

**Latin American, African and Asian immigrants working in Brazilian organizations:
facing the language barrier**

**Imigrantes Latino-americanos, Africanos e Asiáticos trabalhando em Organizações
Brasileiras: enfrentando a barreira do idioma**

Antonio Carvalho Neto

PPGA-PUC Minas

carvalhonet@pucminas.br

Fernanda Versiani

Unihorizontes-MG

nandaversiani@gmail.com

Kelly Pellizari

UFMT - Universidade Federal do Mato Grosso

kyp_l@hotmail.com

Carolina Mota-Santos

PPGA-PUC Minas

cmmotasantos@gmail.com

Gustavo Abreu

PUC Minas / University of Michigan – EUA

gabreu@umich.edu

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ABSTRACT

Since 2010 around half a million immigrants entered Brazil. This paper aims to describe their experience facing the Portuguese language barrier in the Brazilian labor market. Language here is understood as spoken, written and body language. The South-to-South approach here proposed differs from most of the literature, based mainly on studies South-to-North oriented. During six field visits the research group observed the arrival in Brazil, the hiring process and the experience of 34 immigrants from Haiti, Bolivia, Venezuela, Angola, Nigeria, Togo, Iraq and Yemen working within ten Brazilian firms that hired them. Besides the observation technique, these immigrants, social workers, employers and Brazilian co-workers were interviewed. The employers emphasized the immigrants' enthusiasm, willingness to learn and dedication to work. The immigrants said they were well received and emphasized the use of Google Translator, mimicry and drawings to communicate. The employers said they used these same creative ways to teach the work activities to the immigrants as well as placing the immigrant next to another Brazilian worker who performed the same set of tasks so that the immigrant would learn by looking. Few complaints about lack of patience of Brazilian co-

workers and lack of dedication of the immigrants to learn Portuguese were registered.

Keywords: South-to-South Immigration; Brazilian Labor Market; Language Barrier; Brazilian Co-Workers; Brazilian Managers.

RESUMO

Desde 2010, cerca de meio milhão de imigrantes entraram no Brasil. Este artigo aborda a experiência deles no mercado de trabalho brasileiro diante do desafio da barreira da língua portuguesa, língua aqui entendida como linguagem falada, escrita e corporal. A abordagem Sul-Sul aqui proposta difere muito da literatura sobre imigração, a maioria Sul-Norte. Em 6 visitas a campo, o grupo de pesquisa observou a chegada ao Brasil, o processo de contratação e a experiência de 34 imigrantes do Haiti, Bolívia, Venezuela, Angola, Nigéria, Togo, Iraque e Iêmen trabalhando em dez empresas brasileiras. Além da técnica de observação, foram entrevistados estes imigrantes, trabalhadores sociais, empregadores e colegas de trabalho brasileiros. Os empregadores enfatizaram o entusiasmo dos imigrantes, a vontade de aprender e a dedicação ao trabalho. Os imigrantes, que gostaram da recepção no Brasil, e os empregadores usaram o *Google Translator*, o mimetismo e até desenhos para se comunicar. Estas mesmas formas criativas foram usadas para ensinar atividades de trabalho aos imigrantes, além de colocar o imigrante ao lado de outro trabalhador brasileiro para que o imigrante aprendesse olhando. Queixas sobre falta de paciência dos brasileiros e falta de dedicação dos imigrantes para aprender português foram registradas.

Palavras-chave: Imigração Sul-Sul; Mercado de Trabalho Brasileiro; Barreira da língua; Colegas de trabalho brasileiros; Gerentes brasileiros.

Immigration, Labor Relations and Language

This paper describes the immigrant's experience overcoming the Portuguese language barrier in order to be included in the Brazilian labor market. The investigation is about the integration of the immigrant in the workplace through a multiplicity of languages. It involves South-to-South immigrants of different nationalities migrating to the city of São Paulo, by large the biggest economic center of Brazil.

The South-to-South approach here proposed differs from most of the literature about the immigration phenomenon which is based mainly on studies oriented either from North-to-North (Ivlevs, 2016; Refslund & Thörnqui, 2016; Verzhinina & Rodgers, 2018) or from South-to-North immigration (Josephson, 2014; Kerr, Kerr & Lincoln, 2015; Rapoport, 2016; Abramitzky & Boustan, 2017; Farris & Holman, 2017).

The migratory phenomenon has been the subject of numerous discussions in the international scene, especially due to the pressing need of countries to position themselves in relation to the increasing mobility of people worldwide, caused by a wide range of push-factors besides the economic motive, such as wars and religious persecution. In many cases, as stipulated in the classic migration laws by Ravenstein (1976), the economic motive is the dominant one for migration. It is no surprise that the majority of the literature brings economic issues (Kerr, Kerr & Lincoln, 2015; Parey, Ruhose, Waldinger & Netz, 2017).

Nevertheless, the impacts of immigration on wages and employment are far from being understood. It is still a controversial and rather complex field of study (Dustmann, Schönberg & Stuhler, 2016). This article contributes addressing immigration and employment.

The questions that arise from migratory movements are intertwined with employment

relations due to the potential the phenomenon has of affecting the labor market. The intensification of migratory movements around the world is capable of bringing even more heterogeneity and diversity to labor markets (Kemeny & Cooke, 2018), and hence the migratory phenomenon becomes an important topic of discussion in contemporary labor relations (Martine, 2005).

The greater presence of immigrants as one of the social actors in the current labor market can yield different conflicts in contrast to the conflicts generated among the traditional collective social actors (unions, government and employers) present in the industrial relations system. Recent literature in the field of study of Industrial Relations has been questioning if these traditional collective actors are representative when the immigrants are considered (Hopkins, & Dawson, 2016).

When immigrants are involved, a (dis)equilibrium in the relationship between the actors which are already embedded in the social system can become more complex and intensified due to the immigrants' status in society. In Europe, studies show how an economic recession can intensify xenophobia (Crush & Ramachandran, 2010; Hatton, 2016).

After all, the presence and search for the social inclusion of these immigrants ends up impacting society as a whole, and can have ample effects in terms of the job landscape or in terms of the supply and demand of the labor market (Zeni & Filippim, 2014). The current economic disaster in Venezuela, for example, has pushed thousands of Venezuelans to northern Brazil and transformed the socioeconomic reality of entire regions of the Amazon area.

To reflect upon and to understand language as a preponderant factor in labor relations requires elucidating the different meanings generated by the subjects in light of their context. In this study, language can be spoken, written and/or body language. The first is characterized by linguistic communication, expressed by tone of voice and even by gestures. The second is the representation of spoken language, but not the expressions inherent in speech. The body language goes beyond speech and writing, and takes into consideration the way you sit, bend your legs or move your hands at the time of the interaction (Cohen, 2011).

Our research has been conducted for the past two years, and six visits were made to a third sector organization called *Missão Paz* (Peace Mission) and to the firms that employ immigrants through this organization. The Mission, where immigrants, social workers and employers were observed and interviewed, has been active as a mediator for more than one hundred years in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. We also visited the firms that hired the immigrants (located in São Paulo metropolitan region) and interviewed the immigrant-employees, employers and Brazilian co-workers.

The immigrant facing the Portuguese language barrier in Brazil

Brazil's economic boom from 2004 to 2014 can be considered a strong pull factor, influencing the decision of migrants to seek the country as a destination with a considerable labor market and generous immigration policies. This article contributes again addressing a theme poorly represented in the literature about immigrants in the labor market, the language barrier.

It is important to mention that a new legislation was approved in Brazil in May 2017 giving immigrant workers the same legal rights as Brazilian citizens. The clear willingness of Brazil to receive immigrants and include them socially is noteworthy. The recent promulgation of the legislation (2017) that grants immigrants equal work rights and the consensus on immigration among all political parties from left to right are further signs of a favorable situation for immigrants.

Between 2000 and 2010 more than 260,000 immigrants entered Brazil (Oliveira, 2013, Soares, Lobo & Matos, 2015). From 2010 through the middle of 2016 a total of 53,300 resident visas was issued (the majority for Haitians, followed by Peruvians, Bolivians, Koreans, Chinese and several African countries).

During the same period until 2016, according to estimates by the Federal Police, more than 128,000 undocumented immigrants entered Brazil. Immigration has diminished since 2015 with the economic crisis in Brazil, however not considerably.

The huge and ongoing diaspora we are witnessing nowadays everywhere in the world is already a new field of study (Constant & Zimmermann, 2016). In the USA, one of the leading countries as a preferential destiny to immigrants (Abramitzky & Boustan, 2017), this new field of study is booming (Josephson, 2014; Xu, Garand & Zhu, 2015; Farris & Holman, 2017; Ruhes, 2017). The recent restrictions on immigration by the USA, in turn, highlighted other possible destinations in cases of forced migration. Brazil, as the biggest economy in the southern region, potentially becomes a viable option in a chain migration when the USA is more restricted. Another example is the recent economic and political disaster experienced by the Venezuelans that generated a new and continuous influx of thousands of immigrants to Brazil.

Within the group studied in our research, the greatest motivation for migration to Brazil was economic. Brazil, the largest economy in Latin America and the ninth largest economy in the world, has large industrial sectors and modern and advanced services coexist with traditional labor-intensive sectors. It is a powerful attraction for migrants not only from neighboring countries but also worldwide. In some cases, such as the earthquakes that destroyed Haiti, the natural disaster was an aggravating factor, although the economic motive was still predominant considering that migrants were pushed away because of a very poor economy that was further damaged. The same applies to political catastrophes, such as Venezuela where the crisis devastated the economy as mentioned previously.

Nonetheless, the reasons to migrate to Brazil can also be influenced by social networks. In this sense, Brazil is also a very receptive country to immigrants, despite some recent setbacks related to the Venezuelan diaspora. However, in Brazil little is said about the national policies of social integration of these immigrants in order to minimize the possible conflicts that may arise from this demographic movement (Thomaz, 2013, Zeni & Filippim, 2014). Above everything else, when arriving in Brazil, immigrants require assistance beyond a welcoming reception and information sessions. They ultimately seek social inclusion and finding employment is a fundamental step in the integration process (Sassen, 2002; Patarra, 2005; Reis, 2004).

Third Sector organizations such as *Missão Paz* (where this study was based) facilitate the process of entry and inclusion signaling to other migrants in their social network that there is a path to inclusion in the receiving community. As generally agreed in contemporary scholarship, the social network is a self-reinforcing mechanism responsible for successive waves of migration (Yu, 2016).

Migrants might face challenges such as adapting to the local climate or the geography in general that can be very different from that of their point of origin. The experience can be even traumatic (Nicola, 2017). Most importantly, issues within the entire social spectrum, such as differences in cultural habits and especially in language, certainly function as obstacles upon arrival at the host country (Patarra, 2005; Soares, Lobo & Matos, 2015). Recruitment decision-making involving immigrants can be influenced by prejudice against the stranger, against the different (Almeida, Fernando, Hannif & Dharmage, 2015).

Increasingly, with the arrival of more immigrants in Brazil, one notices the growth of a multicultural society. One Brazilian firm we visited has Senegalese, Ghanaians, Bolivians,

Angolans and Brazilians working together. This diversity can provide an increase of firm productivity as argued in Kemeny & Cooke (2018).

The entry of immigrants of different nationalities into the Brazilian labor market demands social relations that must often consider multicultural and multi-linguistic elements (Silva, 2002). In this sense, understanding other forms of language, beyond the verbal expressions, becomes important for communication since aspects of body language, for instance, can have different or similar meanings between nationalities (Bond & Komai, 1976; Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1994; Cohen, 2011).

The language barrier, nonetheless, is one of the largest barriers (Filippim, Schumarcher & Alperstedt, 2018). The labor market, amidst the conflicts and frictions arising from work dynamics, cultural and linguistic diversity, provides immigrants a path to social insertion (Silva, 2002), and the research that originated this article was developed in this environment permitting a closer look at the linguistic and social obstacles.

Language is a fundamental factor to be considered when exploring the object of this research, which consists of the interactions between immigrant workers, their employers and their fellow workers. The official language in Brazil is Portuguese and that is a challenge for most of the immigrants who arrive in the country. This poses a language barrier because Portuguese (although spoken by a large population in the world – 244 million people from 8 countries) is not a very widespread/diffused language and a significant part of the immigrants come either from African countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and speak English or from Senegal and Haiti, French speakers. The vast majority of the Brazilian population does not have a basic command of English. Even fewer Brazilians have any knowledge of French (a language spoken by Haitians and Senegalese, a very significant contingent of the immigrants researched). Immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries, like the majority of Latin America, on the other hand, have an easier time communicating due the great similarities between Spanish and Portuguese.

Authors such as Amado (2016), Dias (2016), Cotinguiba and Pimentel (2015), studied how the migratory process creates a new dimension of the reality researched in labor relations and the learning of Portuguese language. Certainly any immigrant, when seeking the Brazilian labor market is, so to speak, “obliged” to acquire Portuguese as a language. The uniqueness of this phenomenon, acquisition of a language, in the relationships that are established within the labor relations context has significant effects, since the whole worker-employer relationship is mediated by language.

Corrêa (2016, p. 31) brings attention to "a new globalized social order in which social, political, cultural and linguistic interactions intensify and reshape in a space conceived as both endogenous and exogenous". This leads to the reflection that drives this work: how does the linguistic interaction between immigrants, employers and Brazilian co-worker happen?

Linguistic differences of the Portuguese spoken in Brazil compared to linguistic groups such as Japanese, Chinese and Korean or English are clearly apparent. Even linguistic groups closer to Portuguese, like the Haitians that speak French-based *Creole*, have encountered a language barrier considering that the *Creole* is less diffused than the French and even further away from the Portuguese. Amado (2016, p.124) points out that the languages of Haiti (French and Creole) are social markers and "the more educated and with greater socioeconomic power, the more the individual approaches the French. Creole is associated (in Haiti) with less educated environments." Therefore, Haitians with low schooling speak only *Creole* as their mother language which further limits them, while Haitians with the highest level of education speak French (in this last case like the Senegalese, whose presence is already significant in some Brazilian southern regions).

For Spanish-speaking immigrants, such as Venezuelans, Peruvians and Bolivians, whose language is much closer to Portuguese, it is easier to understand the Portuguese spoken

in Brazil; nonetheless, there is still some initial difficulty in communicating with Brazilians. Even for Azorians, Capeverdians, Angolans and Mozambicans - who speak Portuguese with an accent between the Brazilian Portuguese (more melodious, slower) and the Portuguese from Portugal (a faster and drier *staccato*) - encounter difficulties in the initial social interactions in Brazil.

Language, culture and individual identity are imbricated elements. One does not learn or teach a language that is immune to every other factors largely related to culture. The language acquires meaning in this imbricated process. In a context of immigration, elements of material culture, linguistic forms, rituals and traditions gain relevance, drawing out various meanings. Language and symbols may be evoking several things at the same time, among these a new form of belonging, as is the case of the Portuguese language in the public space lived by immigrants (Silva, 2002). In this context, the immigrant, in order to work, must learn a minimum level of Portuguese (Amado, 2016).

The teaching of Portuguese language for immigrants is already present in several regions of the country, echoing the aforementioned sense of a friendly context. On the other hand, we are not disregarding the fact that language barriers certainly can fuel conflict between the immigrant worker and the Brazilian worker as sustained by Tenzer and Pudelko (2015). The inclusion mechanisms related to the several levels of government public policies have not yet reached a degree of effective integration in Brazil (Cabete, 2010, Amado, 2016). We do not intend here to affirm that learning another language means losing one's identity, but rather that extending the meanings of language is a way of guaranteeing and giving autonomy to the subject-immigrant. In this perspective, through the language one can facilitate the social and cultural insertion, allowing the immigrant to re-signify his identity.

Research Methods

This research observed the arrival of the immigrant in Brazil, the hiring process and the full experience of their first steps to be included in Brazilian society through the intermediation of a third sector organization (*Missão Paz*; herein also referred to as the Mission). Additionally, it examines the experience of the immigrant-employee within the companies that hired them, focusing on how immigrants, employers and fellow Brazilian workers deal with the multi-lingual challenge.

The Mission was founded by missionaries of the Scalabrinian-Catholic order to aid Italian immigrants that arrived in Brazil and worked in coffee plantations during the early years of the twentieth century. Today, this civil society organization is a reference point welcoming immigrants from a variety of origins including Haiti, South America (notably Bolivia, Venezuela and Colombia) and Africa (notably Angola, Mozambique, Congo, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria). The Mission offers gratuitous services, such as intermediation between potential employers and employees, professional oriented classes and legal advice.

One quantitative and two qualitative research techniques were chosen, allowing the triangulation between the methods. In-depth interviews were conducted with immigrants, social workers, employers and Brazilian workers. Participant observation was used at the Mission and at the companies that hired the immigrants. A survey was applied to the employers with a closed questionnaire.

The qualitative data were obtained in 6 different visits of 5 members of the research group to the Mission. Each visit had a variable duration of 4 to 10 days. In total, 34 immigrants from from Haiti, Bolivia, Venezuela, Angola, Nigeria, Togo, Iraq and Yemen were interviewed. Additionally, 10 Brazilian employers who hired immigrants and 2 Brazilian immigrant co-workers were also interviewed. Representatives of the staff of the Mission

including the main executive (a catholic priest), a social worker, a secretary, a communication assistant, a librarian, a doorman and a cook were interviewed as well.

The first visit had an exploratory nature; it was possible to interview the person in charge of the library at the Mission where all the reports of the work developed through time by the missionaries were archived. On that occasion, we got to know part of the structure of the place, such as the housing unit where immigrants are accommodated when they first arrive in Brazil. It was possible to observe and talk informally with immigrants of different nationalities.

On the second visit more observation and interviews were conducted with the parish priest (who is the chief executive of the Mission), the social worker (responsible for accompanying the insertion of immigrants in the labor market), the kitchen assistant, the doorman (at the dormitories where the families of immigrants recently arrived in Brazil are staying), the secretary of the Mission and the communication assistant. During the same visit, four employers who had hired immigrants were also interviewed.

Our study enabled our team of researchers to participate as observers by working voluntarily with the Mission in the search for inclusion of immigrants in the Brazilian labor market. Our research team worked in all the steps from the day the immigrants arrived looking for shelter and food to the day they established a minimal level of independence to become a (semi-) permanent part of Brazilian society through getting their first job.

On the third, fourth and fifth visits, our team of researchers had the opportunity to observe and participate in the mediation process at the Mission (acting as interpreters in the intermediations between the immigrants and the possible employers) that resulted in the hiring of immigrants by employing firms. During the same visits, 4 employers who had hired immigrants were interviewed as well. Moreover, the researchers participated as volunteers teaching and observing Portuguese classes for immigrants of different nationalities.

On the sixth round, visits were made to companies that already had a history of hiring immigrants of different nationalities to observe how the insertion and interaction of immigrants occurred at work and with co-workers. In this stage, observations were also made and interviews with employers, Brazilian co-workers, and the immigrants themselves were conducted.

All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The interviews were conducted on December 2015, four different periods during all of 2016, 2017 and on March 2018. The interviews lasted, on average, two hours each. The choice for using in-depth interviews was appropriate to explore more sensitive, complex issues and extract a greater level of knowledge about the phenomenon while going deeper into more subjective data (Poupart, 2008).

Usually the technique of observation is used in conjunction with other techniques and in this study it was associated with the in-depth interviews. The strength of the observation technique in this specific case was the possibility of seeing the reality of the object studied in the different situations observed by the researchers (Bechker, 1972; Zanelli, 2002; Shah, 2006). Immigrants were also closely observed in the intermediation process.

Furthermore, by adopting a participant mode of observation versus a non-participant mode, the researchers were able to act as interpreters in the intermediation process when the contracting of the immigrants by the employers took place. This gave the researchers the opportunity to better understand how part of the process of inclusion of immigrants in the Brazilian labor market unfolded.

Our research also used a questionnaire with 11 questions evaluating the immigrant work that was e-mailed by the Mission in the second half of 2016 to 41 companies that had hired immigrants. The respondent companies operated in the following areas: (auto) mechanics, electric power, restaurants, construction, snack bars / bakeries, general services, wood factories, steel-metal businesses, agriculture. Most companies (85%) had no experience

with immigrants until the time they encountered the Mission, and the hiring of the immigrants took place through the organization.

Presentation and discussion of the data

The intermediation through the Mission gives the immigrants the material support and the opportunity to get a first job, overcoming the fundamental language barrier. Once employed, this third sector organization follows the recently hired immigrant in the initial adaptation phase at the job.

The Mission offers shelter for 110 people in lodgings divided into female and male wings. The selection for admission and temporary stay at the house is given by the criterion of greater vulnerability. This house strives to make the guest feel good and relate to the environment as if it were his or her own home. As explained by the priest that was interviewed, "the team that works in the Mission fosters freedom, responsibility and solidarity in a fraternal and caring environment."

This structure offers a variety of amenities including breakfast, lunch, dinner, laundry, religious service (when requested), clothes, leisure activities, informative lectures and psychological counseling. In addition, the Mission provides professionals to assist the immigrants, directing them to professional courses and giving guidance on the services offered by the city of São Paulo. The Mission also offers medical and legal assistance to immigrants. To ensure the necessary assistance for immigrants, a team of 11 employees and 6 or more volunteers work in three shifts for 24 hours a day. The team is a reference point for support, and one of the few alternatives for immigrants when they find themselves in dire need. In 2015 a sum of 998 people were cared for at the shelter. Among them were men, women and children, with the majority of those being of South American nationality (many Bolivians and Colombians) and from African countries (Congo, Angola, Kenya and Nigeria).

Moreover, the team at the Mission focuses on actions to help immigrants find work. This action is comprised of two moments: one directed at the immigrant and the other at the employer. Immigrants have the opportunity to attend a lecture that introduces some aspects of Brazilian culture to them as well as the characteristics of the labor market and labor legislation. Employers, in turn, are directed to another lecture, where they receive information about the migration phenomenon, cultural diversity and are guided in relation to the procedures for hiring immigrant labor.

The research team participated in all these processes. The Mission follows this routine closely and acts to assist both immigrants and employers, always within the perspective of immigrant inclusion in the workplace. It is with this action mindset and by providing the basic food and lodging that the organization aims to initiate the immigrant's journey in São Paulo. These services are provided with the intention of making the immigrant minimally independent, so that they are able to seek work and stay in Brazil. In 2015 alone, 1,488 immigrants were hired and benefited from the center's intermediation and 556 employers were able to participate in the process. From this data we can see the importance of this third sector agent in the process of insertion of the immigrant in the labor market. Another important point observed was that the service was provided with great quality and professionalism. All those involved established a relationship of respect and affection with the immigrants, which certainly strengthened the bond and stimulated the trust in the institution.

The Mission also supervises hiring, at the other end of the process. It looks both at the employer's side as well as at the employees. It checks in with the employer through periodic visits, e-mails and phone calls, in order to understand how the process of inclusion and adaptation of the immigrant in that work reality is developing. These actions are also intended to verify potential irregularities, and if any problematic situation is found, it is possible for the

immigrant to return and rely on the services offered by the Mission. The research team took part in several of these visits.

It can be perceived that the daily flow of new immigrants seeking the organization is growing. However, this increase is not accompanied by an increase in the number of employees and volunteers, nor by an expanding number of places becoming available at the shelter. This fact may hinder the progress of recruitment processes especially when considering the language barrier between the immigrant and the employer. Very few immigrants are able to speak Portuguese excluding those from a small number of nations that share the language such as Angola and Mozambique.

In our quantitative survey with representatives of 41 companies that hired immigrants, only 5 (12.2%) said they were able to hire immigrants who were able to communicate in Portuguese. However, all the companies emphasized the enthusiasm the immigrant demonstrated with the possibility of obtaining a job, the willingness to learn, their politeness during the exchange and the dedication to work. Almost all businesses (97%) said they needed to find creative ways to teach the work activities to the immigrant because of the language barrier. To start breaking the language barrier, all employers used the help of the internet (Google Translator) to translate basic terms. In several situations, they used drawings and in 3 cases they used theatrical language through mimicry. Another strategy used by all companies was to place the immigrant next to another Brazilian worker who performed the same set of tasks so that the immigrant would learn by looking at the Brazilian co-worker.

As one Brazilian who works together with a colleague immigrant said, "when the immigrant does not understand, we show again, explain, and always repeat with gestures, illustrations." Another Brazilian colleague corroborates: "when there is some difficulty in the conversation we always go for the gesture. Always showing how to do it and he (the immigrant) learns." In a company we visited, when the immigrants first arrived, the Brazilian workers put tags on the tools (like rulers, hammers, etc.) with the Portuguese and French related names until the Haitians learned what they were for. As time passed, they no longer needed the names in both languages as the immigrant workers learned the vocabulary. In other companies, photography was also a means of communication used by the owner.

Immigrants corroborate the perception that employers and their fellow Brazilian workers have the willingness and patience to find alternatives to the language barrier. Overall, when they went to work within a company with several other workers (rather than isolated in one household) they said they learned the work by watching their Brazilian colleagues doing and showing them how. When they did not understand, the Brazilian colleagues would take the pieces and show them with some kind of illustration. A Haitian immigrant exemplified, "Sometimes I want to say something and they do not understand, then I also make gestures. It works. We can work like this". This good acceptance of the immigrant by the Brazilian workers is well reflected in the discourse of a human resources manager of a construction firm: "Brazilians are curious about the history of the immigrant, because it makes us Brazilians better reflect on our country. The Brazilians were very welcoming with the foreign collaborators, showing patience, goodwill and a lot of curiosity".

Immigrants also use strategies similar to those used by the firm managers to begin to overcome the language barrier. An illustrative case, among the several that we encountered, occurred when we had the opportunity to accompany an intermediation between an employer and an immigrant of Yemeni nationality. She was born and raised in Yemen, where the official language is Arabic, but she communicated fluently in English. She was articulate, outgoing and engaged in immigration issues. She lectured (in English) in the city of São Paulo about her history and some aspects of migration and believed it helped the inclusion of immigrants into Brazilian society. She expressed her difficulty to communicate in Brazil: "even though I speak English, which is the universal language, I came here to Brazil and I

saw that many people do not know how to speak English. I was scared, how come?". She witnessed, however, that the Brazilians' willingness to interact and help was great and noted, "the experience I have here is that people try to communicate in other ways even if we do not speak the language." The use of Google surfaced several times in our research, as she continued, "today there are many ways we can understand each other, right now I'm speaking English and what I do not understand in Portuguese I try in another way." She was pointing her cell phone with Google Translator.

The difficulty of making themselves understood affects even Portuguese-speaking immigrants, albeit to a lesser degree. As in the case of an Angolan woman who, upon arriving in Brazil, found the Portuguese spoken in the country a little strange and had trouble understanding it at first. But over time she adapted and now she understands the local language well. The musicality of the Portuguese language spoken in Brazil is distinct from the one spoken in Angola, which has more the mark of the Lusitanian cadence, although it is still closer to the Brazilian one than the one spoken in Portugal. In other words, even when speaking the same language, there are difficulties due to the accent and colloquialisms.

Another case showed how immigrants also used other forms of language to overcome the language barrier, such as pictorial. We had the opportunity to witness an exchange where an employer was looking to hire a couple to take care of the house where they lived in a city in the interior of the State of São Paulo. They wanted to hire a couple because the immigrant-employees would live together in a separate house next to the employer's house. The man would do gardening services, take care of the kennel and perform the heavy services. The woman would do the domestic service. A couple was interviewed in which both the man and the woman could not speak Portuguese (one of the employer's demands). The wife immediately took out a paper and a pen drawing pans and brooms to show that she knew how to do the domestic activities and that the lack of Portuguese would not be an obstacle for her to work. In the cases investigated, immigrants mostly performed low-skilled manual work, which greatly facilitated the adoption of these practices to overcome the language barrier.

A specific case drew our attention because it illustrated how the language barrier can be deeper than one imagines and yet still possible to begin overcoming. On International Women's Day, the Mission had received a visit from a company that wanted to know about the work with the immigrants. The company's human resources manager chose Women's Day to be able to hear some of the stories of immigrant women who were staying at the Mission. The manager and six other women who worked at the company organized some snacks and some gifts to deliver to the immigrant women that were there and included women from Somalia, Yemen, Congo, Colombia and Bolivia. During lunch, the immigrant women and the women who worked at the company introduced themselves, talking a little about their stories. The difficulty of finding a common language was evident. What struck us was that even what seemed to be a simple agreement or disagreement was difficult to be comprehended in a general way. For instance, as Colombians and Bolivians clapped along with the Brazilians to signal support or joy, the Yemenites, Somalis and Congolese made a noise with their mouth (bringing their hands to their mouths to produce a shrieking sound), which in essence was equivalent to the clapping of the other group. Until everyone realized what this ululation meant and the gestures began to be perceived for what they were, there was a general perplexity on both sides. The manager of the company realized that the noise was always made when the women were happy and wanted to express their gratitude. Eventually, the manager began to make the noise herself, imitating the gestures and making everyone repeats. Soon everyone understood the meaning of that gesture and it became a form of broad understanding.

In general, the strategy of the Brazilian employer has been to initially place the immigrant who does not speak Portuguese doing tasks that are not client-facing, since most

likely the Brazilian clients only speak Portuguese. Moreover, as Dias (2016, p.14) points out, learning a new language "involves more than a mere linguistic and communicative competence (...)" it implies familiarity with the cultural, the expansion of cultural awareness and intercultural competence. In these terms, at the beginning of the process of socialization in the Brazilian labor market, the immigrant still has a long way to go. There are also difficulties in the relationship between immigrants and Brazilians. If, as a rule, immigrants and Brazilians speak well of each other, on the other hand there are also signs of some conflicts that have appeared on several occasions. As an employer of a company providing general services stated: "in the beginning it was very good, because the Brazilian workers welcomed all the immigrants. Over time, we had foreigners who were more prominent and gaining promotions, and this challenged the ego of Brazilians, who did not like it very much."

This conflict observed above was recurrent in the speech of many other employers and even in the speech of some Brazilian workers. After the initial stage of socialization at work, where everyone teaches the immigrant the work and a little bit of the language, the Brazilian workers began to feel the competition. Immigrants, being in a situation of much greater vulnerability than the Brazilian worker, are naturally led to strive much more to please the employer, arriving long before the start time, not being absent or missing work even when they get injured. Punctuality and dedication at work, on the part of immigrants, is praised all the time by the employer, and this pressure on the Brazilian co-worker is felt and verbalized by the Brazilians at every opportunity.

The 41 companies managers were also asked how they perceived the progress of the immigrant in speaking Portuguese. While managers from 19 companies thought they had improved little, 12 others thought they have improved a lot. As the manager of a mechanic-shop firm noted:

"Sometimes the communication is difficult. We need to say something and it seems that the immigrants understood it, but when it comes to doing it I see that they did not understand. Then we have to pick up and explain everything again showing with attitudes how it should be done. Because sometimes they do not even know how to ask in Portuguese what their doubt is. I think the difficulty in learning the language is not a big problem for the company. Because the immigrant, when he does not understand or wants to say something that we do not understand, he points, draws, shows, mimics, turns upside down if need be, but in the end we understand and everything works out."
(mechanic-shop manager)

Some companies paid Portuguese classes for immigrants for 6 months, twice a week (such as factories and general service companies). In these cases, there was a positive as well as a negative assessment by the companies that the immigrant progressed faster with classes. Some managers were enthusiastic about the progress while others considered that progress was too slow with lessons and as pointed by one manager, "that it would be better for him to learn in practice."

This situation is independent of the qualification (educational level) of the immigrants. Most of the time, the rapidity of learning the Portuguese language goes beyond the question of the personality of the individual and of his life history, and even the history of the difficulties that he or she encountered in the migratory process arriving in Brazil.

Regarding the adaptation of immigrants in companies, most of the representatives of the companies believed it to be positive, as seen in the following statement:

"It was an arduous process of mutual aid, as both parties had as a priority that the hiring would work out. We translated our procedures into Creole with the help of the Haitians themselves. They are friendly and polite, are always smiling and this has positively

impacted our business, they have come to draw our customers' attention because of these traits and this was very positive. Today we have seven Haitians and only two Brazilians who are in positions that cannot be fulfilled by foreigners because of the communication skills "(general services company HR manager).

This passage shows that both the inclusion and the adaptation of the immigrant at work in the organizations go through the language challenge. Some companies choose to hire immigrants even knowing this "limitation", believing that there are other ways to understand each other in the labor market beyond the spoken language.

Final Considerations

The strategy of inclusion through the intermediation of *Missão Paz* begins with the concern of receiving the immigrants and providing them with basic necessities such as food and lodging so that they can face the challenges of the labor market with more tranquility and regularity. Tranquility in terms of having the basic needs fulfilled and regularity by having access to information regarding Brazilian legislation and/or other legal orientations. In sum, a basic way to improve the human and social condition of immigrants facilitates progression into the labor market and consequentially inclusion into society at large.

Missão Paz can be considered a valuable case study of a third sector institution in Brazil that is concerned with social inclusion through work and that has a legitimate and successful strategy. It is a model that can perhaps be adopted or improved by other civil society organizations or by public entities nationally and internationally.

However, the Portuguese language is a challenge for both *Missão Paz* and employers who count on the organization to hire immigrants. The learning of the Portuguese language, in our research is showed as a matter of survival, and given its relevance to the access of employment, housing, health and education it is a preponderant element among the surveyed actors. It was considered as a challenge for the inclusion of immigrants in the labor market, but was not seen as an impediment by employers who hired immigrants.

The Portuguese language barrier to the inclusion of immigrants in the Brazilian labor market also goes through other related issues such as: lack of creativity of the company to develop other forms of language, lack of proactivity of the human resources sector, lack of patience of colleagues and employers, lack of time to teach and resistance to new challenges.

Understanding the spoken language as the only way for employers and immigrants to communicate becomes the primary challenge for organizations, since the number of multi-lingual immigrants increases in Brazil. Furthermore, it becomes a barrier even for high skilled immigrant professionals to be included in the Brazilian labor market.

Besides investigating the role of language in the labor relations environment, this study intended to contribute and underline a gap that needs to be addressed both at the state and private sector levels in Brazil. As indicated by Zeni and Filippim (2014), there is a lack of coordination by the Brazilian government to serve immigrant needs as well as a lack of protection for immigrants by public policies, even though Brazil is considered a generous country in terms of welcoming immigrants and granting work permits with all legal rights.

The growing migratory wave towards Brazil, especially from 2010 on, has implications that deserve attention not only from the Brazilian government, but also from society in general. This view is often associated with the establishment of public policies aimed at the migrant population, forms of social inclusion, guarantee of human rights and insertion in the labor market, among other contentious issues that merit further research.

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