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Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc): perspectives on a language policy under implementation

Carina Merkle, Gilvan Müller de Oliveira, Wesley Henrique Prates, Elis Gorett da Silveira Lemos, João Carlos Dias Furtado, Willian Canova dos Santos, Airton Yukio Soares Matsushima, João Barreiros, Cleonis Viater Figueira, Marlene Gonçalves Lopes, Myller Augusto Santos Gomes, Larissa Rizzi Varela

Abstract

Following the armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which began in February 2022, the state of Paraná, whose history includes records of Ukrainian migration, established, through the Araucária Foundation for the Support of Scientific and Technological Development of the State of Paraná (FA), a continuous-flow humanitarian and internationalization project under Public Call 09/2022 – Ukrainian Scientists Welcome Program. The initiative created a demand for Portuguese language teaching and learning for these refugees. In this context, Paraná Fala Idiomas (PFI), a language policy used as a strategy by the state of Paraná to internationalize its state universities, launched and implemented the PFI – Portuguese as an Additional Language (PFI-PLA) pilot project, offered remotely to Ukrainian researchers and their families from the perspective of Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc). The PFI-PLAc was subsequently expanded to students in the Student Agreement Program – Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PEC-PLE) at three state universities in Paraná. In addition, the project began serving international students enrolled in graduate programs (PPGs) at the state's higher education institutions. Considering Portuguese as an instrument of internationalization, this article aims to reconstruct the trajectory of the PFI-PLAc between 2022 and 2025. The study adopts a qualitative approach based on bibliographic and documentary research. The results indicate the implementation of Portuguese as an instrument of internationalization in Paraná's higher education institutions (HEIs) through the PFI-PLAc, which, in addition to serving Ukrainian researchers and their families, expanded to PEC-PLE students and international students in Paraná's graduate programs. The study concludes that this pilot project demonstrates the need to consolidate a Portuguese-language policy that goes beyond the status of a pilot initiative. As a future development, work began on creating a website-based repository documenting the project's history. To broaden access to this article, an interpretation in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) was also included.

Keywords: Portuguese language; internationalization; virtual environment.
Abstract Audio in Portuguese and Brazilian Sign Language interpretation: https://youtu.be/kL0O55orJFI

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1. Introduction

The armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which began in February 2022, triggered a series of mobilizations in different parts of the world. In Brazil, the state of Paraná stood out in this context not only because of its institutional response to the emergency but also because of its historical relationship with Ukrainian migration processes. The state's multilingual character is an important element for understanding contemporary initiatives aimed at linguistic and academic reception.

In this context, the Araucária Foundation for the Support of Scientific and Technological Development of the State of Paraná (FA), the state's research funding agency, issued continuous-flow Public Call No. 09/2022 to welcome and integrate researchers and their families affected by the war. Among the actions arising from this institutional policy, the collaboration with the Paraná Fala Idiomas (PFI) program stands out. The program began developing a pilot initiative focused on teaching Portuguese from a welcoming-language perspective (PLAc).

In this context, the Paraná Fala Idiomas – Portuguese as a Welcoming Language Pilot Project emerged. Initially named PFI – Portuguese as an Additional Language (PFI-PLA), it was later consolidated as PFI-PLAc. The initiative belongs to the field of institutional and academic language policies because it proposes Portuguese-language teaching activities for people experiencing displacement or forced mobility while considering the linguistic, social, and cultural dimensions of the welcoming process.

Against this background, this article aims to reconstruct the trajectory of the PFI-PLAc between 2022 and 2025, highlighting the institutional, academic, and linguistic processes that shaped the initiative's implementation and development. The article is organized as follows: it first presents the methodology; it then contextualizes the Paraná Fala Idiomas program and discusses the theoretical framework supporting the proposal; next, it describes the history of the Paraná Fala Idiomas – Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc) Pilot Project; finally, it presents the results, concluding remarks, and references.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach, following the assumptions of Martin W. Bauer and George Gaskell (2002), and is grounded in documentary analysis and bibliographic research. The investigation covers the period from 2022 to 2025, corresponding to the historical context in which the PFI-PLAc pilot project was implemented.

The documentary analysis was based on the collection and examination of calls for proposals, reports, and materials produced throughout the implementation of the PFI-PLAc. The bibliographic research drew

on theoretical works concerning language policy, with an emphasis on Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc) and the different actors involved in this process, including universities, funding foundations, researchers, and students.

3. Contextualization of Paraná Fala Idiomas

The Paraná Fala Idiomas Program (PFI) is a language policy of the state of Paraná linked to the Paraná State Secretariat for Science, Technology and Higher Education (SETI). Since 2014, it has promoted language teaching and learning activities as well as the internationalization of the state's higher education institutions. According to Calvet (2007, p. 11), "language policy is the determination of major decisions concerning the relationships between languages and society." The PFI was therefore conceived as a program to organize and develop language-related initiatives in Paraná, thereby helping to strengthen a state language policy (Rios, Novelli; Calvo, 2021).

Regarding its organizational structure, the program brings together different institutional bodies. Management takes place within SETI in partnership with the Paraná Fund Management Unit (UGF) and is conducted by a State Coordination and a Management Council. At the same time, the activities are implemented within the state higher education institutions, which organize their local teams according to the program's guidelines.

The following state universities in Paraná participate in this structure: State University of Londrina (UEL), State University of Maringá (UEM), State University of Ponta Grossa (UEPG), Western Paraná State University (UNIOESTE), State University of the Central-West (UNICENTRO), State University of Northern Paraná (UENP), State University of Paraná (UNESPAR), and Virtual University of Paraná (UVPR).

At each institution, the program is implemented by a team consisting of an institutional coordinator, a pedagogical advisor, language instructors, and undergraduate interns. The organization of this structure is shown in the organizational chart below.

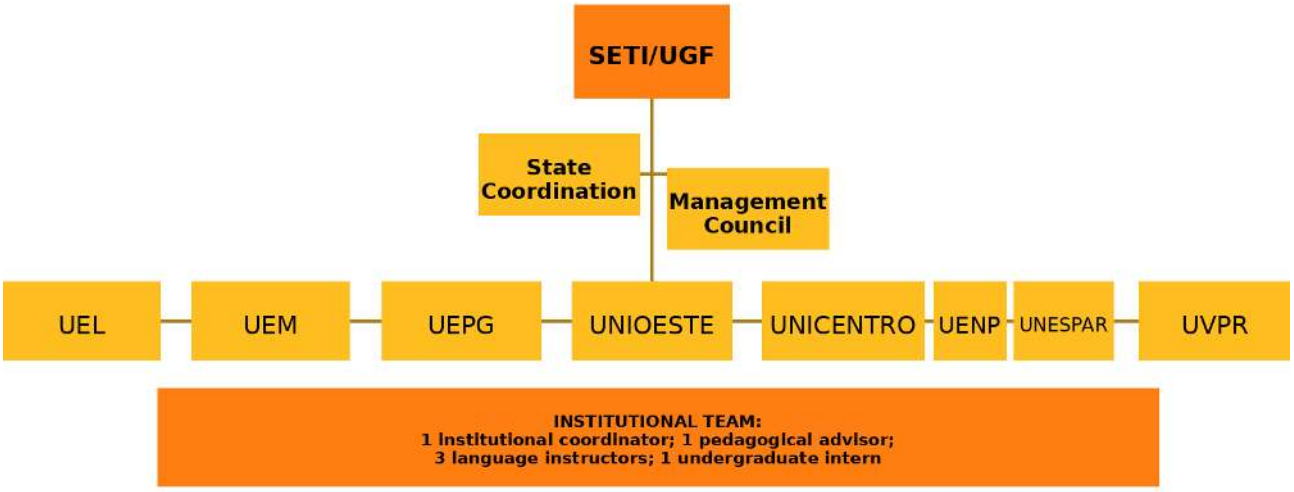

Figure 1 – PFI organizational chart.

Note. Adapted using the Gemini platform (AI) from Rios, Novelli, and Calvo (2021, p. 25).

English was the first language implemented in the program, initially conceived as a pilot project called PFI-English and later consolidated as an integral part of the language policy. French and Spanish were subsequently added. In 2022, building on this trajectory, the PFI-PLAc pilot project emerged from the PFI.

4. Theoretical framework

By promoting Portuguese-language teaching activities aimed at welcoming foreign researchers and their families at Paraná's state universities, the PFI-PLAc constitutes a planned intervention in the language field, linked to public policies on internationalization and academic reception. According to Oliveira (2016, p. 382), "language policies are an area of public policy, conceived and implemented by institutions that exercise influence over society, such as states, governments, churches, companies, NGOs and associations, and even families." From this perspective, the PFI-PLAc can be understood as an institutional language-policy action, developed within universities and state funding agencies, that seeks to address specific social demands through the teaching of Portuguese as an instrument of academic, social, and cultural integration.

In this context, Portuguese began to be conceived not only as a foreign-language offering but also as an instrument of academic and social integration, bringing it closer to theoretical discussions of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PLE), Portuguese as an Additional Language (PLA), and Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc). Within this framework, it is relevant to discuss the different concepts guiding the teaching of Portuguese to speakers of other languages.

Based on the contributions of Maria José dos Reis Grosso (2010), José Carlos Paes de Almeida Filho (2007), and Vilson J. Leffa and Vânia Irala (2014), the different labels assigned to the teaching of Portuguese to speakers of other languages can be understood as reflecting distinct theoretical and contextual frameworks.

The concept of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PLE), associated with the language-teaching tradition described by Almeida Filho (2007), refers to teaching Portuguese to learners who are outside the sociolinguistic environment in which the language is used daily and who study it mainly as an object of cultural and communicative knowledge.

The term Portuguese as an Additional Language (PLA), advocated by Leffa and Irala (2014), shifts the focus away from the notion of "foreign" toward a more inclusive perspective, understanding the language as an addition to the learner's linguistic repertoire, built from the languages they already possess, regardless of order or hierarchy. In this regard, Leffa and Irala (2014, pp. 33–34) state that "one seeks to acquire the additional language not to serve the interests of other countries, but one's own interests."

Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc), as discussed by Grosso (2010), arises in migratory and humanitarian contexts and refers to language teaching aimed at immigrants or refugees who need Portuguese for social inclusion, access to rights, and participation in the daily life of the receiving society. Grosso (2010, p. 74) states that

> [...] a welcoming language approaches the definitions of foreign language and second language, although it differs from both. It is a concept generally linked to the context of reception, an expression associated with migration. Since the learners are usually adults, they learn Portuguese not as the medium of instruction for other subjects, but because of different contextual needs, often related to resolving urgent matters of survival. In this setting, the welcoming language must serve as a bond of affective, bidirectional interaction and as the first form of integration, through linguistic immersion, toward full democratic citizenship.

Thus, while PLE emphasizes language teaching outside the community in which the language is used, PLA highlights the expansion of the linguistic repertoire in plurilingual contexts, and PLAc emphasizes the language's social and integrative role in situations of human mobility and reception.

5. History of the Paraná Fala Idiomas – Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc) Pilot Project

The PFI-PLAc emerged in the context of the armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which began in February 2022. In this setting, the Araucária Foundation issued continuous-flow Public Call No. 09/2022 to receive Ukrainian researchers. The initiative considered both the multilingual character of Paraná and the internationalization needs of the state's higher education institutions. The call provided benefits not only for the researchers but also for their families. Other initiatives later complemented this action, including Public Call No. 10/2022 – Universities as Friends: Ukraine and Public Call No. 15/2024 – Ukrainian Researchers Retention Program.

In this context, Paraná Fala Idiomas (PFI), as a state language policy, established a pilot project initially called PFI-PLA and later reformulated as PFI-PLAc (Portuguese as a Welcoming Language). The emergency project was conducted remotely. Its initial management was led by the PFI State Coordination under the responsibility of Eliane Segati Rios, who was affiliated with the State University of Northern Paraná (UENP). To implement the pilot project, UENP issued calls to select two pedagogical advisors, five language instructors, and one undergraduate student. Together with the State Coordination, they formed the team responsible for implementing the initiative, as shown in Figure 2.

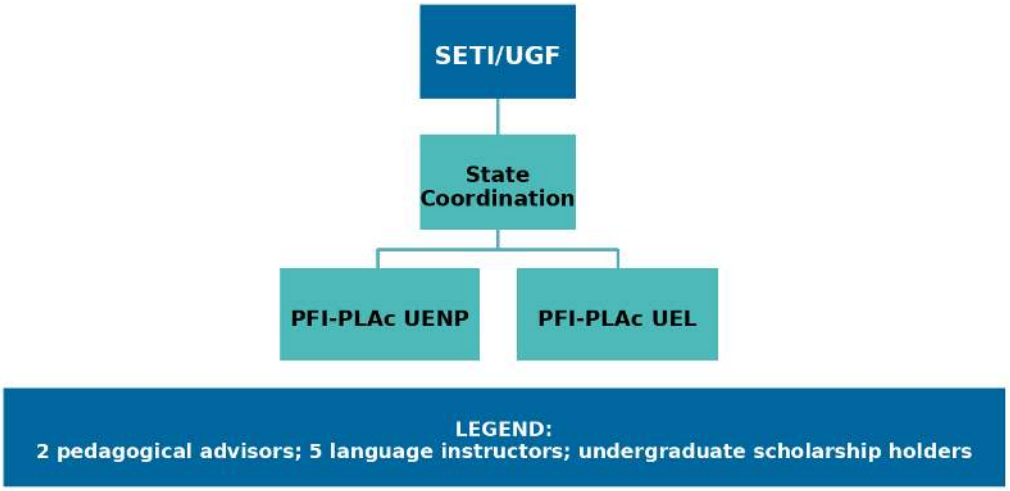

Figure 2 – PFI-PLAc organizational chart.

Note. Authors (2026), using the Gemini platform (AI).

The resources were managed by the Paraná State Secretariat for Science, Technology and Higher Education (SETI) in partnership with the Paraná Fund Management Unit (UGF). The scholarship team

could remain in the project for a maximum of two years, corresponding to the project's total implementation period.

The project aimed to teach and promote the learning of Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc). All activities were conducted remotely through meetings on Google Meet, with additional communication via WhatsApp and email. Materials produced and used during the project were stored in a shared Google Drive repository.

Because this was an unprecedented initiative within the program, the team had to build the project from the ground up. This involved contacting foreign institutions with experience teaching PLAc to Ukrainians, developing the course plan, producing teaching materials, providing teacher education across different fields of knowledge, mediating conflicts, and holding weekly monitoring meetings.

The first contacts with Ukrainian researchers and their families arriving in Paraná were referred to the team based on information received from the Araucária Foundation. Initial outreach and reception therefore occurred mainly through email exchanges. This process presented significant challenges because the team did not speak Ukrainian. Initial communication was consequently often mediated by automatic translation tools such as Google Translate, since many researchers did not share another common language with the team.

From the second half of 2022 until approximately the second half of 2023, the project remained affiliated with the State University of Northern Paraná (UENP). Later, when Eliane Segati Rios was invited by the Araucária Foundation to join its Office of International Strategic Projects while continuing to coordinate Paraná Fala Idiomas (PFI) at the state level, the PFI-PLAc pilot project became affiliated with the State University of Londrina (UEL), under the management of International Relations advisor Viviane Baggio Furtoso.

During this institutional transition, activities were briefly interrupted while administrative procedures were regularized. Between 2023 and 2024, the project was expanded. In addition to PLAc activities for Ukrainian researchers and their families, the remote courses began to include students from the Student Agreement Program – Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PEC-PLE) and graduate students from Paraná's higher education institutions. During this period, still under UEL's supervision, the 1st Paraná Fala Idiomas – Portuguese Meeting (I EPAFIP) was held, at which students presented academic abstracts through remote oral presentations.

During the project's affiliation with UEL, the pilot-project team also organized materials to implement a pilot initiative for the Virtual University of Paraná (UVPR). The activity took place in December 2024, when the PFI's tenth anniversary was celebrated, marking a program that had maintained historical

continuity despite changes in government. In February 2025, the project was discontinued, with the prospect that it might return not as a pilot project but as a structural component of the Paraná Fala Idiomas language policy. In the second half of 2025, the Araucária Foundation released the documentary Rodyna, which portrays the reception of Ukrainian researchers in Paraná. The infographic below (Figure 3) represents the historical trajectory of the PFI-PLAc.

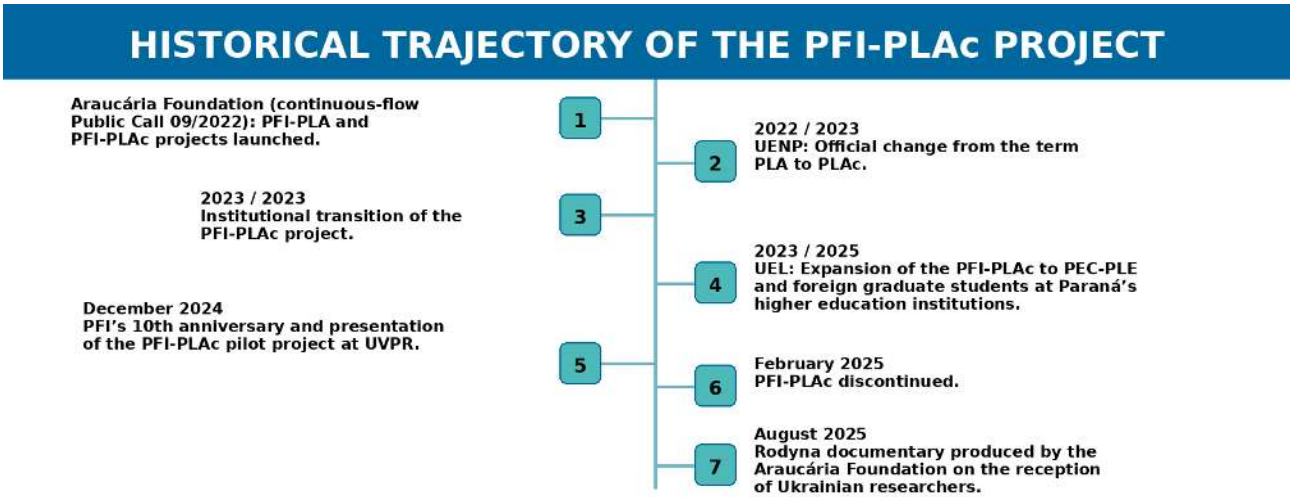

Figure 3 – Historical trajectory of the PFI-PLAc project.

Note. Authors (2026), using the Gemini platform (AI).

In 2026, the PFI is discussing the inclusion of Portuguese as a formal component of the program's language policy.

6. Results and discussion

The actions undertaken by the PFI-PLAc during the period in which it was affiliated with UENP are presented in the following table.

Table 1 – PFI-PLAc UENP.

Dimension / Activity	**Description**
Period	June to November 2022.
Target audience	Approximately 23 Ukrainian researchers and their dependents in refugee situations resulting from the war in Ukraine.
Course offering	Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc) course aimed at developing the language skills required for social and academic integration in Brazil.
Pedagogical planning	Weekly meetings for methodological planning, activity monitoring, and discussion of teaching practices.

Dimension / Activity	**Description**
Course plan development	A plan developed collectively by the project's teachers, taking into account the linguistic and sociocultural needs of the participants.
Course units	1. Personal introductions – "breaking the ice"; 2. Shopping – "bargaining"; 3. Location, places, and services – "finding your way around"; 4. Health – "fit as a fiddle"; 5. Housing and accommodation – "home sweet home".
Learning objectives	Develop basic communication skills, including introducing oneself in Portuguese, providing personal information, understanding numbers and documents such as the CPF, expanding vocabulary related to places in the city, expressing everyday needs, and interacting in situations such as shopping and seeking services.
Initial team training	Training session with Mirna Slava Kirylowicz Voloschen, a member of the Ukrainian Society of Brazil, Ukrainian-language teacher, and co-author of the Ukrainian–Portuguese Dictionary, who provided guidance on the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the target audience.
International exchange of experiences	Meetings with João Barreiros, coordinator of the RTP Ensina portal (Portugal), to discuss experiences teaching Portuguese to immigrants and receive guidance on developing the project website.
Partnership with a Portuguese school	Meetings with the Gabriel Pereira School Group (Évora, Portugal), particularly teachers Luísa Guerreiro and Manuel António P. Correia Dias, who shared their experiences teaching Portuguese to foreign learners.
Participant integration	A virtual meeting between Ukrainian researchers already in Brazil and those who were yet to arrive, promoting the exchange of experiences concerning adaptation, culture, documentation, housing, and mobility.
Development of an informational website	Development of a website containing useful information for participants and their families: program contacts, team presentation, information on Paraná's universities, videos about the state of Paraná, maps, and general guidance.
Ongoing team training	Academic discussions on teaching Portuguese to migrants, including differences between PLA and PLAc, the production of teaching materials, methodologies, and assessment.
Participation of specialists	Meeting with researcher Carla Alessandra Cursino, who shared theoretical and practical experiences in teaching Portuguese as a Welcoming Language.
Academic output	Presentation of the abstract "Ukraine, Brazil, and the Portuguese language as a means of welcoming" at the 2nd Freire Conference (UFRJ, IFRJ, and the University of Cambridge). Submission of the report "Teaching Portuguese as a Welcoming Language to Ukrainians" at the 8th UENP Integration Meeting.

Dimension / Activity	**Description**
Training activities	Meeting with psychologist Danilo Pichioli Silveira on mental health and reception; meeting with educator Adriane Franco Duarte on teamwork and online pedagogical practices; follow-up meeting with Mirna Slava Kirylowicz Voloschen to evaluate and improve the course.

Note. PFI-PLAc.

The actions undertaken by the PFI-PLAc during the period in which it was affiliated with UEL are presented in the following table.

Table 2 – PFI-PLAc UEL.

Dimension / Activity	**Description**
Program	Paraná Fala Idiomas – Portuguese as a Welcoming Language Program (PFI-PLAc) – Phase 2
Nature	Extension pilot project
Implementation period	August 2023 – July 2024
Coordination	Viviane Aparecida Bagio Furtoso
Participating institutions	SETI, Araucária Foundation, Paraná Fund, and Paraná state universities
Institutional affiliation	Initially affiliated with UENP (2022); later transferred to UEL
Pedagogical team	2 pedagogical advisors and 5 language instructors
Pedagogical advisors	Carina Merkle; João Carlos Dias Furtado
Instructors	Ana Elisa Lima Germano; Rodrigo do Amaral Munhoz did not teach the classes, withdrew from the project, and was replaced by Ana Letícia Carneiro de Oliveira; Mariana Clara de Lima da Silva; Wesley Henrique Prates; Amanda Letícia Souza Cordovil Dias later withdrew from the project and was replaced by instructor Carla Alessandra Cursino
Target audience	53 people (23 Ukrainian researchers; 30 PEC-PLE and graduate students)
Platforms used	Google Meet, Google Classroom, Google Drive
Main pedagogical activities	Development of course plans; organization of teaching materials; provision of Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PLAc) courses; academic-genre courses for Ukrainian researchers
Management and training activities	Weekly meetings; teacher education; individualized support for the team; student, teacher, and management evaluation
Institutional integration activities	Participation in PFI meetings in Curitiba; closer coordination between remote and face-to-face teaching at UEL, UEM, and UNICENTRO

Dimension / Activity	Description
Academic output and dissemination	Submission of a scientific article; participation in a FAUBAI event; dissemination through social media; involvement of instructors in graduate programs
Events organized	1st Paraná Fala Idiomas – Portuguese Meeting (I EPAFIP)

Note. PFI-PLAc.

Overview: PFI-PLAc UENP/UEL

Araucária Foundation

- Public Call 09/2022
- Ukrainian Scientists Welcome Program
- Funding for the PFI-PLA / PFI-PLAc project

Paraná Fala Idiomas

- Support for internationalization
- Language teaching at state universities
- Integration into UVPR

UENP – State University of Northern Paraná

- Initial implementation of the PFI-PLA
- Testimony, exchange, exhibition, and interview
- Participation of the team in the 2nd Freire Conference: “Human Rights” Working Group (27′42″)

UEL – State University of Londrina

- Continuation of PFI-PLAc activities
- Scientific communication, academic output, podcast 1, and podcast 2
- 1st Paraná Fala Idiomas – Portuguese Meeting (I EPAFIP)

Rodyna (documentary)

- Audiovisual record of the experience
- Institutional memory of the project
- Scientific and social communication

Note. Authors (2026), using an AI platform.

The implementation of the PFI-PLAc pilot project, as summarized in the tables and overview, reveals the coordination of pedagogical, institutional, and scientific activities aimed at teaching Portuguese to people experiencing international mobility. As part of the PFI, the project developed course plans, offered

PLAc classes to Ukrainian researchers and their families, PEC-PLE students, and graduate students, provided academic-genre courses and teacher education, and participated in academic and institutional events. These activities show that the initiative extends beyond a strictly pedagogical scope and also functions as an institutional strategy for internationalization and language management in higher education.

In this context, PLAc teaching can be understood as part of a language policy designed to guarantee linguistic rights and the social inclusion of migrants. As Amaral and Santos note, "within Brazilian territory, PLAc develops as a language policy because of its emergency nature in the context of migration, thus representing a political act aimed at ensuring dignity and social justice" (2022, p. 11). The provision of courses for researchers in refugee situations, as shown in the project activities table, puts this perspective into practice by promoting the minimum linguistic conditions required for academic and social participation in the host country.

Beyond its humanitarian and educational dimensions, the project is also connected to contemporary debates on Language Policy and Planning for Science and Higher Education (PPLICES). According to Jesus and Oliveira (2021), the absence of clearer institutional positions regarding linguistic diversity in scientific production contributes to the marginalization of knowledge produced in different languages, since "policies that privilege monolingualism in science are currently in force […] and a large body of valid scientific knowledge remains on the margins of the global system" (Jesus; Oliveira, 2021, p. 19). In this sense, initiatives such as the PFI-PLAc, by offering academic-genre courses in Portuguese and supporting the integration of foreign researchers into Paraná's state universities, broaden the possibilities for the circulation of knowledge in Portuguese and counter processes of scientific invisibilization. As the authors emphasize, within language policy and planning for science and higher education, many forms of knowledge remain invisible in the global system, affecting even international languages such as Portuguese and Spanish (Jesus; Oliveira, 2021, pp. 18–19).

This perspective also relates to Oliveira's (2013) conception of Portuguese as a pluricentric language. According to the author, the internationalization of the language depends on the internationalization of its management and on the collective construction of strategies that strengthen its global presence, recognizing it as a language with multiple centers of production and circulation. Institutional policies that promote the teaching and dissemination of Portuguese in international contexts, such as the PFI-PLAc, therefore help consolidate the language as a vehicle for scientific, cultural, and economic relations worldwide.

Finally, these activities were implemented largely in digital and hybrid environments, involving platforms such as Google Meet and Google Classroom as well as collaboration among different state universities. This arrangement resonates with experiences reported in recent literature on teaching PLAc

remotely. As Mori, Ferreira, and Rocha (2024, p. 18) observe, “teaching Portuguese as a Welcoming Language remotely was a major challenge”; however, remote-teaching theories and strategies enabled the development of collaborative methodologies that were essential to ensuring an effective teaching-learning process, even in adverse contexts. The practices described in the project therefore demonstrate the pedagogical and institutional adaptation required to respond to emerging demands related to academic mobility and contemporary migration.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the PFI-PLAc pilot project, developed between 2022 and 2025 within the Paraná Fala Idiomas Program, provides a concrete understanding of how a language policy can be constructed, institutionally coordinated, and implemented in higher education. Throughout its implementation, the project mobilized different institutional actors—including state universities, funding agencies, and pedagogical teams—and developed teaching, teacher-education, and academic-production activities for people experiencing international mobility, particularly researchers and family members in refugee situations.

The PFI-PLAc experience shows that language policies are not constituted solely through regulatory documents; they also take shape through institutional practices, administrative decisions, the development of teaching materials, teacher education, and the organization of courses that respond to specific social and academic needs. The project thus demonstrates how PLAc teaching initiatives can function simultaneously as instruments of linguistic inclusion, support for university internationalization, and promotion of knowledge circulation in Portuguese.

The trajectory of the PFI-PLAc also reveals important aspects of the field of Portuguese as a Welcoming Language in Brazil. First, it demonstrates the strengthening of PLAc as an area of professional practice and academic research linked to public and institutional policies. It also shows the need to connect language teaching, academic mobility, and the reception of migrant populations, thereby expanding the role of universities in developing educational responses to humanitarian crises and international displacement. At the same time, the project contributes to scientific knowledge about pedagogical practices, teacher education, and language-policy management in higher education.

Future developments include the continuation of project-related activities, initiatives to systematize and disseminate materials, and the development of a digital environment for teaching Portuguese to international audiences. Information, materials, and outputs related to the project are currently being made available on a dedicated digital platform accessible through the website. This initiative seeks to broaden the

reach of the activities, facilitate the circulation of knowledge produced by the project, and help consolidate collaborative networks in the field of Portuguese-language teaching for speakers of other languages.

Finally, the experience points to future pathways involving the expansion of institutional language policies focused on Portuguese as a Welcoming Language, stronger teacher education for work in international-mobility contexts, and greater integration of teaching, research, and community engagement in the field. The PFI-PLAc case shows that effective language policies depend on coordination across institutional levels, continuity of action, and the production of knowledge capable of informing and improving these practices in Brazilian and international contexts.

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