"FOR SOMEONE WHO NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT BECOMING A TEACHER IN LIFE, I THINK I'M DOING WELL": A LOOK AT PERSONAL CHALLENGES IN TEACHER TRAINING

"PARA QUEM NUNCA PENSOU EM SE TORNAR PROFESSOR NA VIDA, ACHO QUE ESTOU INDO BEM": UM OLHAR PARA OS DESAFIOS PESSOAIS NA FORMAÇÃO DOCENTE

"PARA QUIEN NUNCA PENSÓ EN CONVERTIRSE EN PROFESOR EN LA VIDA, CREO QUE LO ESTOY HACIENDO BIEN": UNA MIRADA A LOS DESAFÍOS PERSONALES EN LA FORMACIÓN DOCENTE

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ABSTRACT: Through the analysis of learning journals, this study investigated how personal challenges impact the performance of pre-service teachers. Adopting a qualitative approach and utilizing a case study strategy, 382 journals written between 2020 and 2022 in the Applied Linguistics course were analyzed. Using Thematic Analysis, four categories related to the emotional aspects experienced during teacher training were identified. The results indicated that external interferences, such as the advent of COVID-19, hindered students' performance. Regarding feedback, students demonstrated a high level of acceptance and, through it, sought to improve their practices as future teachers, thus promoting feedforward. The study highlights the necessity of considering both emotional and practical aspects in the preparation of future teachers, aiming to foster effective and resilient pedagogical practices.

KEYWORDS: Teacher training. Learning journals. Feedback. Feedforward.

RESUMO: Através da análise de diários de aprendizagem, este estudo investigou como os desafios pessoais impactam a atuação de professores em formação. Adotando uma abordagem qualitativa e utilizando a estratégia de estudo de caso, foram analisados 382 diários escritos entre 2020 e 2022 na disciplina de Linguística Aplicada. Através da Análise Temática, foram elencadas quatro categorias de análise relacionadas aos aspectos emocionais vivenciados durante a formação docente. Os resultados indicaram que, dentre os entraves encontrados, interferências externas, como o advento da covid-19, interferiram no rendimento dos estudantes. Quanto ao feedback, os alunos demonstraram boa aceitação em recebê-lo e, através dele, buscaram aprimorar suas práticas como futuros docentes, favorecendo o feedforward. O estudo destaca a necessidade de considerar tanto os aspectos emocionais quanto os práticos na preparação de futuros professores, visando promover uma prática pedagógica eficaz e resiliente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Formação docente. Diários de aprendizagem. Feedback. Feedforward.

RESUMEN: Este estudio investigó el impacto de los desafíos personales en el desempeño de los profesores en formación a través del análisis de diarios de aprendizaje. Utilizando un enfoque cualitativo y la estrategia de estudio de caso, se analizaron 382 diarios escritos entre 2020 y 2022 en la asignatura de Lingüística Aplicada. El Análisis Temático identificó cuatro categorías principales relacionadas con los aspectos emocionales vividos durante la formación docente. Los resultados indicaron que interferencias externas, como la pandemia de COVID-19, afectaron negativamente el rendimiento de los estudiantes. Sin embargo, los alumnos mostraron una buena aceptación de la retroalimentación recibida y utilizaron esta información para mejorar sus prácticas pedagógicas, favoreciendo el desarrollo continuo (feedforward). El estudio destaca la importancia de considerar tanto los aspectos emocionales como los prácticos en la preparación de futuros profesores para promover una práctica pedagógica eficaz y resiliente.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Formación docente. Diarios de aprendizaje. Retroalimentación. Feedforward.

Introduction

Learning journals are essential methodological instruments in initial teacher education, as they support the identification of problems inside and outside the classroom and foster the development of didactic and pedagogical conceptions (Chárreu; Oliveira, 2015). When shared among peers, journals benefit preservice teachers by contributing to the resolution of future challenges.

Among the various terminologies, journals may appear under labels such as weekly logs, reflective or metacognitive journals, weekly memories, among others. In this study, we adopt the term "learning journals," as the participants not only explained their activity plans and reported on the progress of the classes they taught as a requirement for approval in the Applied Linguistics course, but also used them as instruments of reflection aimed at promoting learning. Through their writings, preservice teachers were asked to highlight their perceptions regarding the beginning of their teaching practices, as well as to establish a dialogue with the suggested formative readings. Zabalza (2004) argues that journals do not need to be written daily to be designated as such. In the present study, the writing frequency was weekly and extended throughout the entire academic semester.

When used in the educational field, journals may be implemented from two perspectives: an investigative one and another oriented toward personal and professional development (Zabalza, 2004). Although these dimensions are not dissociable, they follow different paths in terms of focus. In this research, we aim to examine, through learning journals, how obstacles in personal life impact the performance of preservice teachers. To this end, we ask: are preservice teachers able to express personal situations that generate difficulties in their professional training through learning journals?

Thus, we seek to explore challenges beyond the classroom that are influenced by external or emotional factors and that affect the pedagogical practice of preservice teachers. The learning journals analyzed in this study were produced within a formative assessment context, which is continuous in nature and aims to provide feedback to students (Fernandes, 2023).

Enhancing this type of assessment, the primary objective of a journal in the teaching context "is to serve as a formative assessment tool, since, in addition to organizing lived experience, it provides the opportunity to return to it and learn from its systematization" (Campana, 2023, p. 3, our translation). Therefore, we analyzed whether the feedback provided

by the course instructor was relevant to the development of future teachers. Such feedback re-signifies emotional aspects that need improvement in order to facilitate classroom work, guiding learners toward feedforward, understood as a future-oriented action based on prior feedback.

The target audience of the research consisted of preservice teachers enrolled in the Languages – Additional Languages undergraduate program at the Federal University of Pampa (Unipampa). The participants attended the course Applied Linguistics to the Teaching of Additional Languages II. After completing the Informed Consent Form, the learning journals of the 36 participants were analyzed from a Thematic Analysis perspective (Souza, 2019).

The title of this article was developed from one of the excerpts extracted from the analyzed journals. In line with the adopted methodological perspective, it was understood as an expressive synthesis of many of the perceptions externalized by the undergraduate students throughout the research. With a qualitative approach, the investigation is characterized as a case study, as it examines a particular phenomenon (Severino, 2017). Regarding its objectives, the study is exploratory, as it seeks to formulate hypotheses for future research (Moreira; Caleffe, 2006). Finally, for data analysis, we used the IRaMuTeQ software, which supports researchers in processing findings through lexical analyses (Castro Neta; Cardoso, 2021).

The study, which is linked to the Research Group on Learning, Methodologies, and Assessment and to the research project "Assessment of the educational experience at the university: analyses and propositions," was organized into four sections. The first clarifies the use of learning journals as drivers of reflection, followed by the methodological procedures that structured the research, and by the analysis and discussion of the results. The final section presents the study's concluding remarks.

Learning Journals

In this section, we present the studies that support the theoretical framework of the research. The principles proposed by Zabalza (2004) constitute the foundation of the theoretical grounding, articulated with more contemporary studies that address the use of learning journals to strengthen reflections on teaching practice, whether in the context of supervised internships during undergraduate education or in exchanges with peers who are also immersed in educational settings. Through journals, more in-depth reflections can be developed, moving beyond the stigma of merely listing classroom events. Using the journal as a space for personal

reflection encourages writers to express their emotions with confidence, as the writings are only disclosed with their consent.

Daily reflections establish a parameter between the personal and professional dimensions of preservice teachers (Silvieri-Pereira; Lopes; Silva, 2020). The first dimension refers to aspects related to the individual's personal identity, while the second focuses on professional identity. Teacher identity formation is partly related to the reflections teachers are able to make about their own professional practices. Moreover, the study conducted by Silvieri-Pereira, Lopes, and Silva (2020) with public school teachers demonstrates that journals are effective in promoting reflection and contribute significantly to the construction of effective professional practice.

Another effective strategy for mediating teacher education through reflective practice is the use of the Guided Reflection Process (PRO)[4] mediated by journals, as they enable continuous reflection (Abreu *et al*., 2020). With the aim of fostering more reflective teachers, pedagogical praxis is strengthened (Abreu *et al*., 2020) when a facilitating instrument is employed. Thus, while learning theoretical concepts, preservice teachers can relate them to lived experiences, using the learning journal as an instrument that interconnects theory and practice.

Strengthening the GRP strategy used by Abreu et al. (2020), in classrooms marked by plural differences in beliefs and personalities, inexperienced teachers at the beginning of their professional journey may encounter difficulties in addressing the obstacles they face. In this context, journals function as moments of release, allowing experiences to be shared and discussed later with fellow preservice teachers. Additionally, journals can be considered assessment tools in teacher education programs, as they are mediated by a more experienced instructor.

In a study conducted with undergraduate students in Business Administration, Campana (2023) identified evaluative potential in formative and diagnostic assessment conceptions mediated by learning journals. Journal production is enhanced when instructors aim to support formative assessment, which contrasts with exclusionary classificatory practices (Campana, 2023; Silva; Mendes, 2017). In another study that also used learning journals for formative assessment purposes, but at elementary education levels, Alabidi *et al*. (2022) identified learning progress through this tool that would otherwise remain invisible without the use of

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[4] It encourages teachers to reflect through the mediation of another more experienced professional (Abreu *et al*., 2020).

journals. As a result, they found that the use of journals enabled teachers to recognize students' potentialities and to provide more effective feedback (Alabidi *et al.*, 2022).

Regarding studies conducted with preservice teachers, Souza *et al.* (2012) investigated the journals of students enrolled in a Pedagogy program who had already completed their Supervised Internship courses. The results showed that, after teaching their classes, preservice teachers recorded classroom events in their journals in a detailed manner. Moving beyond the conception of journals as merely a support for lesson planning, the findings indicate that journals contribute to documenting what teachers consider relevant. The writings produced through this tool, in addition to supporting instructors in monitoring preservice teachers' classroom practices through assessment, allow situations to be revisited and reconsidered. Through this process, journal authors develop reflections on the situations or ideas reported.

As a means of fostering reflection, both the act of writing and the socialization of materials among peers are significant, as they promote the exchange of experiences. Writing can create a certain distance between the subject and the lived situation, and, through peer interaction, future teachers are able to reflect from different perspectives, even supporting colleagues in addressing challenges they have already experienced themselves (Zabalza, 2004; Abreu *et al*., 2020). According to Chárreu and Oliveira (2015), this exchange of experiences enables the merging of experiences with the purpose of disseminating events.

Figure 1 – Possibilities mediated by learning journals
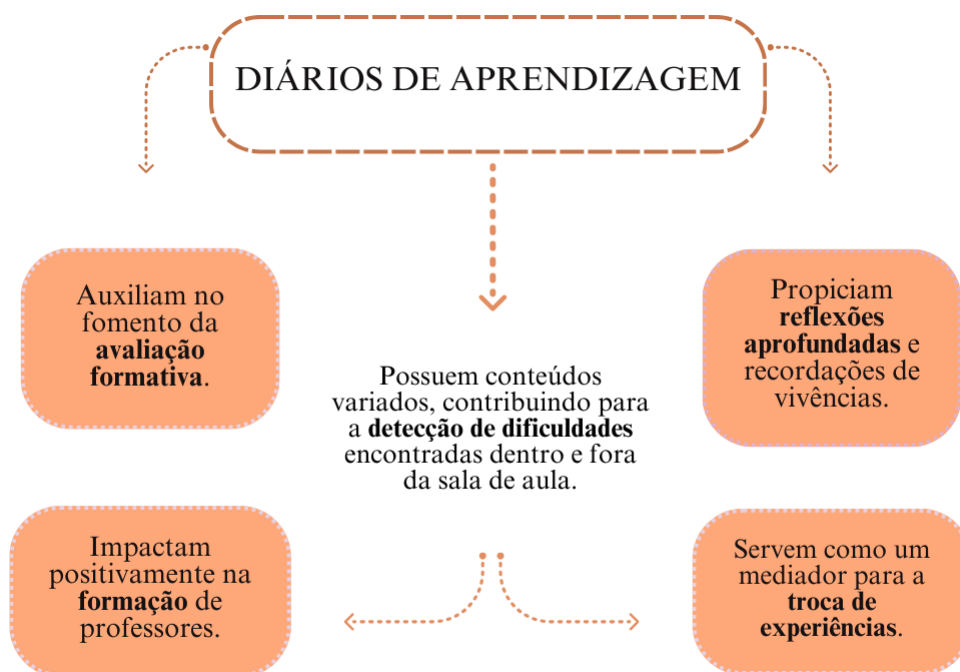
Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024).

By supporting documentation, journals also enable access to the emotional dimension, as there is no rupture between the personal and professional dimensions of teaching practice (Silvieri-Pereira; Lopes; Silva, 2020). Thus, by transcribing their thoughts and rereading them whenever necessary, writers are able to reassess their conduct or identify situations that had previously remained implicit.

Based on the elements presented in Figure 1, when the listed mechanisms are implemented, a developmental spiral emerges. Among the numerous benefits highlighted, beyond the expression of personal and professional difficulties, the socialization of journals facilitates the process of addressing potential challenges. From another perspective, learning journals also support the assessment of preservice teachers, since, by monitoring students' experiences, instructors are able to conduct formative and progressive assessment.

Journal Writing as a Facilitator of Feedback and Feedforward

Journals fall within the category of autobiographical writings or narratives (Silvieri-Pereira; Lopes; Silva, 2020; Zabalza, 2004), allowing authors to address their most personal conceptions. To be relevant to teaching praxis, learning journals must be written with a clear purpose, avoiding a mechanical character and aiming at informed decision-making.

In addition to the personal nature of writing and the benefits associated with journal socialization, the provision of effective feedback constitutes one of the main drivers of reflection. Effective feedback, delivered by an external source and directed toward cognitive and motivational aspects (Oliveira, 2023), also contributes to guiding future actions, thereby internalizing feedforward in students. Within a cyclical and collaborative framework, both feedback and feedforward need to represent internalized and concrete changes. In other words, when feedback is provided individually to each journal author, taking into account their singularity, its impact is maximized.

However, "for students not to perceive feedback as detrimental to their learning, instructors should avoid delayed feedback, that is, providing responses only after the work has been completed, at the end of the academic semester" (Fernandes; Irala, 2024, p. 64, our translation). Accordingly, attention is drawn to the role of the instructor, which is central to delivering effective and timely feedback. Since feedback must be provided continuously in order to support preservice teachers in addressing classroom challenges, instructors need to monitor students' journals regularly and guide them effectively.

Because they are typically written over an extended period, learning journals may, when poorly implemented, take on the character of a tedious activity. When journal writing extends throughout the entire academic semester, it is essential that students remain motivated over the many months of writing. Moreover, for deeper engagement with lived experiences, journals should generally be written immediately after the activities being reported.

As this study addresses journals produced by university students, Fonseca's (2022) observations are particularly relevant. In higher education, texts are often governed by institutionalized norms and may, in many cases, become static and devoid of the author's voice. For preservice teachers to feel "free" to express their conceptions, they need to release themselves from such constraints, directing their reflections not primarily to the immediate reader (in this case, the instructor who will assess them), but writing in a more open and autonomous manner. If students fear receiving feedback from instructors, they may refrain from

recording their genuine perceptions in writing or in online text documents. In sum, a partnership between student and instructor is essential.

In the study by Abreu *et al*. (2020), the authors found that, in addition to fostering the development of reflective teachers, journals also contributed to the improvement of preservice teachers' writing skills. When considering the context of higher education, and more specifically the education of teachers of Additional Languages (AL), learning journals provide opportunities to practice the use of one or more additional languages within the same text. Therefore, clear criteria for journal writing should be established, such as guiding questions, submission deadlines, and, in courses focused on an additional language, the specific languages to be used.

To establish a reflective framework regarding teaching praxis and its influences, students need to write their accounts with the understanding that these records are meaningful for their professional development. Once again, the role of the course instructor is highlighted as crucial, as they act as the mediator of reflections, guiding journal writing toward a purpose defined prior to the beginning of the task. Throughout the process, continuous feedback provides preservice teachers with new perspectives offered by a more experienced individual, which is further strengthened when socialization among peers occurs. Finally, feedforward can be identified through reflective writing, as the instructor is able to conduct formative assessment of the new ways in which students deal with situations that were previously perceived as obstacles.

Methodological Pathway

This study adopts a qualitative approach, as it does not aim to quantify events nor to employ statistical instruments to analyze the generated data (Freitas; Jabbour, 2011). Furthermore, as a research strategy, we chose the case study method, which is characterized by the investigation of a specific case without generalization. For evidence collection, we used learning journals produced in 2020 and 2022 by students enrolled in the Applied Linguistics course. Regarding the research objective, the study is classified as exploratory, since "exploratory research is developed with the aim of providing an approximate, general overview of a given phenomenon" (Moreira; Caleffe, 2006, p. 69, our translation).

Initially, in order to systematize the learning journal writings, we employed Thematic Analysis (TA) to establish categories aligned with the study's objectives. As the journals did

not contain only content relevant to the present research, a filtering process was necessary to support data analysis. According to Zabalza (2004), the longitudinal nature of journals allows for the identification of recurring elements, which serves as evidence of the reliability of the writings (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Thematic map guiding the analysis
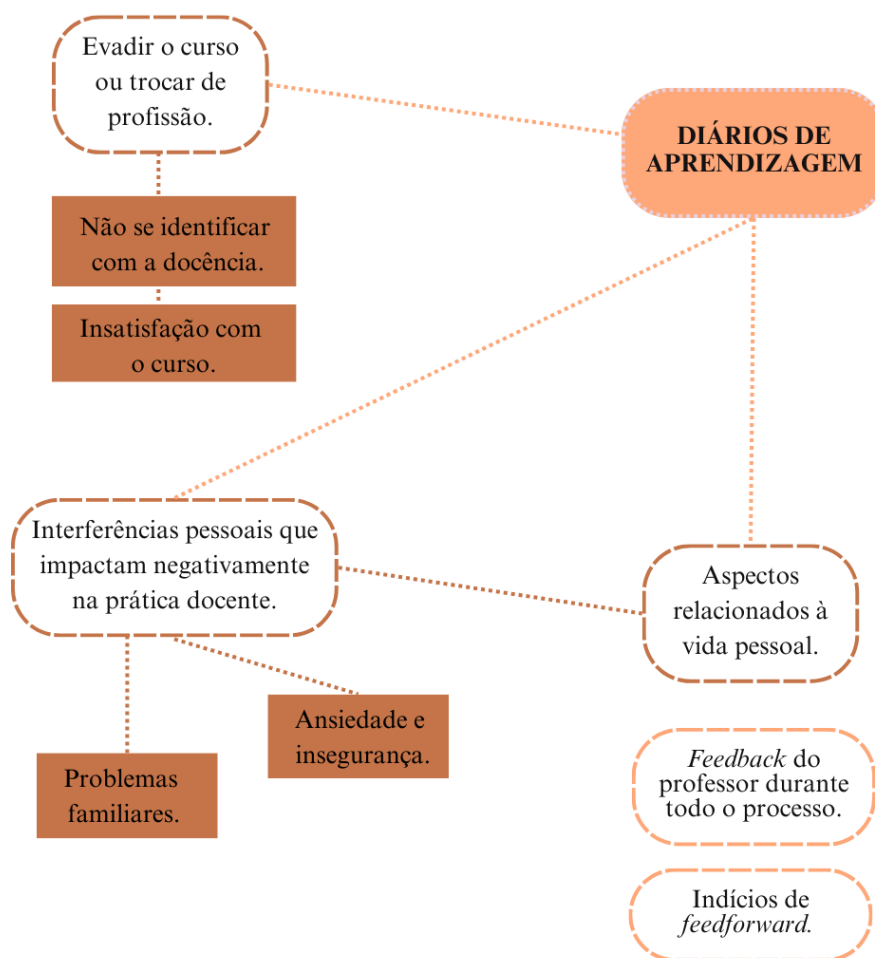
Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024).

From the perspective of Thematic Analysis, which "is a qualitative data analysis method used to identify, analyze, interpret, and report patterns (themes) within qualitative data" (Souza, 2019, p. 52, our translation), we adopted a theoretical approach driven by themes established prior to data analysis. When using Thematic Analysis, it is essential for researchers to develop thematic maps (Souza, 2019), which visually clarify how themes are integrated into a broader unit—in this case, the learning journals. Regarding the selection of themes, we assumed that they should be concise and contextualized (Souza, 2019). However, it is important to emphasize

that Thematic Analysis is flexible, allowing researchers to add or remove themes from the map as needed.

As the investigated program focuses on teacher education in Additional Languages, the journals written by preservice teachers also contained passages in English and Spanish. Therefore, when students chose to use an additional language, we translated the excerpts into Portuguese, as a methodological decision, in order to standardize the corpus submitted to the analysis software. Each student created a folder on Google Drive to upload their weekly reflections, which allowed the instructor to provide feedback through comments on the posts. Each participant was identified by the letter "L" (referring to *licenciando*, preservice teacher), followed by a sequential number for classification purposes.

For data analysis, we followed the framework proposed by Freitas and Jabbour (2011), who divide qualitative data analysis in case studies into four phases:

Table 1 – Stages of Data Analysis

First phase	Second phase	Third phase	Fourth phase
Transcription of collected evidence	Detailed description of evidence	Analysis of evidence based on theoretical frameworks	Cross-referencing of evidence

Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024), adapted from Freitas and Jabbour (2011).

The stages presented in Table 1 are observed and discussed in the following section of the article. To apply them with greater precision, we adopted the Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires (IRaMuTeQ) software as the data analysis technique. This software belongs to the Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software category and, although it allows for automated content analysis, it produces accurate results without diminishing the central role of the researchers responsible for the study (Castro Neta; Cardoso, 2021).

Camargo and Justo (2013) point out that, through a rigorous statistical process, IRaMuTeQ enables multiple lexical analysis procedures. Among them, this study employed Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC), which uses a dendrogram to clarify emerging classes derived from the text segments indexed by the software. For word classification, DHC relies on the chi-square test (χ^2), which represents the associative strength between terms and the classes to which they belong (Blass *et al*., 2024). It is worth noting that the DHC output

generated by the software supports the procedural foundations of Discursive Textual Analysis (DTA), as indicated by Martins *et al*. (2022).

The textual corpus consisted of thirty-three texts, corresponding to excerpts extracted from a larger unit. Based on the themes presented in Figure 2, only textual excerpts related to the pre-established themes were selected. After software-based analysis, the corpus was divided into 169 text segments (TS), with 147 TS retained (86.98%), resulting in 6,007 occurrences (words, forms, or lexical items).

Research Context

Of the 36 participants in the study, nineteen attended the Applied Linguistics course in 2020 and seventeen in 2022. The students, who were regularly enrolled in the undergraduate program in Languages – Additional Languages: English, Spanish, and their respective Literatures at Unipampa, wrote learning journals with the purpose of reflecting on their teaching practice. The program in question adopts the production of learning journals as one of the criteria for mediating formative assessment; in the course investigated, the journals were developed with both evaluative and reflective purposes (Zabalza, 2004). Specifically in this curricular component, the instructor assessed the journals using an evaluative rubric (for hetero- and self-assessment), which enabled the provision of continuous instructor feedback (Brookhart, 2024) throughout the months in which the task was carried out.

At the beginning of each semester, as stated in the course syllabus, the instructor discussed the journal assessment criteria with the preservice teachers. The course aimed to achieve the following objectives (Table 2):

Table 2 – Applied Linguistics to the Teaching of Additional Languages II

General objective	To provide students with opportunities to practice instructional planning.
Syllabus	Definition of objectives, selection of methodological procedures, content, and assessment methods for teaching Additional Languages. Planning, implementation, and evaluation of didactic activities.

Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024).

Students were required to submit journals on a weekly basis. These were referred to as "metacognitive journals" and sought to foster student participation in the scheduled classes. With the aim of developing reflective writing about the sessions taught, the journals were assessed by the instructor based on students' reflective capacity and the regularity of submissions. In the following section, we present the main results of the study and their implications.

Results and Discussion

In light of the principles of data analysis in case studies within qualitative research (Freitas; Jabbour, 2011), the textual corpus indexed in the IRaMuTeQ software was composed of excerpts from journals selected for their relevance to the study's objectives. At a preliminary level, a recurrence of terms associated with students' emotional aspects was observed, indicating that the journals functioned as spaces for expressing obstacles related to personal life.
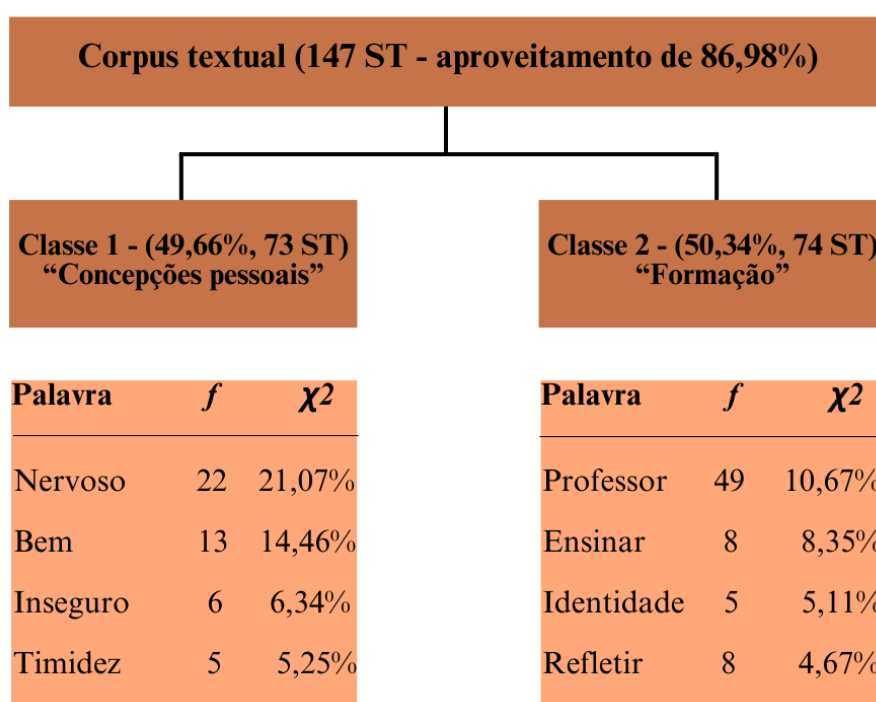
In 2020, the course sessions were conducted synchronously. For students who were unable to attend live, class recordings were made available for later viewing. Because the course took place during the period of social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the semester duration was reduced. Consequently, the journals produced in that year contained more direct references to emotional and mental health aspects, reflecting the lived context.

In contrast, the journals written in 2022 focused primarily on reflections related to the formative readings suggested by the instructor. As a result, students concentrated their comments on these readings rather than on emotional aspects, which were more prominent in 2020. This difference may be attributed to the fact that the participants had already developed certain coping strategies during the pandemic and that social isolation in 2022 was less restrictive than in 2020. Another relevant point is the instructor's pedagogical sensitivity in guiding journal production. In 2020, journals were oriented toward reflections on the circumstances being experienced at the time, whereas in 2022 the focus shifted to mediating

discussions of academic readings. In 2021, no data were collected because the course was taught by a different instructor, who does not adopt journals within her methodological and evaluative approach.

Regarding the analyzed content, it was divided into two classes: Class 1, labeled "Personal Conceptions," comprised 73 text segments (49.66%), while Class 2, labeled "Teacher Education," included 74 text segments (50.34%). The dendrogram that supported the software-based data analysis is presented below.

Figure 3 – Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC)

Corpus textual (147 ST - aproveitamento de 86,98%)		

Classe 1 - (49,66%, 73 ST) "Concepções pessoais"				**Classe 2 - (50,34%, 74 ST)** "Formação"		
Palavra	***f***	**χ2**		**Palavra**	***f***	**χ2**
Nervoso	22	21,07%		Professor	49	10,67%
Bem	13	14,46%		Ensinar	8	8,35%
Inseguro	6	6,34%		Identidade	5	5,11%
Timidez	5	5,25%		Refletir	8	4,67%

Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024).

In Class 1, which refers to "Personal Conceptions" and accounts for 49.66% of the analyzed corpus, the term with the highest hierarchical value is "nervous." This representation conveys the idea of anxiety related to preservice teachers' initial teaching practices. Next, we clarify the students' perceptions regarding the emergent themes in Class 1.

> L_13: Regarding the class I need to teach, I am feeling a bit afraid. I am very insecure, and the closer the date gets, the more nervous I become. I have nothing ready yet; even though I have many ideas, it feels as if nothing will fit together.
> L_25: I feel calm when I am challenged to teach classes. I become more nervous about my English, which I know I still need to improve a great deal, but I want to learn and I want to improve because I want to be a teacher. I need to know what I must improve and whether I am prepared. As I mentioned, I

am very nervous; when it comes to evaluating a class as a teacher, I will be very nervous, but I will do everything I can not to feel insecure.

L_28: I have been thinking a lot about the issue of shyness, which has often hindered my development. Because I am more introverted, I feel quite nervous. I hope everything goes well and that this will be an experience that leads to a positive outcome for this introverted side of me.

L_24: Today I taught my first face-to-face class, and I must admit it was frightening, and I am somewhat disappointed in myself. My nervousness made me forget to record the first 30 minutes of the class, and after that I felt insecure about what I was doing, even though I did not show it and kept going anyway.

L_27: I was quite insecure and nervous because it was my first class with a real group, and after this class, many doubts and answers arose in my mind. Now I feel a little more confident in myself (Participants' journal entries, 2020; 2022, our translation).

When preservice teachers express nervousness in their accounts, they associate this feeling with their first teaching experience and with the pressure of being evaluated. On the other hand, by mobilizing self-regulation processes[5], they were able to overcome difficulties emerging from recent practice, which resulted in increased confidence. Feedback plays a central role in this process, as, when provided by an external source, it contributes both to self-regulation and to the strengthening of confidence-related feelings (Lu *et al.*, 2022). Below, we present two excerpts that illustrate the contribution of instructor feedback.

L_04: The feedback suggested by the instructor contributes greatly to my progress in teaching, and I try to learn the tools that I had never used before in order to rethink my classroom practices. I do not know if I am using my resources correctly, but I am trying to improve every day and would like to receive feedback. Regarding the things that make me a better teacher, one of them is the individual feedback provided by the instructor, because it is through it that I can see which aspects—whether grammatical or oral—I need to change, practice, and improve.

L_24: Despite my insecurities, I know that my classmates and the instructor can give me advice on how to further improve my lesson plan. Feedback is the element that made me reflect the most, because it is undoubtedly what generates the most insecurity and fear when it is time to teach during the internship or in our course, as I am nervous by nature (Participants' journal entries, 2020; 2022, our translation).

For feedback to be effective and to promote self-regulation and its related aspects, it must be provided individually to students, which can be facilitated through comments directly in the learning journals. When effective, feedback—although it does not always consist of

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[5] In short, self-regulated learning refers to learning processes in which students take ownership of the acquisition of knowledge and skills in an autonomous manner (Zimmerman, 1989).

praise, but rather performance-oriented guidance—supports students' conduct in subsequent activities, thereby fostering feedforward.

Still regarding the analysis of terms in Class 1, aspects related to emotional relationships are strongly emphasized. When exploring the term *well*, connections emerge with issues related to students' health, as well as renewed indications of self-confidence through self-regulation.

> L_36: Teaching today was truly a challenge, as I have a sore throat and significant back pain. I think I have the flu, but despite all the adversities, I feel that I did very well.
> L_31: I think I did not make the most of the classes because I was not feeling very well that day. I have always wanted to be a teacher, but until then I did not know which path to follow, and the instructor's classes were a major reference for me.
> L_05: I must admit that my psychological state, as the days go by, has been turning against me, and the pandemic did not help at all, but I always try to take something positive from these self-sabotaging moments. Feeling tired, incapable, and frustrated with our studies is understandable, especially in a situation of a worldwide pandemic.
> L_13: Lately, I have been a very unmotivated student, with little energy to complete assignments and study. I believe this is due to the moment we are experiencing, but I hope that this semester I can change and become a more dedicated and diligent student. With the pandemic, I believe there are various types of threats, such as the internet, the people around us, and online classes—everything ended up becoming a threat.
> L_19: I think the greatest challenge I will face is shyness, because although it may not seem so, I am very shy. For someone who never thought about becoming a teacher, I think I am doing well (Participants' journal entries, 2020; 2022, our translation).

This student movement of believing in one's own potential and reframing obstacles as drivers of learning construction enables a set of concepts to interact and impact academic performance. One such concept is self-efficacy, which can also be directed toward teacher education. Ma, Cavanagh, and McMaugh (2022) discuss the concept of *teacher self-efficacy*, related to teacher education and encompassing crucial changes throughout professional experience.

Therefore, the reflective writing process fostered by learning journals serves as a conduit for teacher self-efficacy, as through writing and analysis, preservice teachers can review actions and monitor their own development. Although self-efficacy appears to contribute positively to preservice teachers' pedagogical experiences, there is still substantial evidence of insecurity and shyness—two terms identified through the analysis conducted.

The use of self-efficacy can be related to the concept of *resilience*, as Raymundo and Leão (2014), through a literature review, found that resilience promotes positive adaptation in

response to adversities encountered in educational settings. Grounded in the principles of Positive Psychology, this concept aligns with healthy aspects of human development, encompassing skills for reconstructing one's life in both personal and professional domains. In essence, resilience is the capacity to overcome adversity (Raymundo; Leão, 2014). When individuals face adversity and manage to overcome it, their levels of self-efficacy may increase. However, if we assume that professional development is not linear, even the most experienced teachers may experience fear, insecurity, and anxiety—factors mentioned by the participants in this study and which overlap with the concepts drawn from Positive Psychology discussed above.

Although preservice teachers mentioned several terms related to the difficulty of teaching, their accounts indicate that the training process does not shape them into teachers in a linear manner. Depending on the moment they are experiencing, even a teacher with a well-established career may encounter obstacles that lead to reflections on professional competence. In this regard, Zabalza (2004) suggests that journals can serve as a formative instrument throughout the entire teaching career, as they allow for the revisiting of personal issues that permeate the professional environment.

Concerning the complex process of preservice teacher development, we relate it to Class 2, labeled *Teacher Education*. This class, which comprises 50.34% of the textual corpus analyzed by IRaMuTeQ, is characterized by the prominence of the terms *teacher*, *teach*, *identity*, and *reflect*. Below, we present key excerpts that characterize Class 2.

> L_01: Being a better teacher means spending all one's time studying and creating new ways of teaching without considering that we are also people and professionals who need to maintain good relationships with others. I think this is why, in our undergraduate program, a large proportion of students do not complete it: there are many sacrifices and renunciations we must make during the teacher education process, and we must devote ourselves entirely to it. As I mentioned in the first journal I wrote, I do not imagine myself teaching for my entire life, nor do I intend to build a career in this field.
> L_04: Being a teacher is not only about being prepared for positive situations, but also about being willing to accept new practices/tools that can be highly beneficial; in doing so, some difficulties will arise, but they will not be impossible to overcome. I also believe it is extremely important to listen to what we need to improve, whether it is said by the professor or emerges through reflection—be it mistakes, advice, or experiences shared by others, among others.
> L_24: Showing this more human side of our profession helps us understand ourselves within it. I really liked feeling like a teacher because I affirmed that I am one.
> L_10: This week was one of the most difficult for me throughout the semester—not only because of the rush of daily life, not only due to the

> pandemic period, not only because of remote teaching, to which I still have not adapted, but also because of the number of tasks that had to be completed in a short period of time.
> L_13: It is virtually impossible to be 100% professional and not allow our "self" to be present in the classroom.
> L_08: An individual's mood and emotional state define how their performance in activities will be. The uniqueness of the moment we are living through is also an aggravating factor for knowledge acquisition.
> L_02: I cannot see myself in the position of a teacher, as teaching is a practice that feels very distant to me, with which I have neither affinity nor prospects (Participants' diary transcripts, 2020; 2022, our translation).

The aspects transcribed from the diaries demonstrate the inseparability of emotional and personal factors, as discussed by Silvieri-Pereira, Lopes, and Silva (2020). As noted by L_13 and L_08, it is difficult to enter the classroom—whether as a student or as a teacher—and leave identities and emotions outside. In the course taught in 2020, students made numerous remarks about the period of social isolation, highlighting its influence on mental health, such as having family members affected by the virus, which caused significant concern.

> L_03: During the pandemic, we had to learn how to study and teach in a different way, often while experiencing emotional problems. Since the beginning of remote classes, I started to feel some of these issues, such as anxiety, stress, and even depression, due to difficulties in carrying out technological activities and synchronous classes—something very different from anything I had done or experienced before, and a skill I am still developing gradually—along with the lack of interaction with people.
> L_14: I need to confess that yesterday afternoon I almost did not finish the assignment. Yesterday I received the news that my grandmother has COVID, and I was devastated.
> L_15: Studying at home, I am susceptible to phone calls from my family, domestic matters, answering the door, taking care of animals, among other things. In short, I am somewhat exhausted by university and household tasks at the same time, and I was not even able to write the diary last week (Participants' diary transcripts, 2020; 2022, our translation).

In addition, participants mentioned the influence of environmental factors, such as domestic chores, which interfered with time dedicated to studying. Consequently, students perceived these interferences negatively, making it evident that the pandemic period contributed to the emergence of atypical aspects, such as the shift to remote teaching and obstacles originating from the home environment. To help restructure the imbalances encountered, teacher feedback provided a pathway forward.

Across the two years analyzed, the course was taught by the same instructor; in 2022, teaching was shared by two professors. Even in 2022, however, only one professor delivered feedback to students. In addition to encouraging students and reminding them of course tasks,

the instructor also provided comments focused on the writing developed in the diaries. Some grammatical errors were highlighted by the professor, which helped students improve the Additional Languages (ALs) they study.

Regarding the feedback received by the pre-service teachers through the diaries, it was perceived as influential for learning and was a topic discussed in class. Bilaterally, students showed receptiveness to receiving feedback to improve their teaching practices and, in turn, sought to understand how feedback should be provided to their future students. Concerning students' reflections on feedback, they reported appreciating it, thereby reinforcing its significance for academic progress. Through individualized feedback, it is possible to guide pre-service teachers' work toward improvement. By providing effective feedback, instructors enable the internalization of responses; when perceived as meaningful, students will apply feedforward in future situations. Specifically, across the 36 diaries analyzed, explicit feedforward situations were not identified; rather, evidence emerged of challenging situations that, when revisited, were addressed differently. Such indications were generally related to teaching practices initiated in the course and can be more clearly understood in Class 1, represented in Figure 3.

With respect to aspects related to teacher identity and persistence in the program, although most participating pre-service teachers expressed the intention to teach, many entered the degree program without full conviction regarding their initial choice. Over the course of their training, however, they progressively assumed a teaching stance. Students themselves observed that a significant number of peers drop out of the program and that, despite requiring commitment, undergraduate study is perceived as a period of "sacrifice and renunciation," as illustrated in L_01's account.

As some Additional Languages students combine their studies with employment, the degree becomes even more demanding, requiring the development of time-management strategies so that, alongside emotional factors, these demands do not become obstacles leading to program attrition.

Finally, regarding the socialization of learning diaries among peers, no information was collected from the materials themselves indicating that such sharing occurred; however, students emphasized the relevance of sharing their experiences related to the classes they taught. They were also able to raise questions in the materials, formulated based on weekly readings and discussed with peers during meetings. This socialization, even when not mediated directly by diary excerpts, proves relevant for enabling shared reflection. As pre-service teachers wrote

about perspectives related to insecurity when teaching their first classes, they also later pointed to moments of anxiety, which were addressed through the realization that nearly all peers experienced similar feelings.

Final Considerations

In this study, we sought to examine, through learning diaries, how personal constraints impact the performance of pre-service teachers. By following the established methodological procedures, we found that the use of terms related to teaching practice—such as *teaching*, *identity*, and *reflection*—with teacher education at the center of the reflections, guided the production of the learning diaries. Conversely, feelings related to anxiety, insecurity, and shyness (identified prior to the beginning of pedagogical practices) demonstrated that personal emotions can be expressed through the writing of learning diaries.

Students also pointed out constraints arising from the context in which the writings were produced: the COVID-19 pandemic. It was observed that most reflections focused on the uncertainties of the pandemic period, even in entries that addressed the classroom context. Mentions of health-related problems (not only those affecting the pre-service teachers themselves) were among the challenges faced during the semesters analyzed.

As the course was predominantly practical and, for many participants, represented their first teaching experience, excerpts addressing a lack of confidence in teaching were recurrent. In relation to the terms *teacher* and *teaching*, students were divided into two axes: those who mentioned the possibility of dropping out of the program and those who identified themselves as teachers. Moreover, the concept of feedback was frequently mentioned by students, who regarded it as a driver of learning. Provided weekly by the course instructor, the feedback proved effective in guiding the diaries as both a reflective and assessment tool. We were unable to identify explicit use of *feedforward* in the analyzed accounts, except for indications of self-efficacy and resilience, which did not occur in a linear manner. This limitation highlights the need for additional methodological approaches to be employed alongside diary analysis.

The results indicated that concepts related to emotions—both self-confidence and, conversely, insecurity—served as references for the influence of students' personal lives on their training process, demonstrating a certain inseparability between these domains. This suggests that students are able to express aspects of their personal lives in the diaries, even when

they are assessed by third parties. Therefore, guidance from the course instructor is necessary to clarify the evaluative objectives for each piece of writing produced.

Although this study revealed important insights, its limitations include a sample restricted to a single university and degree program. Future research is encouraged to explore different institutions and time frames, as well as to investigate the impact of various types of feedback and feedforward strategies on the professional development of pre-service teachers. Such studies would help expand the present findings, offering a broader understanding of the challenges and effective strategies in teacher education.

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