

Practices of portuguese language educators for refugees¹

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this text was to investigate the knowledge base of volunteer educators in teaching Portuguese language within the context of welcoming refugees/immigrants. It involved a qualitative research with a descriptive-analytical approach. The analysis process led to the creation of three analytical dimensions: a) professional choice, the role of the volunteer educator, and conceptions of welcoming; b) knowledge base, teaching learning, and the deconstruction of beliefs; and c) institutional proposal for the training of Portuguese language educators for refugees/immigrants. We concluded that despite the lack of adequate training, there is a strong motivation among educators to provide quality classes. There is alignment between the volunteers and the organization's mission and vision. The institution demonstrates concern for the professional development of its staff, and its actions with the team are driven by practical needs arising from the daily demands of the classes.

KEYWORDS: Refugee. Immigrants. Host language. Teacher Training.

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*Práticas de educadores de língua portuguesa para refugiados***RESUMO**

O objetivo do presente texto foi investigar a base de conhecimentos do educador voluntário no ensino de língua portuguesa no processo de acolhimento dos refugiados/imigrantes. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa de cunho descritivo-analítico. O processo de análise culminou na criação de três eixos de análise: a) a escolha profissional, o papel do educador voluntário e as concepções de acolhimento; b) a base de conhecimento, aprendizagem da docência e a desconstrução das crenças e c) a proposta institucional de formação de educadores de língua portuguesa para refugiados/imigrantes. Concluímos que, apesar da carência de formação adequada, há grande motivação por parte dos educadores em oferecer aulas de qualidade. Há um alinhamento entre os voluntários e a missão e visão da organização. A instituição demonstra preocupação na formação de seus colaboradores, e suas ações diante da equipe são realizadas por uma necessidade prática que surge a partir das demandas rotineiras das aulas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Refugiados. Imigrantes. Língua de acolhimento. Formação de Professores.

*Prácticas de los educadores de la lengua portuguesa para los refugiados***RESUMEN**

El objetivo de este texto fue investigar la base de conocimientos del educador voluntario en la enseñanza de la lengua portuguesa en el proceso de acogida de refugiados/inmigrantes. Se trata de una investigación cualitativa descriptiva-analítica. El proceso de análisis culminó en la creación de tres ejes de análisis: a) la elección profesional, el papel del educador voluntario y las concepciones de acogida; b) la base de conocimientos, la enseñanza, el aprendizaje y la desconstrucción de las creencias y c) la propuesta institucional para la formación de educadores de habla portuguesa para refugiados/inmigrantes. Concluimos que, a pesar de la falta de formación adecuada, existe una gran motivación por parte de los educadores para ofrecer clases de calidad. Existe una alineación entre los voluntarios y la

misión y visión de la organización. La institución muestra preocupación en la formación de sus empleados, y sus acciones ante el equipo se llevan a cabo por una necesidad práctica que surge de las demandas rutinarias de las clases.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Refugiados. Inmigrantes. Idioma anfitrión. Formación del profesorado.

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Introduction

The topic of "refugees" is contemporary and has a significant impact on our society. According to the ACNUR agency, refugees are individuals who are forced to leave their countries of origin due to fear. This fear can be related to political opinions, social group membership, nationality, religion, race, or human rights violations (ACNUR, 2011). It is important to understand the differences between migrants (emigrants and immigrants), exiles, and asylum seekers in comparison to refugees. Migrants are those who change their location. A person who leaves their homeland is called an emigrant, and when they arrive at their destination, they become an immigrant in the new place. Within this concept, a refugee can be considered a migrant, but their displacement is involuntary, meaning it is due to fear and danger and not a simple desire. An exile differs from a refugee mainly due to legal matters, as does an asylum seeker. The status of asylum can be granted by the President of the Republic or by the highest-ranking leader of a country, without necessarily having to go through a specific organization.

When an immigrant arrives in a new country, learning the new language is vital for them to establish themselves, adapt to the new reality, and understand the new culture they are exposed to. Therefore, linguistic training should occur quickly and in a way that also considers the existing social and pragmatic context. Generally, one of the difficulties faced by immigrants is the lack of proficiency in the new language.

In the Brazilian context, especially in the state of São Paulo, there are non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that aim to support these vulnerable immigrants who arrive in the country. In 2018, through an internet search of organizations in the city of São Paulo that provided Portuguese language classes for immigrants and refugees, we found the occurrence of seven NGOs that offered this service. Out of the seven NGOs, one opened its doors for the conduction of this study. NGO "X" has various lines of work, and one of them directly deals with the refugee issue.

The volunteer educators who work at NGO "X" do not need to have a formal education background, but they undergo an initial interview to assess their communication skills, knowledge of the Portuguese language, and ability to build relationships. The NGO values interpersonal relationships as a tool for positive transformation in people's lives.

The present study aimed to investigate the knowledge base of volunteer educators who work at NGO "X" in teaching Portuguese language in the context of refugee and immigrant support. For this study, we have chosen a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical focus. The article is organized into three parts. In the first part, we discuss the concept of teaching Portuguese as a Language of Welcome (PLoW), seeking to establish connections with teacher education. In the second part, we present the analysis of the generated data, and finally, we provide some considerations and list the references.

1. The host language, the background of the NGO "X", and the volunteer educators

When it comes to language acquisition, there are certain expressions that require clarification to avoid conceptual confusion. When we encounter the expression "native language" (NL), it refers to an individual's first social

language, typically learned within the family during childhood development. On the other hand, "foreign language" (FL) refers to a language that is different from one's own. When we come across the term "second language" (L2), it indicates the language learned in school or the official language (GROSSO, 2010).

Considering the studies by Barbosa and Freire (2017), there are no courses offered by private or government universities for the training of teachers who can teach Portuguese as a foreign language, despite the demand for it, especially in border regions of the country that receive foreigners. In this regard, it can also be said that there is a lack of teacher training with an understanding of Portuguese as a host language. This concept goes beyond the teacher's domain of the language's structure itself, but encompasses the practical aspects (GROSSO, 2010). In the immigrant context, the host language enables them to effectively exercise citizenship in the new country. According to the author,

Sociocultural knowledge and sociolinguistic competence are crucial in developing communicative proficiency and serve as the foundation for meaningful discussion and dialogue, fostering full and conscious citizenship in the host language (GROSSO, 2010, p. 71, translation by the authors).

The host language aims at action, thus distancing itself from artificiality and getting closer to real life. This movement occurs between the teacher and the learner in a relationship of mutual learning (GROSSO, 2010). Another important aspect to be considered, according to Mendes (2004), is the integration of language and culture, as language is a means of communication among people, and this communication leads to the development of culture.

When we think about teaching Portuguese as a host language for adult immigrants, we need to consider that it is a target audience with prior

language experience. Therefore, this learning process differs from a child's literacy process, as this audience already has an established language, which calls for an instructional method focused on dialogue, interculturality, and Applicability (BARROS; ASSIS, 2018).

In this sense, the welcoming process concerning the language must take into account the overall aspect of the host language, in the case of this study, the Portuguese language as the official language of Brazil. However, beyond that, careful attention should be paid to the local aspect of this language, as it involves a specific audience, predominantly Arabic, concentrated in the central region of São Paulo, in contact with a highly diverse population influenced by cultures from other countries and other states of the nation.

1.1 The background of the NGO "X"

The NGO "X" located in the city of São Paulo has as its motto the following saying: "Compassion that Transforms". The NGO assists children, teenagers, women, and refugees in situations of vulnerability in the capital of the state of São Paulo. Intentionally situated downtown for easy access, it promotes diverse activities in the areas of sports, arts, and culture. The organization started its activities in sports, cultural, and artistic projects in 1998, carrying out initiatives for children living on the streets, individuals struggling with drug addiction, transgender matters, and families facing difficulties in the neighborhoods of Glicério, Luz, República, Vale do Anhangabaú, the "Cracolândia", and Praça da Sé.

It is worth noting that the educators working at NGO "X" are volunteer, and they do not need to have an education background to teach classes to refugees. There is an initial interview to assess the candidate's profile. Once accepted, the educator undergoes training and an internship, during which they observe three classes taught by experienced educators. In the initial training, volunteers are provided

with an overview of Islam since the majority of refugees assisted by NGO "X" are Muslim. The volunteers are also instructed to refer to learners as "students" instead of "refugees" and to avoid topics related to war, violence, and so on.

According to Lopez (2020), the term "volunteer" can often be associated with an assistentialist context, perceived by the public as an action carried out by charitable individuals on a mission, rather than professionals with a specific field of expertise. Within this understanding, we find an opening for the following reflection:

In a way, this ends up authorizing a space for volunteer practice that, consequently, relieves the Brazilian State of its responsibility to promote policies, including language teaching policies for crisis migrants (LOPEZ, 2020, p. 171, translation by the authors).

When we have this perspective of the volunteer educator, even subconsciously, we end up considering the extreme inferiority position of the immigrant, who needs this charitable attitude to integrate into the new society they have moved to (LOPEZ, 2016; 2018). We start seeing them as someone in need and disregarding the fact that they have rights that should be respected. It is important that, in the process of welcoming immigrants, especially regarding Portuguese language teaching, the culture of the host country is presented, and at the same time, their own culture and life history are valued.

There seems to be a lack of training for Portuguese language teachers as a host language in the Brazilian context, and according to Amado (2013), many teachers, despite their availability, only have the ability to speak the additional language they aim to teach. Their practice is based on "intuitive methods and a lot of self-teaching."

Drawing connections with teacher training, as per Shulman (2014), practice alone is not sufficient for a teacher to learn their craft. It is necessary to combine research, subject knowledge, discussion, documentation, and reflection on their practice. According to the author,

Thus, we arrive at a fresh start, with the expectation that through thoughtful and logical teaching acts, the teacher will attain a new understanding of both the purposes and contents to be taught, as well as the students and the pedagogical processes themselves (SHULMAN, 2014, p. 222, translation by the authors).

There is a tendency, even observed in the official documents governing education, to exclusively prioritize practice as a means of training teachers, while theory takes a back seat.

Another important topic is pedagogical content knowledge, which is the specific area of knowledge for teachers (SHULMAN, 2014), requiring continuous professional development that encompasses both theory and practice. It involves a complex framework of factors, including collective work that enables teachers to perceive their own practice, conceptions about teaching, learning, and children, an understanding about how to apply these conceptions, intentional reflection in their practices, and resources that support them (DARLING-HAMMOND; BRANSFORD, 2019, p. 329).

In order for the teacher to develop their expertise, they need to continuously enhance their pedagogical content knowledge, which goes beyond the necessary pedagogical and content knowledge, but rather the knowledge that connects these two spheres (SHULMAN, 2014). Studies have shown that effective teachers share common characteristics, such as clarity in their expectations for students, showcasing student work, ongoing classroom movement, dynamic organization of classroom layout, especially

for small group work, fostering an atmosphere of dialogue and inquiry during activities, and meticulous lesson planning (DARLING-HAMMOND; BRANSFORD, 2019).

2. Methodological procedures and analysis of the generated data

This is a qualitative study with a descriptive-analytical approach, which involved conducting interviews as the methodological procedure. The interview instrument was divided into two parts: questions aimed at attempting to outline the participants' possible profile, and questions focused on the topic of teacher education. To preserve the interviewees' identity, we chose to replace their real names with names of countries from which the NGO "X" receives refugees. Thus, the following designations were used: Afghanistan, Syria, Venezuela, Morocco, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Palestine.

The educator **Afghanistan**, 49 years old, has a wide range of educational backgrounds, including Theology, Logistics, Incomplete studies in Literature, and Journalism. The educator **Syria**, 46 years old, holds a degree in Marketing and had the opportunity to pursue an MBA in Market Intelligence and a postgraduate degree in Business Administration. The educator **Venezuela**, 68 years old, studied Law and completed a postgraduate program in Business Law. The educator **Morocco**, 32 years old, has a degree in Business Administration with a focus on Foreign Trade. They also completed an MBA focused on Entrepreneurship and Innovation at FGV and a postgraduate program in Clinical Phytotherapy. The educator **Iraq**, 39 years old, holds a degree in Physical Education (teaching qualification) and Theology. The educator **Saudi Arabia**, 31 years old, graduated in Biomedicine. The last interviewee was the educator **Palestine**, 26 years old, with a degree in Educational Communication.

As observed in the description of the interviewed educators, they have diverse educational backgrounds and varying levels of experience,

forming a team with a highly heterogeneous profile, including in terms of age. Below, we present the results of the interviews conducted with each of the research participants.

3. Knowledge base of volunteer educators

After repeated readings of the responses given by the interviewees, we have established the following dimensions of analysis: (first) career choice, the role of the volunteer educator, and conceptions of welcoming; (second) knowledge foundation, learning to teach, and the deconstruction of beliefs; and (third) the institutional proposal for the training of Portuguese language educators for refugees/immigrants.

3.1 The professional choice, the role of the volunteer educator and the hosting conceptions

Initially, we asked the participants to talk about the reasons why they chose to work as educators at NGO "X". The majority of educators expressed a deep interest in helping others. Another supporting point for this dimension is the interest in engaging with different cultures.

Educator Afghanistan mentioned that his personal experience outside of Brazil made him realize the importance of helping immigrants in terms of language learning. Educator Syria shared her interest in assisting refugees in learning the Portuguese language, so they can have a better quality of life in Brazil and increase their chances of finding employment. Morocco expressed the desire to share his knowledge of the Portuguese language with people in refugee situations. Iraq stated that his first commandment is towards the love of God, which motivates him to help people, and his goal is to spread that love through education; secondly, he aims to assist refugees in having better conditions in Brazil. Saudi Arabia wants to help, especially after

the massive arrival of Syrians in Brazil in 2014. Palestine expressed a strong desire to engage with cultures, languages, and customs that are very different.

Below, we present some excerpts from the answers given:

I believe that from my own experience having lived in Bolivia without knowing well the language and learning over time, also due to my living experience in New Zealand, even though I had some Knowledge in English, I realized how it is completely different when you live in an English-speaking country, and in the case of New Zealand, a particular English with slight variation from what we are used to in school... When I returned to Brazil in 2015, I wanted to somehow help foreigners here. That's when I came across NGO "X" (educator Afghanistan).

Firstly, it was the contact with the refugees. Because we help the refugees not only with the classes. We also help the refugees with any basic need that may arise. We end up being a facilitator between the refugees and the NGO's coordination once we have more access to them. So that also motivated me a lot to teach. Because my main goal at first was actually to do a cross-cultural mission in another country. (educator Syria).

In the question about the role of the teacher for the educators, we can see how they conceive the welcoming of refugees. Educator Afghanistan responded that the role of the teacher goes beyond the classroom and involves building relationships with refugees to establish bonds of friendship. In this relationship, the teacher can help with many aspects such as medical issues, university enrollment, or even purchasing bus tickets to another state, for example. Educator Syria mentioned that in the context of teaching Portuguese to refugees, the class goes beyond language learning; the teacher has a social role in assisting and integrating these individuals into the host society. The

new language, for instance, helps them find employment for their sustenance. Educator Venezuela expressed that teaching Portuguese is an act of love and giving. Morocco emphasized that teaching the Portuguese language should be done in a welcoming manner, reducing the impact that refugees have experienced by being immersed in a completely different culture. The role of the teacher is to understand others and their needs, and then deliver the content in the best way possible. Iraq emphasizes the importance of facilitating the learning of the Portuguese language as much as possible, without it becoming another trauma in the refugees' lives. Educator Saudi Arabia believes that teachers should share knowledge and help shape opinions and character. Palestine sees the teacher as a mediator between knowledge, the student, and the new context they find themselves in. Here are some quotes from their responses:

In our case, we work with refugees. First and foremost, we teach them what they need, which is to learn Portuguese. That is essential. And another thing we give them is a little bit of love. Because they are alone, they have come from a country in war. (Venezuela educator).

So, especially when we are talking about refugees, it goes far beyond grammar, it is beyond a language. So, in a basic sense, I see a teacher as someone who is capable of efficiently conveying knowledge. In order to deliver a message, to communicate with people, you have to break down some barriers, you have to understand people, okay? When you learn a language, you learn a culture. Okay? (Morocco educator).

In their responses, we noticed that the volunteers demonstrated a concern for the human dimension of educational action. However, regarding the technical aspects of educational work, we did not observe any explicit

references to formative concerns. In summary, we observed a latent concern in all the speeches regarding the issue of hospitality and the need for relationship-building with refugees, which aligns with the mission and motto of the NGO, which is "compassion that transforms." As noted in our theoretical framework, these educators employ a teaching method focused on dialogue, interculturality, and applicability (BARROS; ASSIS, 2018, p. 67). In fact, practical issues are highly prioritized according to the participants' statements.

3.2 . The knowledge base, teacher education and the deconstruction of beliefs

During the interviews, the importance of higher education as a support for teaching was observed, which started to give us a direction regarding the aspect of educators' knowledge base. The majority of volunteers reported that their higher education courses were helpful for their teaching practices at NGO "X", even if they were not in the field of education. Only the interviewee Syria educator has mentioned limited contribution.

The educator Afghanistan emphasized that the Literature course helped him greatly with Portuguese language issues, and Theology played a significant role in broadening his perspective through the study of anthropology and understanding different cultures. His journalism course, which was taken in Bolivia, allowed him to utilize his proficiency in the Spanish language during classes with Venezuelan refugees. The educator Syria was the only one who expressed limited contribution from her Marketing degree in the classroom, with the focus primarily on using creativity in lesson preparation and in the class in itself. The educator Venezuela mentioned that her background in Law contributed significantly, as justice is practiced within NGO "X", and students often seek her advice on legal matters. The educator Morocco mentioned that the influence of role model professors during his undergraduate and

postgraduate studies had a significant impact, particularly in providing guidance on effective teaching methods. For him, the example of good teachers who can motivate their students is important for teaching at the NGO. The educator Iraq stated that his degrees in Physical Education and Theology were vital for teaching, especially in terms of didactics. The educator Saudi Arabia mentioned that there was a contribution from her Education, as she is naturally shy, and the experience of presenting assignments in college helped her express herself in public and become more open. The educator Palestine noted that her degree in communication greatly helped refine her approach to using various media in the classroom, such as games, videos, podcasts, and audio materials.

It seems that subject knowledge was the most emphasized by the interviewees. This stance aligns with Shulman's (2014) discourse on one of the inherent spheres of teaching, as educators demonstrate a concern for the preparation of the actual content to be taught in their classes. Here are some quotes from the interviews:

Firstly, it's about seeking knowledge and ways to transmit it in a practical and easy- manner to-understand. It should be presented in a light and practical way, both in terms of how the knowledge is delivered and how I conduct myself in the classroom. For instance, not speaking giving my back to the students and using real-life examples to explain theoretical concepts (educator Iraq).

I believe that whenever I had to do a presentation or anything of something of that kind during classes, that helped in my development. It taught me how to express myself better. I am a shy person, so that experiences I had in college did indeed help me (educator Saudi Arabia).

When we asked about the sources/theoretical foundation that guide educators' practices, a perception of a lack of connection between theory and practice emerged. There was no reference, for example, to learning theories. The focus was more on practical aspects of teaching. Only the educator Palestine interviewee managed to mention the issue of learning theories, however, in a more general sense. Educator Afghanistan directed the response towards the classroom practices that help students grasp the content; there was no connection with the theoretical aspect mentioned in the question, such as learning theories. Educator Syria pointed out the connection between the use of theory on cultures acquired through courses provided by the NGO, which proved very useful in Portuguese language classes for refugees, but did not refer to learning theories. Educator Venezuela understood the theoretical foundation for teaching as a practical position to be adopted in her teaching activity. Educator Morocco directed the response towards the classroom practices that help students grasp the content, prioritizing the organization of the lesson in a way that incorporates all four skills (listening, speaking, writing, reading). Educator Iraq referred to theories related to the subjects he needs to teach in class. Educator Saudi Arabia directed the response towards the classroom practices that help students grasp the content, focusing on organizing the lesson in a way that incorporates all four skills. Educator Palestine stated that there is a relationship between theory and practice in lesson planning, addressing how content should be taught and how student doubts should be addressed. She also mentioned practical aspects of lessons, such as managing unforeseen situations that require quick decision-making by the teacher.

In summary, the interviews highlight the importance of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge in terms of theory in the perspective of these educators in the preparation and in the conducting of their lessons (SHULMAN, 2014).

Here are some quotes from the interviews:

So, I believe that some time of my experience has helped me a lot, but there are things that are very new, one thing is teaching Portuguese to Brazilians, another thing is teaching it to foreigners. And I'll use the last class as an example. I had to talk to them about giving presentations in Portuguese, the use of possessives "dele" and "dela," and I wanted to bring in a group of personalities. But not everyone who is a celebrity in Brazil is a celebrity in Afghanistan, so since I have an Afghan friend, I called him and talked to him, I'm going to give a class like this, and I need some suggestions, names of Afghan famous people or famous people for Afghans. And he gave me that, and I used it, and it was interesting to see when they looked at someone there who was known to them, totally anonymous to us but known to them, when they would talk about that person, so I think the practice of this learning comes in this way... In that sense, making things practical (educator Afghanistan).

Yes, yes, it exists, it exists a lot. Of course, it's very much in our day-to-day, in our work there, but it's constant. So I think it starts from the way we welcome doubts, how we work on specific content from the book, how we embrace the doubts that arise, and even, speaking everything out of order, but the lesson preparation as well, it's the change in the preparation itself, during the lesson. Sometimes you see that what you prepared won't fit well there. Even if you have, well, a great idea. (educator Palestine).

Especially in the quote above regarding Afghanistan's response, we can relate it to the concept of local PLoW, as the educator considers in their lesson planning the specific students for whom they teach, intentionally making connections between the culture of the refugees and the content to be taught (SILVA; ZAMBRANO, 2021).

When we asked for examples of successful lessons from the educators' perspective, we noticed their concern for dynamic and inclusive classes. The teaching practices that seem to motivate both the educators and students the most are those that value the students' culture and what they bring as contributions to enrich the class, as well as activities that involve active methodologies such as games, group work, and flipped classroom approaches.

The educator Afghanistan mentioned a lesson in which he taught the use of possessive pronouns "dele/dela" through a surprise presentation of Afghan celebrities to the Afghan class, as previously mentioned. The educator Syria uses playful strategies in class to make it more engaging and less tiring for the students, as some of them work even during the night, and they all come from stressful contexts. The educator Venezuela motivates students to talk about their experiences and personal lives but respects the more reserved students who prefer to remain silent. The educator Morocco seeks to connect theory with practice or their lived experiences during the lessons, to their reality. Educator Iraq makes associations and contextualizations to deliver his lessons. For example, he prioritizes teaching vocabulary related to religious semantics during the Ramadan period, as it makes more sense for the students both emotionally and practically, since this vocabulary will be extensively used during that time. The educator Saudi Arabia proposes lessons with games, cards, videos, quotes from sci-fi movies, and reading literature books. Educator Palestine teaches classes that involve memory games to enhance vocabulary, "face-to-face" games to explore vocabulary related to physical characteristics of people, question and answer games, audio activities, spelling competitions to assess the students' level of comprehension, and group work. Here are some quotes from the interviews:

I am volunteering as an educator for only three months. But I really enjoy incorporating playful activities, which is something we even learned in this course, especially because they are refugees. They come from a context of war, emotionally fragile. So you can't be too pragmatic or authoritarian when conveying something. We also have limits, so I did it this way to discuss contexts. To avoid triggering any sensitive issues. For the refugee or as we mentioned, as I mentioned. Most of them come from a context of war or even persecution. So I really like to use some playful elements, some games to lighten up the class, despite this being an advanced class, but considering the social context as well. (educator Syria).

We always ask for exercises like this project we are working on so that they can talk about themselves, you know? It's not just about Portuguese and grammar. So we always ask them to share something about their lives. Depending on the class, sometimes you see some students who are very reserved and don't want to speak, you know? So we respect that. Others do want to share, they talk about their family, parents, siblings, you know? They speak with joy, so we see that they are a people just like us. (educator Venezuela).

It got explicit in the answers given by the interviewees that there is a concern with pedagogical knowledge. Practically all of them responded that they are attentive to preparing classes with different resources that make them dynamic and beneficial.

When asked about beliefs, there was a recurring response indicating that the teacher should not be seen as a distant figure who is only available to transmit knowledge they possess. There is an understanding of the need for a connection between the teacher/educator and the student. The belief that the teacher is a distant entity in the dynamics of the teaching and learning process has been debunked for

most of the volunteer educators (four) who believe that the teacher should also know how to listen, not just speak. The belief in sharing knowledge emerged as a new belief, replacing pure and simple meritocracy. The belief in respecting the teacher's role was reinforced. One educator pointed out that there are significant cultural differences in beliefs between educators and students, and that this awareness is important for the learning process. Here are some quotes from the interviews.

I believe that in our educational system, there's a lot of emphasis on studying, taking exams, and passing based on exam performance. I think this system doesn't truly evaluate people's learning. I already didn't believe in this educational system that unfortunately most public schools have here in Brazil. I come from a public school background myself. It has always been this somewhat meritocratic approach, and education has nothing to do with that. I had good teachers in my educational journey who always made me love the field of education... It's not about dividing who knows, who passed, who didn't pass. I think this is one of the biggest flaws we have here in Brazil (educator Saudi Arabia).

I think in my process, a big part of it was about demystifying. I agree that we develop this understanding throughout our lives, based on our experiences as students. And when we find ourselves in the role of a teacher at some point, we can understand some things that happened in our own process, why things were a certain way. Sometimes, there's even a late relationship of forgiveness and reconciliation with teachers we had throughout our lives (educator Palestine).

Within this dimension of analysis, the five questions asked were important for us to reflect on the learning of teaching, the theoretical sources to support educational practices, and the deconstruction of beliefs.

Considering the theoretical foundation of the work, we understand, after analyzing the data, that the learning of volunteer educators exists within the NGO "X", but it is still distant from some important pillars within teacher education, such as the awareness that teaching practice should be related to theory, as seen in Shulman (2014), since practice for the sake of practice is not sufficient for the teacher to learn their craft. It is necessary to combine research, content knowledge, discussion, documentation, and reflection on one's practice.

The knowledge of learning theories and how they can unfold within the taught classes did not emerge in the responses given by the research participants. Furthermore, we found that the reflection on practice still occurs in an individual manner. It is a more solitary reconsideration.

3.3 The institutional proposal for training Portuguese language educators for refugees/immigrants

When asked about what defines an expert teacher, the responses from the educators highlighted the attitude of exchange with the students. The expert teacher is someone who is open to learning from their students, someone who shows compassion towards them, someone who has a desire to build relationships, someone who possesses knowledge of the content they intend to teach, who demonstrates good conflict management, and is punctual.

For educator Afghanistan, an expert teacher is someone who is willing to learn to teach, especially when it comes to classes for refugees. For the educator Syria, compassion is an essential characteristic for educators in refugee classes. The educator's perspective should also be focused on the students' needs, not just their grammatical and theoretical issues. Venezuela emphasized that the teacher must first master what they are teaching. It is also necessary to like people, be compassionate and flexible, always keeping in mind that the students have a difficult

reality. Morocco highlighted the importance of punctuality, posture, knowledge, good conflict management, and establishing a genuine connection with students without using authoritarianism. Educator Iraq stated that an expert teacher is one who can achieve their objective, which is to help the student learn the proposed subject. Educator Saudi Arabia believes that an expert teacher requires training. If they don't have formal training in the field, they need to find a way to study. They also need to be open to listening and learning. Educator Palestine believes that an expert teacher is always available to learn from their practice and from their students, and freely shares their knowledge without reservations. We present some quotes as examples:

Firstly, a teacher who is willing to learn will often come to the classroom with the materials prepared, everything ready, and perhaps it will be one of those days when your student will teach you a lot... So, I think an expert is someone who never stops learning (educator Afghanistan).

To teach refugees, compassion is essential, which is also the motto of the NGO "X". Mainly because you can't just focus on grammar, theory, and what you have learned, but compassion, as I mentioned before. Empathy, putting yourself in their shoes. And understanding, as you mentioned about beliefs. You have to break down those barriers in order to put it into practice (educator Syria).

Except for the Palestinian educator, we could affirm that the concern of thoughtfully reflecting on practice was not mentioned by the interviewees.

When the question was directed towards the difficulties encountered regarding teacher training, it was interesting to observe that the three educators who had a degree in education reported experiencing difficulties related to teacher development, which they considered an ongoing necessity. Teaching work presupposes viewing the profession with the idea of

professionalism, and this perspective is more present in educators with formal training. Of the other four, two mentioned difficulties.

Here are some quotes from the interviews:

For me, I think it's quite peaceful. I believe there is always room for improvement, of course. If there's a course available, I will take it. I think we can always acquire more knowledge and improve even further, but today I feel capable of what I'm doing. I believe that both undergraduate degrees and all the practical teaching experience I've had in life, even if it's not in the field of the Portuguese language, have given me a foundation. I have made many mistakes already, so I think it's easier not to make those mistakes again when you've already made them before. Therefore, I feel well-equipped to teach Portuguese to them (educator Iraq).

Time, I think, is one of the main things we need for studying, and sometimes in the hustle and bustle of daily life, you can't find it. Therefore, I would say time. It's time to invest in studying, you know? To pursue and learn things... It can be a bit frustrating when you want someone to understand, when you want them to understand what you're saying, and you can't make it happen. So, I think for that, I would need time to see if I can study a bit and to talk to the coordination team, see if we can arrange a teacher just for her or what other methods we can apply with her, you know? (educator Saudi Arabia).

It appears that there is a concern about the need for collective spaces for group development, moments in which discussions about challenges are facilitated, and exchanges of successful practices are possible. The last question in the interview was about the occurrence of exchanges among colleagues or even dedicated moments for study and development. Each person seems to have a distinct perception of the time and format dedicated to exchanges among colleagues, which is a subjective aspect. For some,

exchanging messages through WhatsApp about the taught class seems enough; for others, it is not.

Educator Afghanistan misses a time of exchange among peers, even to help students in a more holistic way. For them, exchanges through WhatsApp groups are not enough. Syria is satisfied with exchanges through WhatsApp groups and the courses offered by the NGO "X". Educator Venezuela considers the possibility of exchanging class days with other colleagues as an exchange. Educator Morocco understands that there are exchanges through WhatsApp groups. Educator Iraq reported that there are not many moments of exchange, except through WhatsApp groups. Educator Saudi Arabia said that yes, there is exchange. Educator Palestine responded that yes, through WhatsApp groups. Here are some quotes:

Yes, even though we are all volunteers at NGO "X", it is a work that truly impresses me in terms of quality. And considering what has been achieved with limited resources, it is truly inspiring and clarifying. We would like to have more time and conditions to study and develop together, as I think the exchange aspect is very valuable. (educator Palestine).

No, it is something that I truly miss. As we work, for example, with three teachers for the same class, what happens is that at the end of the class, we send a report of what was done, but I do miss sitting together, having conversations, not just for the linguistic development of the student but for their holistic development as well. (educator Afghanistan).

The NGO "X", within its limitations of both financial and human resources, demonstrates a concern for the training of volunteers. This concern arises from the practical demand of the classes since the beginning of the program. There is a practical effort to fill the gaps generated in the teaching process, such as training volunteers with information about the

NGO's mission and identity, providing knowledge about Arab culture, and a sort of teaching internship in which volunteers observe classes taught by experienced volunteer educators. Despite all these efforts, there is still no establishment of a relationship with theories like Shulman's, for example, which alerts us to the fact that teachers, in order to develop their expertise, need to continuously improve their knowledge of pedagogical content, which goes beyond the necessary pedagogical and subject knowledge. It is, in fact, the knowledge that connects these two spheres (SHULMAN, 2014).

Final considerations

Through the volunteers' testimonies, it is possible to perceive that the work is focused on the practical aspects of the classes, and their sources of knowledge are concentrated on what is proposed by the standard material and activities that reinforce this content. Theory is mentioned by them, and although they do not have full knowledge of the sources, they are present in their discourse. Educators demonstrated alignment in various responses throughout the interviews, and one of the subjects in which they found harmony was their beliefs regarding teaching and learning in their practice. The volunteers believe that, unlike their own experiences as students, there should be a connection between the student and the educator, as this proximity facilitates learning. Furthermore, in a less distant classroom context, there is more room for the appreciation of the immigrant's culture and, consequently, for greater exchange.

With this case study, we were able to observe some aspects that are worth highlighting about the work of these educators, namely: - Although there is a leveling of the classes, it is very difficult to achieve homogeneity within them, in addition to the high turnover of students, who enter and leave due to a change of house, work and living conditions; - The graduation of all educators, despite not being aimed at teacher training and presenting a range of different specialties, collaborated significantly to train volunteer

educators; - We were able to see the occurrence of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge in the analyzed responses, but pedagogical content knowledge was not verified, perhaps partly due to the lack of collective space for reflection. The lack of time cited even by some volunteers in terms of training is also an obstacle encountered. This scenario makes us believe that such motivated and engaged volunteer educators, if provided with serious public policies aimed at teacher training, would be even more effective in their practices.

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