



# Initial findings of a socio-cultural-pedagogical investigative approach to PHL: the educators and the initiatives

## Resultados iniciais de uma abordagem investigativa sociocultural pedagógica ao PHL: educadores e as iniciativas

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**RESUMO:** Um número crescente de programas educacionais que promovem o Português como Língua de Herança (PLH) pode ser encontrado em todo o mundo. Com uma relevância relativamente nova para o campo das Línguas de Herança (LH), ainda de modo incomparável aos movimentos de espanhol, coreano ou mandarim, essa expansão mostra o nível de conscientização sobre a importância da transmissão intergeracional das línguas minoritárias entre membros da comunidade brasileira. Esse desenvolvimento traz à luz questões fundamentais: como esse movimento tem se desenvolvido e há quanto tempo? O que está sendo ensinado pelas instituições envolvidas e quais métodos têm sido aplicados? Qual o nível de comprometimento delas? Estão preparadas para ensinar e cultivar a língua e a cultura do Brasil? Os educadores entendem a interconectividade entre língua, cultura, identidade, hibridização e bilinguismo. Um

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**ABSTRACT:** An increasing number of educational programs that promote Portuguese as a Heritage Language (PHL) can be found all over the world. With fairly new relevance to the field of Heritage Languages (HL), in no way comparable to movements of Spanish, Korean, or Mandarin, this burst shows the level of awareness about the importance of intergenerational transmission of minority languages within the Brazilian community. Such development brings to light fundamental questions: how has this movement developed and for how long? What the institutions involved are teaching and what methods are applied? What is the level of their commitment? Are they prepared to teach and cultivate the language and culture of Brazil? Do educators understand the interconnectivity between language, culture, identity, hybridization, and bilingualism? An ongoing latitudinal-longitudinal study, conducted by

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estudo longitudinal-latitudinal em andamento, conduzido por membros de um grupo de estudo vem mapeando programas de PLH, pesquisando, entrevistando educadores e observando o desenvolvimento de seus projetos. O objetivo deste trabalho é discutir resultados iniciais e responder a algumas das questões mencionadas por meio de uma perspectiva sociocultural pedagógica. Descreveremos como os educadores têm desenvolvido suas práticas e como podem contribuir com o campo de estudos das Línguas de Herança.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Português como Língua de Herança. Vitalidade de Línguas de Herança. Perspectiva sócio-cultural-pedagógica.

members of a study group has been mapping PHL community programs, surveying and interviewing educators as well as closely observing their projects' development. This paper's purpose is to discuss initial findings, answer some of the aforementioned questions regarding the emergence of PHL through a socio-cultural-pedagogical perspective. We will describe how educators have been developing their practices and how they can contribute with the field of studies of Heritage Languages.

**KEYWORDS:** Portuguese as a Heritage Language. Vitality of Heritage Languages. Pedagogical-socio-cultural perspective.

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## 1. A heritage scattered around the world

The approach to the preservation of minority languages may appear weak, especially when there is variety and inaccuracy in the many labels it get – e.g. “family”, “immigration”, “community” (BAKER; JONES, 1998; CORSON, 1999; WILEY, 2001, 2005; PFEIFER; SCHMIDT, 2012), especially in the United States and Canada, “language of origin” (FANECA, 2016), and “mother tongue” (PIIPPO, 2015; 2016), mostly in Europe – however, there is an undeniable process of consolidation of the field “Heritage Languages” (HL) (PEYTON; RANARD; MCGINNIS, 2001; BRINTON; KAGAN; BAUCKUS, 2008; VAN DEUSEN-SCHOLL; MAY, 2010; POLLINKY, 2015).

Many publications, conferences, and, as a result, a vast body of expertise and research have gained momentum in the last 50 years since the term was coined by Jim Cummins in the 1970s. Specifically to Portuguese as a Heritage Language (PHL), one can detect a formational stage in the studies and practices of this HL especially within Brazilian communities, the group on which our investigations focus.

Immigrating to all over the world, largely since the 1980s, with oscillating numbers reflecting the socio-political instabilities of the country of origin, Brazilians have the tendency to spread out, rather than create communities. For many years, in numbers that can only be conjectured at this point, parents, educators, and communitarian agents have been actively promoting the maintenance of the language and culture of Brazil within the descendants of such particular diaspora (BESERRA, 2005; FLEISCHER, 2002; MARGOLIS, 1994, 2003, 2008, 2009, 2013; MARTES, 1999; RIBEIRO, 1999; SALES, 1999A, 1999B). Dispersed and disarticulated, their communitarian actions ended up being dispersed, which can be detected from reports of immigrants from as far back as the Brazilian dictatorship period, 1964 to 1985 (Brasil em Mente, 2015a), and, more recently, from those who attend courses and conferences that discuss PHL.

However, the creation of community programs and projects has increased in the last ten years (MORONI, 2015) in various countries (LICO, 2010; JOUËT-PASTRÉ, 2011; JENNINGS-WINTERLE; LIMA-HERNANDES, 2015; CHULATA, 2015; SOUZA, 2015; PFEIFER-MELLO, 2016). Consequently, the number of academic and non-academic events discussing what has been referred to as an emergent field of studies (BRINTON; KAGAN; BAUCKUS, 2008) has also grown at times giving the impression that such phenomena is a result of only recent immigration patterns.

This paper investigates initial findings of a longitudinal and latitudinal study, which underscores the actions and interactions of different instances, institutions, individuals, and the effects they have towards the teaching, promotion and maintenance of PHL. The observation of pedagogical and structural matters of cultural activities offered to the descendants of Brazilian immigrants identifies the movement pushing forward PHL growth. It is worthy to note that careful recordings have not always been practiced and recorded.

## 2. Methodology

The implementation of a questionnaire available on a website (since 2013) aims to gather pedagogical and logistical data regarding educational and cultural programs that promote PHL (here called initiatives). The objective is to build a map of these diverse programs. The questionnaire poses questions regarding the origins of the initiative (date, who did it, as well as basic details about the meetings), the training of the educators involved (level of instruction, academic history, participation in additional programs specific to language, HL and/or PHL education), as well as its pedagogical activities (what they promote, for how many children, of which age, and if the program has a philosophical and pedagogical basis).

In addition, the educators are invited to anonymously answer a questionnaire that asks about her/his values and opinions, absence of educational practice and preparation. Educators are then invited to an interview, in person or online, in which they discuss their path, goals, conquests and challenges, what they understand about language, identity, culture and heritage. The interviewer prioritizes the spontaneity of the meeting, hence does not bring previously made questions or nor does it have a closed nature.

During the phase of interviews, some families that have participated in the selected programs are also invited to share school and home experiences of how they relate to the issue at hand. Spontaneity is welcomed in this phase of the study, which can include the participation of children and teenagers, upon the authorization of their legal caregivers. The interviews and questionnaires are then analyzed, and the initiatives are categorized in terms of the frequency of their meetings.

To develop a wider comprehension about the many factors that influence the heritage language acquisition, we also conducted interviews at a bilingual school (German and Portuguese) with PHL speakers' mothers of German origin. In each interview, only the researcher and the interviewee were present. They were recorded by the researcher and transcribed subsequently. Before each interview, the purpose

was carefully explained to each participant and provided an Informed Consent Form, ensuring anonymity and signed by both parties. As a way of maintaining anonymity, initials have been used in place of names. All forms were signed in two copies: one for the researcher and one for the interviewee.

For this article, we selected parts of the transcripts in which interesting information about the contexts of PHL's acquisition – immigration process, background, contact with input – as well as about the most common difficulties and obstacles. Since all the interviews were conducted in Portuguese, we have presented our own translations of the selected parts.

### **3. A Social-cultural-pedagogical perspective**

A social-cultural-pedagogical perspective guides the discussions of this study and was generated while the data was collected and analyzed. It identifies the comprehensive perspective of PHL as a multifaceted compound; i.e., in any context, from the simplest to the more comprehensive, a multitude of aspects, phases and domains can be seen.

A metaphorical comparison is drawn with an onion, a spherically shaped vegetable that is a composite of rings and uncountable layers. In all kinds of segmentations (i.e., if cut vertically, horizontally, diagonally, in cubes, or slices) each piece contains portions of the whole bulb, visible to the naked eye.

Likewise, a socio-cultural-pedagogical perspective defines segments: individual, global and local spaces, but considers them as intrinsically inextricable (JENNINGS-WINTERLE; LIMA-HERNANDES, 2015). The delineation of each of these levels aims to facilitate the identification of particular and general characteristics in each instance, initiative and educator involved with PHL, as well as the possibilities of its vitality within and across contexts and countries.

### 3.1. The Individual Space

The Individual Space is that of the family nucleus: parents, extended family, and the HL speaker (HLS) her/himself. This level encompasses the various models of family one can identify within multilingual groups, as well as the values and expectations that set the implementation of such lifestyle.

It contains the many profiles of the HLS, which can most certainly be represented in the form of a spectrum. Supporting that observation, Van Deusen-Sholl (2003) defines HLS as “a heterogeneous group ranging from fluent native speakers to non-speakers who may be generations removed, but who may feel culturally connected to a language” (p. 221).

The same researcher differentiates “heritage speakers” and “heritage learners” (VAN DEUSEN-SCHOLL, 2003) within those that are thought to have the right to an additional identity-cultural-linguistic core. Shin (2013) points out that such variation is perceived “in background characteristics, language proficiencies, and attitudes towards their home language and cultures” (p. 74).

This condition, in addition to the level of personal value attributed to the language and commitment to perpetuating heritage is a determining factor of acquisition of any HL. Therefore, the individual in question – the speaker, the learner, the educator, and the researcher – plays a part in how they determine and delineate linguistic parameters. Like an onion that grows from the core of its bulb, HL comes from within an individual purpose, the result of a choice or how a person values it.

Aside from linguistic and cultural advantages, one has to consider the matters of relationship, involvement and authority establishment of the family dynamics. Devastating effects have been reported when parents and children cannot communicate with one another due to language and cultural barriers (MOTA, 2004, 2010; SHIN, 2013).

Such concerns are shared by the mothers of PHL speakers as seen on the interviews conducted in Germany. To illustrate, excerpts provided below. The passages are translated from Portuguese to English (since the mothers are Brazilian).

I think it's also an issue of identity, right? It is an identity that is ours and that cannot be lost. It's my mother tongue. She has grandparents, she has family in Brazil, she must be able to talk with them. It is also good for her social development, you know? (...) I do not think it's possible for a child to not be able to talk to her grandparents ... you know? I think this is a lack of respect for the grandparents, for the motherland, for the language. And for the mother's self, you know? I'm Brazilian, how come she's not going to speak my language? (*L.O., mother of a nine-year old PHL speaker, 2017*).

I have always told him: son, we need to speak in Portuguese ... why? If you speak Portuguese with mom, you can talk to grandma, to your uncle, right? And if you start speaking German with mom, you will forget Portuguese and you will stop talking to your family. And then we kept speaking with him only in Portuguese. There were several moments he wanted to change to German, but we always insisted. (*A.F., mother of a nine-year old PHL speaker, 2017*).

If I give them the opportunity to speak Portuguese, I grant both things: the language and the contact with my country, with my family, with my history, with my past. (*F.K., mother of three PHL speakers, 2017*).

From interviews conducted with education professionals at a bilingual (German and Portuguese) school in Berlin, it was also possible to identify some of the barriers faced by immigrant children, e.g., the resistance against speaking Portuguese in some cases, the resistance against speaking German in others, the family linguistic policy, and the issue of identity. Parts of the transcripts were selected and translated from Portuguese to English.

There are cases in which the mother speaks Portuguese, the children answer exclusively in German, understand everything, but do not speak very well

... speak with a certain resistance ... speak when abroad, when they visit the family in Brazil, right? It's all right. But when they are here in Germany again ... no ... just German. (...) Usually in binational couples, every now and then it happens that ... the language spoken at home is German. Because, for example, the husband is German ... the woman is Brazilian ... and she adapts, then, more and more to the spoken language and then... the German is spoken ... right? There are certainly parents who make a methodical division, then ... who has German as mother tongue speaks only German, who has Portuguese, only Portuguese. But in reality, I think it's a difficult system to maintain ... right? It has an artificial aspect, I think. (*H.S., teacher and coordinator, 2017*)

A complete methodical division between the languages spoken by the father and the mother was, in fact, not verified throughout the development of the research with the families in Germany. However, the predominance of a language, used practically all the time by each one of the parents, was verified in all cases, as well as the persistence in maintaining the Portuguese language at home, despite the resistances and obstacles. According to the interviewee, however, these cases would not correspond to the majority:

These are certainly exceptions. Because this also requires a certain decision ... deliberate, right? So, to really try and ... to train bilingualism at home, right? I think that it's usually much more pragmatic ... so, each one talks how she or he can ... at that moment. (*H.S., teacher and coordinator, 2017*)

The need, therefore, for an instituted and adhered family linguistic policy arises as an inherent element in the application of the “one parent, one language” method for the children to be able to acquire both languages.

While the challenge for some families is the maintenance of the Portuguese language, the problem for others is German acquisition.

Because of the Portuguese environment, in which all classmates are Portuguese speakers, the motivation to actually learn German ... is low ...



right? Because they can always turn to Portuguese. It means that the process of studying German, of learning German, is often not ... motivated, not stimulated ... is actually prevented ... by that fact. (*H.S., teacher and coordinator, 2017*)

It is interesting to note that, unlike the environment outside the school, where German is the predominant language, which would require students to learn it in order to develop social relationships, within the school the context is different: having contact with teachers and classmates almost all speakers of Portuguese, this language is maintained and developed, to the detriment of the acquisition of German. In terms of the PHL learning process and its maintenance, however, the school plays a major contributing role, providing comprehensive and constant inputs in the language.

The process of devaluation and subsequent valorization of the Portuguese language was raised and its relation to the issue of identity was established during the interview with another education professional.

There are several students in the ESB classes, which is *Europe Schule Berlin* ... we call ESB, that almost do not speak Portuguese. Because they were born here or because they are beginning to enter the teenage years and they do not want to be noticed as “the other”, right? They are the minority at the school, for every Portuguese-speaking group, there are four or five German-speaking classes, so they do not want to be “the others” in this process. Then they get interested in Portuguese in the *Oberstufe*<sup>1</sup>. From what I have observed, I have been working here for more than three years, they start regaining interest, because it ceases to be something that differentiates them negatively to be something that values them. And then they go to the world, right? The world stops being just the school, they start to go out, they begin to have the experience of the *Praktikum*<sup>2</sup>. I think that this process of facing the world makes them realize that there is something about this bilingual formation. (*D.S., pedagogical psychologist, 2017*)

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<sup>1</sup> This is the school period, which comprises students between the ages of 15 and 18.

<sup>2</sup> Internships the students usually take after the ninth school year.

The interviewee also addressed the difficulty of integrating in the society, as this may be one of the motivations for the resistance in maintaining the Portuguese language. Interestingly, this same social problem may cause the opposite effect and lead to problems in the acquisition of the German language.

This can be very destructive, I think, at the level of the language acquisition. I have seen several cases of students who completely refuse to learn German. They block it. They do not learn the language, they say, "I do not like this land, I do not like these people." They react in a completely emotional way to something they think is cognitive, and they say, "I do not want to learn, I will not learn, I do not like this language" and they only make friends with other Portuguese speakers, who also grew up in Portuguese-speaking countries. And they close themselves in this bubble, so they can protect themselves. I think it's a very understandable psychic protection mechanism. But, of course, it brings losses. Students who were great students in the countries of origin... because they have fifty percent of the subjects in German here, they start suddenly to have low grades in these subjects in German. And there are half of the teachers thinking they are bad students, who have no interest. At times, they are just facing this blockade in the German language, which has more to do with all this subtlety of the structural and societal racism than with the teacher and the subject itself. (...) But there are also many of them who put the Portuguese aside to fit better. (*D.S., pedagogical psychologist, 2017*)

The acquisition of a heritage language, therefore, carries requirements that go far beyond the linguistic scope. Emotional, cultural and identity issues are intrinsically related to it and we advocate that the concepts of identity, culture and language translate the very concept of the heritage language. They exist in a symbiotic way and it is problematic to visualize a clear outline between what is language, what is culture and what is identity.

Hence, prior to the development of any curriculum, educators are committed with the development of awareness about the importance of the intergenerational

transmission of PHL among fellow Brazilians. They expect to convince parents, which, in turn, is the first step to guarantee support and attendance to their practices.

They acknowledge that parents' concerns go way beyond the "should I or should I not speak Portuguese with my child"; it involves any possible effect on their children's academic and social life, mostly the less advantageous ones, which indeed affects the formation of the HLS's identity since a very young age.

### 3.2. The Local Space

The Local Space refers to a group with distinct characteristics depending on the country, state, province or town. It offers more frequent possibilities of in-person meetings (as opposed to the virtual gatherings, a more feasible way to operate in the global space), where the family's desire of nurturing and bestowing the heritage language is materialized coming out of the living room to a classroom, and replicated in other neighborhoods, cities or countries. It is in this space that the HL shows its most intrinsic characteristic – it coexists (MORONI, 2015) with a whole different set of linguistic uses, identities and cultural expressions.

In the Local Space we were able to identify and analyze a multitude of educational and cultural programs, summarized in the term "initiatives" - activities that celebrate cultural aspects and offer opportunities in and about Portuguese in different settings (e.g., playgroup, playschool, *escola*, *escolinha*, *oficina*, *escola comunitária*, *encontros*) (JENNINGS-WINTERLE; LIMA-HERNANDES, 2015). Such actions are developed mainly by the community of immigrants, not by the Brazilian government or local, public, private or international schools.

It is true, however, that there seems to be an increasing effort from these agencies, as seen in the inclusion of the term "Português como Língua de Herança" as a matter of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations agenda since 2009, as well as in 2015 on a sponsorship announcement for programs of internationalization of language

and culture (MORONI, 2015). In addition, some embassies offer programs for the children of Brazilian immigrants, namely in Barcelona (Spain), Helsinki (Finland), Rome (Italy), and Tel Aviv (Israel) in their Cultural Centers (Centro Cultural Brasil-Espanha, Brasil-Finlândia, Brasil-Roma, Brasil-Israel). Although scarce, it is reported that some teachers and school administrators have indeed been encouraging parents to maintain their HL (largely called mother or native tongue) at home.

The vast majority of the observed initiatives operates in an informal and amateur way, and does not have, not that they should, a scholastic, standardized structure or curriculum. We argue that it is precisely because such programs do not have too many school characteristics that children of Brazilian immigrants participate and engage in such flexible, atypical, most likely on the weekend type of gathering. The opposite, the lack of participation and engagement due to the comparison that the child and their parents make with the regular school structure, seems to be also true.

The term “initiative” does not include the ever-growing number of dual-language programs offered for example in Utah, Florida, Rhode Island and Massachusetts on public schools, as well as in many cities across Europe, the latter been sponsored by the renowned Portuguese *Instituto Camões* (2017) or governments that have their own “mother tongue” educational programs (Piippo, 2015, 2016).

Initiatives are categorized in three groups in accordance with the frequency of meetings: “formal” are those that promote meetings more than once a week, for at least 4 hours a week; “informal” are those that promote meetings once a week, for less than 4 hours a week; and “sporadic” are those that promote meetings with irregular frequency (JENNINGS-WINTERLE; LIMA-HERNANDES, 2015).

Across distinct cultures and languages, one can observe more similarities than differences. For instance, structural aspects of the initiatives and formational factors are, in many senses, identical, even taking into account the pairing with very distinct languages (i.e., heritage language and mother tongue/ majority language) and

noticeable discrepancy in linguistic policies of various countries and states. The study also shows that practices are constantly reinvented, which demonstrates lack of networking among the individuals ahead of these activities, and lack of acknowledgment from the Brazilian government and local community (including fellow expatriates).

Among the 75 investigated initiatives, 21 are in the Americas (US, Canada, Costa Rica and Argentina) 41 in Europe (United Kingdom, Spain, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Poland, Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein, Sweden, Slovenia, Denmark, Norway, Italy), 3 in the Middle East (United Emirates, Israel and Lebanon) 4 in Asia (Japan), and 6 in Oceania (Australia and New Zealand). These numbers are expected to be higher. Worldwide the majority of initiatives are categorized as “informal” and “sporadic”, a group that sums up to 68 out of the 75 initiatives investigated.

In regards to: (a) their formation: 74% started from the desire of 1 – 5 families that added efforts, paid for an educator, or become educators themselves, and, with time, grew into more and bigger groups, divided by age; (b) their challenges: 53.7% say that parents’ lack of involvement is an important factor to the absence in meetings and/or abandonment, and 12.96% have financial hardship to pay for space and educators (the remaining either have their own space, the “tuition” covers it or they use public spaces); (c) the involvement of the children: 42.3% receive children with ages up to 5 years, 46.15% children up to the age of 10, and 11.5% children and teenagers. 35.93% report that, if left alone, children will switch to the majority language, and 42% report that parents relay on the complain of their children to decide to continue coming to the events or not; (d) the involvement of the local community (e.g., school, church): 70.45% report none or little support, 29.54% report medium and satisfactory support; and in regards to the involvement of the local consulate or

embassy, 52.17% report none or little support, and 47.82% medium and satisfactory support.

Their pedagogical objectives, here called “pedagogical bases”, are comparable and can be seen across initiatives that have never met, or have met only recently; hence, they seem to be intuitively established (JENNINGS-WINTERLE, 2015). The pedagogical bases can be seen as part of an organized or rudimentary political-pedagogical-project in all initiatives, and can be summarized as: (a) the development of a sense of identification and belonging to the culture of Brazil; (b) the exposure to and acquisition of the phonological aspects of PHL; (c) the development and enrichment of an age and level of proficiency-appropriate vocabulary; (d) the development of biliteracy and/or exposure to written materials.

Based on the observed practices and reported results, especially through individual and group discussions pertaining to a continuing education program, one can conclude that the PHL educators (a) have a notion of the importance of the sequence from one base to the next; (b) the understanding that the level of involvement and engagement of themselves and the families must increase as well; (c) the recognition that, while intending a wholesome development of capacity, the creation of opportunities and desire for the use of PHL has to be done in contextualized and practical forms (LO BIANCO; PEYTON, 2013); furthermore, (d) the educators are aware that the bases become more sophisticated, demand specific materials, and, more importantly, require higher professional development.

As objectives, however, the essence of each base (e.g., language acquisition, vocabulary, metalinguistic abilities, sound/symbol relationship) does not seem to be fully understood when lesson plans, curriculum, methodology and philosophy are analyzed (e.g., ages and levels of proficiency seem to be taken for granted and linguistic concepts mixed up). In fact, such concepts are themselves poorly

understood. That can pose a significant obstacle to the development of language knowledge.

Lo Bianco and Peyton (2013) release some of the pressure in this instance while exposing that:

Focusing language revival efforts only or mostly on improving the language capacity of learners does not necessarily lead to successful maintenance, recovery, or development of the language spoken by a community of speakers. In addition to improving language knowledge, it is clear that we must also address the domains of opportunity for actual use of the language, both to stimulate desire to use it among those who know the language and to inspire novice speakers to use it as they are acquiring it (p. iii).

From the promotion of events celebrating Brazilian festivities and culture and monthly storytelling using Brazilian books (characteristic of the “sporadic” initiatives’ activities), to the regular weekend meetings with activities focusing on the growth of the child’s cultural repertoire, one can see that opportunities are created and that “the use of the language is natural, welcomed and expected” (LO BIANCO; PEYTON, 2013, p. iii). Furthermore, one can see that those actions facilitate the development of biliteracy and/or exposure to written materials, the most advanced pedagogical base.

Hence, the increment of linguistic capacity is inevitably supported by the creation of opportunity and desire. However, an effective enrichment added to the literacy learned in the majority language, is still confined to bilingual programs (e.g., dual-language programs or bilingual school), i.e., regular school instruction settings, the very few “formal initiatives”, private classes, and homeschooling (LESSA, 2015).

The profile of educators and participants reflect the diverse essence of the Brazilian identities, which, in turn, seems to be determinant by the design of the initiatives’ activities and their goals, the choice of pedagogical material and resources, as well as the investment on professional development. Shin (2013, p. 86) considers such aspects essential to the success of programs of all HLs and explains that:

Teaching techniques that poorly address the learning styles of heritage learners, lack of motivation by students who resent having to go to school on weekends, and lack of professional development of teachers contribute to low success rates (...) Students are often turned off by instructional materials that have little direct relevance to their lives.

The lack of depth also dissuades parents from continuing bringing their children to the initiative, either because they wanted low-cost activities to entertain their children, and eventually found something else closer to home; or because they were looking for a wider understanding of the language. These parents can also give up before “seeing results” because they do not fully understand bilingualism, especially one that involves a heritage language, or have inadequate expectations usually involving too little time for too much intended results.

### 3.3. The Global Space

The Global Space has intercontinental proportions and involves various linguistic and cultural policies, the research community, and the network that educators form with the intent of making exchanges between hemispheres, traditional and modern, from memory to paper and screens, since the fragmented to the whole in a multidisciplinary and faceted fashion, and across languages and cultures.

The global space is in no way institutionalized, homogeneous or standardized; i.e., actions and *quasi* policies are established despite and beyond the existence and interventions of associations of educators, language policies and incentive (if any) of the country of residence, or the local agencies of the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Brazil. Generally, it works in a bottom-up method (MORONI, 2013) – the desire and the strategies that aim to nurture the HL rise from



the family, from daily life at home, and advance to the near compatriots in an informal and experimental way – mostly amateur.

Such practices and the discourse that sustains them – one that involves the necessity and the search for the continuation of a kind of identity – become, or better said, are yet to become theory when systematically observed and analyzed. The development of a global space for PHL has been guaranteed, though, by the multiple possibilities that the Internet offers, specifically social media (MORONI, 2015).

Communities of the now retired Orkut migrated to Facebook, a platform that hosts groups of teachers in the whole world – e.g., *Ensinar Português como Língua de Herança*, *Português como Língua de Herança*, *Professores de Português na Suécia*, *Professores de Português no México*, *Professores de Português no Japão*, etc.; initiatives and projects – *Federação das Iniciativas em prol do PLH*, *Elo Europeu*, *Associação Brasileira de Iniciativas Educacionais no Reino Unido – ABRIR*; and multicultural families – *Criando Filhos Bilíngues* (with more than 6.000 members), *Mães Brasileiras na Austrália*, *Pais de Brasileirinhos da Bay Area* etc. (just to mention a few examples). Actually, it is to Facebook that the laurels for the advances on the awareness about PHL should be given (MORONI, 2015; SOUZA, 2015).

In addition, blogs and other discussion groups have been contributing with information at various levels of in-depth discussion. Every week a new opinion-making parent talks about the challenges, difficulties and joys of bilingual living, some with good theoretical support.

It is clear that this is a predominately female realm, a very significant mark in the essence of PHL itself (MORONI, 2015; JENNINGS-WINTERLE, 2016). One could argue that the more typical manner of social organization – one in which women, majority in this group of immigrants, stay home and, conceivably are more involved with their child's language development – is a plausible explanation for this phenomenon.

Still on the private sector, *Brasil em Mente*, a cultural organization leader in the world movement of forwarding PHL (FUNIBER, 2015; MORONI, 2015) has been promoting a continuing professional development program since 2014 containing three volumes in a total of 55 weeks of online-instruction, in which more than 120 educators, living in 18 countries, have made an investment of their own to participate. In addition, initiatives around the world celebrate PHL and the diversity of its means of promotion on May 16<sup>th</sup>, since 2014. This commemorative date has the support of important institutions, among them the *Academia Brasileira de Letras* (Brazilian Literary Academy) and the *Instituto Internacional da Língua Portuguesa* (International Institute of Portuguese Language) (Brasil em Mente, 2014).

Academic writing has been produced as well. A specific online journal was launched in December 2015 – *LINCOOL: Língua e cultura, a revista eletrônica do Português como Língua de Herança* – welcoming researchers (including independent ones) and educators to send their papers.

Books have been published. *Português como Língua de Herança – a filosofia do começo, meio e fim* (JENNINGS-WINTERLE; LIMA-HERNANDES, 2015) is worth noting for its collaborative and pioneering contribution – 14 women of different countries and areas of expertise wrote 300 pages in content. In the same year, a second publication was released, *Português como Língua de Herança: discursos e percursos* (CHULATA, 2015) and, since then, at least three other books that use the term “Português como Língua de Herança” in its title or in more than one chapter’s title have been published in Brazil (SOUZA, 2015), Portugal (MELO-PFEIFER, 2016), and in the US (LICO; BORUCHOWSKY, 2016; GONÇALVES, 2016; MILLERET; RISNER, 2017).

Various events have been promoted by both Brazilian organizations and individuals inserted in international academic contexts with the goal of capacitating and providing networking within PHL educators and with those of other HLs. In 2013,

the *I Simpósio Europeu sobre o Ensino do Português como Língua de Herança* (European Symposium about the Teaching of Portuguese as a Heritage Language) took place in London, England and, since then, biannually – 2015 in Munich, Germany 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland – focus exclusively on initiatives that promote PHL in Europe (SEPOLH, 2017).

In 2014, a panel composed by Brazilian educators was presented at the *II International Conference on Heritage/Community Languages*, in Los Angeles (NHLRC, 2014). On the same year, the *I Conferência sobre o Ensino, Promoção e Manutenção do PLH* (Conference about Teaching, Promoting and Maintaining PHL) took place in New York, and in 2017 its 4<sup>th</sup> edition received once more educators, authors and researchers that develop actions and projects all over the world (Brasil em Mente, 2017).

Since 2014, Brazilian initiatives have been highlighted in the Community-Based Heritage Language Conference, hosted by the American University in Washington, DC (UCLA International Institute, 2017); in fact one of the two main organizers is Brazilian. In Japan, where Brazilian immigration is so significant that around 40 private schools operate in Brazilian Portuguese language and have the recognition of the Brazilian Ministry of Education, teachers and school administrators. They have gathered on 4 different occasions in the *Fórum de Educação* (Education Forum), an event in which the theme PHL was a topic of discussion in its most recent edition, in 2015.

In addition to these events, workshops have been promoted at Brazilian consulates and/or embassies (specifically in 2009 and 2010 in Washington, DC; in 2012 in Geneva; in 2012 and 2016 in San Francisco; in 2013 in London, and in 2014 in Madrid) in a scattered, not frequent nor sufficient manner, but free of charge. Academic professors were brought from Brazil to speak to the community of parents and educators of PHL, which, as reported by some of the participants, left a sense of gap and misunderstanding regarding the particularities of the HL as a concept, the specificities of its contexts, and the variety of HLS profiles.

We have also catalogued around 20 individuals in Brazil (LIMA-HERNANDES, 2016; SARTIN, 2016; NOGUEIRA, IN PRESS; MENDES, 2012; 2015), United States (SILVA, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017; GONTIJO; SILVA, 2013; BORUCHOWSKY, 2014; SILVA; BORUCHOWSKY, 2017), United Kingdom (SOUZA, 2006; 2016), Portugal (SOARES, 2012; GROSSO, 2015; MELO-PFEIFER, 2016), Spain (GOMES, 2015; MORONI, 2015; MORONI; GOMES, 2016; MORONI, 2017), Italy (CHULATA, 2015), France (FANECA, 2011, 2013, 2015), Germany (FLORES; MELO-PFEIFER, 2014), The Netherlands (BRASILEIRO, 2009; ROCHA, 2015), and Japan (HATANO, 2010; SUMIKO, 2012) pursuing or that have acquired a doctorate degree with concentration in the study of PHL, even if at the time of publication such label was not yet used. We are certain that this number is exponentially higher.

There is, however, lack of consensus on the use of an abbreviation to the name of this realm, at times also referred as “a cause”, “a call”, “a system of education”. Some use three letters – PLH (*Português como Língua de Herança*) or LPH (*Língua Portuguesa de Herança*), while others use four letters – POLH (*P*Ortuguês como Língua de Herança).

Such inconsistency, sometimes seen in one single piece of writing, demonstrates disconnection within the global space, and, although it carries a mark of resistance – especially in the case of the 4-letter anagram, which seems to aim for a clear distinction from PLE (*Português como Língua Estrangeira*, Portuguese as a Foreign Language) – in practice, it divides more than it brings together. The concern is that, while this is an inceptive field of study, homogeneity, rather than heterogeneity, to the label could strengthen the collective, giving consistency and coherence to the subject, especially in the fields of Heritage Languages, Bilingualism and Applied Linguistics.

#### **4. An end to a very beginning**

This is only the beginning for a definition and discussion regarding spaces of socio-cultural-pedagogical perspective for Brazilian PHL. This article presents only a

sample of what has been seen in this ongoing study and expects to analyze more than 75 initiatives. So far, we can demonstrate that the field of studies of PHL has at least decades of implementation, and therefore, it is, in several aspects, solidifying.

Its current zeitgeist shows that Portuguese as a Heritage Language is finally coming out of living rooms and going to classrooms, including academic ones, expanding from the amateur to the professional, from the private to the institutional, even governmental, which shows exciting possibilities for the maintenance and (re)identification with the language, culture and identities of Brazil. The study is also able to report that the metaphorical onion of PHL has steadily become robust and shows many indicators of prosperity to this more “recently relevant” minority language.

Portuguese as a Heritage Language will continue being a minority language in the perspective of the society of other majority language, symbolically devalued like any other HL. It will continue being a mark of difference in the immigrant’s way of representing her/himself internally and externally.

That is exactly why it cannot be said too many times: minority languages need visibility, exposure in mainstream academic fields of study and means of mass communication. Specific to PHL, the movement needs support from the local school and the Brazilian consulates and embassies, as well as urgent analysis and action upon the professionalization of the educators (which are both trained and experienced teachers and untrained and inexperienced parents), and the materials at their disposal.

Considering the importance of the PHL, the role of the family is to want its maintenance and development, to persist and to participate in engaging community activities, to support its development, to make it viable, cultivating and celebrating it. And the role of the school is to educate parents about plurilingualism, strengthening student’s linguistic abilities, and pushing forward not just a bilingual education, but also a multicultural one.

Finally, the role of the community of expatriates, which does include the international sites of the Brazilian government, is to promote, to inform, to encourage, and to provide resources (e.g., spaces for meetings or for advertising, as well as sponsorship and materials) for practices and researching regarding the PHL (JENNINGS-WINTERLE, 2013).

Paraphrasing Lo Bianco and Peyton (2013), the (re)vitality of PHL cannot replicate the power and effectiveness of the system, the local society, but how it operates to foster a mutually supportive link between learning and usage represents the maximal point of language vitality, a replication of an environment that (re)creates contexts, experiences and an atmosphere that makes PHL flourish. That is the main role of the initiatives.

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