

Issues in Language Instruction

A Journal for Practicing and Interpreting Teaching English as an Additional Language



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Issues in Language Instruction (ILI) is an independent academic journal edited and published at the University of Kansas by faculty at the Applied English Center (AEC). Scholarship, perspectives, and opinions expressed in *ILI* do not necessarily reflect those of the AEC administration or other units at the University of Kansas.

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Editor's Note

In 2016, *ILI* published [research agendas](#) of Vietnamese EFL instructors at the end of a professional development program hosted by the University of Kansas. Similarly, in this volume of *ILI*, Brazilian EFL instructors publish their reflections on a professional development program at the University of Kansas.

In spring 2023, the University of Kansas hosted a six-week professional development program for K-12 Brazilian teachers of English. The program was administered by The Institute of International Education (IIE) and sponsored by the Brazilian Federal Agency for the Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education. In Portuguese, the program is called, *Programa de Desenvolvimento Profissional para Professores de Língua Inglesa nos EUA*, which roughly translates to Professional Development Program for English Language Teachers in the USA. The acronym PDPI is often used. According to IIE's website, "PDPI ... makes up part of the Brazilian government's strategic plan to improve English language teaching and teacher training in all states of Brazil."¹

More than 40 English teachers participated in the program this year. Participants attended courses and a series of guest lectures. The courses were on teaching methods, communication in English, technology in the classroom, and pronunciation. Guest lectures included discussions on public K-12 education in the US, a comparison of teaching English as a foreign language in Brazil and Portuguese as a foreign language in the US, TESOL's six principles, integrating language and culture, and a talk with the superintendent of the local public schools. The program also comprised of cultural and experiential learning components such as a dinner in an American home and trip to the state capitol to learn about the historic supreme court decision in the *Topeka Brown v. Board of Education* case.

The intent of the PDPI program is to make an impact on English language instruction in Brazil. But did it? What is the perspective of the participants in the program? The collection of essays published in this volume expresses the participants' thoughts about the professional development program. The essays are organized in a similar way. They all begin with an introduction that gives the authors' backgrounds, which often include working conditions, relevant life experiences, previous educational experience, and the authors' current teaching assignments. The next sections consist of statements about the authors' experience in the program, the impact of the program, and suggestions for improvement.

Of the 42 EFL instructors taking part in the PDPI program this year, five chose to submit essays. Published essays about the professional development of EFL practitioners are rare. Ding and Bruce (2017, p. 152-153) note "...a relative paucity of research exploring practitioners, their work, development needs, identities, pedagogies, curriculum innovations, and significantly, their working conditions..." Open access journals such as *ILI*, however, are uniquely positioned to address this "paucity of research." In their recent article, Patent, Tomlinson, Mohr, and Lind (2023) wrote that open access "(OA) publishing has ... radically upended traditional publishing models and opened up research that had been cloistered away in university and college libraries or kept behind paywalls." They go on to add that "institutional repositories ... have come to serve as the digital archive for research produced at that institution" (p. 26). This special PDPI issue of *ILI* uses the open access platform to give voice to our Brazilian EFL colleagues and to serve as a digital archive for reflection on this professional development opportunity at a North American university.

¹ <https://www.iie.org/news/14-universities-welcome-pdpi-brazilian-english-teachers-to-the-usa/>

Finally, I would like to thank our Senior Editor, Marta Carvajal Regidor, and our new copyeditor, Sandra Issa. Marta's consistently thoughtful contributions improved key decisions we needed to make throughout the editing process. I greatly appreciate her feedback and insight. As our new copyeditor starting with this issue, Sandra began with essays from authors not accustomed to publishing in English. With much previous experience working with writers who speak English as an additional language, she eagerly and seemingly effortlessly prepared all the essays for publication.

Marcellino Berardo, Ph.D.
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Issues in Language Instruction

A Journal for Practicing and Interpreting Teaching English as an Additional Language

Breaking out of English Language Traps

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Introduction

Teaching is one of the most challenging tasks a person might have; however, witnessing student development also makes it one of the most satisfying professions. Since language is much more than grammar and phonemes, every language teacher should have the opportunity to experience the language in its natural setting to learn the social and cultural aspects that can be missed in the teaching materials. Social and cultural nuances can be essential in understanding languages and recognizing this can shape language teaching.

Professional Background

I am Raquel Ester Teixeira dos Santos, and I have a Bachelor's degree in Mass Communication and Advertisement and a bachelor's degree in Languages (English and Portuguese). I also received my Master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in 2020. I started teaching in 2012, and in 2014, I entered public service, teaching English and Portuguese in public schools for the state of Rio de Janeiro. Later I began teaching at municipal schools. By the time I was accepted as a candidate for the PDPI program, I taught 8th and 9th graders and young adults in high school. Since then, I have gotten a promotion, and I am currently working as an Educational Advisor and teaching children seven to eleven-years-old. In the PDPI program in 2023, I had the opportunity to learn and observe the English language, in a country where it is spoken natively, the U.S.

Every person should feel the necessity to improve herself in all fields of her life. Concerning my professional development, I used to feel uneasy because I thought I needed to improve my performance as a teacher and did not know how. In 2019, my school's former guidance counselor sent me an email explaining what PDPI was and how it could help me develop professionally. I had heard about Brazilian Government programs for English teachers but did not know how they worked. I started to apply nonetheless, but I could not continue due to the Pandemic.

In 2022, the Fulbright team sent me a message to retake the TOEFL test. At first, I thought I would not get the necessary score since I was experiencing COVID symptoms when I took the test. In the end, however, I did get an acceptable score. I applied for and was accepted to participate in the *Programa de Desenvolvimento Profissional para Professores de Língua Inglesa* in the United States of America, which, in English, is commonly called the PDPI Brazilian English Teachers program.

I participated in the program because I needed new strategies to teach my students who are educationally disadvantaged. I teach in two urban schools in different neighborhoods. English proficiency among students is low in Brazil for several reasons such as the absence of correct materials, lack of qualified teachers, low importance given to the subject, and other causes. Although they have studied English in early grades, many students still might be considered beginners even in high school.

My Experience in the PDPI Program

I spent six weeks immersed in the US language and academic culture in Lawrence, Kansas with approximately 40 other English teachers from the state of Rio de Janeiro. I had the opportunity to observe actual English language use and reflect on the importance of fluency concerning accuracy. The program offered four related classes that focused on teaching the English language. Since language is living, it is impossible to consider every aspect of language pedagogy in six weeks; however, the courses allowed us to broaden our teaching knowledge and become more aware of how English is used. The subjects were *Pronunciation Enhancement*, *Communicating in English*, *Technology in EFL Classrooms*, and *Teaching Methods for the EFL Classroom*.

All subjects were important; nevertheless, the two that I thought were most relevant in my teaching reality were *Pronunciation Enhancement* and *Communicating in English*. I learned the importance of “good” pronunciation and the interference of L1 in speech. Indeed, the accent from L1 is part of one’s identity. However, it is unacceptable if it interferes with the other person’s comprehension since the responsibility to be understood is on the speaker.

My participation in the PDPI program helped me realize that pronunciation and communication are not straightforward or standardized, which I observed in the actual language use of English speakers in the U.S. I also changed my perception of the importance of fluency concerning accuracy. I discuss both points below.

Actual Language Use

By coming to the US, I observed how English is used daily, in real life, which differs from the presentation of English in textbooks. Several aspects caught my attention during my time in Lawrence. For instance, seeing people responding to “thank you” with “sure,” “yes,” “no problem,” or just “ok” instead of “you’re welcome” gave me food for thought. I had been teaching that “you’re welcome” is the correct response to “thank you.” Other English courses and schools teach the same way; therefore, when I came across an answer that I had not expected, I realized other nuances I had missed all these years and responses and expressions that were socially different from what I was supposed to learn.

Giving me more food for thought was the actual pronunciation of the letters “t” and “th” in words such as “ten,” “button,” “mountain,” and “three.” Usually, Brazilians have difficulty pronouncing the number *three*. Still, I learned we also have problems pronouncing the allophone of the phoneme /t/ appearing in names and words such as “Burton” [ˈbɜːrən] and “mountain” [ˈmaʊnɪn].

Some English phonemes do not exist in Portuguese; therefore, pronouncing those words remains difficult. As Cheung (2015) stated, “[t]he ‘th’ sounds /θ/ and /ð/ do not occur in Portuguese, which means that Portuguese speakers may commonly use /s/ or /z/ instead.” Brazilians also have problems with the North American English /r/, /l/, and schwa, which made me think we should care about being more precise and better understood to reach our audience. It should be noted that altering pronunciation in these ways to speak English is not a matter of losing identity. One’s identity is still expressed through other aspects of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary use, and cultural effects on discourse. The point here is to emphasize the necessity of clarifying yourself and avoiding misunderstandings. Although important, accuracy is not the only factor in speaking another language. In the next section, I discuss fluency.

While participating in the PDPI program, I also deepened my understanding of how language links to culture. You must know the link to explain it to the students. When studying another language, students must remember that they might learn specific grammar structures; however, people speak the way they want. They use their language and culture in creative ways to make meaning. It can be unpredictable, and the teachers sometimes do not prepare students to face these realities of a living language. No books explain every rule for how speakers use their language and culture for communication. Certain expressions can become conventional, but even these conventional expressions can surprisingly appear. For example, a person might greet someone with “have a good day” and receive the response “have a good one.” That collocation is not often taught at school or in English courses. The expression “have a good one” is informal and can refer not only to having a good day but also to a good morning, afternoon, and evening.

You can also hear short exchanges such as:

Person A: “We are going on vacation tonight.”

Person B: “Oh, that’s good. Have a good one”.

In this case, “have a good one” refers to vacation or a good time. At first, this may appear confusing, but one must be prepared not to understand the literal meaning and not get frustrated; we are not native speakers, and even native speakers might misunderstand some collocations and slang. The same happens in Portuguese. For example, senior citizens in Brazil usually struggle to understand what teenagers say.

When learning a new language, an overwhelming imaginary burden falls on one’s shoulders, which I am calling a *language trap*. I say it is unreal because there is no pressure in most cases, yet the learner feels obliged to understand and speak the target language appropriately. People will ask questions, and the person feels obliged to have the correct answer, primarily because of subtle social pressure. If you are learning English, you must understand and know everything; indeed, this may seem like common sense, yet this perception is a trap that might capture the student and create a lack of confidence. If someone is still facing the learning process and does not understand a word or utterance, that person may feel threatened by the language, understood as social pressure (such as by family, friends, and teachers), and freeze. Thinking carefully, listening to something, and not understanding happens in all languages, even the mother tongue. Several times you may hear something in your native language, but you might not comprehend it for several reasons, such as noise, poor diction, or lack of vocabulary, to name a few reasons.

To illustrate that even native speakers of English do not always understand every word, consider my experience at a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball game. On February 6, 2023, the Kansas Jayhawks played against the Texas Longhorns. Before the match started, they played rap and hip-hop songs loudly. I could not understand all the lyrics. Therefore, I had the idea to ask native English speakers next to me whether they could understand all the lyrics. Many answered that they could not but liked the beat since it helped set a scene for the match. Even native speakers might not understand something in their language, so it is the teachers’ job to explain this phenomenon to the students to prevent future frustration and failure, in other words to prevent students from falling into the language trap.

Fluency, Not Just Accuracy

While participating in the PDPI program, I also had the opportunity to reflect on the purpose of language. Language allows people to comprehend each other; therefore, we as teachers sometimes burden our students to be accurate in the target language instead of caring about fluency. The same phenomenon occurs in our native language. A swath of the Brazilian population makes some grammar mistakes, like “chegar em casa” (to get “in” home) instead of using the correct preposition “a” (to), “chegar a casa” (to get home or to arrive at home). This grammar mistake does not mean people are not fluent in Portuguese. Sometimes it even seems to be more natural to hear someone saying “em” (in) instead of “a.” Almost all Brazilians who read “chegar em casa” would translate it as “to get home” or “arrive at home.” Perhaps this grammar “mistake” is becoming conventional, supporting my earlier point that actual language use reveals creative ways native speakers use language to make meaning.

It does not just happen with Portuguese speakers. Native English speakers also vary their grammar and eventually make grammar mistakes, as in a sign that I saw “it is not *far* sale” instead of “it is not for sale.” To see more grammar mistakes native English speakers make, one only needs to google “common grammar mistakes native English Speakers make.” In our Teaching Methods for the EFL Classroom class, we learned the difference between fluency and accuracy. Indeed, precise grammar matters; however, it might also prevent English language learners from breaking out of the language trap and using the language freely.

Conclusion

The PDPI program is designed to help Brazilian English teachers continue their professional development. While at the University of Kansas, I was exposed to English as North Americans use it. My observations affected my teaching ability. I used to emphasize writing and vocabulary in class and overestimated accuracy, sometimes correcting right on the spot; however, since I returned from the USA, I have been focusing on speaking and listening. I noticed more engagement and acceptance by the students, who may still feel challenged in comprehension, but now engage in healthy competition in the classroom.

Since the PDPI program, I have created a warm environment for learning, and in my first classes, I avoid feedback or checking mistakes. I divide my class into modules. I present the content using audio, texts, or pictures to the students; after that, I give some exercises referring to the previous activity to engage the students. When they are ready to answer, I encourage them to speak in English although they still mix Portuguese with English due to a lack of vocabulary. However, that is my checkpoint. I do not correct everyone, but I correct some mistakes I hear. I write on the board and explain the content using what I heard as a hook and compass. Also, I have been sharing what I learned and exercises I create with my coworkers.

In my personal life, my observations affected my ability to use English. I feel more confident than before. No one knows everything, especially when this “everything” relates to language. Imagine someone from the 16th century, a native English speaker, contacting an English native speaker from the 21st century. Both would have hindrances in understanding each other. Non-native speakers should not feel anguish for lapsing in their language skills. Language exists to bridge, not set us apart.

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Teaching about Brazilian and American Stereotypes in a High School English Class

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Introduction

I am Francileide Santos, and I teach English at a public high school in a city called Nova Iguaçu, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I graduated in Letras-Português/Inglês (Portuguese and English Language and Literature) in 2007 from the now defunct *Universidade Gama Filho*. I am currently attending a specialization course in Applied Linguistics—English as a Foreign Language at *Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro* (The State University of Rio de Janeiro), which is a great opportunity to improve my knowledge in the field of second language teaching, and it also will help me analyze my teaching methods, making learning easier for my students.

After graduating in 2007, I taught English at private language schools for students of all ages and levels. Since 2010, I have been teaching English to high school students. I went from working at language schools, which students attend because they want or need to know the language, to teaching in public schools, where it has always been difficult to teach English because the majority of students are not interested in learning the language. They always ask why they must study English since they believe they are not going to travel anywhere because they are poor and come from a public-school background. This has been so frustrating! I have always thought about what I could do so my students could be more interested in my classes, learn a new language, and be curious not only about countries such as the United States or England, but the whole world.

In 2019, I started working at an intercultural school called CIEP 117 Carlos Drummond de Andrade Brasil – Estados Unidos (United States), in Comendador Soares, Nova Iguaçu in the state of Rio de Janeiro, which is a full-time bilingual public school. In this high school, students are taught in two languages, a native one and English. In contrast to other public schools in the state of Rio de Janeiro, it is a full-time school where students have twelve English classes a week, along with some other school subjects in English such as mathematics and geography. They also have a subject in English called ‘Projeto de Integração Global’ (Global Integration Project), in which the students are expected to discuss various topics and present speeches in English. Additionally, the students are supposed to have all four English skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and at the end of the course students take a test that corresponds to level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR).

Working in education, I must continue to stay in touch with whatever could interest my students to keep them motivated to learn a new language and different cultures. That is why I decided to apply for the PDPI Program (Programa de Desenvolvimento Profissional para Professores de Língua Inglesa nos EUA), which is a six-week program for English teachers who work at public schools from all over the country, sponsored by the Government of Brazil - Ministry of Education, Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (Coordination of Higher Education Personnel Improvement) and the Comissão para o Intercâmbio Educacional entre os Estados Unidos da América e o Brasil (Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange between the United States of America and Brazil), with funding for administration provided by the U.S. Embassy in Brazil.

To apply for the program, teachers must first be civil/public servants and have worked at public schools for at least three years. Then, we must send all required documents for analysis and, finally, we must take an English proficiency

exam. Depending on our score, we can attend courses at an intermediate level to improve English proficiency or advanced level to continue to develop pedagogical methodologies. After going through the whole process, I was able to attend the advanced level course. And so my adventure began.

My Experience in the PDPI Program at the University of Kansas

I went to the University of Kansas (KU) in Lawrence, Kansas, which is located in the middle of the United States, where I took a six-week course in the PDPI program along with 42 other teachers who work in public schools in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The 2023 PDPI program at KU consisted of four classes: *Teaching Methods*, *Technology in the Classroom*, *Pronunciation Lab*, and *Communicating in English*. All classes were very helpful and inspiring. During the classes, we were able to learn different tools to implement in our work as teachers and share our experiences with our colleagues.

In the teaching methods class with instructor Carolyn Heacock, for instance, we focused on different aspects of teaching English as a second language and the problems faced by teachers of English, such as managing large class sizes, lack of resources, and a lack of student motivation. In addition, it was a great opportunity to review and discuss some topics related to the course, receive lessons and activities that can be adapted to our contexts, and develop a portfolio of lesson plans to be used in our classrooms. See Appendix I for a description of a lesson plan.

In another class, *Technology in the Classroom* with instructor Marina Greene, we were introduced to different types of educational technology. For instance, we learned about quizzes and game apps, resource sites for teachers, and presentation technology like podcasting, which was one of our assignments during the PDPI program. During classes, we could share the technological resources we already used with our colleagues, as well as practice using them to check which ones can be applied to our teaching contexts. Moreover, we had the opportunity to present pros, cons, and applications of apps and other resource sites for English classes.

The pronunciation lab classes with Dr. Marcellino Berardo were focused on Brazilian teachers' English pronunciation where we had some exercises to increase awareness of American English pronunciation. It was important to recognize some difficulties that we teachers may have in pronouncing certain sounds such as the vowel sounds in the words *bad* and *bed* and how difficult it can be to teach these types of sounds to our students. During classes, we also discussed how to adapt what we learned to our own teaching context.

We also took a course called *Communicating in English* with Dr. Marta Carvajal Regidor, where we focused on increasing our communication fluency in English through the lens of American culture. During classes, we were able to practice the target language in conversations in English, including some techniques such as turn-taking, giving opinions, agreeing/disagreeing, and interrupting. We also learned and discussed different aspects of American culture, contrasting and comparing them with Brazilian culture.

Furthermore, there were many other different PDPI program components such as lectures, local school observations, KU class visits, volunteer work (which was mandatory), a basketball game, dinner with an American family, mentoring, and two school trips. Although these activities were important to improving as a teacher, there was no time to explore, go further and try to make friends and connections. For example, if I had the time, I would have gone to Ecumenical Campus Ministries more frequently. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving KU students and the Lawrence community that offers a number of programs such as Tai Chi and kickboxing classes.

Before arriving at KU, I had some information about the university and the city through websites. But when I got there, I noticed how different it was from what I had imagined it would be. I had the idea that I would work a lot, of course, but I had no idea how it would go. I did not even think about the weather, for example. It was winter, and I was coming from summer in a hot city. I did not realize how the cold might impact my studies. I can say it was hard to get used to the weather, but I managed well. I already had some idea about what kind of classes I would attend, but it was a surprise when I heard from Marina Greene that I would have to produce a podcast. I was worried about it because I had never thought I would do something like this, but it was a great experience, indeed.

While working on all the classes, one class in particular, *Communicating in English*, interested me. We had a final presentation on any aspect of American culture, and I was inspired to do some research into Brazilian and American stereotypes along with my classmate and coworker Julio César de Moraes Alves, who works at *Colégio Estadual Gua-*

dalajara (Guadalajara State Middle/High School), in Duque de Caxias in the state of Rio de Janeiro. This project, to create a unit to teach culture in my English language classes, was an important experience I had in the PDPI program.

During one of Dr. Carvajal Regidor's classes, we discussed differences and similarities between Brazil and the U.S., comparing and contrasting, agreeing, and disagreeing with each other. Then, Dr. Carvajal Regidor gave us a survey asking for our opinions about Americans and Brazilians. While I was answering it, I thought how interested in that topic my students would be. In particular, Brazilian high school students are curious about how different Americans and Brazilians can be. Moreover, they think of Americans, for instance, as only eating junk food, all being rich, and not being friendly. For this reason, having a class about stereotypes would be interesting to my students.

With this in mind, a lesson about stereotypes will help students understand how stereotypes can lead to prejudice in individuals and groups, as well as help them recognize stereotypical attitudes in themselves and others. The lesson would also help students become aware of the negative consequences of prejudice and stereotypes. This type of unit content is very important for teenagers, so they can become critical thinkers and respectful to people in general. For this reason, I spent time working on lessons about stereotypes during the PDPI program.

A Description of a Lesson on Stereotypes

This sample lesson on stereotypes can be taught in one class, depending on how much time and how many students the instructor has to work with. First, have students think about how Americans are seen culturally. Then, ask your students to answer prepared questions about American people with just one word. They should complete sentences such as "Americans are...", "Americans like...", "Americans don't like...", as well as indicating what they think Americans believe, worry about, and value the most. This activity can be adapted and done in many different ways (See Appendices I & II). Next, ask your students to do the same thing but now about Brazilians. When they are done, collect the surveys and keep them.

After that, explain what a stereotype is, show the video *The Simpsons Travel to Rio*¹, which is available on YouTube, and have students discuss it. This episode is full of stereotypes about Brazilians. It is important to ask them how they feel about it and show that some attitudes can be hurtful. Even if some say that stereotypes are just a joke and others do not say anything at all, students should understand and be aware that they are being stereotyped.

To conclude the lesson, have students brainstorm ways to avoid stereotypes. If the class is more advanced and more time is available, you can scaffold and ask students to prepare presentations about how to avoid stereotypes. Also, the surveys can be used for students to discuss the results. The results can be shown visually in charts or numerically as percentages to allow students to work on ways to present data.

How the PDPI Program Influenced My English Language Instruction at My Home Institution

While studying and immersing myself in the English language in the United States and since returning to Brazil, I have been thinking a lot about how I can improve my classes and get more student engagement. The unit on American and Brazilian stereotypes is one example. Another way to achieve this is to share with my students what life in the U.S. is *really* like and if North Americans in fact speak English as shown in the textbooks.

One aspect about life in the U.S. that would interest my students is how teenagers can be independent at a very young age. They can drive to school by themselves as well as live with roommates. These things do not happen with Brazilian teenagers. In addition, Brazilian students are always interested in actual spoken English in the U.S. One example that we often hear is, "have a good one." This expression is not found in textbooks.

Therefore, experiencing life at KU in Lawrence, Kansas gave me tools to plan my classes in an appropriate way, teach vocabulary as it is used in a real-life environment, help students with the correct pronunciation of the words, and master the most important aspect of teaching, lesson planning. Since we worked with great teachers, we had the opportunity to share ideas of classes and activities to adapt to our context.

Another aspect from the PDPI program that inspired me to work with my students was a school visit. I had the opportunity to be in a public high school in Lawrence, Kansas and learn how the school operates. I also had the opportunity to observe a creative writing class. There were about 20 students in the classroom. I noticed that there was a lot

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XoBU_raFXs&t=28s

of information about the teacher on the classroom walls and on the bulletin board. It made me realize that displaying information around the classroom was a good way to gain my students' trust in me and have a friendly class environment.

Unfortunately, I do not have my own classroom in the school where I work, but upon returning home, I had a class in which I introduced myself and shared with my students a little about my life and interests. I showed them they can trust me, and I think it worked. They were comfortable talking about themselves, it helps to have a good and respectful environment. In addition, telling students about the differences between the North American and Brazilian public schools made them try harder and consider a better future.

Improvements or Changes to the Program

Without a doubt, PDPI is a great program for Brazilian teachers, and it would be wonderful if all the teachers had the opportunity to improve their language skills, learn and experience American culture, review interesting pedagogical topics, and exchange ideas with colleagues. Unfortunately, it was a short period of time and there were so many program commitments.

Six weeks is simply not enough time to attend four different classes, all day long. The one afternoon when we did not have classes, we attended lectures. Even though the professors said they would not assign much homework, there was always something to prepare or read. Of course, it is important to acquire more knowledge, but one of the most important aspects when living in another country for a short time is exploring places and being in touch with local people whenever possible.

It is a shame that I missed some cultural aspects that I could have experienced and shared with my students. For example, I unfortunately had to miss a Mardi Gras parade that I wanted to see. In my opinion, the schedule should be organized according to cultural aspects. One suggestion is for classes to be from 8:00am to 2:00pm. Thus, we could have enough time for assignments and exploring. It is something to think about, so teachers can work beyond books.

Simple changes to the program can benefit teachers to take better advantage of opportunities to learn about the culture and interact not only in the classroom but also outside of it. I actually missed interacting outside the classroom, trying to talk to local people, not only when buying something, but trying to make friends to practice speaking the language as it really is used.

My comments are about the amount of time we had. My overall opinion of the PDPI program, again, is that it was an excellent opportunity to engage with American culture, the English language, and to enhance teachers' careers.

Conclusion

Having this experience in the PDPI program made me think about how I can further improve my career and help my students be more involved in my classes. Studying, engaging in professional development, and being in contact with North American language and culture are some examples of what teachers must continue to do in order to develop themselves professionally. Teachers must always look for some new tools to embrace our work.

I intend to follow up on what I learned from my experience in the PDPI program. I was exposed to many different technological tools. There were also amazing lesson plans shared during our classes, and I gained much from the lectures and presentations. I now feel I have many resources to use in my classes, and I am sure my students will benefit from all this content.

Recently back from the PDPI program, I am currently attending a Specialization Course in Applied Linguistics – *English as a Foreign Language* at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) for my professional enrichment in the second language. Later, I intend to enroll in master's and doctoral courses. It would be great if I could take these courses in the US because of the importance of immersion in the language and culture when it comes to studying the English language.

Appendix I: A Description of a Lesson on Stereotypes

This sample lesson on stereotypes can be taught in one class depending on how much time and how many students the instructor has to work with. The lesson is outlined below.

Step 1: Have students think about how Americans are seen culturally. Ask students to give one-word answers to the series of questions about Americans (See Appendix II). This activity can be adapted and done in many different ways.

Step 2: Ask your students to answer the same series of questions about Brazilians (Appendix II). When they are done, collect the surveys, and keep them.

Step 3: Explain what a stereotype is.

Step 4: Show the video *The Simpsons Travel to Rio*² that is available on YouTube, and have students discuss it. This episode is full of stereotypes about Brazilians. It is important to ask students how they feel about the stereotypes and to point out that some attitudes can be hurtful.

Step 5: To conclude the lesson, have students brainstorm ways to avoid stereotypes. If the class is more advanced and more time is available, you can scaffold activities to help students prepare presentations about how to avoid stereotypes. Also, the results of the surveys can serve as discussion points. The results can be shown as charts or percentages to give students an opportunity to work with data in English.

Step 5 (Variation): Distribute the survey results from the beginning of the lesson to the students. Allow time to discuss the results. Do students see evidence of stereotyping? Ask students to brainstorm ways to avoid stereotypes and have them present their ideas to the class.

² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XoBU_raFXs&t=28s

Appendix II: Questions about American and Brazilian People

Directions: Think about how Americans and Brazilians are portrayed through media and complete the statements with one word.

- Americans are _____.
- They like _____.
- They don't like _____.
- Americans are worried about _____.
- The most important thing to most Americans is _____.
- Brazilians are _____.
- They like _____.
- They don't like _____.
- Brazilians are worried about _____.
- The most important thing to most Brazilians is _____.

Issues in Language Instruction

A Journal for Practicing and Interpreting Teaching English as an Additional Language

An Immersive Learning Experience for Teachers and the Change of Teaching Practices

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Introduction

This essay is nothing less than a happy result of an enriching experience the authors had during a short training program in early 2023. The program took place at the University of Kansas and granted the opportunity of learning more about teaching methods, technology, phonetics and pronunciation, and cultural interaction.

We would like to start this essay by introducing ourselves so that our readers understand a little of our background and the path that led us here. We met during the PDPI Program in 2023 and spent a total of seven weeks sharing a room, ideas, laughter, difficulties and thus, becoming real friends. But our life stories before that January night when we first saw each other happened miles apart and under different circumstances.

Inspired by a teacher from her school days, Laila wanted to help others to learn more and motivate others to have access to a new culture, knowledge, and perspectives without being limited by the language. This is why she became a teacher. Currently, she is a college professor and high school teacher in the state of Rio de Janeiro, where she teaches all levels of English at college and basic English in high school.

Professional development is what keeps her going. This is why the PDPI program was such a good fit for her. Although it seemed so unreachable at first due to personal insecurities, the program offered the real-life experience she lacked, where her theoretical knowledge could finally be put into practice and culture would be experienced first-hand. The program offered a course on pronunciation, communication, teaching methodologies, and technology as well as opportunities for socializing. This would help Laila turn her classroom into a fruitful learning environment and would be a remarkable first experience abroad.

Kathia always loved the English language, especially music from the U.S. and Great Britain. She started studying the language at age 13 and never stopped. Inspired by the idea of passing this passion on and granting others the opportunity of learning a second language, she went to college to be a Portuguese and English teacher. Since then, she has kept on studying to improve her teaching skills. She started teaching English in private language schools and then in public schools. She also participated in professional development programs, including the 2014 PDPI program at the University of Delaware and, more recently, the 2023 PDPI program at the University of Kansas. Currently she is studying to get a master's degree and intends to do research in the field of English teaching and learning.

Today, Kathia teaches at two different public schools in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Her students are middle and high schoolers, and she also teaches adults in the state program *Educação de Jovens e Adultos*, which freely translates as Education for Youth and Adults. It is an opportunity for older students to return to their studies or to continue their

studies. The lessons are at a basic level, and the classes have an average of 20 to 40 students. Since there are so many students in the classroom, it is difficult to develop listening and speaking activities with them. The lessons end up focusing more on grammar, vocabulary, and reading. Reading is especially emphasized in high school classes because of its relevance to university entrance exams and other high stakes tests.

We applied for this PDPI program in 2019 before the coronavirus pandemic. Although it was a great opportunity to enrich our personal and professional experience, it was not easy to think about leaving our home country and family for six weeks. The anxiety and mixed feelings were difficult to handle. When the pandemic came, everything stopped, and we had to wait. On the one hand, it was a relief not having to handle this soon and, on the other hand, it was sad to put this dream on hold. It took so long that we thought this ship had sunk. Fortunately, we learned that the program was going to happen. We could dream and be anxious again over planning the trip. But feelings set aside, the will to live this experience one more time in another U.S. state and at another university and to have the opportunity to learn more and further develop professionally was more important.

Our Experience in the PDPI Program at the University of Kansas

A lot was going through our minds before going into the PDPI program. Kathia had done this before, but for Laila, being in an English-speaking country was a completely new experience, and doing so in the winter was another scary element to add to everything else such as leaving family behind, facing insecurities, and spending money at an unfavorable exchange rate. Although there was a lot going on and much too quickly, it all felt natural somehow.

We did not expect as much support as we had; the infrastructure offered by the program was beyond imagination. Our living arrangements, the campus beauty, and how much we felt like any other Kansas University student were joyful surprises that added to the incredible lessons and teachers, which made our goodbyes hard and filled with tears and mixed feelings.

It was impossible not to take every moment available to explore the campus, in the snow or under the sun, with the group or by ourselves, simply to gather our thoughts and feel the sadness when missing our families was too hard to handle. The daily scenario offered by the jaw-dropping KU campus and charming town of Lawrence drew us to explore not only the nightlife, but to go on outings, picnics, visit lakes, museums and get to know more of the history of the United States, more specifically the Midwest and the struggles of the school system against racism. In particular, we were interested in the management of resources to provide proper education for all races, the reality of teachers when teaching in the state of Kansas, and how similar our challenges are. The program made it possible for us to meet with school and college staff, visit school sites, and ask as much as our curiosity demanded.

Although Kathia had already had the PDPI Program experience years before, this was now completely different due to the elapse of nine years and a lot of major changes in life and her career. The University of Kansas was a happy surprise. Although it was not possible for the participants to choose the university, the choice could not have been better. The teachers and the classes were brilliant and enriched our teaching knowledge. The most important thing was that we not only had methodology, pronunciation, technology, and communication classes, the teachers really wanted to listen to our teaching reality in Brazil and took our reality into consideration when designing their lessons. We learned how to put new methods into practice and how to adapt them to our classrooms and students.

What can we say about the friends we made? We will always remember the Brazilians, Americans, Kuwaitis, South Africans, Costa Ricans, Afghans, younger and older people of all genders. Some were people we stopped on the street and started a conversation with, others we “begged” into recording a podcast with us. In class and outside, we learned more than idioms or pronunciation, we learned that there is much more when it comes to language learning. For example, culture involves unseen or invisible aspects. We experienced that in class and on the street with our new friends, Uber drivers, restaurant servers, and in our everyday interactions.

These cultural interactions opened our eyes to a new kind of English teaching we never really paid attention to. Until this point, teaching culture in the Brazilian EFL classroom was limited to the visible elements of Edward Hall’s well-known cultural iceberg analogy. Now that we have lived and discussed in depth the invisible and deep cultural elements in our communication classes, we know and feel more comfortable exploring culture on another level, so our students not only have deeper insights into other cultures, but also their own. Hopefully, this kind of language instruction will lead to more respect and appreciation.

The university also provided important moments outside the classroom. We had the opportunity to engage in volunteer work, which was a rich and beautiful experience. Kathia went to the Ecumenical Campus Ministries (ECM) veggie lunch. ECM is a place where everyone is welcome. They serve a vegetarian lunch every Thursday, and we went there to help prepare and serve the food. It is a very warm space surrounded by music and books. Every week they offer workshops about interesting and important topics, cultural events, and fun events, like karaoke nights. Laila also did volunteer work, but at the Jubilee Cafe, where socially struggling people would go to have a decent breakfast served at tables, in a warm place and with a delicious menu. This is a place where the reality beyond the stereotypical American dream could be seen, and we were given the chance to help provide at least one actual meal in a day for many people.

We also visited different cities in Kansas, like Kansas City, for some shopping and Topeka to visit the Kansas State Capitol building and hear about the political organization of the state. We went up to the Capitol dome to see a fantastic view of the city and face the fear of being in such a high place. We also went to Monroe School, the national historical site of the *Brown v. Board of Education* case.¹ We learned a lot about segregation and the Black children's struggle to have the right to study.

The work in class and homework kept us busy, but the group seized every moment to walk around the city and experience the cold weather, which was quite different from the weather in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Going downtown, taking the bus, walking around the campus were all amazing moments. There is no doubt that the Brazilians in the group and the friends we made are for life. This is what the PDPI experience can provide us: six weeks living in the same place, going to the same classes, laughing and crying together, and counting on each other. It connected us in a particular way forever. We will always have Lawrence and the University of Kansas in common.

How the PDPI Program Influenced our English Language Instruction at our Home Institutions

After such immersive learning, it is impossible for us, as teachers, to keep doing things the same way in our classrooms. This experience has changed the way we see our students and the teaching and learning process. The methodology lessons taught us much more than new concepts. They taught us to look at our students as human beings, with needs and expectations and to listen to them, engage in their lives, and let them see us teachers as human beings too, with flaws and personal lives. Although sometimes it is difficult to handle this in large classes, this perspective changed our teaching. We learned that if we cannot reach all students, to reach at least one of them and make a change in that student's life is something we should be proud of.

The technology classes provided new information, too. We were exposed to several technological tools and activities online and offline, since not all teachers have access to the Internet in our classrooms. That way multiple materials can be developed and shared with our peers. Every week we had the opportunity to research and share new websites and apps that provide games, quizzes, and activities we can use with our students. The Education technology classes helped us plan and record a podcast with three guests: a KU student, a KU professor, and a member of the KU International Short Programs staff. With the podcast, we got to know more about the similarities and differences of high school life and university life on campus, as well as the reality of a Brazilian professor living and working at an American university. It was an amazing experience to record the podcast, something we had never done before. The campus sound studio structure was amazing, with soundproof booths, computers, microphones, and we could count on the staff to edit the podcast with high quality. After recording the podcasts, we could share them with our teacher and colleagues. Each group thought about a different and interesting topic to be discussed and recorded.

The pronunciation classes were also very useful to our practice too, especially in making us better speakers of the English language and enriching our lessons as well. When our students realize we really know what we are talking about and speak the language well, our credibility is enhanced. The instructor was very thoughtful and provided individual attention to help us improve. We had a wonderful time learning more about pronunciation topics, presenting in class, and mainly practicing together.

The communication classes were remarkable mainly in giving us the understanding of the concept of deep culture. We have always included cultural aspects in our classes, but the discussion about a deeper side of culture opened our eyes to the importance of carrying this knowledge to our classrooms. We were presented with the well-known concept

¹ *Brown v. Board of Education* is a U.S. Supreme Court case that ruled that racial segregation was not constitutional in public schools.

of a “cultural iceberg.” Normally, what we used to teach was the visible part of the iceberg such as age, clothes, gender, language, behavior, physical characteristics, as well as special dates typical of English-speaking countries, like Valentine’s Day and Saint Patrick’s Day. We learned, however, that it is even more important to discuss the “hidden” parts of the iceberg, what is called the deep culture, such as family traditions, political and social issues, religion, beliefs, racism, and all types of prejudice. We now more fully understand that there is so much more to discuss and understand about cultural differences than what we were teaching. Due to space limitations, we do not elaborate on deep culture here. For more information, the reader is referred to Hall (1976) and the discussion of Hall in Shaules (2019).

Suggestions for the Program

As said before, PDPI is an incredible program that allows us to live the experience of being a student at a North American university along with having an amazing cultural immersion experience and, more importantly, improving our teaching skills. The suggestions that could be given to make a change in the program are about the tight schedule. Understandably, there is so much to be done in so little time, but we would have liked to enjoy and learn even more about a place or an event on our own. We did not seem to have enough time to do so, or when we had the time, we did not have the energy.

This change would improve the program in the sense that the participants would be able to really experience being part of the university and the city, being able to immerse even more in the culture, get to know more people, practice more English outside the classroom and, consequently, enrich our vocabulary, pronunciation, and cultural knowledge to pass it on to our students.

Conclusion

At this point, we believe our teaching has been transformed by the valuable learning experience we went through. We feel forever changed by the PDPI program. We are now considering more professional development ideas, including contacting the U.S. State Department Regional English Language Office, the Fulbright program, and other organizations. In 2023, Kathia enrolled in a master’s degree program, and Laila started on a Ph.D. degree. After the PDPI program, both research projects will certainly be influenced by what was seen, heard and experienced.

In terms of language improvement, Laila is about to get her TESOL Certificate from Arizona State University and was selected as a trainer by *World Learning*.² Kathia definitely felt a significant increase in her ability to speak English as a second language, which will help her in the classroom as a teacher and in her research in the master’s degree program.

Not only do we offer our gratitude to all involved in the PDPI program, from the ones we did not have the pleasure of thanking, such as the many administrative employees who dealt with all the bureaucracy (Brazilian and American) to the staff that helped us on a daily basis indulging our doubts, and listening to our victories and losses. We also thank both governments and hope that they keep valuing us, English teachers, and more importantly that they keep valuing the teaching and learning of English as a way for us to help our students to change their perspective in life.

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² An organization associated with the American Embassy and National Geographic to help English teachers around the world improve their language and teaching skills. <https://learn.eltngl.com/>

Issues in Language Instruction

A Journal for Practicing and Interpreting Teaching English as an Additional Language

A Journey of Self-Improvement with the PDPI Program

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Introduction

As an educator, I have been teaching English since 2008 in divergent contexts, such as private English schools, public schools, private schools, and private tutorials. I have a degree in Language Arts specializing in Portuguese and English from UNISUAM – Centro Universitario Augusto Motta (UNISUAM – the University Center Augusto Motta). My first experience as an educator was with high school and junior high groups in a private school and some months later in an English school. Later, in 2011, I started working simultaneously in public schools at the elementary and junior high levels, which constitute most classes I currently have.

From 2016 to 2021, I felt I needed to take a break from teaching in private schools and English language schools. Although I kept teaching in public school, I realized that I needed more English language practice, or I would lose the language. Consequently, I decided to teach in English language schools again. I worked with groups from all levels, which allowed me to speak English almost full time throughout the day.

At this point I realized I wanted not only to improve my speaking skills but I also wanted to improve as an educator, more generally. Undoubtedly, the PDPI program was one of those chances. It offered the possibility of being immersed in an English-speaking country, learning about the culture, improving my English, and enhancing my skills through academic studies. Hence, I decided to participate in the selection, and, as a result, I was approved.

The schools where I have taught for the last 10 years are mostly located in poor urban communities known as *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro. It is relevant to mention this fact since the social condition of my students limits them in terms of access to different cultures. Moreover, the number of students per class varies from 28 to 35, and I teach 11 groups in the same school.

My main goals with my students are, firstly, to get them excited about English. Pushing the boundaries of shyness is of great importance. The more students feel comfortable with a new language and comprehend its applicability, the more they will be open minded to anything they need to learn and be less reactive to what might look difficult at first sight. That said, what is emphasized during my lessons at public schools is vocabulary, especially words and phrases concerning social interactions, personal interests, and global language used in small talk, short trips, and food.

My Experience in the PDPI Program at the University of Kansas

I have never traveled abroad before participating in the PDPI program. According to my own research on Kansas, I expected to find nice people who would be fans of sports and the University. I also expected a city where I could find a peaceful environment provided with services that worked well. Moreover, my research revealed that winter weather in Kansas can be very cold, which did concern me. Once I got to Lawrence, Kansas, my expectations were confirmed. For instance, people are fanatics for basketball, albeit I had not been aware of how big an NCAA game is. The city is also full of cultural attractions beyond sports, and the public transportation worked much better than I had expected.

As a PDPI participant, I attended short courses on teaching methodology, culture, communication, and pronunciation. In each course, different activities were developed such as group work activities, brainstorming about teaching

strategies and approaches, lesson planning, podcasts, short presentations, classroom observations and demonstrations of lessons. Through theory and practice, I was able to open my mind to self-assessment, work on my flaws, learn from the teachers and other colleagues, understand different points of view and, as a result, improve my abilities.

Non-campus activities, such as volunteer work, were also a point of considerable importance regarding social interaction with native speakers. For example, I helped people prepare food which was served for free to anyone who was in need or just wanted to get to know more about the nonprofit organization. PDPI participants also went on outings such as the trip to downtown Topeka, the state capitol of Kansas, and the museum *Brown v. Board of Education*, where I was able to learn more about the history of Kansas.¹ The PDPI program also included lectures by education experts on campus, and these were paramount to guiding me to a better understanding of how the educational system in the US works and consequently allowed me to compare it with the Brazilian school system. As far as I could see, all activities contributed positively to my personal growth, and I am very grateful to have taken part as much as I could.

As a result of my experiences, I was able to make a number of observations of how English is used in the U.S. Some examples include the dynamic way people communicate on a daily basis, including idioms, how North Americans respond to basic greetings, and how people can ask for help. I also observed some unique aspects of local culture such as the sales tax system.

When it comes to language pedagogy, the lessons I attended were incredibly relevant to me. I learned some teaching strategies, improved my way of working in groups with my students, worked on my classroom management to give students clearer instructions toward a specific goal, and learned to use a variety of activities to build a strong classroom community. I was also able to identify specific vocabulary that I can use in my own lessons.

One important experience I had in the PDPI program was a presentation I gave with colleagues contrasting U.S. and Brazilian culture. Differences included greetings, food, weather, tipping and payment methods, school systems, measurements, and sports. These topics will fascinate my students and that is why I intend to incorporate them in my language instruction.

How the PDPI program Influenced my English Language Instruction at my Home Institution

The PDPI program had a great influence on the way I teach. I can now answer some questions with more certainty concerning how people actually use English in the U.S. For example, when asked by students how to respond to “what’s up?” or “how’s it going?” now I can give my students an answer based on authentic English usage. Moreover, I now know that formulaic greetings such as “how are you?” are more of a conversation starter. The person does not actually expect a detailed response to the question.

To be immersed in a culturally different environment and to communicate and interact well reinforced my own beliefs on how important it is to have solid use of social skills, especially related to respecting personal space. For example, physical distance between conversation partners varies from culture to culture. In the U.S., North Americans tend to keep a greater social distance from their conversation partners than Brazilians do. Therefore, respecting personal space in the U.S. requires more physical distance than in Brazil.

Vocabulary is another aspect of language that I was able to develop along with pronunciation and rhythm. With a wider range of vocabulary, I now can speak more fluently and understand better since I did not know many words before participating in the PDPI program. In addition, I am now more aware of how to speak with an English rhythm, emphasize specific words, and use thought groups. This has made me a better English teacher. For example, when students try to read word by word separately and sound out all the phonemes of every word, afraid to make mistakes, I tell them that grouping words together brings naturalness to speech. This point is important to address in class because students often complain about the speed of the listening activities. For example, my students tend to listen for individual words such as “going” and “to” for the future tense. However, North American English speakers group these words together and pronounce them as “gonna.” Grouping these words together and reducing the forms from “going to” to “gonna” gives the perception of fast speech, and is more natural sounding to English speakers in the U.S. It is important to help students work on contextualized pronunciation and use thought groups to prevent them from sounding robotic.

¹ *Brown v. Board of Education* was a 1954 supreme court case that made racial segregation in US public schools illegal.

Thanks to the courses in methodology and technology in education, we learned that some approaches are important, like splitting the class into groups for warm up activities (such as memory games) and giving instructions to students before delivering handouts. This improved my classroom management during lessons.

I now use much more technology in my instruction. I now use technology to develop quizzes and crossword puzzles. I also use Google Drive and I record podcasts. Another software program I use is Kahoot, which is a fun gaming program to help students review vocabulary and grammar.

Improvements or Changes to the Program

As far as I could see, the program does not need any improvement. Perhaps, if more weeks were provided, I would have had more chances to interact with native and international speakers of English and improve my own English proficiency skills. After all, practice makes perfect.

Conclusion

In conclusion, everything I have learned from the PDPI program enriched my soul and already made me a better teacher and human being. I definitely have plans to return a second time for professional growth; I have a lot of room for improvement. But that is not all. I am conscious of the responsibility I have as a teacher to be committed to my ongoing development. Having said that, I intend to put into practice everything I acquired during the program. Moreover, I will seek other programs of improvement for teachers and possibly get a master's degree.

Brazil is definitely not an easy place for teachers to make a living. I hope that professional development opportunities such as the PDPI program will help me advance in my career so that I can work more comfortably and fewer hours a day, which will give me time to create world-class lessons for my students.

Issues in Language Instruction

A Journal for Practicing and Interpreting Teaching English as an Additional Language

PDPI Changed My Personal and Professional Life

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On My Way to Being an English Teacher

A quote attributed to the French chemist, Antoine Lavoisier, is “nothing is created, nothing is lost, everything changes.” This quote characterizes my experience in the PDPI program at the University of Kansas in January and February 2023.

I studied English when I was just a teenager in a public school in Brazil. I enjoyed learning what was new and interesting, but I did not have much money to study at a university like many English teachers did. It would cost a lot, and my father worked hard just to give us food and a basic education.

When I started to work, the first thing I did was to apply to a university. I spent all the money I had to study, and I succeeded. After almost a year and a half, I found a better job which allowed me to graduate with no worries. At that point, I was working in a multinational corporation and using my English. But soon, I became a mother and my priorities changed.

It is difficult to be a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister, a housewife and still find time to work and earn money. I was 32 years old when I had my son. He was premature and had to be in an intensive care unit for 50 long days. By devoting so many hours to the multinational corporation, I missed my son’s first word and first steps. At that point, I decided to apply to be an English language teacher. It was the best decision for me.

Applying to the PDPI Program

However, after 10 years teaching English at a public elementary and high school, in Duque de Caxias, Rio de Janeiro, I felt like time had stopped. I was no longer progressing as a professional. This was when I became interested in the PDPI Program. Was it possible to go to the US? Was my English good enough? Did I have the TOEFL scores? Could it really happen? The answer “no” came too quickly to my questions. I had to believe in myself.

Unfortunately, in 2020, the COVID-19 virus was spreading and the whole world stopped, including the PDPI selection process. I believed that it was the end, but in 2022, I received an email informing me that they were re-opening the program. Fortunately, I had all the support that I needed from my family, friends, and coworkers. Even the new Director of my school supported my decision. To my surprise, I received the scholarship. It was just like a dream, and I only woke up when I put my feet on the campus of the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas, USA.

Participating in the PDPI Program

In this program, I studied Communicating in English and learned more about American culture and the importance of being understood. It’s all about communication. In my teaching methodology class, I learned about how to write for learning, how to do free writing, how to engage students, how to plan, how to help students build the right habits and a lot more. I also took a pronunciation class and focused on stressing the right syllable in content words and the rhythm of spoken English. In the technology class, I recorded my first podcast, and I am sure I will record more podcasts.

PDPI allowed me to visit a college, go to a basketball game, meet with a mentor, have dinner with an American family, take a tour of the state capitol of Kansas in Topeka, and learn more about US history.

PDPI was an amazing and unique experience for me. I was a dreamer. I put my dream in a hidden place in my heart and now my dream was coming true. The caterpillar was getting a chance to turn into a butterfly. Am I an expert in English now? No, but because of my English classes at the University of Kansas and my experience living in North American culture, I had the opportunity to study hard in an English-speaking country and I improved my English proficiency. Kansas has a special place in my heart!

How the PDPI Program Changed My English Language Instruction

The PDPI program changed my English language instruction in so many ways. After living in the US and studying for 180 hours in only 6 weeks, I understand that to learn we have to continue to challenge ourselves professionally to create better activities and lesson plans, so they will be more attractive and engaging to our students.

I also prepare for my classes differently now. I used to plan only one activity for class, but now I have at least two or three lesson plans, one of which is always a group activity. It is very important to be prepared because our students notice this and realize that they are important and that there is a purpose.

PDPI changed my mind and my actions in the classroom and the results are for the better. Now I have hope in education again. I was once burned out from teaching for a decade at a public elementary and high school, and now I am a rejuvenated EFL professional.

Suggestions for the PDPI Program

Unfortunately, PDPI is only a six-week program. It went by very quickly. Even though it was tightly scheduled and in the last few days I was very tired, if I could apply to the PDPI again, I would. However, I hope this program can make some changes. I understand the need to complete the hours, but rest is important too. Studying all day long with commitments at night can produce a lot of stress and can be demotivating. Another change that I would like to see in this program would be more financial aid to more teachers, so they, too, can have this opportunity.

Back Home

Now after returning to Brazil, I am looking for a better way to teach, share, motivate and inspire my coworkers and students. They have already noticed a change in me. For example, I am now looking for a master's program to further improve my skills. I had never thought about getting a master's degree before PDPI. It sounds like a bit of a cliché, but I believe we need to be the change we want to see in the world. I'm now ready to fly higher because I am already a beautiful butterfly.