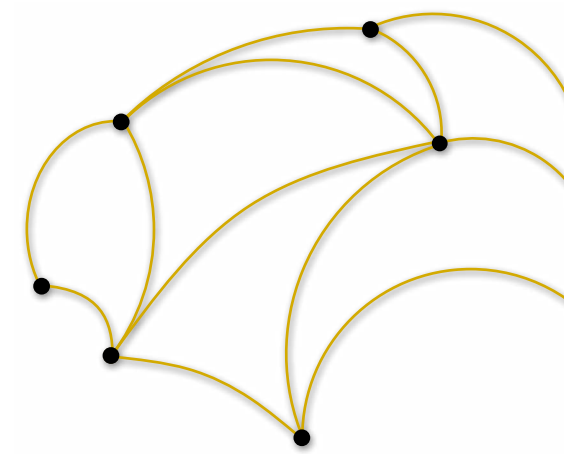


Chapter 5

Internationalization:

paths of memory and dialogue
in higher education



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Abstract: The internationalization of higher education is discussed in this chapter as a form of academic pilgrimage. Just as a pilgrim leaves the comfort of his home and crosses borders in search of transformation, the student or researcher exercises detachment from local certainties such as his theories, his language and his university to walk through the territory of the unknown, even when the actions are carried out in the same location. On this journey, people involved in internationalization actions face differences in relation to language, culture, and knowledge and create ways of seeing, living, and transforming their own community, as they cross geographical and epistemological borders. The objective of this chapter is to describe and discuss internationalization actions at home and in the community lived throughout my teaching career, from which I highlight experiences that occurred locally and in universities abroad. In both situations, I highlight how the relationship between people, higher-education agents for internationalization policies over the years, is an important strategy for building and sharing knowledge. In addition, I will discuss how internationalization actions are a stage for social transformation.

Key-words: internationalization, interculturality, higher education.

To make memory is a bit like recreating what has been done.
(Freire, 2013, p. 24)

1 INTRODUCTION

The memory of a certain event appeared to me as inspiration for the writing of this chapter. In 2025, while walking through the corridors of USP, during the coffee break, I saw a bookshelf exposing book for sale. I came across the book Paulo Freire, *peregrino do óbvio*, released that year, authored by Juha Suoranta, a researcher and university professor in Finland who analyzes the current political and pedagogical legacy of Freire.

Paulo Freire called himself that, a “pilgrim of the obvious”, but I did not remember it and what caught my attention was the word pilgrim that, over the years, became frequent for me, who adopted long-distance walks as a frequent activity.

This reference was enough for me to want to read the book and meet again with the Freire who had no borders, who walked and spoke in such various places, so close and so far, whose books spread throughout the world. He had many interlocutors with whom he walked on the academic and affective roads. He circulated in various places, between intellectuals and simple people, and chose dialogue as the meeting point between them.

In the book, the author brings Freire’s explanation for the term pilgrim of the obvious: “in this pilgrimage I am learning how important it is to take the obvious as an object of critical reflection and, going deeper into it, I discover that sometimes it is not as obvious as it seems (Freire, 1975, p. 17 apud Suoranta, 2025, p. 23)

I do not consider myself a Freire scholar, but I see what he teaches us in what I am. So, I propose here, a dialogue that allows, from the figure of the pilgrim, a conversation about the internationalization of higher education from the memories of what I experienced as a teacher, researcher, and manager over the years of work in higher education. I am not referring to memories only, but to what was created individually and collectively, understanding the social and historical causes of events.

I return to the epigraph of this chapter to remind you that recreating, for Freire (2013), generates awareness, because we are subjects with the

capacity to transform, create and recreate our own reality from the action and practice linked to reflection on the world, that is, awareness is related to the integration between action and reflection and the ability to act on reality.

This process of recreating through memories can also allow the hybridization of culture which consists of, among other things, expanding the understanding of acculturation, which should not be the purpose of internationalization actions. I understand memory as a territory of identity reconstruction, fundamental for interculturality that is related to the processes of confrontation, negotiation, exchange, and mixture that occur when distinct cultural groups come into direct contact, such as in internationalization actions. Thus, memory helps in the valorization of local identities and works as a protection against the erasure of such identities.

This understanding means that internationalization actions can occur without our identities being questioned or superimposed, because memory makes us rescue our own history and, by knowing it, we can make it the protection against the impositions of other cultures in the relationships made possible by the internationalization actions of higher education. This occurs at the individual and collective levels, since, given its dynamic character, memory is transformed into political strength and resistance. In internationalization actions, this materializes where cultural differences are considered to value or depreciate a certain group or set of knowledge, which can reinforce postures of a colonial education.

Therefore, among the concepts that we can use to understand actions for the internationalization of higher education, I choose interculturality as a thread with which I sew memories as well as ideas for the present and the future, such as Freire’s unprecedentedly viable, choosing as a basis for this the notion of community, created and strengthened in intercultural dialogue and critical interculturality in the terms of Candau (2008; 2022) and Walsh (2013).

I refer to the studies of the two authors to discuss the criticism of internationalization focused on individual exchange or concerned with international rankings that motivates cultural dependence and the inferiorization of knowledge produced in the place. In a critical approach to internationalization, in the light of the readings of both, we have as a starting point, the idea of breaking with academic Eurocentrism and establishing horizontal partnerships of cooperation.

I share Nez's (2025, p. 3) understanding of internationalization that has permeated my studies on the subject.

Internationalization manifests itself in a “transversal” way to the various dimensions of university life, such as research, teaching, and extension, being essential to understanding the performance of universities in their region. This means that it does not occur in isolation, but is influenced by institutional, national, and international factors, reflecting the tension between different local and global approaches and needs.

From this, I address two possibilities for internationalization of higher education, namely: internationalization at home and internationalization in the community. This categorization has a didactic effect for this chapter, as I chose to present internationalization in the institution in which I work, based on my trajectory, and where internationalization at home and through the creation of community happened and happens concomitantly at times. By recalling the internationalization actions described and discussed below, I refer to other researchers and the way I understand the path and institutional efforts for internationalization, corroborating the discussion by Leal and Moraes (2018) about the relationship between decolonial epistemology and the theoretical field of internationalization.

2 INTERNATIONALIZATION AT HOME: PILGRIMAGE IN KNOWN LANDS IS ALSO FINDING THE UNKNOWN

The first experience of internationalization at home as a professor at the State University of Goiás (UEG) was the establishment of a partnership with English teachers from a language school and with the local government. In partnership with the university's English teachers, an immersion program was carried out with teachers and students of the *Letras* course, English teachers in training. This action, entitled Artslit, was described and analyzed in different scientific productions (Freitas, 2010; 2017; 2024) and involved teachers from the United States and Mexico.

From this period, I discuss the internationalization at home, which includes the actions related to Artslit, in the period from 2005 to 2008, and the meeting on teacher training (Enfople), which began in 2005 and continues with annual editions. In both cases, internationalization at home is based on extension and teaching actions. I recorded these stories in chapters, articles, and lectures as well as in the book *In the Shadow of the Flamboyant: Stories and Memories Intertwined in University Extension*:

The first opportunity for actions on internationalization at home, which coincides with the beginning of Enfople, is directly related to Professor Daniel [Soares]. The Artslit project was promoted when [...] stood out with its participation and the methodology it developed (Brossi, Freitas & Silva, 2025, p. 58).

Over the years, *Enfople* has consolidated itself as a language teacher training event and includes activities that characterize internationalization at home with the Artslit project and the Immersion Program for Teachers, between the years 2017 and 2021, with the commitment of the university's External Relations Office and the English for Kids program, which started in 2017 and is still active today.

These actions constitute training spaces based on activities related to both teaching and university extension and efforts to carry out actions for the internationalization of higher education.

I emphasize that such actions have repercussions on the linguistic, methodological, and cultural training of the teachers involved. Although the term immersion in a foreign language has a strong colonial appeal, I emphasize the value of this action for the linguistic development of teachers and future teachers of English and for the expression of local culture as a way of valuing and sharing local knowledge. Both Artslit and Enfople and Immersion activities constitute a decolonial education by valuing historically marginalized knowledge.

Recognizing and proposing a decolonial education is important for understanding internationalization as exchanges, sharing of knowledge, and questioning coloniality by rescuing the epistemologies of the global south, valuing the history and identity and memory of the people of the place, and combating social and educational structures related to racism,

sexism, and social and economic inequalities, motivating a “decolonial internationalization, capable of promoting changes in future policies and practices” (Silva; Xavier, 2021, p.5588).

3 INTERNATIONALIZATION AS A COMMUNITY: TO WANDER IN THE WORLD IS TO FEEL PART OF IT

The launch of the Luso-Brazilian Collection, available on the website of the *Observatory of Ideas*, in which I worked as an organizer in ten editions, opens a very productive period and relationships with researchers from other institutions in Brazil and Portugal and marks the beginning of what I am considering an internationalization as a community.

The creation and participation in research groups and networks motivates and impacts the relationships between people, which provokes internationalization actions. In this sense, it is the personal and professional relationships that generate the experiences between the institutions and, consequently, the actions of internationalization as communities and from the understanding of the groups as a community that act to strengthen joint actions and recognize that cultural differences are the basis for valuing partnerships.

In this way, visiting other countries and receiving teachers from other countries become, through the sense of mutual collaboration and complicity, a condition for strengthening internationalization actions. In the case of the Luso-Brazilian Collection group, the partnership between Brazilian and Portuguese professors generated internationalization actions such as participation and holding of events, academic training, and research in partnership.

Currently, I highlight the constitution of a community with internationalization actions related to study and research groups, as well as their scientific productions intensified by graduate programs in Education and partnerships with universities in Portugal and Latin America. I bring two examples: (i) the performance and international reach of Gefople (Study Group on Language Teacher Training), which promotes Enfople and brings together researchers and students from several Brazilian universities and

Portuguese universities, and (ii) the constitution of a working group at the Latin American Association for Research in Education.

Through Gefople's activities, which has maintained study and research activities in online meetings since 2020, we have established a partnership with the University of Aveiro; we reaffirmed and strengthened the activities with the University of Porto by creating the Research Group on Literacy, Culture (LECCE, UEG/CNPq); we started the CoNEXOes (<https://editora.ua.pt/index.php/uaeditora>) program, which involves not only researchers from Gefople and Lecce, but also researchers from the University of Aveiro. In addition, Gefople participants also attend in research groups linked to the University of Brasília (UNB), the State University of Londrina (UEL), the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), among others, which promote internationalization actions through the constitution of new communities.

By coordinating the recently created Education and Artificial Intelligence WG, at the Latin American Association for Research in Education (<https://alie.lat/>), the constitution of a group of researchers from Latin American countries establishes an experience of the constitution of a community that, involved in research, teaching and extension, also generates actions of “internationalization for global solidarity, aimed at actions against the oppression and marginalization of cultures and individuals” (Silva; Xavier, 2021, p. 5588).

What I highlight in the notion of community is the dialogue that Nez (2026, p. 12) explains: “Dialogue in internationalization exceeds the exchange of information; It establishes a deep recognition and genuine respect for the culture of the other. For this dialogue to be effective, it is essential that local identities are considered and honored.”

This reminds me of the beginning of relations with Portuguese universities and the constructions about Brazilian researchers and, in particular, female researchers. An intercultural look and practice had to be constructed so that another could be deconstructed from the simplest coexistence to the discussion of themes necessary for the deconstruction of historically constructed conceptions.

4 FUTURE PILGRIMAGES

On a present and future level, I glimpse, in the outburst of Chagas and Finardi (2024, p. 21), what can be built in terms of internationalization actions: “If we could think of internationalization as a process of greater cooperation and dialogue between peoples, knowledge, and languages, perhaps the current world scenario of wars and crises of relevance to the university would be different”. Internationalization as a journey that transforms people and generates local transformations is more effective from a social point of view than accumulating points in the curriculum and consuming the knowledge of others, for example, how some internationalization models work.

As in Garcia *et al.* (2025, p. 18), “based on Freire’s contributions, we propose to confront the asymmetrical power structures instituted by coloniality based on principles and practical actions that can contribute to ‘southing’ Brazilian university internationalization”, believing in epistemic pilgrimages.

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