

IS IT POSSIBLE TO WELCOME ONLINE? STRATEGIES AND AFFECTIONS IN
REMOTE CLASSES OF PORTUGUESE AS A WELCOMING LANGUAGE FOR
HAITIAN IMMIGRANTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

*É POSSÍVEL ACOLHER ON-LINE? ESTRATÉGIAS E AFETIVIDADES EM AULAS
REMOTAS DE PORTUGUÊS COMO LÍNGUA DE ACOANHIMENTO PARA
IMIGRANTES HAITIANOS DURANTE A PANDEMIA*

*¿ES POSIBLE ACOGER EN LÍNEA? ESTRATEGIAS Y AFECTOS EN LAS CLASES
REMOTAS DE PORTUGUÉS COMO LENGUA DE ACOGIDA DE INMIGRANTES
HAITIANOS DURANTE LA PADEMIA*



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ABSTRACT: In this work, we share experiences related to Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PWL) classes during the period of the covid-19 pandemic in the Move Program of the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Goiás. We reflect on the global migration crisis, the need to welcome immigrants, the theoretical and methodological aspects of PLAc teaching-learning, affectivity in the construction of welcoming, and strategies for these affective relationships in an online teaching-learning context. We analyzed how different strategies were used to establish positive affective relationships and build an educational welcoming environment and concluded that it is possible to welcome online as long as there is not only an attempt to transpose in-person attitudes to the virtual environment, but the understanding that welcoming goes beyond merely pedagogical actions and is built on the flow of affective relationships and interpersonal interactions, which can be mediated by digital tools.

KEYWORDS: Welcoming. Portuguese as a Welcoming Language. Online teaching. Migration. Affectivity.

RESUMO: Neste trabalho, compartilhamos experiências relativas a aulas de Português como Língua de Acolhimento (PLAc) durante o período da pandemia da COVID-19, no Programa MoVe, do Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia de Goiás. Refletimos acerca da crise migratória mundial, da necessidade de acolhimento a imigrantes, dos pressupostos teóricos e metodológicos do ensino-aprendizagem de PLAc, da afetividade na construção do acolhimento e de estratégias para essas relações afetivas em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem on-line. Analisamos como diversas estratégias foram utilizadas para estabelecer relações afetivas positivas e construir um ambiente educativo de acolhimento e concluímos que é possível acolher on-line desde que não haja somente a tentativa de transposição de atitudes presenciais para o ambiente virtual, mas com o entendimento de que o acolhimento extrapola as ações meramente pedagógicas e se constrói no fluxo das relações afetivas e das interações interpessoais, as quais podem ser mediadas por ferramentas digitais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Acolhimento. Português como Língua de Acolhimento. Ensino Remoto. Migração. Afetividade.

RESUMEN: En este trabajo compartimos experiencias relacionadas con clases de Portugués como Lengua de Acogida (PLAc) durante el período de la pandemia de covid-19, en el Programa MoVe, del Instituto Federal de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología de Goiás. Reflexionamos sobre de la crisis migratoria global, la necesidad de acoger a los inmigrantes, los presupuestos teóricos y metodológicos de la enseñanza-aprendizaje de PLAc, la afectividad en la construcción de la acogida y las estrategias para estas relaciones afectivas en un contexto de enseñanza-aprendizaje en línea. Analizamos cómo se utilizaron diferentes estrategias para establecer relaciones afectivas positivas y construir un ambiente educativo de acogida y concluimos que es posible acoger en línea cuando no sólo se intente trasponer actitudes presenciales al entorno virtual, sino con el entendiendo que la acogida va más allá de acciones meramente pedagógicas y se construye sobre el flujo de relaciones afectivas e interacciones interpersonales, que pueden ser mediadas por herramientas digitales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Acogida. Portugués como Lengua de Acogida. Enseñanza remota. Migración. Afetividad.

Introduction

This study addresses experiences and reflections derived from Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (*Português como Língua de Acolhimento - PLAc*) classes within the MoVe Program at the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Goiás (IFG). We focus on data from classes held in 2021, during the period of remote education necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, in an intermediate-level class composed of adult Haitian students and undergraduate students in Letters, who served as volunteer teachers.

The objectives of this study are to identify and analyze possible strategies for fostering welcome in virtual teaching-learning environments. We begin this article with a brief reflection on the global migration crisis, the need for hospitality for people in situations of forced migration, and the perspective of teaching-learning PLAc. We present the methodological paths taken to construct this study, then discuss some experiences lived and analyze how various strategies were employed in an attempt to establish positive affective relations and build an educational environment of welcome in online interactions. We conclude with some reflections on these experiences, on welcoming in general, and on its implications and impacts on the lives of the individuals involved in the teaching-learning process of PLAc.

Portuguese as a Welcoming Language for People in Forced Migration Situations

While not a recent phenomenon, the global migration crisis has reached unprecedented levels. According to data from the UN Refugee Agency (ACNUR, 2023), more than 108 million people today live in a condition of forced migration due to wars, climate catastrophes, and severe human rights violations. In Brazil, according to data from the Ministry of Justice, over the last decade, more than 1 million immigrants have been registered, predominantly Haitians and Venezuelans (Cavalcanti; Oliveria; Macêdo, 2020), an increase of over 1,000% between 2011 and 2021 (Junger *et al.*, 2022).

This humanitarian tragedy that afflicts the planet has led governments to implement policies of reception and welcoming for these people. However, public policies have been shown to fall short of the real needs of these individuals. Olsen and Kozicki (2020) state that the reception of immigrants encompasses three dimensions: humanitarian, political, and economic. According to the authors,

Reception is humanitarian because it deals with the most essential human rights, clothed in an urgent character; it is political because it is up to the States to adopt measures that enable and materialize this protection. However, it is not only humanitarian and political, it is also economic, insofar as states that are short of labor are more willing to accept refugees but are reluctant when they find that these refugees will seek to enjoy the public service network of health, education, assistance, and welfare (Olsen; Kozicki, 2020, p. 143-144, our translation).

However, the enjoyment of rights encounters a primary obstacle: language. Andrade (2021, p. 203) emphasizes that "[w]ithout speaking the local language and often without pre-established migrant community reception networks in the country, many migrants arriving in Brazil face a situation that does not seem to fit into the semantics of the word 'welcoming'." Given this scenario, we understand that the teaching-learning of Portuguese for/by immigrants should be part of the public policies of hospitality.

Considering the urgency and relevance of teaching-learning Portuguese for/by this audience, we believe it is important to position Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc), within the scope of Applied Linguistics, as a subarea of foreign language (FL) or additional language (AL) teaching-learning, and this demarcation is very relevant because it is based on the audience to which PLAc is intended. According to Silva (2023, p. 11, our translation), "[i]n Brazil, PLAc has been framed as a subarea of PLE/PLA that arises from the learning needs of migrants in crisis displacement and in a condition of social vulnerability." That is, PLAc is dedicated to "a specific and complex reality of Portuguese learning, given the scenario stemming from a crisis migration, from limit situations, frailties, omissions, and absences of public power" (Silva, 2023, p. 11, our translation). This delimitation is essential to our understanding of the concept of PLAc. Grosso (2010, p. 74, our translation) states,

The concept of a welcoming language is close to the definitions of foreign language and second language, although it is distinct from both. It is a concept usually linked to the context of reception, a term associated with the migratory context, but which, generally being an adult audience, learns Portuguese not as a vehicular language of other disciplines, but for different contextual needs, often linked to resolving urgent survival issues, where the welcoming language must be the link of affective (bidirectional) interaction as the first form of integration (in linguistic immersion) for full democratic citizenship.

In this regard, São Bernardo (2016, p. 65, our translation) states that

[W]hen we refer to the target language as a welcoming language, we move beyond the notion of a foreign or second language. For the adult audience, newly immersed in a linguistic-cultural reality not experienced before, the use of the language will be linked to a set of knowledge, such as knowing how to act, knowing how to do, and new linguistic-communicative tasks that must be carried out in that language, as well as with the possibility of becoming a citizen of that place, culturally and politically aware, participating as a subject in that society.

Thus, we can understand that the perspective of PLAc (Portuguese as a Language of Welcome) aims to help immigrants not only in their linguistic integration but also in social integration (Silva, 2023). However, it is important to emphasize that this is not a “romanticized view, as if knowing Portuguese were enough to be well received,” nor is it a “somewhat unequal perspective, assigning to the migrant an inferior position that requires charity” (Bulla, Kuhn, 2020, p. 8, our translation). PLAc is neither welfare nor a guarantee of shielding against the social violence that immigrants face, such as xenophobia, racism, poverty, labor exploitation, etc. For Silva (2023), PLAc is very important in the new start of these individuals' lives but cannot be the sole or major responsible for, nor can it fully account for all aspects of welcome. For the author, “PLAc can also be seen as a form of (re)existence” (Silva, 2023, p. 17, our translation).

It is this perspective that we assume and defend in this work: PLAc as a form of (re)existence, restart, and (re)construction of identities and lives. To welcome people in this context, the MoVe Program was created at IFG and also served as a fertile field for the development of teaching, outreach, and research actions, as this article focuses, and as we will see in more detail below.

Methodological Paths

Since 2017, IFG has been developing welcoming activities for immigrants through the MoVe Program. The action began as an extension project that, from 2017 to 2019, offered a PLAc course to immigrants living in Goiânia and the surrounding area. In 2020, due to the transition of activities to remote teaching mode because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project underwent profound changes and was renamed “*Movimentos migratórios em V: português para falantes de outras línguas - MoVe*” (Silva, Machado, São Bernardo, 2021). In 2021, the project was elevated to the status of an Extension Program, becoming an institutional action for

teaching-learning Portuguese to serve immigrants and indigenous people (Silva; Machado; São Bernardo, 2023). It is within this context that this study is situated.

This work falls within the scope of interpretative qualitative research. This approach in Applied Linguistics is justified because, as Moita Lopes (1994, p. 331, our translation) states, "what is specific, in the social world, is the fact that the meanings that characterize it are constructed by humans, who interpret and reinterpret the world around them, thus creating not a single reality, but multiple realities." The data focused on in this study are derived from classes of the MoVe Program that took place in the year 2021, experienced by an intermediate-level class consisting of about 30 Haitian immigrants aged between 18 and 50 years. The primary objective of the students was to pass the Celpe-Bras² and/or the ENEM (National High School Exam) so they could participate in Brazilian university selection processes, revalidate their diplomas obtained in other countries, and, most importantly, apply for Brazilian citizenship. The classes were conducted through Google Meet, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp. The class teachers were Letters students who acted as volunteer teachers and were guided by a Letters course teacher with experience in PLAc.

The MoVe Program was institutionally approved via a public call for extension support, and all participants signed Free and Informed Consent Terms and Terms of Use of Image, Voice, and Presentation for participation in research arising from the Program. In this article, transcriptions of statements from video recordings of classes and reflective sessions via the Google Meet platform were used. The videos are stored and available in the MoVe Program's public database, under the terms of Law No. 12.527/11 (Brasil, 2011).

Next, we will present and discuss the data, focusing on the various strategies that can be employed in the classes to ensure effective reception, from a critical standpoint.

² Celpe-Bras is the Certificate of Proficiency in Portuguese Language for Foreigners, an exam developed and granted by the Brazilian Ministry of Education.

Estratégias de acolhimento e afetividade em aulas online de PLAc

As we have already stated, reception pertains to many aspects of individuals' lives. In the context of PLAc classes, the affective aspect is the primary means of building welcoming relationships. As São Bernardo (2016, p. 66, our translation) asserts, PLAc "transcends linguistic and cultural perspectives and also refers to the emotional and subjective prism of the language and to the conflictual relationship present in the immigrant's initial contact with the host society." In this context, reception primarily involves the construction of emotional ties.

For immigrant students, the Portuguese teacher is often one of the few reliable sources of information and someone who respects their experiences, insecurities, and frustrations. As Xavier (2020), Silva, São Bernardo, and Machado (2020), and Bertoldi *et al.* (2021), point out, in many cases, these individuals, dehumanized and violated by xenophobia and racism, find in the PLAc class the best of their social interaction because, for the rest of their day, their relations are predominantly characterized by labor precarization and exploitation and by prejudices and stigmatization.

We understand that creating this welcoming environment is essential for learning. However, when it comes to the virtual environment, the issue becomes even more complicated, especially in the context of the pandemic. In this regard, Bertoldi *et al.* (2021, p. 1-2) state that the "COVID-19 pandemic may have made life even more difficult for these groups of migrants, as many educational institutions stopped offering Portuguese classes to migrants," as these are not mandatory projects for teachers and institutions. Given this scenario, we agree with Bertoldi *et al.* (2021, p. 15, our translation) that "Portuguese classes for this group of foreigners could not stop during the pandemic, even if it meant having to find innovative solutions to serve this group".

Based on various studies and our own experiences, we have adapted, created, and employed strategies to build a welcoming atmosphere in PLAc classes. Initially, a table was created and shared by each advisor with the personal information of all students (age, gender, origin, current place of residence, profession, education level, languages spoken, etc.), and this served as support for the preparation of the first classes and teaching materials. The PLAc class was then divided into two parts: synchronous, via Google Meet; and asynchronous, via Google Classroom and WhatsApp. The synchronous class included digital materials, interaction through cameras and microphones, and many attempts, sometimes frustrated, at communication. To minimally overcome the lack of physical contact, images, and audio were

extensively explored. All students were greeted with a smile and a welcome, called by name, encouraged to speak, and congratulated for their participation. Delays, entries, and exits from the virtual room were treated as efforts to participate and were valued. The following class excerpt illustrates the greetings and reception of students:

[1]

[Transcript from class on 06/29/2021]

Saul: Good evening.

Paula: Good evening, Saul.

Saul: Very cold?

Paula: Yees. (laughs) I'm finding it good! Do you like the cold?

Saul: Not really. (lies down on the bed laughing) How was your week? All good?

Paula: All good, thank God. And yours?

Saul: All good, yes.

This brief dialogue at the beginning of the class demonstrates how even trivial topics like the weather can generate friendly and joyful interactions. The laughter and the fact that the student lays down and smiles show that he is feeling comfortable. Small actions that may seem obvious to experienced teachers are not so for everyone. Calling by name, asking how they are, and greeting with a smile are strategies that Campos, Santos, and Machado (2021, p. 110, our translation) conceive as "reception as an attitude of reciprocity," that is, an exercise in empathy and sympathy. It is essential to emphasize reception as an attitude because, in a virtual environment, interactions tend to be more impersonal due to the lack of physical contact and contextual and bodily cues like gaze, facial expression, etc. Online classes require skills from the teacher that are not always spontaneously developed, as can be seen in the words of Augusto, a teacher in the class:

[2]

[Transcript from the reflective session on 05/25/2021]

Augusto: I apologize for anything; I'm still adapting. I'm not very skilled at speaking virtually because it's been a long time since I've had social media or anything like that, so I'm adapting during the pandemic. But I felt very comfortable.

[3]

[Transcript from the reflective session on 06/29/2021]

Augusto: I'm not skilled with these virtual issues. You're watching me learn and relearn how to speak because I had never spoken to anyone like this through a screen, not even a phone call. I spent years without a cell phone. I don't have social media. So, I'm reinventing myself.

Reception is not unidirectional, from teacher to student only. As Campos, Santos, and Machado (2021) point out, it is an attitude of reciprocity, a two-way street that encompasses all individuals involved in the educational process. Teachers in all areas, but especially in PLAc, need training in reception. We cannot expect it to emerge in social relations spontaneously. That's why we emphasize that even strategies that seem obvious should also be highlighted.

Considering that the pandemic was a completely new and challenging situation for all of us, Augusto articulates what many people around the world felt: the difficulty of dealing with virtual interactions, a pressing need to adapt to screens and digital tools, the urgency to develop new skills, to learn to talk to machines and interact at a distance. However, Augusto's insecurity is replaced by the feeling of being comfortable in that environment. The classroom, even though not confined to a physical space, became a welcoming and comfortable space for both students and teachers. We can assert, therefore, that reception as an attitude of reciprocity took place.

Another critical point to highlight regarding the participation of students in synchronous activities is the inclusion of their families and communities in the classes, not only with mentions and stories but also with the active participation of relatives in the activities. It was common for couples to be enrolled in the same class and for more than one person in the house to watch the class on a single cell phone. As Silva, São Bernardo, and Machado (2020) explain, family inclusion is an important strategy for closeness and reception. The sense of community and belonging fosters reception and tends to make immigrant students more willing and uninhibited for educational activities. Moreover, family is a recurring subject, whether in shared stories or needs that become class topics.

Another strategy employed was active and interested listening. We understand that listening to students is the first and most important action any teacher should take. When it comes to Portuguese as a Language of Welcome (PLAc), this becomes even more essential, given that the approach itself exists solely for a specific audience. Frank (2021) discusses the importance of "listening" to students in the sense of welcoming and respecting their stories and identities. The author emphasizes that "listening is a very serious linguistic matter, especially in the classroom context where teacher-led turn-taking predominated by power relations prevails" (Frank, 2021, p. 300, our translation). The importance of listening to students goes far beyond just "letting them talk" or "giving them a voice," ideas we reject as they express a teacher-centered perspective and the power relations of an authority who has the word and can grant it to someone they see as lesser.

This genuine and interested listening is considered by Nascimento (2022, p. 464) as essential, for "it is an unequivocal condition for intercultural language education" and "a necessary preliminary step for any pedagogical practice, from the design of the curriculum proposal to the methodologies developed in the classroom" (Nascimento, 2022, p. 463, our translation). In alignment with Nascimento's proposal, referencing Paulo Freire, we agree that

What is taught should not be seen as a donation or, even less, an imposition, but a structured, systematized, and potentiated return of elements generated in dialogue with those with whom the educational practice is developed. These elements originate from the real world and the perspectives held about it, "perspectives imbued with desires, doubts, hopes or despairs, which implicitly bring forth significant themes upon which the programmatic content of education will be based" (Freire, 2005 apud Nascimento, 2022, p. 464, our translation).

As we have discussed in this work, reception is not assistance, and teaching-learning in PLAc is not a donation, much less can it be an imposition. Reception is built precisely in the empathetic and sympathetic relationship between those involved in the pedagogical process, and we believe it is impossible to develop empathy and sympathy without listening and interest. This epistemological listening, which engages subjects from various loci of enunciation and diverse cultures, actually functions "as an inter-epistemic dialogue, founded on the idea that the contextualization of pedagogical practices must follow the dynamism and contingency of the lives lived by the students" (Nascimento, 2022, p. 464, our translation).

Listening was crucial for teachers to identify the needs and desires of students, thereby shaping themes, lesson plans, and educational materials. There was no pre-determined syllabus. The educational materials were all specifically tailored for the class, taking into account the profiles of the students, including their images, with the insertion of photos, audio, videos, and the names of the learners in the activities. Each lesson was developed based on an analysis of the class's needs and the student's preferences, as well as the possibilities for access to and handling of equipment and applications.

The use of specific and personalized educational materials also acts as a welcoming strategy, as it tends to bring students closer to the activities, fostering a personal connection when seeing their name or a photo of a classmate. For example, it was not always possible to use the images and information of the participants due to the lesson's theme. However, the concern of the teachers to tailor the material to the students was constant and the primary criterion for the development of exercises.

Since the focus of the activities in synchronous classes was oral practice, many materials functioned as provocateurs of discussions, and for this, teachers sought to use authentic texts, particularly songs and videos related to the lesson topic, as well as questions from the ENEM and tasks from Celpe-Bras. Moreover, questionnaires, registration forms, and answer cards, among other documents from these exams, also served as teaching materials. An example of using personalized material occurred in a lesson about professions, where teachers prepared slides with images of professions/professionals for vocabulary practice, always striving to present black individuals, as all the students in the class were black. This involved a simple game where the student had to name the correct profession according to the image, describe the activities of that profession, and express an opinion about that profession.

Using the educational materials as a provocative element, the students expanded upon the activity and shared their impressions and ideas not only about professions but also about the working conditions many professionals are subjected to and, most importantly, their aspirations and frustrations in the face of limited employment opportunities in Brazil. Many students reflected on their professional qualifications, degrees, and difficulty practicing their trades in Brazil. This indicated to the teachers that the class needed to go far beyond the planned vocabulary practice. One teacher then explained the process for recognizing degrees in Brazil and introduced the students to the Carolina Bori Platform, projecting the website for the class and answering questions.

This adaptation of the plan and materials during the ongoing class is a constant in PLAc classes when listening to and respecting the needs of the students is prioritized. It is essential to consider that "teaching cannot be based on usual schedules, as the refugee has an urgent need to learn the new language, since it will form the link for integration to enable the exercise of rights" (Olsen, Kozicki, 2020, p. 154, our translation).

Because they were encouraged to speak and felt safe in a comfortable and welcoming environment, it was common for students to share stories and episodes from their lives. Personal narratives functioned not only as indicators for the teachers but primarily as a sharing of ways of living, emotions (often intense and challenging), knowledge, and dreams. In the first class of the year, the students listened to and discussed the song "*Amarelo, azul e branco*", by Anavitória and Rita Lee³. Each student voluntarily read a set of verses, and anyone could share

³ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtvS897PiyQ>. Accessed in: October 29, 2023.

their opinion about those words. Below is an excerpt where a student comments on the verse "My path is new, but my people are not":

[4]

[Transcription of the class of May 25, 2021]

Sheila: It's interesting, everyone, to know that the person who wrote this song is also Brazilian, right? And she's describing words that are so related to... just like us Haitians. We see, despite the suffering, everything we have experienced in life, and we feel... (gestures with hands interlocking fingers) we... we cling to those words. "My path"... I will repeat it again because I think it's very, very... I'm thinking... "My path is new, but my people are not." The path I am facing. To explain to you what I'm going to say, I will try, if you allow me, to explain a little of my history in Haiti so you know about it. I was 6 years old when I dreamed of coming here to Brazil. I never dreamed of living in my country. Why? Why did I have that dream? Because when I was 6... My father was French, and my mother was Haitian. They killed my father in front of me. He was a lawyer. He had lived in France all his life, there in France, in Paris. Then, he met my mother on an adventure there when there was a soccer team in Haiti. They met and decided to get married. Unfortunately, as he was studying at college, he couldn't stay. He went back to Paris and promised my mother that he would return after 10 years. So, my mother had to wait for him for 10 years to come back. And when he came back, they had a beautiful family, five children. Understand? But we didn't have the opportunity to live the joy of that family together. Unfortunately, they killed him. And the way they killed him, you saw that they were not foreigners, others, they were the brothers, you understand?, it was the Haitian people who did that. Since that time, I told my mother: I think my body is here, but I feel that my spirit is saying that there is a better life out there, something better waiting for me. But that doesn't mean I don't love. I love being Haitian. I am Haitian, okay? That will not change. It will never change. But I feel a wind that's saying, go forth, spread out. Maybe you'll encounter a reality you've never known before. When I decided to come here with my husband, I came to Venezuela, and I found out there is a border that connects Venezuela and Brazil. And I said: why not, right? I'm going to fulfill this beautiful memory I had since I was 6 years old. Then I came here. Even though everyone went through so much difficulty getting into Brazil, for me, it was not so hard. It was so easy you wouldn't even believe it. I came here, and I was very well received, and I really liked it. But, with everything I explained to you, that they killed my father, and I lost my mother as well, a few years later, when the earthquake happened. It was very difficult for her, and she died. She died in my hands. Understand? There's so much history that, in short, I can't tell you all about it now. In short, I've gone through so many tragedies in my life. I don't know, I decided to think about the weight of it. But I'm thinking a lot, you know? There, I left my family, left my sisters, and a brother, the only one, that my mother was pregnant with when they were killing my father. My mother was pregnant with that niño, that boy. He must be 30 years old now. It's been about 10 years since I saw him. I carry all, all this on my back. (...) That is to say, despite everything, you will always be Haitian. That is to say, despite the color, the race, everything you've lived through, and everything that's happening in your life, you remain the person you truly are. (...) So, folks, we are Haitians. We left because of

misery, we left because of insecurity, all that. But we bring our name, our culture, our food, and a piece of our land within us. That's what it means to us.

Sheila's statement is very powerful and could provide various analyses, considering all the information and emotions she expresses. However, more important than analyzing the contents of her narrative, we consider it crucial to listen to/read what she has to say, to welcome her story, and to listen with attentive and moved ears to the life of an immigrant who has suffered countless tragedies, but chooses to tell them from the perspective of a childhood dream: the dream of experiencing the world, feeling the wind, "spreading out" and discovering better realities. Although Andrade (2021) states that immigrant stories are "stories of survival," we understand that they are more: they are stories of life, dreams, and hopes. It's not just about surviving tragedies, but about hoping for a better life, about "dreaming with the spirit."

Listening, in PLAc classes in general, and this class specifically, is not just an exercise in oral practice, fluency, and listening comprehension. Far beyond the development of linguistic skills, it involves the co-construction of human abilities in empathy, respect, and dialogue.

Sheila's speech evoked deep emotions and reflections in the class teachers, as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

[5]

[Transcription of the reflective session of May 25, 2021]

Tatiana: Help! I can't take it! It was such a thing... It was a completely surprising class in every way for me. Because last semester... (pauses with voice choked with emotion) Our class had people from eight different countries, from various parts of Africa, from Central America too, and we had a lot of... cultural... cultural exchange, they taught us a lot. But it was more a matter of acquiring the language. They didn't bring as much to the classroom as the Haitians did: their history, their pains, and the hardships they went through. And I had never stopped to think, like this, how much these people have suffered and how much they came here in search of a better life, and yet they continue to suffer. They continue to be looked at as if they were not people, you know? And they feel that. And yet they are proud to be here, proud to be Haitian. So there were so many slaps in the face in an hour and a half of class that I... am... in shock! That's it.

Tatiana's emotional state during the reflective session that took place immediately after the class demonstrates the impact of listening in shaping the perspective of the language of hospitality. Getting to know people beyond the preconceived positions of students and immigrants is essential for understanding what it means to host. Hosting is not abstract. It presupposes a human being with identities, stories, desires, ideas, and opinions. Listening and

dialogue, in this case, are not just diagnostic/practical tools, but fundamental elements of interepistemic exchange. Moreover, it is essential to emphasize that roles are not fixed in a PLAc class, and one must be very open to this. It is not only the teacher who teaches but also the student who learns. As Sheila and Tatiana's remarks show, positions are constantly destabilized, and the teacher is often the one who knows less and/or has less experience.

On the other hand, asynchronous classes were developed through activities and materials written, oral, and audiovisual sent via Google Classroom and, mainly, via WhatsApp, in the class group. Extra-class support was also provided via WhatsApp, either in the group or individually. It was observed that there were degrees of formality and informality according to each tool: in Google Classroom, the speeches/writings were always more formal, as students dedicated themselves to responding to the proposed task (recording audio/video or writing a text). It can be inferred that the Classroom was considered a repository of tasks, a place to submit an exercise, and not an instance of interaction.

On the other hand, WhatsApp was seen as a means of informal interaction, where students could ask questions, clear up doubts, and send various messages, such as greetings, stickers, etc. The teachers encouraged the informal and unpretentious use of WhatsApp from the beginning as an attempt to establish more personal bonds, not just instructional ones. In line with this approach, Bertoldi *et al.* (2021, p. 14, our translation) recommend

The use of the WhatsApp group was intended not solely for pedagogical purposes but also to encourage communication aimed at social interaction, allowing students to learn more about their teachers and the teachers to learn more about their students and Haitian culture.

We emphasize that, despite not being "merely pedagogical," this more personal and informal use of WhatsApp interactions indeed had educational purposes, as all aspects of teaching and learning are inherently pedagogical, including interpersonal and affective relations. Given that students were already familiar with this tool, it was used in a more relaxed manner to facilitate connection, considering the constraints of virtual learning environments. On WhatsApp, students could express themselves more freely and spontaneously, even outside class hours.

We can affirm that this tool was crucial in building effective connections and fostering a welcoming environment, not just for the students but also for the teachers. In the early months of the pandemic, WhatsApp usage surged by 97% in Brazil (Nogueira, 2020), and the app

became the main tool for virtual contact and communication. This increase is also evident in our PLAc classes, serving as a microcosm of a broader context of social isolation and emergency remote teaching worldwide. Given the significant emotional insecurity faced by everyone during this period, these affective connections were exceedingly important.

Final considerations

Throughout this paper, we have presented and discussed various ways in which welcoming was achieved in remote classes through the use of many strategies. Key strategies included: prior knowledge of the learners' profiles; active listening and recognizing the experiences and life stories of students as sources of knowledge; valuing the cultures and native languages of immigrants and their perspectives; including the homes, families, and communities of the immigrants in the teaching-learning process; employing personal narratives and life stories of learners; fostering non-formal interactions with the sharing of information and personal stories; using various tools for synchronous and asynchronous interaction; employing WhatsApp for informal interactions outside class hours; providing extracurricular support; displaying friendly body language with smiles, gestures, and positive expressions; offering cordial greetings and words of encouragement; valuing the efforts of students and their presence in class; respecting limitations and differences; and using customized educational materials that consider the identities, preferences, and needs of students. We recognize that these are just a few suggestions amidst the multitude and complexity of scenarios and subjects in the teaching-learning of PLAc, many of which are obvious to experienced teachers.

The construction of affective relationships involves various nuances of physical contact. However, in virtual environments where there is no physical presence, the establishment of effective relationships tends to occur in other ways. When dealing with classes mediated by digital tools, in the case of online PLAc courses, this welcoming must be handled with even greater care, because just as a technological tool can promote dynamic, inclusive, and participative teaching-learning, it can also be exclusive and further confuse the student. Conducting classes using technological tools can represent an additional challenge. In PLAc classes, affective bonds are constituted inflows and projects beyond the environment, and by the environment, we are not limited only to the physical space. Thus, it is possible to provide a welcoming environment online by adapting and constructing specific strategies for this context.

Listening to and respecting the needs of the students may be the principal strategies for welcoming them into PLAc classes, from which all other strategies develop. In this article, we sought to show that yes, it is possible to welcome online because welcoming is not simply a set of actions, but also, and importantly, a human stance, and that technology, in times of pandemic, could mediate relationships and emotions. Moreover, the interaction with immigrants, even if virtual, also impacted the emotions of the teachers and was itself a form of welcoming, as we were all facing challenges due to the pandemic.

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