

**PORTUGUESE AS A WELCOMING LANGUAGE IN A (POST) PANDEMIC CONTEXT:
PERSPECTIVES FOR ONLINE ENVIRONMENT**

**PORTUGUÊS COMO LÍNGUA DE ACOLHIMENTO EM CONTEXTO (PÓS) PANDÊMICO:
PERSPECTIVAS PARA O ENSINO ONLINE**

**PORTUGUÉS COMO LENGUA DE ACOGIDA EN CONTEXTO DE (POST) PANDEMIA:
PERSPECTIVAS DE ENSEÑANZA EN LÍNEA**



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ABSTRACT: This article is a reflection on the experiences, paths, and adaptation of a PLAc course during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this context, we are theoretically based on the assumptions of Braga (2013), Carvalho, Sataka, and Rozenfeld (2023), Kenski (2005,2008) on the Teaching and Learning of Foreign Languages linked to the use of technologies, and Ançã (2003), Grosso (2010) and Costa e Silva (2020) about teaching PLAC. Reflections on this process are ways to guarantee quality access to teaching the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture for people in refugee situations using technology and digital tools in an online context. The research results indicate that it is possible to work with PLAc from the perspective of online interactivity and that the continuity of the remote course was essential for learning and, consequently, for the insertion of this audience in Brazilian society.

KEYWORDS: Portuguese as a Welcoming Language. Language Teaching and Learning. Pandemic. Online Teaching.

RESUMO: O presente artigo é uma reflexão sobre as experiências, percursos e adaptação de um curso de PLAc para o ensino remoto emergencial durante a pandemia da COVID-19. Neste contexto, pautamo-nos teoricamente nos pressupostos de Braga (2013), Carvalho, Sataka e Rozenfeld (2023), Kenski (2005, 2008) sobre o Ensino e Aprendizagem de Línguas Estrangeiras atrelado ao uso de tecnologias e Ançã (2003), Grosso (2010) e Costa e Silva (2020) acerca do ensino de PLAC. As reflexões sobre tal processo revelaram novos caminhos para garantir o acesso de qualidade ao ensino da Língua Portuguesa e cultura brasileira para pessoas em situação de refúgio por meio do uso da tecnologia e de ferramentas digitais em contexto on-line. Os resultados da pesquisa indicam que é possível trabalhar com PLAc a partir da perspectiva de interatividade on-line e que a continuidade do curso remoto foi essencial para a aprendizagem e consequentemente para a inserção deste público na sociedade brasileira.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Português como Língua de Acolhimento. Ensino e Aprendizagem de Línguas. Pandemia. Ensino On-line.

RESUMEN: Este artículo es una reflexión sobre las experiencias, caminos y adaptación de un curso de Portugués como Lengua de Acogida (PLAc) durante la pandemia de Covid-19. En este contexto, nos basamos teóricamente en los supuestos de Braga (2013), Carvalho, Sataka y Rozenfeld (2023) y Kenski (2005, 2008) sobre la Enseñanza y el Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras vinculadas al uso de tecnologías y Ançã (2003), Grosso (2010) y Costa e Silva (2020) sobre la enseñanza de PLAC. Las reflexiones sobre este proceso presentan formas de garantizar un acceso de calidad a la enseñanza de la lengua portuguesa y la cultura brasileña para personas en situación de migración mediante el uso de tecnología y herramientas digitales en un contexto en línea. Los resultados de la investigación indican que es posible trabajar con PLAc desde la perspectiva de la interactividad en línea y que la continuidad del curso a distancia fue fundamental para el aprendizaje y consecuentemente para la inserción de este público en la sociedad brasileña.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Portugués como Lengua de Acogida. Enseñanza y aprendizaje de idiomas. Pandemia. Enseñanza en línea.

Brief Overview of the Migration Context in Brazil

According to the 7th edition of the report “Refuge in Numbers,” prepared by the Observatory of International Migrations (OBMigra), Brazil received 28,899 requests for refugee status recognition in 2020 and 29,107 requests in 2021. Furthermore, the number of refugees in Brazil until 2021 totaled 60,011 people⁴.

The report indicates that the number of asylum seekers remained constant throughout the COVID-19 pandemic⁵, meaning that people continued seeking protection in Brazilian territory.

However, despite Brazil having national frameworks for migrants, such as Laws No. 9,474 of 1997 (Refugee Law) and No. 13,445/2017 (Migration Law), there are no government actions aimed at the learning of Portuguese for this population (Brazil, 1997, 2017). Thus, to aid in the integration of these individuals into the country, Portuguese as a Host Language (PLAc) classes are conducted through voluntary actions promoted by universities, non-governmental organizations, missionary councils, and other reception centers. Examples of these initiatives include the PLAc courses offered by the Federal Center for Technological Education of Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais) and the charitable organization Circles of Hospitality in Florianópolis (Santa Catarina). Following this brief overview of migration policies, we introduce the guiding concepts of the area of Portuguese as a Host Language.

In this way, PLAc can be understood as a branch/specialty of the area of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PLE), which arises from the more urgent need to serve minority groups or migrants in vulnerable situations seeking social integration in the host country. Additionally, in this specific socio-historical context, the "teacher and learner cooperate and learn together [...] and integrate for well-being and trust" (Grosso, 2010), that is, through cultural integration that prioritizes participation, aiming at integration through knowledge of the other's language and culture. As Costa and Silva state,

Considering the socio-historical context and geopolitical scenario, we conclude that PLAc represents an alternative, innovative, and meaningful perspective in the field of PLE. In addition to addressing unmet demands by the state (Costa; Silva, 2018), PLAc bases its methodology on a participatory

⁴ The total number of people recognized as refugees is not necessarily the total number of refugees living in Brazil today.

⁵ [Brazil] observed the maintenance of a considerable contingent of human flows that headed towards the country in search of protection due to persecution related to issues of race, religion, political opinion, nationality, belonging to minority groups, or even in the midst of structural circumstances of disorganization of social life and, consequently, of serious and widespread violation of human rights (Junger *et al.*, 2022, p. 46).

teaching culture that respects the identity construction processes of individuals (Anunciação, 2018), focusing on the promotion of citizenship and intercultural awareness and dialogue (Costa; Silva, 2020, p. 136, our translation).

However, starting in 2020, with the COVID-19 health crisis, the teaching and learning of Portuguese for migrants, which had been conducted in person, either ceased or became less accessible. This was due to the suspension of in-person PLAc courses, as social mobility was significantly restricted. Nonetheless, some courses transitioned to remote learning with the support of available technology for both students and teachers.

In this article, we discuss a PLAc course (henceforth referred to as PoLEM - Portuguese Language Among Migrations) offered by the Faculty of Sciences and Letters of Araraquara (FCLAr) at São Paulo State University “*Júlio de Mesquita Filho*” (UNESP), located in the interior of São Paulo state.

Thus, the main objective is to reflect on the experiences, trajectories, and adaptations that PoLEM underwent due to the pandemic, culminating in the format of offering fully online courses with diverse operational fronts and themes to accommodate the specific needs of the migrant audience. Additionally, we aim to shed light on and problematize the strategies employed in our extension project of teaching Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc), relating them to theories and the potential of online practices, and to present the impact of online teaching on participants and the training of future teachers.

To achieve this, the course is charted from theoretical discussions on Digital Information and Communication Technologies (TDIC), emphasizing the concept of interaction. Furthermore, we present the processes that PoLEM project participants began to develop, citing the following phases: the in-person classroom context, the initial format of the course, which lasted until 2020; the adaptations and reformulations the course underwent during the pandemic, and the current identity of the PoLEM Project.

In this sense, we consider that this article can contribute to the field of Applied Linguistics studies and to the theme of Teaching and Learning Portuguese as a Welcoming Language, as it aims to present theoretical and methodological reflections on the online teaching of PLAc based on experiences in emergency remote teaching.

After presenting our introductory considerations, in the next section, we will discuss the theories that underpin this work. Then, we will address the methodology of this investigation, highlighting its nature and the methods of analysis used. Subsequently, we will discuss the PLAc Extension Project and its developments, as well as present the volunteer teachers and

discuss the collected data. Finally, we will provide our considerations on the topic. Thus, we now present the methodological approach and analysis of the present article.

O ensino por meio das tecnologias em contexto de ensino de línguas estrangeiras

With a contextualization of the evolution of Information and Communication Technologies and their relevance to the 21st century, we understand the internet "as one of the stages in the evolution and enhancement of social communication and human sociocognitive abilities" (Braga, 2013, n.p., our translation). We align with the understanding that the use of the internet is a natural step in the evolution of social and technological communication, and thus, we comprehend the importance of its use as a mediator for Foreign Language Teaching and Learning, according to the social and historical context. Regarding the use of the Internet in the context of Teaching and Learning Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL), a term that includes Portuguese as a Welcoming Language, Santos (2020, s/p, our translation) states that

The incorporation of applications and programs into teaching can act as a significant motivational element for students and as a way to bring classes closer to modernity. Since young people intensely experience situations and environments closely connected to modern world technology, it is important to bring relevant, motivating technological innovations to PFL teaching that provide more knowledge to students.

In the same vein, Carvalho, Sataka, and Rozenfeld (2023), who work with Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICTs), explain how the situational and historical context is essential for understanding the use of technologies in the foreign language classroom context. From studies conducted by these researchers, we could see that in the early 2020s, due to the pandemic, there was a significant increase in the use of technologies for educational purposes, and "emergency teaching had a great impact on learning contexts, given that teachers had no options to teach during the period of social distancing, except through the use of DICTs" (Carvalho; Sataka; Rozenfeld, 2023, p. 4, our translation).

Moreover, in the PLAc course classes, based on a teaching practice derived from a humanistic and problematizing education for students, and in search of dialogue between teachers and students, we realized that the concept of interaction proved necessary "for the realization of learning" (Mattar, 2009, p.113, our translation). This focus on the humanistic education advocated by Paulo Freire (1982) has always been present in the ideals of our PLAc project. However, in the process of migrating teaching from the in-person context to the online

context, many difficulties of various kinds arose. Yet, by rethinking and replanning, the group (supervisors, coordinators, and volunteers) managed to establish themselves and find ways to make the classes accessible and suitable to the new context, dynamics, and criticisms, and, most importantly, to create a welcoming space for plural learning and training for all students.

Thus, to guide the actions we developed in teaching the PLAc course in an online context, we initially followed the concepts of interaction in the digital environment proposed by Thompson (2018) in his interactional theory of media. According to the author's research, we observed that PLAc classes promoted interaction in the online mode, understood as "new forms of action and interaction created by computer-mediated communication occurring in online environments" (p. 20, our translation), justified by "the creation of new forms of action and interaction, new types of social relationships, and new ways of relating to others and to oneself" (p. 19, our translation).

These theoretical assumptions proved fundamental for the successful operation of the project. In a context where face-to-face interactions in the classroom are not possible, the online environment became essential for the effective continuation of the work, ensuring a comprehensible and appropriate learning of the language and culture for migrants.

Regarding the return to the in-person context, we agree with Kenski (2005), who states that "it is necessary to organize [the teaching staff] new educational experiences in which technologies can be used in cooperative learning processes." Thus, through the concept of interaction, it is possible to more adequately understand classroom interaction, whether in-person or online, prioritizing the way students can take on a more prominent role. As the author states:

[...] learning will be more meaningful with a greater degree of interaction and communication among the participants in the process; new techniques and technologies have been developed to achieve the maximum approximation in cyberspace. However, this has not been a constant concern in the study of methodologies for in-person classes (Kenski, 2005, p. 74, our translation).

Contrary to what the author asserts about the lack of concern with interaction in the in-person context, after the experienced firsthand, we understand that the care in maintaining interaction with students in the remote context was very significant in maintaining the teaching and learning process. We observed that from the positive experience with online interaction using digital tools, the movement to seek support in digital technologies for in-person classes has become increasingly significant and present because, as Rocha (2023, forthcoming) states,

"[...] digital information and communication technologies (DICT) play a fundamental role in education"⁶ and this role remains relevant for the implementation of foreign language classes in the in-person context. Also, according to Kenski (2005),

[...] regardless of the modality, in-person or distance, in a rapidly changing world, teachers and students need to analyze unexpected and complex situations coming from different areas of knowledge. They need to go beyond the use of memory, reasoning, and predictability of classical theories and use their creative abilities and other types of rationality (Kenski, 2005, p. 76, our translation).

We agree that teachers and students must be prepared for an increasingly technological and competitive world and, thus, must have knowledge of different areas and the ability to adapt and seek new information primarily through technological tools. Additionally, to make quality education possible for all our students, we agree with the assertion that "the development of a computer culture is essential in restructuring how education management is carried out [and] the reformulation of pedagogical programs [...]" (Kenski, 2005, p. 78, our translation). Thus, the focus of the analysis is on recovering the experiences we had with the online context and the high rate of interactivity with students.

Therefore, next, we present the methodology of this research.

Methodology

The methodology of this work is qualitative in nature, defined as a case study, as it is understood as

[...] a type of research that investigates a particular case consisting of an individual or a group of individuals in a specific context. It is a naturalistic study because it examines an event in a natural environment and not created exclusively for research purposes (Oliveira; Paiva, 2019, p. 65, our translation).

Thus, we present the methodology according to Oliveira and Paiva (2019, p. 15, our translation) considering that "methodology is the study of methods, and methods are research procedures. [...] A research method is a technology for conducting scientific inquiry." To this end, data were collected from responses provided by some of the volunteer teachers participating in the Extension Project through a form prepared by us. Therefore, next, we

⁶ [...] *con la pandemia del Covid-19 las tecnologías digitales de la información y de la comunicación (TDIC) asumen un rol fundamental en la educación.*

describe the mini-courses taught to students in the Portuguese Language Among Migrations (PoLEM) course.

The first online mini-course offered by PoLEM (See **Extension Project PLAc and developments** section) to migrant students took place in January 2021. After the end-of-year break in 2020, we held a planning meeting for the first semester of 2021 and realized that it would be interesting to propose monthly mini-courses. Primarily because the students showed great participation and wished to have more synchronous contact with the teachers, and secondly due to the characteristic of a mini-course, which is a short-duration event, capable of promoting participation from a larger number of participants from start to finish, and therefore, it made sense to apply it to a group of students in the project with unstable dropout rates and attendance.

In this way, with monthly mini-courses, migrant students in the project could participate in proposals that interested them the most, and if they were unable to attend classes in any given month due to work or other commitments, they would not be disadvantaged and could return to participate when possible. For this reason, and also due to the pandemic, since then, all mini-courses offered by PoLEM have taken place online, so that the teacher and students were connected via desktop computers or mobile devices (laptops, tablets, and smartphones) and interaction occurred synchronously. The meetings took place on Saturdays, with a duration of 2 hours each.

Next, we can observe the mini-courses offered by the PoLEM Extension Project in 2021:

Table 1 - Mini-courses

MONTH	TEACHER VOLUNTEERS	MINICOURSE
March	Tallita ⁷	Brazilian Portuguese sounds and pronunciations
April	Raquel	Brazilian language and culture through music
May	Tamires	Meeting with Brazilian literature
June	Gustavo	Writing in Portuguese: Text production in a Brazilian context
August	Karen	Brazilian cultures and dances
September	Luana	History of Brazil is told through urban inscriptions

⁷ Fictitious names.

October	Amanda	Familiarization with Celpe-Bras
November	Bruna	Reading and interpretation of texts

Source: Prepared by the authors.

From the table presented, it is possible to perceive that the volunteer teachers who taught PoLEM mini-courses were concerned with meeting different interests in the learning of migrant students. Thus, students had the opportunity to participate in mini-courses on various topics, covering both grammatical and phonological aspects of the Portuguese language as well as aspects of Brazilian history and culture.

Regarding data collection for this article, a form was administered to the volunteer teachers who worked in the year 2021. The form focused on questions related to their experiences with the online format, student participation/interaction, and the overall impact of the mini-courses. At the end, teachers were asked to provide a testimonial about their experiences in delivering mini-courses in an online format through digital tools such as Google Meet. Below, we present the questions included in the questionnaire:

1. How long have you been participating in PoLEM?
2. Do you have experience teaching classes online?
3. Which mini-course did you teach for PoLEM in 2021?
4. Do you believe this format of classes facilitates student participation and interaction?
5. In your opinion, what was the overall impact of the mini-courses?
6. Please provide a testimonial about your experience delivering your mini-course.

Additionally, in the following table, it is possible to observe the academic background and the tenure in the project of each of the volunteer teachers at the time of the interview (August 2022):

Table 2 - Data of participating teachers in the research

FICTITIOUS NAME OF VOLUNTEER TEACHER	ACADEMIC EDUCATION	TIME OF ACTION ON THE PROJECT
Amanda	Undergraduate in Portuguese/English Languages - FCAR	Since 2021 / 01 year
Bruna	Master's student in Linguistics and Portuguese Language - FCLAr	Since 2020 / 02 years
Gustavo	Master's student in Linguistics and Portuguese Language - FCLAr	Since 2018 / 04 years
Karen	Master's student in Linguistics and Portuguese Language - FCLAr	Since 2021 / 01 year
Luana	Master's student in Linguistics and Portuguese Language - FCLAr	Since 2019 / 03 years
Raquel	Master's student in Linguistics and Portuguese Language - FCLAr	Since 2019 / 03 years
Talita	Doctoral student in Linguistics and Portuguese Language - FCLAr	Since 2018 / 04 years
Tamires	Master's student in Linguistics and Portuguese Language - FCLAr	Since 2018 / 04 years

Source: Authors' elaboration.

As observed, the volunteer teachers who participated in the research were all members of the academic community of FCLAr. Among them, there was a volunteer teacher who was an undergraduate student in Literature, another pursuing a Ph.D. in Linguistics and Portuguese Language, and the remaining six volunteer teachers were enrolled in the master's program in Linguistics and Portuguese Language. Additionally, all volunteer teachers had at least one year of experience as PoLEM teachers, with the majority accumulating between 03 and 04 years of dedication to the project.

Next, we present the structure and theoretical basis for the actions of the PLAc Project of FCLAr, the developments resulting from the pandemic, and the PoLEM Project.

PLAc Extension Project and Developments

We understand that, for the PLAc audience, "acquiring the language of the country to which they migrated is one of the powerful ways to promote social integration, equality of opportunities, and the exercise of full citizenship" (Ançã, 2003, our translation). Thus, the systematization of Portuguese language and Brazilian culture learning for such students in education, through the Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc) aspect, is essential for these students to solve their everyday problems and make their own decisions as integral members of the host country. According to Costa and Silva,

Linguistic competence in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) is significant in the immigrant's process of reintegration because, in addition to granting them greater autonomy in social interaction, it expands their possibilities of participation in public life. In this regard, access to language, as an element of "rehumanization," we might say, ensures a certain personal defense (Lopez, 2016) in the struggle against the initial lack of protection upon arrival in an unknown geographical, social, and cultural territory (Costa; Silva, 2018, p. 603, our translation).

With the purpose of assisting in the integration and autonomy of migrants in vulnerable situations in Brazilian society, in October 2018, undergraduate and graduate students from the Faculty of Sciences and Letters of Araraquara (FCLAr) proposed to offer Portuguese classes free of charge to three Venezuelan families (about 30 people) newly arrived in the city of Araraquara. Thus, PLAc classes were offered in person, through partnerships between FCLAr, the Directorate of Education, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Municipal Government of Araraquara⁸.

One year later, in the second semester of 2019, the project counted with over 100 Venezuelan students, including children, youth, and adults with different levels of proficiency in the Portuguese language. Regarding the contributions brought by the group's formation, based on the years 2018 and 2019, Fiorelli *et. al.* (2021, p. 100) state that

The Portuguese Language of Welcoming for Venezuelans project has contributed in various ways to all involved. In the academic area, we have the training of Portuguese teachers as a foreign and welcoming language. During the planning meetings, the coordinators seek to discuss pedagogical themes about language teaching and the PLAc context. We believe that the experience which volunteer teachers have undergone, accompanied by theoretical

⁸ To learn more about the choices and actions that the project team took during 2020, in this process of migrating from face-to-face to online teaching, see the article "Portuguese as a host language for Venezuelans: Strategies and practices of teaching in times of pandemic" (Fiorelli *et al.*, 2021, our translation).

discussions, can assist and enrich their professional development (Fiorelli *et al.*, 2021, p. 100, our translation).

However, in 2020, with the advancement of the COVID-19 pandemic, classes began to operate online, using platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, and planning meetings via Google Meet.

Initially, and in light of this new context, we discarded the possibility of promoting synchronous classes, since PLAc students might not have access to electronic devices or internet packages. However, gradually, through conversations with the students, we realized there was a great interest in synchronous meetings, so we began offering them occasionally. During this time, we also held weekly doubt sessions so that students could clarify their doubts related to asynchronous classes, the use of Portuguese more generally, or their everyday experiences.

Through synchronous meetings and doubt sessions, we were able to have greater contact with PLAc students and better understand their expectations, interests, and needs. Thus, we were able to prepare ourselves to better welcome them in the following semester. In this new context, the project was renamed and became known as "PLAc Online," especially due to the new modality of classes. However, with the aim of having its own particular identity beyond the linguistic theory that underpins our work (namely, Welcoming Language), in 2022, activities in PLAc teaching and learning at FCLAr began to be designated and registered as the Extension Project entitled "Portuguese Language Among Migrations (PoLEM)"⁹.

The need for its identity arises from the significant proportion that the project gained, both nationally and internationally. In an online context, project students consisted not only of Venezuelans but also Cubans, Haitians, Colombians, Timorese, and Bangladeshis, so that remote classes could expand the project's impact and reach. This occurred because "the new forms of interaction and communication in networks, offered by digital media, enable the exchange of information and cooperation on an unimaginable scale" (Kenski, 2008).

Thus, the PoLEM Project began to serve and welcome migrants spread throughout the Brazilian territory, remotely and free of charge. In light of this, we believe that, through access to language and culture, we can welcome those in need and assist them in their linguistic, discursive, and cultural needs and interests.

⁹ Access link: <https://www.fclar.unesp.br/#!/instituicao/administracao/divisao-tecnica-academica/secao-tecnica-academica/projeto-centro-de-linguas/portugues-como-lingua-de-acolhimento/>.

In 2021, it was decided to offer specific minicourses according to the needs of the students and the research lines and interests of the volunteer teachers, considering that, for the most part, these teachers were involved in scientific initiation, master's, or doctoral programs (see Methodology). Thus, each volunteer could offer a minicourse with a theme that they identified with the most, serving foreign students through the following platforms: Social Media such as WhatsApp; the GEPLAc (Extension Group in Portuguese as a Welcoming Language) page; Online Afghan Group via Meet; Conversation Circles and Minicourses via YouTube.

Social media platforms were indispensable for the development of the project in a remote context. Through WhatsApp groups, we could disseminate minicourses and conversation circles, suggest videos, and respond to the most urgent questions and doubts from students. We consider this contact necessary because

According to Moore, the transactional distance [which stems from the concept of interaction and interactivity] will be greater or lesser, depending on how students are treated: whether they are left to their own devices with their study materials or can communicate with teachers. This means that with more communication between students and teachers, the distance between them is reduced, regardless of physical distance (Kenski, 2005, p. 73, our translation).

Thus, although YouTube had many accesses in the beginning of 2020, asynchronous videos gradually lost space to synchronous minicourses and conversation circles, most likely due to the need for such interaction on the part of foreign students. Continuing, we present the experiences and interdisciplinary background of the volunteer teachers of the project, analyzing the forms and testimonies.

PoLEM and the volunteer teachers: discussion of the data

Since the beginning of the Project in 2018, we have relied on the support of volunteer teachers, as it is an unpaid and non-profit initiative. Thus, we developed a selection process for the participation of students from the Bachelor's Degree in Literature and/or Pedagogy courses, who, under supervision, guidance, and monitoring from the supervisors and coordinators of the Project, could teach classes to migrant students. Especially since the beginning of the pandemic, we have also had new volunteers, undergraduate students in Literature and postgraduate students in Linguistics and Portuguese Language, who have been involved in different areas,

such as teaching classes, creating lesson plans for YouTube, managing social media, a Project as study groups mediated by supervising teachers and postgraduate students.

It can be asserted that the project also contributed to the training of many volunteers and students from the Literature Course, considering that it proposed spaces for teaching practice and studies on the theories of foreign language teaching and learning, especially Portuguese as a Host Language (PLAc). Additionally, the project fostered reflections promoted within the Study Group on Portuguese as a Non-Native Language (GEPLiNM). It is in the current PoLEM that many prospective teachers have their first experiences in a classroom setting, and it is through this partnership between the Public University and the community that future PLAc teachers and students find a space to learn and share experiences.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that the volunteer teacher participating in this project can develop skills in different areas, as evidenced in some responses from the form we administered to trainee teachers who taught minicourses in an online context during the year 2021:

I recorded classes for YouTube, created scripts, coordinated social media, created artwork for posting, facilitated conversation circles, conducted minicourses, administered the truck exam¹⁰ [a course dedicated to refugee naturalization in the country], assisted in minicourses (Luana - volunteer teacher, our translation).

In the online context, it is important for us to focus on the interdisciplinary training of these volunteer teachers, as their testimonies clearly demonstrate.

Last year [2021], I was part of the doubt-clearing sessions, assisted in the minicourses, and recorded weekly videos for the YouTube channel. This year [2022], I have already participated as a teacher in the Truck course and am part of the Conversation Circle Committee, and I follow the GEPLAc (Amanda - volunteer teacher, our translation).

From the excerpts cited, it is evident the various skills that a volunteer teacher needs to develop to work in the remote context: recording videos, facilitating online meetings, among many other skills necessary for the smooth functioning of the project in this format. Regarding this formative experience, the teachers who taught online minicourses affirm that the experience

¹⁰ Online course “*Caminhão*”, result of the extension project “*Português como Língua de Acolhimento (PLAc) para migrantes e refugiados*”, prepared by doctoral student Lígia Sene and object of her doctoral research. To find out more, visit: <https://repositorio.unesp.br/bitstreams/3a29a7e1-2f0d-497a-9dc1-557de9ed204c/download>.

was very interesting and positive. In fact, there was an expressed interest in participating in other opportunities like these, as Raquel states:

[...] During the meetings, we worked on different themes (such as housing, health, education, etc.) based on songs. The students showed a lot of interest, participated actively in the classes, and pointed out that those themes would indeed be useful for their daily lives in Brazil. I was very pleased with the positive feedback and intend to apply another minicourse soon" (Raquel - volunteer teacher, our translation).

From the questionnaire (See **Methodology** section), it was found that the use of digital technologies, aligned with the minicourse format, brought positive feedback from the teachers. All of the seven responses obtained (a high number considering that eight teachers taught minicourses during this period) were positive.

Regarding the responses about the format in which the classes were taught, and whether this format helped in the participation and interaction of the students, we have, for example, the following statement:

Yes! A lot! Due to the fact that the topics are very relevant to the students' everyday situations, they become more excited to understand and thus participate in the classes (Karen - volunteer teacher, our translation).

Furthermore, some teachers compared their experiences with using the platforms YouTube and Google Meet. The responses were:

I believe that the minicourses work much better than asynchronous classes (YouTube videos) and synchronous online classes, as it allows students to participate only in minicourses that have themes that are interesting to them. I also received many compliments from students during the implementation of my minicourses, they really like this format of classes (Tamires - volunteer teacher, our translation).

I really like the minicourse because we face the students' involvement head-on. While we only have YouTube videos, we can't access their doubts or difficulties. I also liked the exchange that was made, where I talked about Brazilian history, and they related it to events in their countries (Luana - volunteer teacher, our translation).

We noticed that the recorded classes available on YouTube did not seem as interesting due to the low participation of students in our specific context, mainly because asynchronous classes have "a content-centered process" (Moreira; Schlemmer, 2020, p. 09, our translation) and "communication is predominantly bidirectional, one-to-many, in which the teacher plays a

leading role in video lessons or conducts an expository class through web conferencing systems" (Moreira; Schlemmer, 2020, p. 09, our translation).

Regarding the impact of the minicourses in an online context, the volunteer teachers agree that the experience was very fruitful and that this format facilitates student participation and engagement, stating that

The minicourses are very interesting to the students, we always have new students, but those who really enjoy and can follow along are always present, congratulating and thanking us for the classes (Raquel - volunteer teacher, our translation).

We had a consistent group in the various themes of the minicourses and they always seemed interested and actively participating in whatever the theme was (Tamires - volunteer teacher, our translation).

I received many compliments from students during the implementation of my minicourses, they really like this format of classes (Raquel - volunteer teacher, our translation).

I think there are several factors that influenced our audience's participation. Although the synchronous format may have been a hindrance for many students who were working at the time, this same format, given the social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was what allowed for greater follow-up by the teacher, even if only in the short term. Because it was synchronous, interaction was greatly favored, and it was possible to establish dialogue and create bonds, and everyone's participation was more active (Tamires - volunteer teacher, our translation).

Based on the presented accounts, we notice that migrant students were also satisfied with the minicourse format classes and demonstrated contentment through gratitude, participation, and attendance at the meetings. It is also important to highlight that the choice of minicourse topics (Table 01) has always been based on two main points: the proximity that the teacher has to the subject and the interest shown by the students in the topics covered. Furthermore, volunteer teachers reported on student engagement beyond the classes, as evidenced by the following excerpt:

After the end of the minicourse this year [2021], the students were very involved with the country's history and wanted to know more about the culture and artistic productions that tell the story of Brazil. So it was very rewarding, and I believe it is something that encourages them to continue participating in the minicourses (Luana - volunteer teacher, our translation).

It is also noteworthy that, in the year this work was prepared (2023), the project continues to serve students online, and the minicourses are ongoing in terms of implementation

and adaptation, always considering the feedback from students and teachers involved in the teaching and learning process. Additionally, strategies for using digital tools are constantly being applied and developed with the aim of facilitating and improving the teaching experience in the classroom.

Regarding the return to face-to-face classes, a new proposal is being developed to serve students residing in Araraquara (SP) and the surrounding area. It is understood that future face-to-face classes will be guided by the perceptions acquired during the pandemic, so that successful experiences may influence the approach used in PLAc teaching and learning in the online context. As stated by Almeida, Carvalho, and Pasini:

Post-pandemic education will undergo a period of "estrangement" between in-person and distance learning. It must be considered that the return will be gradual, with students gradually returning to the classroom, requiring the continued use of technology (Almeida; Carvalho; Pasini, 2020, p. 07, our translation).

In conclusion, we present the final considerations of this study.

Final considerations

This article aims to reflect on the experiences, trajectories, and adaptations faced by the PoLEM Project due to the pandemic, especially in proposing minicourses taught during this period. We evaluate this strategy from the perspective of the participating teacher trainees in the project, while also considering the impact of online teaching for the participants and the training of future teachers.

Teaching Portuguese as a Language of Welcome remotely was a significant challenge. However, by using theories of remote teaching, we were able to develop collaborative and essential methodological strategies for effective teaching, even in adverse contexts. Based on this theoretical and methodological foundation, we were able to provide a fair and relevant experience of Portuguese teaching for those who urgently needed and still need access to our language and culture.

We hope that the experiences shared in this work inspire other foreign language teaching groups to find alternatives and solutions, especially in the context of Portuguese as a Language of Welcome and in the online environment. We realize that through minicourses, we were able to work based on the concepts of interaction in the context of the online Portuguese as a

Language of Welcome classroom, and thus, we were able to establish relationships of proximity and create a welcoming, collaborative, and receptive environment for teachers and students.

We also highlight that the PLAc Project (initially created to teach Portuguese to Venezuelan immigrants) and the PoLEM Project (reformulated to serve immigrants from all over Brazil) emerged as innovative initiatives, integrating practice and theory in their actions. Thus, these projects have promoted the development of various research projects linked to the graduate program in Linguistics and Portuguese Language at UNESP, highlighting the interconnection of the three pillars of Universities: Extension, Teaching, and Research. Additionally, we currently have the Portuguese teaching project for immigrants supported by the Network of Attention to International Migrants (RAMIN), involving UNESP units from five cities in the interior of São Paulo, with institutional and financial support from the UNESP Rectorate, and support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

We conclude by highlighting our ongoing commitment to exploring new learning possibilities and integrating digital technologies into teaching, aiming to meet the needs and interests of our students. We believe that through our Portuguese language and Brazilian culture classes, we can welcome those in need, providing them access to linguistic, discursive, and cultural knowledge. We aspire to offer a plural and intercultural education, making ourselves available to those making Brazil their new home and those just passing through the country.

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