

FIRST JAPANESE LANGUAGE TEACHING EXPERIENCES IN A LANGUAGE CENTER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GRADUATES

PRIMEIRAS EXPERIÊNCIAS DOCENTES DE LÍNGUA JAPONESA EM UM CENTRO DE LÍNGUAS PELA PERSPECTIVA DE EGRESSOS

PRIMERAS EXPERIENCIAS DIDÁCTICAS DE LENGUA JAPONESA EN CENTRO DE IDIOMAS DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA DE GRADUADOS



Isabella Hoglhammer SECONE¹
e-mail: isabella.secone@unesp.br



Rozana Aparecida Lopes MESSIAS²
e-mail: rozana.messias@unesp.br

How to reference this article:

SECONE, I. H. MESSIAS, R. A. L. First Japanese language teaching experiences in a language center from the perspective of graduates. **Rev. EntreLinguas**, Araraquara, v. 10, n. 00, e024032, 2024. e-ISSN: 2447-3529. DOI: 10.29051/el.v10i00.18097.



| Submitted: 06/06/2024
| Revisions required: 05/08/2024
| Approved: 07/10/2024
| Published: 30/12/2024

Editors: Prof. Dr. Rosangela Sanches da Silveira Gileno

Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

¹ Doctoral degree student in the Postgraduate Program in Letters at the São Paulo State University "Júlio de Mesquita Filho", Faculty of Sciences and Letters of Assis-SP. She is currently a Japanese teacher at the Language Studies Center (CEL) of the State of São Paulo, in the city of Assis-SP.

² São Paulo State University (UNESP), Presidente Prudente Campus, São Paulo (SP), Brazil. He belongs to the permanent staff of the postgraduate program in Education (PPGE)-FCT/UNESP-Presidente Prudente. At FCL-UNESP/Assis she is the coordinator of the extension program *Centro de Línguas e Desenvolvimento de Professores* (PROEC), and participates in the coordination of Teletandem and Telecollaboration activities with foreign universities.

ABSTRACT: This article portrays the development of Japanese as foreign language teachers in an Extension Program at UNESP in Assis-SP, known as the Center for Languages and Teacher Development (CLDP). We seek to understand how graduates of the Portuguese/Japanese Language course, who worked at the CLDP during their undergraduate studies, describe and reflect on their first teaching experiences in this Extension Program. We start from the idea that the CLDP is configured as a third space in the initial teacher development processes. We based our methodological approach on the assumptions of the case study. The data analyzed showed that, for the research participants, this Extension Program represents an indispensable teacher development space for the current configuration of the Language course at the Assis campus, as well as for the beginning of the professional development of those who pass through it.

KEYWORDS: Japanese language. Language and teacher development center. Development of Japanese teachers.

RESUMO: Este artigo aborda o desenvolvimento de professores de japonês como língua estrangeira no âmbito de um Programa de Extensão da UNESP, campus de Assis (SP), conhecido como Centro de Línguas e Desenvolvimento de Professores (CLDP). Buscou-se compreender de que forma os egressos do curso de Letras Português/Japonês, que atuaram no CLDP durante sua graduação, descrevem e refletem acerca de suas primeiras experiências docentes nesse Programa de Extensão. Partiu-se da ideia de que o CLDP se configura como um terceiro espaço nos processos de formação inicial docente. A metodologia adotada foi baseada nos pressupostos do estudo de caso. Os dados analisados mostraram que, para os participantes da pesquisa, esse Programa de Extensão representa um espaço de formação docente indispensável para a atual configuração do curso de Letras no campus de Assis, assim como para o início da construção profissional daqueles que por ele passam.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Língua japonesa. Centro de línguas e desenvolvimento de professores. Formação de professores de japonês.

RESUMEN: Este artículo retrata la formación de profesores de japonés como lengua extranjera en un Programa de Extensión de la UNESP en Assis-SP, denominado Centro de Lenguas y Desarrollo de Profesores (CLDP). Buscamos comprender cómo los egresados del curso de Literatura Portuguesa/Japonesa, que trabajaron en el CLDP durante sus estudios de pregrado, describen y reflexionan sobre sus primeras experiencias de enseñanza en este Programa de Extensión. Partimos de la idea de que el CLDP se configura como un tercer espacio en los procesos de formación inicial docente. Nos basamos metodológicamente en los supuestos del estudio de caso. Los datos analizados mostraron que, para los participantes de la investigación, este Programa de Extensión representa un espacio indispensable para la formación docente para la configuración actual del curso de Literatura en el campus de Assis, así como para el inicio del desarrollo profesional de quienes pasan por él.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Idioma japonés. Centro de desarrollo de maestros y lenguaje. Formación de profesores de japonés.

Introduction

This study was carried out as part of a University Extension Program called the *Centro de Línguas e Desenvolvimento de Professores*³ (CLDP), administered by the Pró-reitoria de Extensão Universitária e Cultura⁴ (PROEC) at São Paulo State University (UNESP). The concern to understand the CLDP as a third space (Bhabha, 1998; Felício, 2014; Zeichner, 2010) for training Japanese language teachers originated when one of the authors, while still an undergraduate, developed a study entitled *Ensino/aprendizagem de japonês/LE no contexto de um Centro de Línguas e Desenvolvimento de Professores*⁵. In the section presented, an analysis was carried out focusing on issues related to the training processes of Japanese teachers, as reported by students who graduated from the extension program at the Assis Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

It is based on the assumption that one of the most important peculiarities of this program lies in the very configuration of the action, since it allows undergraduate students in the Languages course to practice teaching while they are still undergraduates in Foreign Languages. In this specific environment, these students have the freedom to carry out and develop their lessons, while being mediated and guided by undergraduate teachers (professors of foreign languages and language teaching methodology). With this scenario as a focus, the study concentrates on understanding how graduates of the Languages course, who worked as Japanese teachers at the CLDP, reflect on their first teaching experiences.

The focus on the training of Japanese language teachers is especially relevant considering the role that this language is currently playing on the national and international stage. According to data from a survey carried out by the Japan Foundation, in 2015 there were around 3.65 million Japanese speakers outside Japan and, specifically, in Brazil the number of *nihongo*⁶ students was around 23 thousand. Faced with this situation, it is urgent to look at the spaces that train teachers of this language in the Brazilian context.

³ The name in English would be: Language and Teacher Development Center.

⁴ The name in English would be: Pro-Rectorate of University Extension and Culture.

⁵ The name in English would be: Teaching/learning Japanese/LE in the context of a Language and Teacher Development Center.

⁶ "Japanese language" in Japanese.

The first step was to organize the CLDP's official archives, paying special attention to the documents of the Japanese undergraduates who taught in the program between 2010 and 2018⁷. Organizing this data was crucial not only for accessing information on the research participants, but also as a way of retrieving data that could contribute to future investigations, as well as helping to build the history and trajectory of the CLDP at FCL-Assis. In this process, the difficulty encountered in the period from 2010 to 2015 was noteworthy, as the documents had not yet been digitized (an action that only began in 2016). As a result, the files for those years were archived in analog form⁸.

After this first part of cataloging the data, we found 27 names of Japanese teachers between 2010 and 2018. However, only 21 emails were found. Based on the 21 emails, the graduates were contacted to check their impressions of the training processes they had experienced during their participation in the Extension Program by means of an *online* and anonymous questionnaire (*Google Forms*). The questionnaire received 8 responses, which corresponds to around 40%. In addition, interviews were held with five previously selected graduates, to explore the issues raised in the form in greater depth.

The article is organized into the following sections: *Methodology of the Study*, which discusses the methodological assumptions adopted in this research; *The Language Centre and Teacher Development*, which goes into more detail about the context of this teacher training space; *Looking at the Data*, where the information obtained during the investigation was analyzed and assigned meanings for the construction of this study; and finally, *Final Considerations*, which summarizes the discussions developed throughout the article.

Study methodology

This study used a qualitative methodology, in the form of a case study. It was based on the concepts and discussions proposed by André (2013), Chizzotti (2003), Telles (2002), and Godoy (1995). According to Telles (2002), qualitative research is mainly characterized by the researcher's involvement with the research object. The author points out that although this proximity is essential, the researcher must maintain a certain distance from the context under

⁷ The dates represent the opening of the CLDP (2010) and the last year before one of the researchers started her Master's degree (2018).

⁸ In a subsequent study, FAPESP, Proc. 2019/19223-6, the data (names of teachers of all languages, number of classes, etc.) from the archive boxes have been digitally organized and are accessible for consultation.

investigation in order to observe and reflect on aspects that may be imperceptible, remaining an active participant in the investigative process.

The researcher must determine their degree of involvement with the person(s) involved in the case. If he himself is included in it, he must have moments of closeness to the participants and moments of distance so that he can carry out his reflections and acquire different perspectives of involvement (degrees of unfamiliarity) to produce multiple meanings of the occurrences in the case (Telles, 2002, p. 108, our translation).

Thus, the case study proved to be an effective research methodology for this investigation, since one of the researchers participated in the program initially as a student and later as a Japanese language tutor, which allowed her to be involved in two different spheres of the CLDP. In this way, distance and closeness to the object of research merged in the course of the study, providing a unique insight into the training processes of future Japanese language teachers at FCL/Unesp/Assis.

Also, for Godoy, the case study is "a type of research whose object is a unit that is analyzed in depth. It aims to examine in detail an environment, a single subject or a particular situation" (1995, p. 25, our translation). In this way, we sought to reflect in depth on the initial training of Japanese language teachers in a third space of teacher construction. Bhabha (1998) was used to understand the interstices and spaces between borders. For the author, these hybrid spaces (in the case of CLDP, an Extension Program that is not a language school, but emulates the classroom environment) consist of

[...] an intermediate space, as any dictionary will tell you. [...] In this sense, then, the intermediate space "beyond" becomes a space for intervention in the here and now. Dealing with such invention and intervention [...] requires a notion of the new that is in tune with hybrid aesthetics (Bhabha, 1998, p. 27, our translation).

In the search for studies that relate the university and teacher training processes to the concept of hybridity proposed by Bhabha (1998), we found in Zeichner's (2010) reflections and Felício's (2014) concrete examples support for the development of our perspective of observing the CLDP as a "third space". According to the first author, one of the main challenges in degree courses today is to make sense of the theories seen in the classroom and the praxis experienced by students in their compulsory curricular internships. This problem can be found in the Languages course (FCL-Assis), since only one supervising teacher is responsible for mixed classes (students from six different languages), and is often unable to answer specific questions

related to the methodology of each foreign language. In addition, despite so many advances in education studies, it is not easy to deal with the dichotomous view rooted in the concepts of theory/practice, sometimes restricting thinking and knowledge that goes beyond this barrier.

Felício (2014) gives examples of how this dichotomy can be broken down, resulting in a much broader and more consistent language education. For the author, an example of how to integrate theory-practice-teacher training can be seen in the *Programa Institucional de Bolsas de Iniciação à Docência*⁹ (Pibid). According to the official website of the Ministry of Education, Pibid is configured as a

[...] the program offers teaching initiation scholarships to students in classroom courses who dedicate themselves to an internship in public schools and who, upon graduation, commit themselves to teaching in the public network. The aim is to anticipate the link between future teachers and public school classrooms. With this initiative, Pibid links higher education (through undergraduate courses), schools, and state and municipal systems (Brasil, [2016], our translation).

Felício (2014) discusses six points that differentiate compulsory curricular internships from projects or teaching programs such as Pibid. In an adaptation of his notes, Rezende (2020) sets out six reasons why we can consider the CLDP as a third space.

Chart 1 - Reasons why the CLDP is a third space

1.	It differs from the compulsory curricular internship in its consideration of the school setting.
2.	It allows students to enter the classroom early with the support of a coordinating foreign language teacher.
3.	It comprises a configuration that allows the participation of university professors from the departments of modern letters and education.
4.	It presupposes constant dialog between the trainee, language coordinator and supervisor.
5.	Actions are planned to initiate students into teaching based on real-life experiences.
6.	It assumes the movement of reflection-action-reflection as a fundamental presupposition for the development of activities.

Source: Rezende Jr (2019) adapted from Felício (2014, p. 423).

⁹ The name in English would be: Institutional Program for Teaching Initiation Scholarships.

With these perspectives in mind, it was emphasized that, although the CLDP is part of an institutional action at UNESP, its administrative and pedagogical configuration differs from the epistemology that governs the initial training relationships of an undergraduate course, where the professor directs the students' activities. Similarly, this space cannot be considered as a language school, nor as a regular Basic Education school. The *modus operandi* of the actions developed at the CLDP lies in between: there is guidance, but also freedom to develop pedagogical practices; the professor, still a student, can manage their classroom. With this formation framework in scope, we contacted the alumni of the Japanese language program and former CLDP professors to gather their impressions regarding their initial teaching experiences based on the case study phases outlined by André (2023).

From the email addresses found, a total of 21, contact was made with the alumni. After this phase, an online questionnaire was sent via the Google Forms platform to these addresses. It contained 18 questions aimed at profiling the research participants and, primarily, investigating their reflections on the processes they experienced at the CLDP. A total of 8 responses were received (about 40% participation).

Finally, semi-structured interviews (Ludke; André, 1986) were conducted to triangulate the questionnaire responses with five alumni, selected based on their availability. The focus of the interviews was to delve deeper into some of the issues addressed in the online questionnaire and to create a comfortable space for the alumni to share their experiences and opinions regarding their time at the CLDP, a space we will discuss in the next section of this article.

The Language and Teacher Development Center

The CLDP, located in the Faculty of Sciences and Letters of Assis, was created in 2010 through a departmental partnership (Education and Modern Letters), in the form of an Extension Project supported by the *Pró-reitoria de Extensão Universitária*¹⁰ (PROEX). From a legal point of view, the operation and management of the CLDP are governed by UNESP Resolutions that deal with Programs and Extension Actions, as well as those specifically related to the Language Centers.

In the case of São Paulo State University "Júlio de Mesquita Filho", the first Resolution dealing with the General Regulations for University Extension was published in 2012 (with 65

¹⁰ The name in English would be: Dean of University Extension.

articles in all), and was replaced by a new Resolution published in 2020 (with 75 articles). In Article 1 of the 2020 Resolution, University Extension is defined as "an educational, Cultural and scientific process, which is inseparably linked to teaching and research, and which enables a transformative relationship between the University and society" (Unesp Resolução, 2020, p. 01, our translation).

As for the University Language Centers themselves, there are two Resolutions: No. 82/2016, which was later replaced by Resolution No. 12/2018, according to which:

Article 2 - The Language and Teacher Development Centres are linked to the University Units with Teaching Departments, which have teachers specialized in the Teaching of Foreign Languages and Literatures and Portuguese as a Foreign Language, and institutionally to the Dean of University Extension, as a university extension action.

Sole Paragraph - The Language and Teacher Development Centers may coordinate language teaching in University Units or Experimental Campuses that do not have Teaching Departments for Teaching Foreign Languages and Literature and Portuguese as a Foreign Language (Unesp Resolução, 2018, p. 01, our translation).

The CLDP at FCL/Assis offers teaching in the six languages covered by the degree in Languages (Japanese, German, English, Italian, Spanish, and French), as well as Mandarin, in partnership with the *Confúcio* Institute, and Portuguese as a Foreign Language. Classical Greek and Latin are also offered, both taught by volunteers. Administratively, the program has a coordinator, a vice-coordinator, three supervisors specializing in foreign language teaching methodology, and teacher-supervisors responsible for each of the languages offered.

The tutors for the foreign language courses, who are students in the Languages course, are responsible for teaching the classes. The supervising language teachers select them through a public notice. The courses on offer cater to the university's internal community (students, teachers, and staff) and the external community (local residents from Assisi or cities in the region). The foreign language teacher-coordinators assist all tutors and frequently attend pedagogical meetings with the foreign language methodology supervisors and the program coordinators. A unique feature of the CLDP is that it encourages novice tutors to teach in pairs with more experienced tutors, thus providing a context in which the newcomers have more confidence to start teaching. Administrative meetings are held, especially at the beginning and end of each academic semester, to discuss aspects such as the number of vacancies to be opened and the courses to be offered, among others. All decisions are taken collectively.

As previously stated, due to its configuration, the practices of the pre-service teachers in the CLDP differ from those conducted in language schools or even in the mandatory curricular internship. In this differentiated space, students teach classes to groups that are considered "theirs," while part of the hours taught count as supervised internship hours. In this in-between space, where the student is not solely characterized as an undergraduate student nor an intern in a regular Basic Education school, it is believed that the potential of the CLDP as a third space for initial teacher training emerges. Thus, based on the presented format, the alumni of the Japanese language program who participated in the CLDP were asked about their reflections on their initial teaching experiences within this Extension Program.

Looking at the data

For the cataloging and analysis of the data collected, the theoretical basis of Martinez (2007) and Bardin (2016) was adopted. The first author takes an in-depth look at the relationship between the researcher and the data obtained in the research, reflecting on the extent to which this relationship should be more intimate or, on the contrary, more distanced, due to the academic demands of the context. According to her, a more intimate treatment of the data collected is a possible way forward, since "interpreting, evaluating and judging the implications reported in the speeches of the research subjects are actions that depend a lot on [...] looking at them as a researcher and are part of a very particular context, but which can bring contributions to the academic context" (Martinez, 2007, p. 89, our translation).

Bardin (2016) provided support for organizing the data, based on his proposal for systematization: 1) pre-analysis, when documents are chosen, hypotheses are formulated, and interpretation is prepared; 2) exploration of the material, the main objective of which is the systematic administration of the previously mentioned stages and, finally, 3) treatment/interpretation of the data, in which the data is obtained in its "raw" state, which must be re-signified and interpreted reflectively and critically.

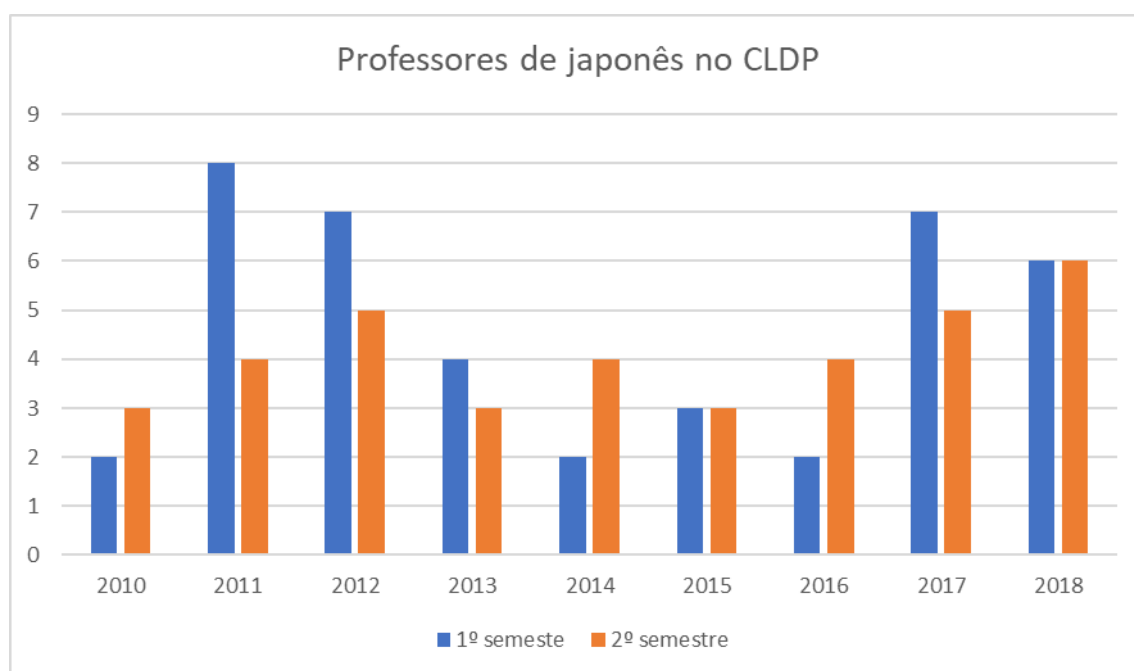
In view of the nature of the data, the analysis was thematized into: (a) engagement with Japanese teacher training itself, observed through the systematization of the Japanese language classes offered as part of the CLDP actions; (b) impressions triggered by the experience, based on the questionnaire applied and (c) of all that was experienced, what remained, through the interviews given by 5 graduates.

Data cataloging: observing engagement with one's training

The first phase of data collection involved organizing and cataloging the CLDP's official documents. At this stage, by searching through the boxes containing the printed documents from 2010 to 2015, a period when the CLDP's official data was not yet digitized, and on *Google Drive*, adopted from 2016, it was possible to find 27 names (28 including one of the researchers) of Japanese language undergraduates who acted as tutors of that language in this Extension Program.

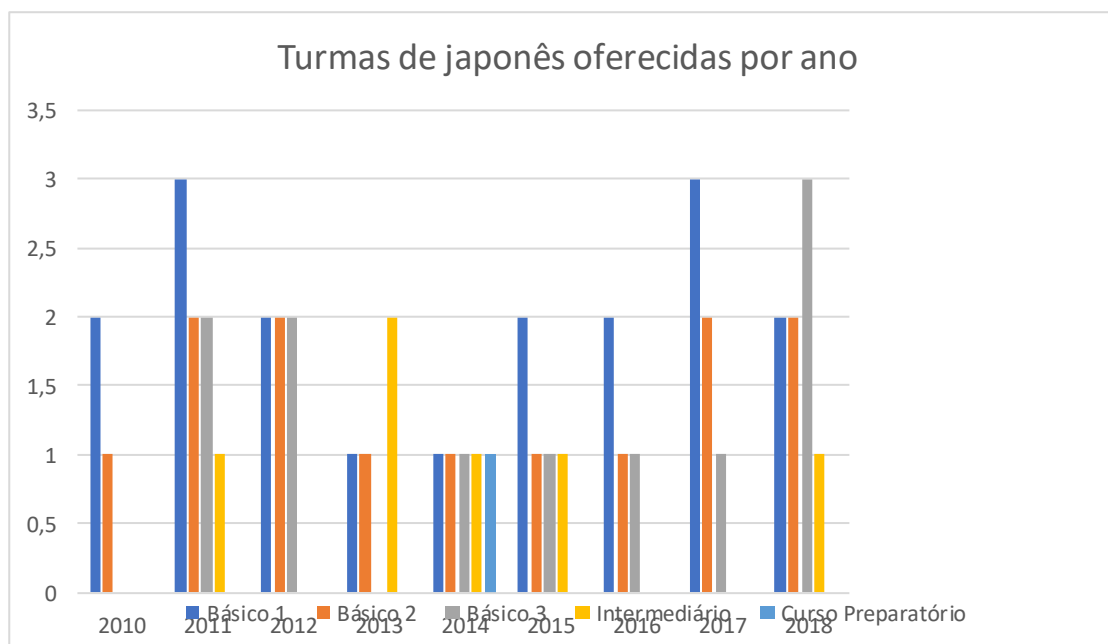
When listing the 27 names with the contact information of these graduates, it was noted that only 21 emails were registered. Although it wasn't possible to contact all the graduates, information was collected on the classes offered between 2010 and 2018 and related to the names of the tutors responsible. The graph below shows the number of tutors, classes offered, and observations of these figures.

Graph 1 - CLDP Japanese tutors (2010 to 2018)¹¹



Source: SECONE, 2021.

¹¹ Color translation: Blue: 1st semester; Orange: 2nd semester.

Graph 2 - Japanese classes at CLDP (2010 to 2018)¹²

Source: SECONe, 2021.

Graph 1 shows an oscillation in the number of tutors joining the CLDP. The first semester of 2011 saw the most significant number of graduates taking part in the extension project. This instability, marked by ups and downs in the number of tutors, is related to the low number of scholarships on offer (only one for each language). Another issue may be related to the student's engagement with the Japanese language and their desire to become Japanese language teachers. In general, when analyzing the average number of students enrolled in the Japanese language degree program, specifically in the third and fourth years of the degree (approximately 10 students), in relation to the demand for the CLDP as a place to start teaching (average of 4 to 8 students), we see a significant number.

With regard to the levels offered, a pattern was observed in the more elementary levels, such as Basic 1 and Basic 2. However, higher levels, such as Basic 3 and even Intermediate, can be seen in several years, although not all. This point in itself caught my attention, and once again, there are several possible explanations, all of which have to do with the very constitution of the CLDP program, which is essentially linked to undergraduate courses. As this is a place where only students who are still studying teach, it's reasonable to think that many of them don't feel comfortable teaching more advanced levels of Japanese. In addition, the fact that it is

¹² Title translation: Japanese classes offered per year.

mostly made up of volunteers reinforces the seasonality of some offers, such as a preparatory course for the proficiency test¹³ (Preparatory Course), which was only given in 2014.

Questionnaires: impressions triggered by the experience

Based on the panorama presented and directed at the 21 identified graduate contacts, an online questionnaire was drawn up using the *Google Forms* tool, which was sent to the former tutors anonymously, ensuring that they did not need to be identified. In the end, eight responses were received, corresponding to approximately 40% participation. The questionnaire contained 17 questions, and the focus of this study is only on those that express the graduates' impressions of their first teaching experiences.

In this regard, everyone who answered the questionnaire said that their time at the CLDP at UNESP Assis was "excellent/satisfactory". At another point in the questionnaire, graduates were asked whether they considered their experience at the CLDP to be "extremely relevant" or "irrelevant", among other options. Thus, 100% of the participants in the survey said that their time working in the CLDP could be considered positive and indispensable, resulting in 8 answers marked "extremely relevant".

In addition to this objective questioning, the graduates were asked to share some of their opinions about the CLDP in writing. The following are excerpts from some of the answers obtained¹⁴:

I) I believe that **since its creation, the CLDP has become an indispensable environment for the Letters course at UNESP/Assis. I would like all students to have the experience of teaching in this Extension Program, but unfortunately, due to issues such as physical space and scholarship distribution, among others, I recognize that this is not yet possible.** In any case, I believe that the CLDP represents undergraduates' **first contact with teaching practice** and, because of this, it sets them apart from other Extension Projects, as it prepares them for the job market, but in a more relaxed and comfortable way.

II) It was **essential to give me security** when I graduated.

¹³ Also called *Japanese-Language Proficiency Test* (JLPT) or *Nihongo Nouryoku Shiken* Japanese. It is a proficiency test held twice a year in Brazil (June and December) and has five levels, with N5 being the lowest and N1 the highest.

¹⁴ Because of space, we haven't included all the answers and, in one case, we had to cut off the final part due to the length of the answer. It's also worth noting that we've put the answers here exactly as the graduates wrote them on the form.

III) With this in mind, I believe that **the CLDP is important both as a way of enabling teaching experience and as a formative action for future teachers** in order to encourage **reflection on teaching practice** and the transformation of contexts through teaching.

The graduates' speeches show a largely positive attitude towards the CLDP, accompanied by a sense of gratitude for the experiences provided in this environment. One of the graduates even suggested that all students in the Languages course should have the opportunity to take part in this extension program. However, factors such as the distribution of scholarships and the limitations of the college's physical space are pointed out as obstacles to possible expansion. Even so, the CLDP's distinguishing feature is its ability to emulate the conditions of the teaching job market in an educational way, which makes it unique compared to other extension projects or programs.

In addition, the CLDP is also described as a space that enables the creation of a solid, confident, and secure base for future teaching work since it is often precisely in this place that language students have their first contact with a teaching career and may become interested in pursuing it after graduating. In this sense, the CLDP, according to the research data, seems to contribute immensely to the initial training of future teachers who work in it during their undergraduate studies. For Castro and Amorim (1995, p. 51-52, our translation), the initial stage of building a teacher's identity should be taken seriously and universities should "invest vigorously, as a counterpoint to a policy that increasingly invests in equipping teachers by imposing continuing training packages".

The CLDP not only provides a space for tutors (volunteers or scholarship holders) to build on their experiences, but also fosters discussion and reflection on the methodologies and conduct used in the classroom through meetings with the coordinators, supervising teachers, veteran tutors, and various other people who make up the Language Center team. In this way, a network of mutual and collaborative support is created, further promoting initial teacher training at the Assis Campus.

This picture reinforces the idea that the processes of teaching and learning become part of an experience that moves tutors from the passive position of merely observing trainees to that of acting teachers. In this context, tutors are responsible for leading a classroom, intervening in educational dynamics and critically reflecting on the practices carried out with students. In between, he is forced to take what he learned at university and turn it into teachable content. As Zeichner (2010) points out, in these situations, theory and practice intertwine in a

substantial way, revealing knowledge that becomes concrete and acquires meaning when it is configured as a direct result of the experiences of those involved.

Interviews: of all that has been lived, what remains

For the interviews, reference was made to Ludke and André's (1986) research, which discusses the "semi-structured" interview in depth. According to them,

A well-crafted interview can make it possible to deal with subjects of a strictly personal and intimate nature, as well as subjects of a complex nature and clearly individual choices. It can allow points raised by other more superficial collection techniques, such as the questionnaire, to be explored in greater depth. It can also, and this makes it particularly useful, reach informants who could not be reached by other means of investigation, such as people with little formal education, for whom a written questionnaire would be unfeasible (Ludke; André, 1986, p. 34, our translation).

Five graduates were selected to take part in the interviews, based on their availability to meet with one of the researchers. It was made clear to the interviewees that they had complete freedom not to answer questions that made them uncomfortable, following the precepts of the "semi-structured" interview (Ludke; André, 1986), which consists of a previously established script, but which can be altered according to the need/willingness of the interviewee or the interviewer.

The graduates were asked several questions in order to deepen their understanding of the CLDP's contribution to their initial teacher training. However, we focused more on one question: how do you characterize your experience at the CLDP? Finally, excerpts from the graduates' responses were presented in order to understand how they see this process of participation in extension work. According to graduate M., his experience at the CLDP

[...] it was... difficult (laughs). **It was the best possible experience in the sense of being able to understand the completeness of what it is, in my opinion, the teacher who is a researcher and is in the classroom... The CLDP was crucial to obtaining this training.** If today I'm able to have a repertoire, to have arguments for certain issues in my work, now as a graduate, **I've created this repertoire and I've learned/understood this in the four and a half years I've been at CLDP.** So, I think that if it hadn't been for this experience, I wouldn't have the baggage, the certainty, and the confidence that I have today in my teaching practice (Interviewee M., 2019, emphasis added, our translation).

In this discourse, the CLDP appears to be responsible for building the necessary background to be a good teaching professional, as well as ensuring that future teachers have confidence in their own practices. Another interesting point mentioned by the graduate is the bridge made at CLDP between the teacher (the prototypical image of the teacher in the classroom) and the teacher-researcher, the one who, after classes, reflects on their practices and questions themselves about new methodologies, possible obstacles that may arise in class, the profiles of their students, etc.

As well as being a place where many undergraduates can experience the teaching profession for the first time, the CLDP also makes it possible for this same environment to be the target of undergraduate research by the students who work in it, or even larger-scale research, such as Master's and PhDs. Such research takes advantage of the peculiarities of the FCL/Assis Language Center to reflect on such topics as language education for foreign language teachers and teacher training, among other aspects. Although she shares a similar opinion to M., alumna P. highlights other points that she considers relevant. For her

[...] it was at the Language Center that I realized I wanted to be a teacher. It was there, actually teaching and starting with the processes of "what does it mean to put together a teaching plan?", "what does it mean to plan a lesson?", "what does it actually mean to teach a lesson and have contact with the students?". Using the language not only for myself, but **by teaching, I realized that I wanted to be a teacher.** I would say that in this sense, it was fundamental for me to make the decision "ok, **I want this to be my profession!**" (Interviewee P., 2019, emphasis added, our translation).

According to P., one of the central aspects of the CLDP is precisely to consolidate essential actions in the initial training processes, such as drawing up lesson plans and planning the flow of lessons, among others. These elements are considered necessary for future teachers graduating from FCL/Assis to build a solid foundation and meaningful initial training. For P., this preparation is fundamental, as it allows future teachers to feel more capable of facing the different contexts they may encounter in educational institutions, whether public, private, or other.

This way of conceiving the teacher is different from that which sees him or her as a technician who applies methods and is closer to what scholars who are concerned with the full training of teachers preach. According to Pimenta and Lima, the development of research in the field of teacher training has gone against the technicist view. The university is the space par excellence for teacher training, and "research is the methodological path for this training. They

are therefore opposed to the guidelines of policies generated by the World Bank, which reduce education to mere training in skills and competencies" (Pimenta; Lima, 2004, p. 49, our translation).

So what would teacher training actually be and why is it so important, especially at this early stage of development? For Nóvoa (1995, p. 04, our translation), all the discussions and pedagogical and methodological confrontations permeate teacher training, after all, it is there that "the profession is produced [...]. More than a place for acquiring technical skills and knowledge, teacher training is the key moment for socialization and professional development".

At this point, several aspects become food for thought in the CLDP environment. One of the main ones concerns the change in the position of those who, until then, were just students, now taking on the role of foreign language tutors. This change can leave CLDP participants confused at first, as they have never seen themselves in the position of educators. However, it is precisely this contrast between student-tutor-researcher that makes the CLDP such an interesting and different environment from other projects or programs with a similar proposal, precisely because it offers students a third space for teacher training (when you consider that the other two spaces would be the undergraduate course, in the role of students, and the basic and higher education institutions, in the role of graduates, respectively), as we saw earlier in the explanations by Bhabha (1998), Zeichner (2010) and Felício (2014).

According to Zeichner (2010, p. 487), "third spaces bring together practical and academic knowledge in less hierarchical ways, with a view to creating new learning opportunities for trainee teachers". Finally, C.'s speech seems to summarize all the discussions made so far, because, according to her,

It was a space in which I had the chance to take a more pragmatic look at everything we learned in undergrad. I know that many professors at various universities have this issue of not just sticking to theory but somehow getting students to see the practice as well so that they don't just do it in real life and end up "getting beaten up." **The Project was very good for me, because I had the chance to put into practice everything I saw in my degree.** There was also this study, which I don't know if it still takes place today, but which was **an exchange between the students who were working as CLDP teachers and the teacher responsible for the language who was guiding us.** At the time, we had these meetings periodically with Professor J. and **we had this theoretical study and discussed the application of the theory in our classes, how it was going, if it was working, etc. So, in that sense it was very rich** (Interviewee C., 2020, emphasis added, our translation).

Once again, the CLDP is described as a space where the dichotomies between theory and practice, graduation, and the Extension Program are rethought and reassessed, with the aim

of extracting the best experiences and learning from both contexts. The presence of specialized professionals to guide the tutors is crucial, because it is through these exchanges that the practice experienced in the classroom acquires meaning, through discussions and reflections on methodologies that worked, exercises that were unsuccessful, praise or criticism received from participants in the Program, among various other aspects that carry a unique significance for the Extension Program and its members.

Final considerations

Following the analysis carried out throughout the article, it is possible to reflect on some points that were highlighted during the research. The first point that deserves attention is how the CLDP, in the course of its almost fifteen years of creation at the FCL/Assis, has become an indispensable key to the current configuration of the Letters course.

The fact that the CLDP is repeatedly described as a comfortable, safe environment that provides a solid and consistent foundation for undergraduate language students leads us to reflect on the relevance that this extension program has achieved over its first decade of operation. It is possible to think of an undergraduate degree in Languages before the Center for Languages and Teacher Development, because it did exist, but it is too Herculean a task to imagine an undergraduate degree in Languages without the presence of the CLDP from now on. The discussions, reflections and, above all, experiences provided by this space are intrinsically linked to the graduates' initial teacher training.

Another point that also deserves to be highlighted in our search for records that would lead us to the first experiences of the Japanese language graduates is the need for better organization and cataloging of the CLDP's official documents. As mentioned earlier, we found 27 names of graduates who had worked as Japanese language tutors, but only 21 emails could be linked to these volunteers and scholarship holders. This shows that a better organization of CLDP data, both the analog data stored in the boxes covering the period from 2010 to 2015 and the digital data in the program's *Google Drive* would certainly contribute to future research in this context, as the necessary information would be better organized and easier to find.

Finally, it is essential to acknowledge the efforts of the head tutors and previous monitors, who partially organized various files needed for this research. However, with a joint effort by more tutors and coordinators, the retrieval of information would be much more

complete, considering the complexity and importance of the Extension Program for the campus in which it is located.

Acknowledgements: to CAPES, for funding the research.

REFERENCES

- ANDRÉ, M. E. D. A. O que é um estudo de caso qualitativo em educação? *Revista da FAEEBA – Educação e Contemporaneidade*, Salvador, v. 22, n. 40, p. 95-103, 2013.
- BARDIN, L. **Análise de conteúdo**. 1. ed. São Paulo: Edições 70, 2016.
- BHABHA, H. K. **O local da cultura**. 1. ed. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 1998.
- BRASIL. Ministério da Educação. **PIBID – Apresentação**, [2016]. Disponível em: <http://portal.mec.gov.br/pibid>. Acesso em: 26 jan. 2025.
- CASTRO, M. M. C. E.; AMORIM, R. M. DE A. A Formação Inicial e a Continuada: diferenças conceituais que legitimam um espaço de formação permanente de vida. **Cadernos CEDES**, v. 35, n. 95, p. 37–55, jan. 2015.
- CHIZZOTTI, A. A pesquisa qualitativa em ciências humanas e sociais: evolução e desafios. **Revista Portuguesa de Educação**, São Paulo, Pontifícia Universidade Católica (16), 221-236, 2003.
- FELÍCIO, H. M. S. O PIBID como “terceiro espaço” de formação inicial de professores. **Revista Diálogo Educacional**, Curitiba, v. 14, n. 42, p. 415-434, 2014.
- GODOY, A. S. Pesquisa qualitativa: tipos fundamentais. **Revista de Administração de Empresas**, São Paulo, v. 35, n. 3, p. 20-29, 1995.
- LUDKE, M; ANDRÉ, M. E. D. A. Pesquisa em Educação: Abordagens Qualitativas. **E.P.U**, São Paulo, p. 25 – 38, 1986.
- MARTINEZ, J. Z. **Uma leitura sobre concepções de língua e educação profissional de professores de língua inglesa**. 2007. Dissertação (Mestrado em Letras) – Área de Estudos Linguísticos, Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba, 2007.
- NÓVOA, A. Formação de professores e profissão docente. In: NÓVOA, A. (org.). **Os professores e sua formação**. Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 1995, p. 15-34.
- PIMENTA, S. G.; LIMA, M. S. L. . **Estágio e docência**. 1. ed. São Paulo: Cortez Editora, 2004. v. 1. 296p.
- REZENDE JUNIOR, E. L. **A formação inicial de professores(as) de língua estrangeira no Centro de Línguas da UNESP FCL/Assis**. 2020. Dissertação (Mestrado em Educação) – Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia, Universidade Estadual Paulista “Júlio de Mesquita Filho”, Presidente Prudente, 2020.
- SECONE, I. H. **Ensinar língua japonesa em um Centro de Línguas universitário: quem faz essa opção?** 2021. Dissertação (Mestrado em Educação) – Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia, Universidade Estadual Paulista “Júlio de Mesquita Filho”, Presidente Prudente, 2021.

TELLES, J. A. “É pesquisa, é? Ah, não quero, não, bem!” Sobre pesquisa acadêmica e sua relação com a prática do professor de línguas. **Linguagem & Ensino**, Pelotas, v. 5, n. 2, p. 91-116, 2002.

THE JAPAN FOUNDATION. Pesquisa sobre as instituições de ensino de língua japonesa no mundo, 2015. Available at: <https://www.jpf.go.jp/j/project/japanese/survey/result/survey15.html>. Accessed in: 08 feb. 2019.

UNESP. **Resolução nº 12, de 07 de março de 2018**. Dispõe sobre criação, objetivos e diretrizes de Centros de Línguas e Desenvolvimento de Professores vinculados à Pró-reitoria de Extensão Universitária da Unesp e em consonância com a Política de Idiomas da Unesp. São Paulo, 2018.

UNESP. **Resolução nº 75, de 18 de novembro de 2020**. Dispõe sobre o Regimento Geral da Extensão Universitária e Cultura na Unesp. São Paulo, 2020.

ZEICHNER, K. Repensando as conexões entre a formação na universidade e as experiências de campo na formação de professores em faculdades e universidades. **Educação**, Santa Maria, v. 35, n. 3, p. 479-504, 2010.

CRediT Author Statement

- ☐ **Acknowledgements:** We would like to thank CAPES for funding the research.
 - ☐ **Funding:** Foundation for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES)
 - ☐ **Conflicts of interest:** There is no conflict of interest.
 - ☐ **Ethical approval:** The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the *Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia de Presidente Prudentes* (SP) on June 19, 2020.
 - ☐ **Availability of data and material:** The research data is available in full in the Master's dissertation at the following link: <https://repositorio.unesp.br/items/5f3242f5-9107-46c2-9638-1c7b73c0992c>
 - ☐ **Author contributions:** Prof. Me. Isabella Hoglhammer Secone was responsible for writing and developing the research and, subsequently, the article in question. Prof. Dr. Rozana Aparecida Lopes Messias was responsible for supervising the Master's dissertation, as well as the revisions necessary for the publication of the article.
-

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.

Proofreading, formatting, standardization and translation.

