICA NO ENSINO DE
PORTUGUÊS LÍNGUA DE HERANÇA**

**LA HISTORIA ORAL COMO ESTRATEGIA DIDÁCTICA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL
PORTUGUÉS COMO LENGUA DE HERENCIA**

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ABSTRACT: This text presents one of the projects proposed by us in a class of Portuguese as a heritage language, in a university context. This project, and didactic strategy, consisted of the so-called oral history, already widely used in the most diverse scientific areas for a long time, and which we resorted to in the specific context of language teaching. In this text, we will not only present, in general, the theoretical lines that guided us to implement this strategy in the classroom, but we will also describe the project itself and analyze some of the collected information, as a way to demonstrate the potential inherent to the use of this form of action in such a specific, and relevant, field, such as learning a language, in general, and an heritage language, more in particular.

KEYWORDS: Didactic strategies. Oral history. Portuguese heritage language.

RESUMO: Este texto apresenta um dos projetos por nós propostos numa turma de português como língua de herança, em contexto universitário. Consistiu este projeto, e estratégia didática, na designada história oral, já muito utilizada nas mais diversas áreas científicas, desde há muito tempo, e a que então recorreremos no quadro específico do ensino de línguas. Neste nosso texto, não só apresentaremos, em traços gerais, as linhas teóricas porque nos orientámos, para a implementação desta estratégia, em sala de aula, como também descreveremos o próprio projeto e analisaremos alguma da informação recolhida, como forma de procurarmos demonstrar as potencialidades inerentes ao uso desta forma de atuação num campo tão específico, e relevante, como o da aprendizagem de uma língua, em geral, e de uma língua de herança, mais em particular.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Estratégias didáticas. História oral. Português língua de herança.

RESUMEN: Este texto presenta uno de los proyectos propuestos por nosotros en una clase de portugués como lengua de herencia, en un contexto universitario. Este proyecto, y estrategia didáctica, consistió en la llamada historia oral, ya ampliamente utilizada en las más diversas áreas científicas durante mucho tiempo, y a la que recurrimos en el contexto

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específico de la enseñanza de lenguas. En este texto, no solo presentaremos, en general, las líneas teóricas que nos guiaron para implementar esta estrategia en el aula, sino que también describiremos el proyecto en sí y analizaremos parte de la información recopilada, como una forma de demostrar el potencial inherente al uso de esta forma de acción en un campo tan específico, y relevante, como es el aprendizaje de una lengua, en general, y una lengua de herencia, en particular.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Estrategias didácticas. Historia oral. Portugués como lengua de herencia.*

Introduction

Students who learn a heritage language carry, in themselves, an incalculable set of experiences related, in particular, to the language and culture of their community of origin. The use of the so-called oral history - "a history built around people", according to Paul Thompson (ORAL HISTORY CENTER, 2021) -, summarized and globally conceived as the collection and study of historical information through sound recordings of interviews to people with a personal knowledge of past events (ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION, 2021), is, therefore, and in the field of education, a fruitful opportunity to have such knowledge summoned and revealed, through, for example, the creation, by the teachers, of learning opportunities (even more, at least) significant for the students, especially when family members of the students are (also) seen as producers of knowledge. Inscribing us, therefore, in the line of work that seeks to counteract the recurrent trend of not exploring, at least in all its fullness, all the experiences lived outside the classroom, by the learner of a heritage language (BURGO; 2016; FERNANDES, 2018), we focus precisely in this text on a proposal we made to our group of speakers of Portuguese as a heritage language, in a public university in North America, and with a large community of Portuguese speakers. This proposal of ours, which consisted, therefore, in an oral history project - albeit with the necessary adaptations -, aiming, roughly, at (re)connecting learners with their (Lusophone) heritage, while stimulating their own cultural awareness, comprised the two main stages: the elaboration of an interview with a Portuguese-speaker (a direct relative of the student, and with whom he/she lived, in the same host society); and the preparation of a written report based on what was shared by the interviewee.

This text will be organized as follows: at first, focused on a brief theoretical context, we will globally present the strategy of oral history, contextualizing its resource in the field of language teaching; and, in a second moment, we will describe the project itself implemented

by us in the classroom, analyzing some of the data collected, (also) in order to demonstrate the inherent potentials of the use of this form of action in a field, as already mentioned, so specific, and relevant, such as learning a language in general and a heritage language more in particular.

Oral history as a teaching strategy

It was already in 1990 that Freeman claimed that the heritage language was a national treasure, constituting the historical and personal connection that each speaker establishes with that language as the most evident element in such teaching, and not (as much, at least,) the effective linguistic proficiency of students, according to Fishman (VALDES, 2005, p. 411). One of the main differences between teaching a mother tongue, or a foreign language, and teaching a heritage language would reside in this aspect (FERREIRA; GRAÇA; CARDOSO, 2020), since, in the latter, the weight associated with the very question of the construction of a given identity: “More profound than the grammar, the commemorative closes or the local jergas, what must be sought in the teaching of a language of inheritance is to contribute to the student finding his place in this language and in this culture, and, by consequence, meaning and genuine interest in this learning” (GOMES, 2015, our translation). It happens, however, that heritage speakers are (still) sometimes subjected to discourses according to which their knowledge of the heritage language is (only) perceived as deficient, compared to that of a native learner; and that is why it is not uncommon for such students to present, in such situations, a low linguistic self-esteem, if they internalize such perceptions (FERREIRA; MELO-PFEIFER, 2015; 2018). Overcoming such situations would require, therefore, and very particularly, considering the heritage of each learner (much) beyond the development of the language itself, building a curriculum that would understand not only the language but also the history and culture.

Now, it is precisely in this framework that it will be possible to understand (even better) the use of the so-called oral history, collected through interviews, as a didactic strategy in the context of language teaching, in general, and, in our case, and as already mentioned, of a heritage language (ALLEN; MONTOYA; ORTEGA, 2018; BARELA; CONDE; MIGUEZ, 2009; BURGO, 2016; FERNANDES, 2018; MOLL *et al.*, 1992). Based on the traditions of the older members of each family, transmitting stories they have lived and/or heard, to transfer significant knowledge from one generation to another, in order to protect customs and knowledge, oral histories have, in effect, an interdisciplinary nature, as they have long been

used in the most diverse scientific areas, such as human and social sciences and medicine (EHLMAN *et al.*, 2011) and law, with, of course, their natural differences, more or less important, depending on the particular scientific field (BURGO, 2016). No longer reserved (at least) for older and even illiterate men and women, oral histories have even become an important tool in the academic context, as a way to obtain a certain knowledge at first hand, during the carrying out of the investigations themselves (FERNANDES, 2018). This is the case of the use given to them by anthropologists, who resort to such oral histories mainly as a data collection tool for investigation, since the first-person accounts obtained expand the scope of a research, by placing the focus in a given personal experience, already lived, enabling particular understandings related to ways of life and events both in the past and in the present. As for the use of oral history in the field of education, in general, Clary-Lemon and Williams (2012, p. 6 apud STRACHAN; WINKEL, 2020, p. 162) affirm, peremptorily, the following: “Since the 1950s, oral history has been recognized for its strong teaching approach”. Among the main advantages associated with the use of such a strategy, in the classroom, as a pedagogical practice, we could highlight the following three: i) development of knowledge of the content and understanding of the historical context, in terms of the meaning of certain historical events (BURGO, 2016); ii) promoting solidarity and integrating culturally relevant educational practices, according to Flores Carmona and Delgado Bernal (2012); and iii) development of language skills, in addition to allowing work either on the adoption of multiple points of view or on critical thinking itself (MONTERO; ROSSI, 2012). And what can we say, more specifically, about the implementation of such a didactic strategy in the context of teaching heritage languages, (even more in particular)? Without sharing a specific theoretical structure that goes beyond the basic methodology of any oral history - roughly speaking, selection of participants, interview and registration -, as it was not in line with the goals previously defined by us for this project, we considered it particularly relevant starting from the start by highlighting, particularly, that the subjects of heritage language offer more and more opportunities for students to effectively use this language, to which they are also increasingly exposed, stimulating the construction of linguistic and culturally positive identities, and considering the linguistic realities of both the countries of origin and the host societies in which the students are inserted (BURGO, 2016). Adopting this strategy could allow learners to (re)connect precisely with their heritage and with their community, with which they can thus become directly involved, which would (also) contribute to increasing their own cultural conscience. The integration of oral history in the classroom of a heritage language will thus confer an indisputable relevance to the discourses and experiences,

historical and cultural, always very rich, experienced by students outside the classroom (TORRES; PASCUAL Y CABO; BEUSTERIEN, 2017). And, by allowing teachers to insert, in the classroom, either such personal experiences of students or knowledge about their community of origin, they also end up, in fact, recognizing the value of understanding such (always) distinct perspectives, in addition to stimulating important reflections in the teachers themselves, as highlighted by Deafenbaugh (2015, p. 77): “Allowing community knowledge and ways of knowing into the classroom requires teachers to be learners and reflective about their own practice”. These resources existing in the communities and in the homes of the students themselves are designated by Moll *et al.* (1992) as 'funds of knowledge', an expression that is *per se* very significant. And these " funds of knowledge", according to the authors' analysis, " represents a positive (and, we argue, realistic) view of households as containing ample cultural and cognitive resources with great potential utility for classroom instruction» (MOLL *et al.*, 1992, p. 3). It happens, however, that the authors consider that such resources are not yet properly used. If they were in fact used, the authors argue that this would challenge the well-known models of learning deficits and language use, which tend to perceive heritage learners as having a domain not yet, at least, good enough. Still, the truth is that much work in this regard has also already been done, in terms, therefore, of using oral history both in the language class in general and in the heritage language class more in particular, and as it can also be seen by the various and recent publications that have seen the light of day (ALLEN; MONTOYA; ORTEGA, 2018; BOON, POLINSKY, 2015; FOULIS, 2018; LIGON *et al.*, 2009; MILLER; KOSTKA, 2015; NARAYANASAMY *et al.*, 2019; STRACHAN; WINKEL, 2020). And this interest naturally demonstrates the indisputable relevance of recognizing and paying tribute to the (always) unique origins of each student. And, giving a voice to interviewees that the learners know so well, what will these learners have most retained in each of the interviews carried out? What new knowledge will learners have built up, for example, either about the emigration history of each respondent or about their own Portuguese-speaking community, more generally? The following part of our text aims, precisely, to answer these and other questions, related, therefore, to the oral history project proposed by us.

Exploratory Study: «Our Lusophone Heritage»

The context and the didactic proposal

This exploratory study presented here was carried out, as already mentioned, in a class of Portuguese as a heritage language, at a public university in North America, and inserted in a context with a significant community of Portuguese speakers, during the academic year of 2020/2021. It should be added that this study was designed in line with the study presented in 2016 by Burgo, but in the context of a class for speakers of Spanish as a heritage language. And since it is a class, therefore, and as it is common, with an already considerable domain, particularly in terms of conversation in informal environments, and already with more evident difficulties in terms of conversation in a formal context, in addition to also in the context of written production, we decided to propose an oral history project. This project would not only help students to develop their skills in speaking and writing, in a formal environment, since the interview technique would require such a formality, but also, and very particularly, we would also be fostering a (very relevant, at various levels) connection of each learner with their respective Portuguese-speaking heritage, and allowing the construction of intergenerational knowledge, by giving due importance to all the experiences already lived by the students, including here those of their relatives, in the Portuguese-speaking or host world. Developed over the second semester, this project will comprise the following steps: i) choice of the respondent (as already mentioned, a Lusophone speaker, the student's direct family member, and with whom they lived, in the same host society); ii) elaboration of the interview guide, based on the set of questions provided by the teacher; iii) conducting the interview, recorded in audio, with the due consent of the respondent; iv) preparation of a written report, based on what was shared by the respondent, and with a maximum length of one page (font Times New Roman and size 12). As for the aforementioned set of questions provided to students, which is also the result of the translation and adaptation of other questions found in works related to this theme (BURGO, 2016), is shared in the following table.

Table 1 – Examples of possible interview questions

1. ORIGINS AND DEPARTURE	2. ARRIVAL AND SETTING	3. LIFE AND WORK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When and why did you come to this country? How old were you? - What did you think, when you got here? And how were the first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was most difficult when you got here? Why? - Who was the most important person in this country, once you got here? And how did you meet? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tell me about your life here. - Do you like living here? - Describe your work experience in your home country and compare it with what you have

<p>days or the first weeks?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was hardest to leave behind? Why? - Still at home (in the country of origin), to whom did you tell you were going to emigrate? What happened when you told it to your family (or close friends)? - Who came with you on the trip? Did you already know anyone here? If yes, who? - Why did you decide to emigrate? Was it your choice or who decided about it? - What are some of the best memories you have of your home (in the country of origin)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was there something you really liked when you got here? If yes, what and why? - Where did you live, once you arrived? How did you get there? - What was it like to learn a new language? What helped you? Or who helped you? - Currently, when do you speak your first language? Which language do you prefer? Why? 	<p>in this country you now live.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you miss your home country (the country where you were born)? - What does it mean to you to be an e/immigrant?
<p>4. CONNECTIONS</p>	<p>5. CULTURAL ASSIMILATION</p>	<p>6. FINAL REFLECTIONS</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you miss most about your country of origin? Indicate three aspects. - Do you want your family to remain connected to your language, culture and past traditions? If so, do you want this connection to be made, more specifically, with what? How? Why? - What holidays in your home country did you continue to celebrate? Why? - Are you still in contact with the people you left in your home country? If so, how is this contact maintained and why? And if you don't, why not? - What do you think we (your children/your grandchildren/your siblings...) lost by growing up here? And what do we win (if we do win at all)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you think you should have done differently when raising your family in this country? What do you think you did best? - If you have parents or grandparents who emigrated, and if you had to tell them, in one sentence, what you think about their emigration history, what would you say to them? - What are you most proud of in the culture of your host country? - How do you feel when we speak English (in public; and at home)? - What is your opinion about the people and culture of your host country? - What have been the positive and negative aspects of your life in this country? - What were the biggest challenges you faced? And which ones are faced by your community? And how could these problems be solved? - Would you like to return to your home country? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tell me about one of the most important people in your life. - What moment are you most proud of, with regard to your e/immigration life (or as a relative of e/immigrants' family)? - Do you consider that you have changed when you come to this country? If so, to what extent? - If you had to tell your descendants, with one sentence, what you went through to come to this country, what would you say? - Do you feel different/unique/special..., for having a family of e/immigrants? If so, to what extent? - What advice would you give to other and/immigrants in your situation? - Could you compare your life as an e/immigrant, when you moved to this country, with the life of e/recent immigrants? - Do you find it easier or more difficult to be an e/immigrant these days? Why?

Source: Prepared by the author

Regarding the written report, each student was also provided with a more detailed description of the task, with a proposal for a structure, obtained through the translation and adaptation of a scheme prepared by David Lauderback (s/d). Generally speaking, the oral history report should demonstrate the student's ability to write clearly, use good grammar and punctuation, and analyze material concisely. The importance of highlighting the most relevant

information shared by the respondent was also underlined in it, selecting some of the topics covered, so that the interviewee's life and the analysis of some of the main shared experiences and a reaction to the interview itself could be easily understood, when reading. More specifically, the suggested structure that was presented is the following.

Table 2 – Guiding structure for the written report

I. Introduction
A. Historical context and purpose You should briefly state what your oral history project consists of. You can start by summarizing the time period to which the respondent will refer.
II. Life history and respective analysis
A. Biographical summary You should tell the life of your interviewee, selecting information collected (year and place of birth, growth, emigration, family milestones, jobs...). Be sure to provide examples for selected topics.
B. Experiences It should tell how all the experiences lived by the respondent influenced his/her life. Again, be sure to provide examples for your chosen topics.
C. Reaction This is the most important part of your oral history project. In this section, you should describe your reaction to the subject of your project. What did you learn from the interviewee? Do you agree or disagree with your interviewee's considerations?
III. Conclusion
You can conclude the text by answering the following question: How has this oral history project helped you to better understand both the interviewee's life in the host country and the life, in general, and in the past, of this country?

Source: Prepared by the author

In the next section, we will present our (initial, and brief) analysis of three of the reports prepared from the oral histories collected, and produced, therefore, by three students, who (more) stood out, for elaborating with a particular detail such written productions: Antónia, Liliana and Gil – pseudonyms chosen by us –; and each one, naturally, with a specific linguistic profile as a learner and speaker of the heritage language.

The case of three students

Antónia: interview with the mother

Antónia was born in the United States of America and her mother, the youngest of eight children, was born into a family with few resources, in a small village in Espírito Santo, Brazil. As Antónia, by the way, specifies: «cresceu com muito pouco dinheiro, ajudando a família trabalhando na lavoura de café e cuidando da casa».² As is also the case since the beginning of the text, despite such difficult circumstances, her mother was the first in her

² Our translation: “she grew up with very little money, helping her family working in the coffee plantation and taking care of the house”.

family to complete high school. Once this stage was completed, she first moved to Rio de Janeiro, with the aim of achieving a better paid job. As life even in Rio de Janeiro was still difficult, she decided, at the age of 25, to emigrate to the United States of America, ending up falling in love and marrying an American. There was also a new move to Canada, and the problems of adapting to the country soon emerged: «o tempo frio foi um choque e ter que aprender rapidamente a falar inglês para se comunicar era árduo».³ The success finally achieved, much later, and at great cost, was due, according to Antónia's mother, to her own mother, and the student's grandmother, who taught her the values of hard work, not to give up and to be determined, as if such teachings were the only treasure she could pass on to her children: «Diante da pobreza, minha avó incutiu esses valores em sua família, seus filhos, que ela valorizava acima de tudo».⁴ As for regrets, Antónia's mother admits to having one: not having “imposed” the Portuguese language on her daughters, since she recognizes “the importance of the language as a vehicle of culture”. And Antónia is even more specific: «Minha mãe me ajudou a perceber a importância de continuar ensinando ativamente aos meus futuros filhos as tradições brasileiras, se eu tiver filhos».⁵ And, despite having been away from Brazil for many years, the truth is that «mãe [de Antónia] também mencionou que sente falta do povo do Brasil»⁶, with «pessoas [que] tendem a ser mais calorosas e amigáveis»⁷ than those of other countries, although, of course, she also knows that «o Brasil tem muitos problemas sérios, incluindo racismo institucional e corrupção».⁸ And the report does not end without a reference to the fulfillment of one of the main goals achieved, with the realization of this project: «conversando com minha mãe, consigo entender melhor a experiência da imigração para [este país]».⁹

Liliana: interview with the mother

Liliana has a Brazilian mother, who soon learned about the paths of emigration, that took her to different countries. It was in Argentina that Liliana was born. And despite the comfortable life the family lived there, the insecurity she felt led Liliana's mother and father,

³ Our translation: “the cold weather was a shock and having to quickly learn to speak English in order to communicate was arduous”.

⁴ Our translation: “Faced with poverty, my grandmother instilled these values in her family, her children, which she valued above all.”.

⁵ Our translation: “My mother helped me to realize the importance of actively continuing to teach my future children Brazilian traditions, if I have children.”.

⁶ Our translation: “[Antónia's] mother also mentioned that she misses the people of Brazil”.

⁷ Our translation: “people [who] tend to be warmer and friendlier”.

⁸ Our translation: “Brazil has many serious problems, including institutional racism and corruption”.

⁹ Our translation: “talking to my mother, I can better understand the experience of immigration to [this country]”.

along with Liliana and sister, to move to Canada. Although the security already felt there, life did not (yet) have the ease they wanted. After all, it was a completely new country, with a language they didn't know how to speak and a different culture; and, besides, they didn't know anyone, so they couldn't have any help. After this change, others followed, even within the same country. And if such changes were already easier, since they were already adapted to the country's culture, in addition to the fact that Liliana's father's family was already living nearby, the truth is that Liliana recognizes the enormous effort that comes with each change, even if always accompanied by an undeniable enrichment, on multiple levels: «Mover-se constantemente tem sido extremamente difícil, mas extremamente gratificante».¹⁰ After all, and as underlined by Liliana, her mother had never expected to achieve the life she currently has. However, there were in fact a large number, as already mentioned, the sacrifices made: «Ela teve que deixar tudo o que conhecia e todos que amava. Ela sente falta da comida, da cultura e de sua família todos os dias.»¹¹ And Liliana's feelings of admiration and gratitude towards her mother are unmistakable:

Estou continuamente impressionada com minha mãe. Ela não só conseguiu se adaptar repetidamente em novos países com línguas e culturas diferentes, mas também o fez enquanto cuidava de sua família. Em todas as dificuldades, ela foi capaz de aprender e se adaptar. Minha mãe sempre colocou minha irmã e eu em primeiro lugar e priorizou nossa segurança e felicidade. Não consigo imaginar como é difícil mudar de país, e como poderia ter sido muito mais difícil fazer isso com crianças. Mudar-se para um país diferente sem ajuda e sem conhecer ninguém parece muito assustador, e minha mãe teve muita coragem.¹²

This feeling of gratitude also extends to the fact that Liliana's mother managed to keep the Portuguese language and the culture of Brazil, more in particular, and the Portuguese-speaking culture, more generally, alive in her house. And why? Liliana doesn't leave us without an answer: «[A minha mãe] sempre fez questão de que falemos português [...] em casa, praticando as tradições, para que nos lembremos de onde viemos».¹³ And this is because,

¹⁰ Our translation: “Moving constantly has been extremely difficult, but extremely gratifying”.

¹¹ Our translation: “She had to leave everything she knew and everyone she loved. She misses food, culture and her family every day.”.

¹² Our translation: “I am continually impressed by my mother. She not only managed to adapt repeatedly to new countries with different languages and cultures, but also did so while taking care of her family. In all difficulties, she was able to learn and adapt. My mom always put my sister and me first and made our safety and happiness a priority. I can't imagine how difficult it is to move to another country, and how much more difficult it could have been to do that with children. Moving to a different country without help and not knowing anyone seems very scary, and my mother had a lot of courage.”.

¹³ Our translation: “[My mother] always insisted that we speak Portuguese [...] at home, practicing the traditions, so that we remember where we came from”.

and after all, there may be many countries through which we pass, but who we are, and will be, will always be also connected to the roots that we soon created when we were born.

Gil: interview with the sister

Gil, born in Canada, is the son of Brazilian parents, with a background in South Korea, and has a sister who is also Brazilian. When the sister was born, the parents were still facing serious difficulties in Brazil, which made them look for new life opportunities in Canada, and in fact better living conditions emerged. Listen to Gil: «Hoje, ela [a irmã] estuda Psicologia enquanto simultaneamente pratica para se tornar golfista profissional.».¹⁴ This situation contrasts, however, with the early days of his sister's emigrant life. After all, and as underlined by Gil, due to her introverted personality, her sister had always had difficulty getting along with other people, ending up remaining isolated, which had even more seriously affected her self-confidence. However, and with the help of her family, her sister had begun to understand that she could not depend on anyone to build her happiness; on the contrary, she should, herself, do only whatever makes her happy. In addition to this already very impressive difficulty, Gil also underlines the fact that «imigrar do Brasil para o Canadá quando ainda era criança afetou gravemente seu senso de identidade, afirmando que muitas vezes ela não sabia se deveria considerar-se brasileira, coreana ou canadense».¹⁵ And it is the explanation of such difficulties, felt by the sister, that lead Gil to also verbalize his own difficulties in this regard: at first, he admits to having had difficulties in living together, ending up by «muitas vezes tentar mudar a [si] mesmo para ser aceito por outras pessoas»¹⁶; in a second moment, he recognizes that he had already learn to manage such concerns much better: «Entretanto, quando cresci, comecei a perceber que não deveria mudar a mim mesmo para ser aceito por aqueles ao meu redor, mas em vez disso, deveria procurar pessoas que me amassem e me aceitassem pelo que sou».¹⁷ And, similarly to what was already felt by his sister, it is also Gil who admits that he has also already struggled with his identity, questioning whether he is Canadian, Brazilian or Korean. However, and as he grew up, so did Gil understand that all these different identities allowed him, in fact, to be the person he had become:

¹⁴ Our translation: “Today, she [the sister] studies Psychology while simultaneously practicing to become a professional golfer”.

¹⁵ Our translation: “immigrating from Brazil to Canada when she was still a child severely affected her sense of identity, stating that she often did not know if she should consider herself Brazilian, Korean or Canadian”.

¹⁶ Our translation: “often trying to change [himself] even to be accepted by other people”.

¹⁷ Our translation: “However, when I grew up, I began to realize that I shouldn't change myself to be accepted by those around me, but, instead, I should look for people to love me and accept me for what I am”.

*Entrevistar minha irmã sobre suas dificuldades provou ser benéfico para a compreensão de minhas próprias experiências pessoais. Entender como ela resolveu seus problemas me permitiu refletir sobre minhas próprias experiências e entender melhor como isso ajudou a moldar quem eu sou hoje.*¹⁸

And a final wish of Gil: to use what he had learned from this oral history project to try to help other people who «sofrem com o mesmo problema».¹⁹

Conclusion

This text presented an oral history project proposed by us to our class of Portuguese as a heritage language, in a university context. The impetus for the realization of this project came mainly from the awareness that the students had little knowledge of their family's emigration history, and also from the awareness that greater knowledge about such a family trajectory, obtained through the realization of a project like this one could contribute to improving the performance of each student in the classroom, both in terms of competence in the Portuguese language and in terms of knowledge about the Portuguese-speaking community. The collection of information was carried out by the students within their family, and the focus was placed, essentially, on the following themes: origins and departure; arrival and setting; life and work; connections; and cultural assimilation. Students analyzed the information obtained, presenting it in a written report, and some of the conclusions were shared in the classroom. Another possibility would have been, firstly, the video recording of the interviews, after the due request for consent to the interviewees, and, secondly, the editing of each video, with the inherent work of choosing photographs and inserting transitions, subtitles, titles and credits, and compiling, finally, all the oral histories collected, which would constitute an important resource to be provided to the community itself. In any case, the truth is that, and despite its very simple implementation, and the (still) exploratory analysis presented here, the contributions of this project were very evident, and recognized by the students themselves. On the one hand, they developed their command of the Portuguese language; and, on the other hand, they deepened, in a very significant way, their knowledge of the emigration path of their family members and of the community itself. In fact, despite the fact that the analysis already presented in this text is still very incipient, the truth is that it does not fail to show the greater awareness that students acquired about the life of their relative, in

¹⁸ Our translation: "Interviewing my sister about her difficulties proved to be beneficial in understanding my own personal experiences. Understanding how she solved her problems allowed me to reflect on my own experiences and better understand how it helped shape who I am today."

¹⁹ Our translation: "suffer with the same problem".

matters, particularly, of emigration, even if a much more detailed analysis is still needed, namely, to better understand all the potential, including the didactic ones, of this teaching strategy. Anyway, we really believe that this text of ours can contribute to demonstrate the potential of oral history as a possible strategy for a participatory pedagogy, which helps each student to look more attentively both at himself and at his family and respective community, (also) as entities with their own voice and agents of change in society.

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