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## Academic Mobility and Internationalization: UFSJ's experience with the Volunteer Social Tutoring Program

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** We analyzed the Voluntary Social Tutoring Program developed at the Federal University of São João del Rei (UFSJ), understanding it as an action that aims to stimulate Internationalization at Home in the institution. Every six months, Brazilian students are selected via public notice by the Office of International Affairs (ASSIN), to escort foreign students in academic mobility. This selection has been taking place since 2017 and has provided cultural exchanges among students, in addition to helping Brazilians and foreigners learn more about the culture and history of our country. **Objective:** From the above, we seek to understand how the Program is organized and what actions Brazilian and foreign students are involved in. **Methodology:** We followed some of the cultural activities organized by ASSIN, between 2017 and 2018, we interviewed representatives of the office, we analyzed the documents that conduct the internationalization in the institution and the Program selection notices, as well as we situated the action in a scenario of national effort that aims at cultural exchange between Brazilians and foreigners. **Results/Conclusion:** Our considerations about this policy highlight the importance of tutoring activities, especially in a context of budget cuts, to promote the mobility of Brazilians, which may constitute a strong foundation for active internationalization practices in the country.

### KEYWORDS

Internationalization. Social tutoring. Foreign students. Academic mobility. Higher education.

## Mobilidade Acadêmica e Internacionalização: a experiência da UFSJ com o Programa De Tutoria Social Voluntária

### RESUMO

**Introdução:** Analisamos o Programa de Tutoria Social Voluntária desenvolvido na Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei (UFSJ), entendendo-o como uma ação que visa estimular a Internacionalização em Casa na instituição. De forma semestral, estudantes brasileiros são selecionados via edital pela Assessoria Internacional (ASSIN), para acompanharem alunos estrangeiros em situação de mobilidade. Essa seleção ocorre desde 2017 e tem proporcionado intercâmbios culturais entre os estudantes, além de contribuir para que brasileiros e estrangeiros aprendam mais sobre a cultura e a história de nosso país. **Objetivo:** A partir do exposto, buscamos compreender como o Programa é organizado e quais as ações nas quais estudantes brasileiros e estrangeiros estão envolvidos. **Metodologia:** Acompanhamos algumas das atividades culturais organizadas pela ASSIN, entre 2017 e 2018, entrevistamos representantes do órgão, analisamos os documentos que norteiam a internacionalização na instituição e os editais de seleção do Programa, bem como alocamos a ação em um cenário de esforço nacional que visa o intercâmbio cultural entre brasileiros e estrangeiros. **Resultados/Conclusão:** Nossas considerações acerca desta política ressaltam a importância das atividades de tutoria, sobretudo em um contexto de corte de verbas para a promoção da mobilidade de brasileiros, podendo constituir um forte alicerce para práticas de internacionalização ativa no país.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Internacionalização. Tutoria social. Estudantes estrangeiros. Mobilidade acadêmica. Ensino superior.

## Movilidad Académica e Internacionalización: la experiencia de la UFSJ con el Programa de Tutoría Social Voluntaria

### RESUMEN

**Introducción:** Analizamos el Programa de Tutoría Social Voluntaria desarrollado en la Universidad Federal de São João del Rei (UFSJ), entendiéndolo como una acción que pretende estimular la Internacionalización en Casa en la institución. Cada semestre, estudiantes brasileños son seleccionados a través de convocatoria pública por la Asesoría Internacional (ASSIN), para acompañar a estudiantes extranjeros en situación de movilidad. Esta selección ocurre desde 2017 y ha proporcionado intercambios culturales entre los estudiantes, así como contribuido para que brasileños y extranjeros conozcan más sobre la cultura y la historia de nuestro país. **Objetivo:** Con base en lo anterior, buscamos entender cómo se organiza el Programa y en qué acciones participan los estudiantes brasileños y extranjeros. **Metodología:** Acompañamos algunas de las actividades culturales organizadas por ASSIN entre 2017 y 2018, entrevistamos a representantes del organismo, analizamos los documentos que orientan la internacionalización en la institución y los edictos de selección del Programa, así como asignamos la acción en un escenario de esfuerzo nacional que tiene como objetivo el intercambio cultural entre brasileños y extranjeros. **Resultados/Conclusión:** Nuestras consideraciones sobre esta política destacan la importancia de las actividades de tutoría, especialmente en un contexto de recortes presupuestarios para la promoción de la movilidad de los brasileños, y pueden constituir una base sólida para las prácticas activas de internacionalización en el país.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Internacionalización. Tutoría social. Estudiantes extranjeros. Movilidad académica. Educación superior.

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## 1 Introduction

The main objective of this article is to analyze the potential of actions that seek the creation of links between foreign and Brazilian students in higher education. We are specifically interested in the Voluntary Social Tutoring project, developed by the Office of International Affairs (ASSIN) of the Federal University of São João del-Rei (UFSJ). The project aims to select Brazilian students, enrolled in different undergraduate courses at the university, to welcome and monitor foreign students in the most varied demands.

ASSIN has been seeking to promote training that goes beyond strictly academic content, proposing trips, cultural scavenger hunts and training in Portuguese as an Additional Language (PAL). The tutors selected and appointed by ASSIN become a reference for escorting foreigners in everyday demands and on trips promoted by the office. We observed how this performance occurs in different opportunities: in three cultural trips and in PAL classes. We discuss how these actions can enhance intercultural formation, based on references such as Knight (2004; 2011), Miranda and Stallivieri (2017), Mueller (2013), Gusmão (2008; 2009; 2011), and others.

Internationalization at Home, “collaborating in the construction and implementation of fair and egalitarian democratic processes” (MOROSINI, 2019, p. 188), is a driving experience that seeks to glimpse, in addition to complementing the résumé, respect for other cultures in the relationship between the social actors in the production of knowledge. Still according to the author, more specifically on Internationalization at Home:

The concept of Internationalization at Home – IaH – emerged in the 1990s. Its creator, Nilsson (2013), was after a new curricular structure in Higher Education Institutions. In addition to a qualified technical education, his initial objective was to educate citizens with an open mind and respect for other cultures, providing multicultural experiences for all students (*Ibdem*).

In addition, Gonçalves (2009) lists a series of extracurricular activities that can be developed in order to help the internationalization of universities' curricula. Such activities are actions of “Internationalization at Home”, considering that the internationalization of the curriculum “is, in short, one of the most relevant dimensions of the IaH. But there are extracurricular institutional activities that are also excellent educational opportunities” (GONÇALVES, 2009, p. 142-143). These activities can be developed through:

1. intercultural and international learning experiences (e.g., International Weeks);
2. multi and intercultural debates, exhibitions and thematic debates (cinema and other arts, colloquies, literary events...);
3. communities of practice and joint projects between national and international students;
4. peertutoring and voluntary service that promotes cooperation between national and international students;
5. to promote the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) to facilitate virtual mobility;
6. to encourage the learning of foreign languages;
7. free formation about other cultures;
8. training in intercultural communication. (GONÇALVES, 2009, p. 142-143).

In this regard, we present some conceptions specifically related to the actions of “Internationalization at Home”, considering that, given the impossibility of providing international experiences to all students, such activities can act satisfactorily in the higher education formation. In addition, we present semi-structured interviews carried out with representatives of the Office of International Affairs, who discuss the objectives of tutoring, as well as we analyze official documents that guide the university's internationalization policies, such as the program selection notices and the Institutional Development Plan (PDI). The interviews and document analysis are focused on establishing relationships between the success of students' engagement in different social spaces that permeate academic training and the activities developed by ASSIN.

The text is organized as follows: initially we address the internationalization of higher education in Brazil, then we indicate our methodological path, later we outline considerations about the social mentoring policy developed at UFSJ and, finally, we discuss the future objectives of this project, under the prism of the Covid-19 pandemic, a viral outbreak that suspended face-to-face educational activities, as well as international travels.

## 2 Internationalization of Brazilian Universities: a brief historical trajectory

The university, a teaching and research institution in higher education, is constituted as a space for the construction of knowledge, fostering exchanges of knowledge in the professional and scientific training of the subjects it serves. “Being a space of cultures, interculturality is an inherent condition of its existence, favoring the coexistence and integration of diversities” (OLIVEIRA; FREITAS, 2017, p. 776). In recent decades, higher education has been expanding its policies around the new perspectives of integration, universalization, quality and internationalization.

Internationalization, as practiced in the country, seeks not only to provide experiences to Brazilian researchers abroad, but also teaching and learning experiences to students from other countries on Brazilian soil, thus contributing to cultural exchange and advance in international relations:

The promotion of the internationalization of higher education, at the government level, needs to have a strategic meaning for the country. The opening of Brazilian universities to the world needs to be two-way, in the sense of leading them to modernization and innovation, based on international cooperation between different countries and, consequently, seeking to promote national development (MIRANDA; STALLIVIERI, 2017, p. 591).

This expansion is due to the intention of offering a more global education, since, today, the idea that universities are not isolated from broader contexts, such as ivory towers, is becoming more and more common (PATTERSON, 1997). Baumvol and Sarmiento (2016) explain that, in the midst of globalization, internationalization actions in higher education are

not balanced when compared to mobility towards developed countries in relation to less developed countries. Therefore, actions within the scope of the IaH can, to some extent, try to overcome deficiencies that hinder training at a global level, as universities currently yearn for.

A pertinent distinction is the one that highlights the difference between globalization and internationalization. Miura (2006) clarifies that, despite being commonly used as synonyms, even though they are directly related, the two terms deal with different themes. Globalization is a broader factor that encompasses economic sectors, with education being just one aspect influenced by it. Thus, internationalization in higher education is a consequence of globalization. However, internationalization would represent an ongoing process and not a single, finished definition of global integration. [...] “The internationalization of higher education has gained strength in academic debates, in view of the impacts of globalization on education” (MIURA, 2006, p. 02).

Furthermore, continuing the path of internationalization processes, it was in the Middle Age, with the institutionalization of upper-class schools, that the internationalization of knowledge began. Many people from different regions of the world gathered in these spaces in search of new knowledge. In addition, classes were held in Latin and the curriculum among schools was similar, favoring student mobility. According to Silva and Mari (2017, p. 38),

In sixteenth-century Europe, the university was characterized as a space for confrontation and dialogue between cultures and experiences; a place of constant exchange of knowledge and intellectual activity. In this scenario, the mobility of individuals was of key importance, as it was the main strategy used in the spread of ideas, in the achievement of breakthroughs and innovations.

With the creation of the nation-state and the beginning of the process of nationalization of modern countries, the internationalization of knowledge and higher education institutions, even if minimized, remained a major factor in the consolidation of a new educational, economic, political, cultural and social view in the world. As shown by Feijó (2013), internationalization actions have been intensified in recent decades since the Bologna Process, which began in 1998, in France. The Bologna Protocol was a declaration jointly signed by Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, aiming to promote “a European area of higher education”, also known as the Sorbonne Declaration. In 1999, another 29 European States signed the declaration, including Portugal, setting goals to the year 2010, seeking to promote the mobility of students and professors in a coherent manner and better qualification of these agents:

This reform is not imposed on national governments or universities; the Bologna Declaration is a voluntary commitment of each signatory European country to reform its own education system. The process emerged through agreements and projects and the need and willingness to leave, through studies, in search of new horizons, interacting in other countries that could offer new technical and cultural knowledge through exchanges. At first, only the countries of the European Community were part of this agreement, but little by little, other countries joined in and readjusted their higher education (FEIJÓ, 2013, p. 35).

Internationalization began to be developed more systematically in our country at the beginning of the 20th century with exchanges of Latin American students (FEIJÓ, 2013). In

the 1950s, two important bodies were created to develop attempts at the growth of science and technology in our country: the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES). Among other collaborations, the bodies provided and still provide scientific exchanges between researchers from several parts of the world, financing and developing national research towards standards that denote excellence, especially in Graduate Studies.

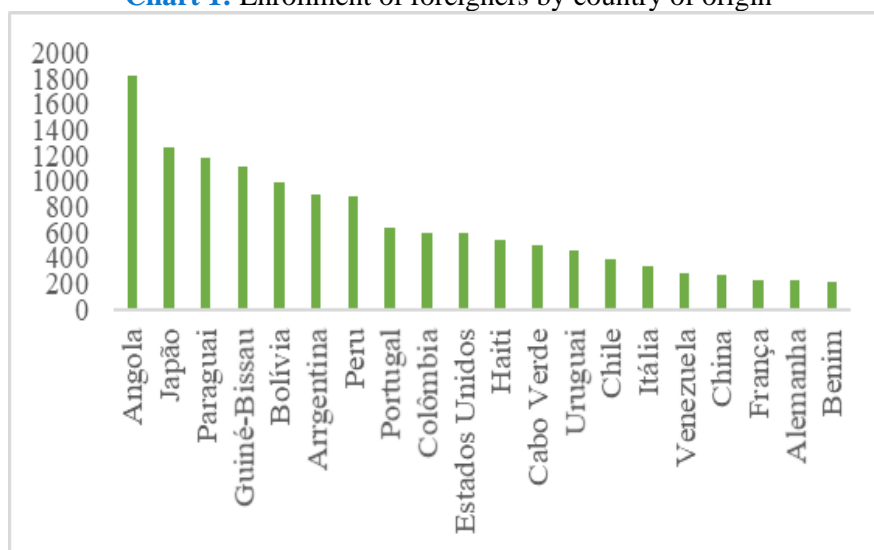
The policies of internationalization of education began timidly, with the sporadic exchanges in the first decades of the 20th century, with Latin American students. However, the formalization of Brazil's agreements with foreign countries began after the Second World War. During the 1960s, this process took place through bilateral agreements for scientific and technological cooperation, in which the expansion of agreements and the number of students-agreement and the movement to reform the Brazilian university are worth to be highlighted (FEIJÓ, 2013, p. 37).

The principle of internationalization “brought with it the formulation that a society was being forged in which knowledge would be an important productive force, the mainspring for the development of countries” (MAUÉS; BASTOS, 2017, p. 334). Therefore, the genesis of the creation of the modern university carries an institutional structure that efficiently seeks to expand the construction of knowledge beyond borders. Globalization, as the main driver of this policy, is under the structural system of institutions, demanding “changes in the treatment of higher education” (MAUÉS; BASTOS, 2017, p. 335).

Thus, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Brazil, seeking insertion in the globalized world, supported by national internationalization policies, have been producing guidelines for valuing intercultural relations, bringing together the diversity of peoples and cultures. In Based on that, with the creation of programs that offer opportunities in undergraduate and graduate courses for foreign students from many countries, we see in the institutional documents the stimulus to interculturality, aiming at expanding “the coexistence of different cultural realities in the academic space” (OLIVEIRA; FREITAS, 2017, p. 776).

According to the Higher Education Census, in 2018 approximately 13,398 foreign students were enrolled in undergraduate courses in our country. Of these, 45.6% come from countries located in the American continent and 27.3% in the African continent. This shows that we are establishing, as a priority, cooperation with countries that are still peripheral and subaltern, on a global scale, in relation to the dominant Northern countries. For many students, coming from countries with less possibilities for studying, such as some African countries, or even Asian countries, such as East Timor, Brazil is one of the first options, since it offers free education and is a Portuguese-speaking country, which, foremost, would already facilitate a possible adaptation (SANTOS, 2019). As it can be seen in Chart 1, it was Angola, the African country that most provided the arrival of foreigners to Brazil:

Chart 1: Enrollment of foreigners by country of origin



Source: adapted from Higher Education Census (BRASIL, 2019, p. 26)

Foreigners who enter our country do so to receive degree mobility formation. This type of mobility involves full enrollment in Brazilian courses, unlike exchange programs, which last an average of six months to one year. These students come from African, Latin American and Asian countries, most of them linked to the Graduation Agreement Student Program (PEC-G) (MACEDO; GOMIDES, 2020). To do so, the certificate of proficiency in Portuguese is necessary, which does not exempt them from the challenges offered by the contact with Brazilian Portuguese in their institutional activities, even for foreigners from Portuguese-speaking countries (MACEDO; BARROSO, 2010). As we see below, this fact justifies activities such as the voluntary social tutoring project at UFSJ.

In the CAPES report, which summarizes the international actions of Graduate Studies in Brazil, internationalization is understood as a process that must involve teaching, research and extension, making higher education more responsive to the dynamics of our society, which is increasingly globalized. “It is the highest stage of international relations among universities. Conceptually, we can divide it into two types: passive, where [Brazilian] professors and students move abroad; and the active, where the flow is reversed” (BRASIL/CAPES, 2017, p. 06). Authors such as Morosini (2019), Morosini and Nascimento (2017), Maués and Bastos (2017), Vergara and Maciel (2017), Santos and Reis (2020) and this report itself, highlight the importance of the promotion of the international processes of Brazilian universities to the level of active internationalization, taking advantage of the benefits that the foster of a larger number of foreigners in our institutions can provide.

One of the actions that should guide policies for the internationalization of our institutions is *Internationalization at Home*, which, applied in a scenario of budget cutting and the impossibility of achieving more efficient mobility, could act in international formation, without necessarily implying on practical departure from Brazil. Several actions can be developed ‘at home’, as reported by Gonçalves (2009), such as organizing *weeks*, debates, cinemas and intercultural fairs, encouraging cooperation between Brazilian and

foreign students by ‘peertutoring’, allying digital technologies to mobility actions, through virtual mobility, encouraging Brazilian students to learn a foreign language and/or foreigners to learn Brazilian Portuguese, among others.

In general, studies have criticized the fact that Brazilians who have gone abroad have not been recruited by educational institutions to share their experiences in other countries with those whom have not yet been offered this opportunity. It is possible to find data about arrivals and also departures from the country. However, as, for example, in the case of the extinct Science without Borders Program, just knowing how many Brazilians were sent abroad and which countries these students were sent to is not enough for statements about the effectiveness of policies for internationalization to be evaluated or improved. It is necessary to show in greater detail what effects, in fact, these experiences have on students and their surroundings, including creating opportunities for them to contribute to actions *at home* (MOROSINI, 2019).

This and other factors are commented by Knight (2011) in *Five Myths about internationalization*, which indicates five preconceived ideas, but which need to be sufficiently clarified so that higher education internationalization actions can advance: i) foreign students should not be understood, *per se*, as agents of internationalization. Just the inclusion of foreign students in Brazilian higher education does not guarantee intercultural exchanges in institutions; ii) internationalization does not mean a real increase in the quality indicators of HEIs, and these indexes may mask decrease in other important indicators for their development; iii) exorbitant amounts of signed international agreements do not mean prestige and quality, the ideal is that the institution only signs agreements that can be feasible; iv) accreditation in agencies that certify quality also do not attest to its presence; and v) internationalization is insufficient to guarantee the recognition of the HEI in a global context, such recognition cannot be the final objective of the actions.

Internationalizing the university has been one of the main objectives regarding the development of higher education in our country. “As a rule, it [the internationalization] is related to quality, excellence, innovation, knowledge and other diverse themes, highlighting, in most cases, the positive contribution of this presence” (MOROSINI; NASCIMENTO, 2017, p. 02). We believe that higher education institutions should focus on solidarity and interculturality, since they are precursor factors for a development that contribute for the advancement of the society we are after. Therefore, international mobility, when consciously managed, results in a movement of holding hands towards the new, the efficient and the fair.

Brazilian higher education has been appropriating the importance that internationalization through academic mobility carries regarding the advances of the knowledge society and the 21st century, since the understanding of different contexts can enhance a broader education, endowed with holistic, reflective and critic competence over the field which it is appropriating (SANTOS; REIS, 2020, p. 22).

For Luce *et al* (2016), despite not being the only aspect of internationalization in universities, mobility, which is the physical departure of students or professors from Brazil to



abroad, or vice versa, is still the most notable aspect of actions in our country. This is probably because it is in the entry and exit actions that the effects of internationalization are perceived in a more latent and concrete way. However, it is not enough for students to be sent abroad or the possibility of receiving foreign students, without having, for such, policies to guide them. “Mobility helps in the process, but in the long term and, for this reason, it is important to be clear about the national objectives that you aim to achieve [...] so that you can define, even at an institutional level, your quality criteria” (LUCE *et al*, 2016, p. 321-322).

The data highlighted above show that our country has acted passively in relation to internationalization, receiving a large number of students, while opportunities for sending Brazilians abroad are scarce. The number of scholarships distributed by Science without Borders between 2011 and 2015 is considered small, since around 73 thousand were distributed, not reaching 1% of the total number of students enrolled in 2013. Therefore, actions ‘at home’ would be reasonable to fill this gap left by the impossibility of providing this experience broadly to academics (BAUMVOL; SARMENTO, 2016).

We understand that Voluntary Social Tutoring can be considered as an action to promote Internationalization at Home in UFSJ. In the “Guide to university internationalization”, organized by Marília Morosini (2019), an axis was elaborated for understanding the model of Internationalization at Home. Presented as a strategy of institutions in the search for a more complete, egalitarian and fair internationalization, it is a factor that accelerates institutional activities in the intercultural and international scope, being able to strengthen the university curriculum and actions at home.

Therefore, perspectives such as the IaH contribute to the process of democratization of internalization, since it is necessary an appropriation and engagement of all actors in the academic community in its process (DOMENCH *et al.*, 2014) and the development of international and intercultural activities at home (MOROSINI, 2019, p. 190).

We believe that Internationalization at Home is one of the ideals of many universities with a profile similar to UFSJ’s, that is, that do not have the financial resources to send students to foreign institutions frequently. We believe that interactive situations such as those provided by Voluntary Social Tutoring, reported in this article, can inspire new strategies to intensify internationalization in Higher Education, especially in view of the frequent financial limitations.

### 3 Academic Literacy Practices in the context of Internationalization

For the investigation about the impact of the way in which the practices of Internationalization at Home favor the intercultural exchange between Brazilian and foreign students, we are anchored in the perspective of Academic Literacies (LEA; STREET, 1998) that considers reading and writing in higher education as social practices, situated in power relations and strongly related to the identities of their producers (STREET, 2010). In this

sense, we identified literacy practices and events in situations provoked by the Voluntary Social Tutoring project, mediated by the UFSJ's Office of International Affairs, considering different opportunities for socialization: cultural trips, scavenger hunts and assistance to foreign students during PAL classes.

We understand 'literacy practices' as actions situated in specific historical and social contexts, in which the relationship with literacy is not only observable, but also allows us to understand how people act and react, attributing meanings to literacy (BARTON; HAMILTON, 1998). In turn, the events contribute to the understanding of practices, and may be built through sequenced routines (*ibidem*) or even appear, according to Heath (1982, p. 50, our translation) in "[...] any occasion in which a written text is part of the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretative processes". In the historical-cultural aspect, cultures and historic time have different conceptions about the uses of written language, in view of the different philosophies present in social relations entangled in the experience of subjects in society. The so-called 'New Literacy Studies' (LEA; STREET, 2014) point to an idea of transformation and rupture with the dominant discourse on academic writing.

According to Lea and Street (2014), the approach to writing and literacy is divided into three models: the first settles literacy as a cognitive and individual skill, as it presupposes the transmission of knowledge from one context to another; the second evidences an academic socialization, in which students understand and master the basic rules of a discourse and reproduce them; and the third, proposed by Lea and Street (1998), in view of the other two, takes into account power relations, institutions and social identities in the academic environment.

In addition, we outline an overview of voluntary social tutoring for foreigners who enter the UFSJ and present the activities developed in the process of acquiring knowledge about the region where these students will live during their stay in Brazil. We understand that far beyond reading and writing in academic literacy processes, there are other practices involved in the construction of these subjects' identity. Therefore, the Academic Literacy model, despite not being opposed to the evidenced models (skills model and socialization model), presents a more central concern about social aspects, such as power relations, identities and the production of meanings in the use of practices arising from other contexts, promoting the knowledge produced by theory (LEA; STREET, 1998).

The perspective recognizes the importance of mastering the reading and writing skills that are characteristic of the academic context, however, it reinforces the multiple literacies that circulate in the university sphere as social practices. It is assumed that the different literacies to be produced at the university are affected by factors such as the subjects in which they were developed, the genres from which the productions derive, and also the mutual relationship in voluntary tutoring, which encompasses several practices. Therefore, the practices resulting from this perspective cannot be treated homogeneously in the institutional sphere.

Thus, considering the relationship of foreigners with the academic context, we see academic literacy practices that are determined not only by reading and writing, but by the context in which they are developed. We must analyze the impact of the effects of the social practices of reading and writing on life in society, always taking in consideration the conditions in which these practices are unfolded. In this way, the different uses of reading and writing, the way they are employed, who uses them, for what reasons, among other factors, are involved. These elements are indispensable for the interpretation of the interaction between the events and literacy practices (SOARES, 2002).

In the context of internationalization, academic literacy practices, which enable greater interaction among ASSIN, foreign and Brazilian students, can be of fundamental importance to leverage international policies, since there is great learning between both, and there is a significant development in the institution, making it more integrated and dynamic.

#### 4 Monitoring of Social Mentoring activities: a methodological path

We address the instruments used to collect the data discussed. Such data derive from a research clipping (SANTOS, 2019). Our intentions, in the original work, were based on understanding the academic literacy strategies developed by foreign students linked to the university. The original investigation was primarily developed through 14 semi-structured interviews with students from nine different nationalities. However, more data was collected, such as the monitoring of activities mediated by ASSIN with foreign students linked to the institution between 2017 and 2018 and interviews with representatives of the office. We highlight that other texts have already been published from our initial work: Macedo e Gomides (2020) and Macedo e Gomides (2021).

In this article, we consider the actions of Voluntary Social Tutoring as social practices of academic literacy, developed by the body in charge of the promotion of internationalization at the university, which, for the most part, seek to encourage the exchange of knowledge between foreigners and Brazilians. We hypothesize that this fact can favor actions of Internationalization at Home, as well as the establishment of horizontal international relations. We gathered interviews with representatives of the office of international affairs, notes from field diaries, audio recordings of classes and meetings among the office, foreign and Brazilian students, as well as documents from the university itself that aim to guide these actions.

A fact that facilitated the monitoring of activities was the opportunity to participate in the social tutoring project, following a North American Graduate student, the only American student linked to the university at the time. In addition to classes and contact with students via *WhatsApp* group, created to establish greater contact between tutors and foreigners, we also followed two trips to the city of Ouro Preto (MG) and a trip to Tiradentes (MG), cities that are part of the cultural circuit defined by ASSIN. The interviews took place at the

headquarters of the Office of International Affairs and also through the *WhatsApp* messaging app, more recently, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Regarding the document analysis, our main objective was to understand the institution's purposes in relation to the development of internationalization actions, through its Institutional Development Plan (PDI), a basilar document, which outlines strategies for institutional action every four years, establishing a diagnosis of the current situation and setting goals for the future, in addition to monitoring the selection notices for voluntary social tutoring, which have occurred more systematically since 2017. Below, we present our analyzes of documents and experiences.

## 5 Volunteer Social Tutoring at UFSJ: documents and experiences

The university received, between 2016 and 2019, an annual average of 40 foreign students (UFSJ in numbers, 2019). As the representative of the Office of International Affairs points out, the university's internationalization is still developing in a timid way, given its late adherence to agreements with foreign institutions and international funding partnerships. However, it is possible to find a certain flow of foreigners in the institution, which is continuous, due to the different modalities in which exchanges can take place (six months, one year, four or five years, the latter depending on the duration of the mobility degree courses). We found in Macedo and Gomides (2020) that in 2017, between October and December, about 28 foreigners passed through the institution, most of them linked to undergraduate courses, in mobility degree and coming from the PEC-G (about 43%).

UFSJ began its activities in 1987 as a Higher Education Foundation, becoming a university in 2002. Relatively young, the institution began to receive international students in 2004 and, in 2007, its policy for receiving international students was reformulated. Actions for voluntary social tutoring were initiated in 2017, arising from the need for closer monitoring of foreign students. At the same time, the initiative seeks to foster Internationalization at Home actions, promoting contact and experiences between Brazilians and foreigners inside and outside the university.

Selections for social tutoring began in 2017 and are carried out by ASSIN, which determines the number of vacancies according to the needs of each year in terms of reception. In 2017, 50 vacancies were offered, in 2018, 20 vacancies, in 2019, 10 vacancies and in 2020, 15 vacancies. On average, 24 vacancies are opened each year. The selection consists of registration, sending and analysis of documents and interview. The student's course performance coefficient is taken into account, as well as their participation in the program in previous years. The activities required by the 2020 notice are described below:

- a) assist in the reception of foreign students upon their arrival in Brazil and at UFSJ;
- b) participate in the Orientation Week and Welcome Scavenger Hunt;
- c) help foreign students adapt to Brazil and the city;

- d) help the foreign student to understand the different cultures of Brazil;
- e) assist in the integration and socialization with the internal community;
- f) be available to assist the foreign student throughout the semester, taking turns with other social tutors (to solve bureaucratic, medical, academic-cultural issues and other demands that arise during the semester);
- g) participate, at the invitation of ASSIN, in cultural activities together with foreign students (visits, trips, etc.) (UFSJ, 2020).

It is possible to understand, based on the reading of the functions of the volunteer social tutor, that the selected student is understood by ASSIN as a sort of ‘ambassador’ for the foreigner in the institution. The social tutor becomes someone the tutees can count on to introduce them and help them in academic socialization, inserting them in academic literacy practices defined by the university and other social practices related to their stay in Brazil. Actions like this mean, at the same time, the institution’s willing to mature regarding internationalization and a concern with the stay of these students, considering the impossibility of ASSIN, alone, taking charge of all these functions, which is highlighted in the extract below:

*So, the idea, when we started to select these students to help us, is because the office is very small [...] there are very few people to give all this kind of help that they need, so we selected some students, right at the beginning, to help us with the most basic things, like obtaining a CPF [ID], getting to know the city, helping to welcome people. But then we saw that this idea worked, not just in basic help [...] **because they are talking to people who are just like them, they are students, about the same age**, that kind of thing. So we said: why not introduce them as if they were their first friends here in Brazil from the start? That is, the person arrived at the bus station or at the airport, then we would go there and introduce that tutor and everything else [...] and then we started to include these extracurricular activities, trips, tours, visits to the planetarium, some other kinds of trips, and then came the idea of the project where it is today. **Just like we say, we are there, more concerned with the bureaucratic part, the contacts and sometimes they don't see us as a person who they can ask about something more personal [...]** (INTERVIEW WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF ASSIN, 2020, emphasis added).*

When the ASSIN representative states that introducing a person similar to the foreign students means introducing their first friends, we understand that the intention is to make the adaptation of foreigners more practical under the tutelage of someone who can have an affective and reliable relationship. This, in fact, is an alternative that enables greater interaction, in addition to facilitating many paths that the advisory would have difficulty with, due to the short number of personnel in the sector.

As reported in an interview, the coordinator of the Office of International Affairs, in the past, internationalization was understood internally in the institution as an action resulting from the mobility of students and professors. The policies for the promotion of internationalization issued in 2004 and 2007 reflected this understanding. After 2013, a concept was proposed that presents more active internationalization actions, opposing the passive internationalization practices coined until then. The advisor believes that it is necessary to develop actions for Internationalization at Home, taking advantage of the international experiences present in the institution or even *online* interactions, which do not necessarily imply the physical mobility of the agents.

*So as you work on this process of Internationalization at Home, as you bring the foreigner here, as you create institutional conditions to receive that foreigner, working on internationalization, within the scope of the courses curricula, with contents that are of international interest, about diversity, multiculturalism, the situation of refugees, human rights, working on these contents, you provide a much more holistic training for that student who is being trained, you're training citizens who will act in the global world and not in that little limited world in the city (INTERVIEW WITH THE INTERNACIONAL ADVISOR, 2018 ).*

Corroborating the advisor's statement, in the institution's most recent Institutional Development Plan (IDP) 2019-2023, internationalization was elected as one of the priority areas, which must be guided through the following three axes: "international curriculum content; mobility of students, professors and administrative technicians; engagement in technical and educational assistance programs with foreign institutions" (UFSJ, 2019, p. 104). In this sense, the actions and indicators that can contribute to achieving this objective are described on Table 1:

**Table 1:** objective 63 of the UFSJ IDP "To Promote the Internationalization of Undergraduate Courses, Undergraduate and Extension Programs"

Actions	Indicators
Contribution to the academic excellence of institutional programs by incorporating the international dimension into courses and programs.	Number of international mobility opportunities offered to students and personnel.
Contribution to the improvement of the training of global professionals through the internationalization of curriculum and curricular incorporation of international experience and content of global interest.	Number of course pedagogical projects with prediction of students taking advantage of international academic experience.
Incorporation of Distance Learning and virtual learning tools to promote internationalization.	Number of subjects and courses offered in a foreign language or with content of global interest at UFSJ, in face-to-face or distance learning modality.
Valuing Transnational Education, which incorporates models, experiences, languages and cultures from different international communities.	Number of foreign visiting professors in undergraduate and graduate courses.
	Number of mechanisms created for the admission of foreign students in undergraduate and graduate courses.
	Number of professors and students included in international research networks.
	Number of active international partnerships.

Source: PDI UFSJ (2019-2023) (2019, p. 97)

On Table 1, we see that the objectives defined by the institution to effectively develop the internationalization plan present actions that enable academic excellence, as well as investment in the training of professionals and in the structuring of an adequate curriculum for teaching/learning. In addition, the aim is to value transnational education open to students' different experiences, languages and cultures.

The indicators can be summarized as follows: the number of opportunities that enable greater academic mobility for students and personnel; the pedagogical projects elaborated by university students that promote their international experience; the foreign language courses offered; the presence of foreign professors in undergraduate and graduate courses; the creation of mechanisms for the entry of foreign students; and in the international partnerships of professors and students.

Language policy is mentioned, without any language, other than Portuguese, being specifically highlighted, as shown by Macedo and Santos (2020). In documents issued by CAPES, it is common for English to be mentioned as the preferred language to be developed in international experiences. In the case of UFSJ, PAL should be stimulated, mainly by the affinity of students in mobility degree, coming from African, Latin American and Asian countries, promoted mainly by the PEC-G. In the first item of objective 64 on language policy, the “promotion and appreciation of the use of foreign languages” (UFSJ, 2019, p. 97) is highlighted, without specifically mentioning any language.

During our field research, carried out between 2017 and 2019, we followed some activities of ASSIN and social tutors on several occasions. We were on two trips to Ouro Preto (MG) and Tiradentes (MG), organized by the advisory, with the aim of teaching foreign students a little about the culture and history of Brazil. On these opportunities, vacancies were made available on the bus seats for foreign students and their social tutors who, as a group, headed towards the mentioned cities, aiming to visit museums, historical monuments, caves and mines (as in the case of Ouro Preto, at *Mina do Chico Rei*), *cachaçarias* (distilleries of cachaça), among other itineraries with the objective of telling a little about the history of our country. However, even before the visits, called ‘cultural trips’ by the office, students are already introduced to these places through lectures.

We observed, before the trip to the city of Tiradentes MG, the work of one of the social tutors, a History student at the university, when presenting the elements to be unveiled on the upcoming trip. For about an hour, in one of the PAL classes, this student exhibited slides with photos of Tiradentes, presenting information about the city such as the origin of the name, the importance of *Inconfidência Mineira* for the country, the origin of *Largo das Forras*, slavery and the abolition of slavery. The places that would be visited by the students were also presented, such as the Padre Toledo Museum, a cachaça distillery in the region and also the ‘crookedt house’, a famous monument in the district of Bichinho. The students were curious and excited when they were introduced to the places they would be visiting, having the previous opportunity to ask some questions.

Another recurring activity is the ‘cultural scavenger hunt’. This is a literacy practice that has been evaluated by the Office of International Affairs as a very positive experience, since it encourages contact between foreigners and Brazilians, in addition to providing Brazilian students with opportunities to acquire new knowledge. The passage below demonstrates how social tutoring activities can be involved with different social practices, but always aiming a better adaptation to the city and also to the university context. Various literacies are involved in the activities, from building strategies to better deal with university demands, to learning “how to do it yourself”, eating at a popular restaurant or learning how to move around in the city bus lines.

*[...] we created a cultural scavenger hunt, so we divide the students into groups and we do some activities, so they have to go, for example, to the Tancredo Neves Memorial and find out why the name of the main avenue in the city is Avenida*

*Tancredo Neves, we ask them to go to the regional museum and they have to find out when was the year of the abolition of slavery in Brazil and we, in every scavenger hunt we create tasks that make them to go to our tourist spots, to eat at the popular restaurant because it is an option they have while they're here, we make them take the bus from here to other campuses and to some places, so they can learn to take the bus, but they always do it with the social tutors. So the tutors who participate in the scavenger hunt, when they give their testimony, is a really interesting, because they say that they learned as much as the foreign students, they are Brazilian students who arrive at the university and they don't know our local culture, they don't know these places and they end up learning all these things along with the foreign students. So, every year, this orientation of students becomes something more dynamic, involving more aspects and we have received excellent feedback from students about this because they really get along, socialize in the city (INTERVIEW WITH THE INTERNACIONAL ADVISOR, 2018).*

These activities, as highlighted in the interview with another member of the staff, make these students more autonomous in their daily demands. In Santos (2019) we showed that students are selected for courses in Brazil, however, most of them enter our country without actually knowing it. Many students claimed to know only the most famous universities, located in the capitals of Minas Gerais, such as the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), São Paulo, such as the University of São Paulo (USP) or Rio de Janeiro, such as the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Other students did not even know the state in which UFSJ is located. So, all these activities help in this 'discovery', not only from an academic point of view, but also about Brazil, as a diverse and multicultural country:

*The idea of these scavenger hunts, is that basically, the more information they can get for themselves the better. Because they arrive here very 'raw', when the student comes here, some examples that we have, they say: "ah, you are in São João del Rei, but I would like to go to Foz do Iguaçu, is it close?" So, they don't have a spatial notion of where they are, the size of Brazil, so the set of classes with these activities as well, they have a better idea of where they are and how to go to these places (INTERVIEW WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF ASSIN, 2020).*

From tables 2 and 3, which systematize the information passed on to us by ASSIN, we see that there are two competitions organized by the body: the welcome scavenger hunt, which takes place every semester and seeks initial contact among tutors, foreigners and the advisory itself, aiming to present the city in a historical-cultural context, and the scavenger hunts that take place during cultural trips. The latter are mediated by the advisory, focusing on more specific objectives, according to the trip and the city to which the students are taken to.

**Table 2:** Scavenger hunts by ASSIN

Welcome scavenger hunt	Trips Scavenger hunts
Its main objective is to get to know the city, students are divided into two teams (green and yellow team), with a mix of nationalities and cooperation agreements, tutors are included. Students must visit certain places in the city stipulated in advance by the advisory and carry out interviews with some people in the city, such as, for example, a <i>bell ringer</i> . Other activities may include taking a photo at a certain tourist spot, these activities must be posted on a social	It occurs during certain activities delimited by the advisory, such as, for example, responding to some requests during a trip. In one of the opportunities in which foreigners visited the city of Ouro Preto, they were asked to visit the <i>soapstone fair</i> and explain what this fair was, for example. At the end of the tour, the groups meet and present what they have learned from these demands.



network and, at the end, students must present their impressions in Portuguese. The team that obtains the most points receives a prize such as açai vouchers and at the end there is a collective closing taking turns to share their impressions, for example.	
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Source: Research data.

We understand that social tutoring activities have been developed satisfactorily for the institution and attracting more interested parties every year. These students help ASSIN with bureaucratic issues and make Brazilian students a reference for foreign students, also promoting Internationalization experiences at Home, as they can foster opportunities for mutual learning. For universities like UFSJ, young and with tight budgets, the promotion of Internationalization at Home actions, like this one, can be essential to minimize financial limitations for mobility, and also to comply with the requirements of development agencies such as CAPES, for example. We present Table 3 with all the cultural trips developed by ASSIN in 2018, considering the destinations and the main activities carried out:

**Table 3:** Cultural trips developed by ASSIN in 2018

Destinations	Activities
Tiradentes and Bichinho	Museum, church, cachaça distillery Amazonia Mineira (more modern)
Coroas and Rezende Costa	Cachaça distillery (more traditional, handmade), weaving loom crafts, lunch at a typical Brazilian barbecue restaurant
Mariana and Ouro Preto	Train trip, museum ( <i>Casa dos Contos</i> or <i>da Independência</i> ), Pedra Sabão fair and a mine. Insert a guide to do the scavenger hunt
Inhotim	Contemporary art museum
Carrancas	Waterfall
Belo Horizonte	Get to know the capital of Minas
São João del Rei	Mountaineering Museum, bells, planetarium, crossing the <i>Serra de São José</i> .

Source: Research data.

We believe that these activities, promoted with the aim of providing learning experiences about the region where foreign students will live during their training, can be considered practices of academic literacy in the context of internationalization. Furthermore, we cannot disregard the PAL classes and the assistance offered by the social tutors, who become true guides for these foreigners throughout their university formation. Such social practices allow students not only to enjoy academic experiences at UFSJ, but also to develop themselves interculturally, also acting as agents of internationalization. It should be noted that the activities described in this article were paralyzed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, as we present below, together with an analysis of new perspectives for projects like this at the institution.

## 6 Voluntary Social Tutoring: challenges and possibilities

We bring a balance of ASSIN's impressions about the mentioned project. We questioned, at the time of writing this text, how UFSJ dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic, regarding the reception of foreigners in Brazil and, specifically, voluntary social tutoring

actions. As pointed out by one of the ASSIN's representatives interviewed in November 2020, with the pandemic, practically all students linked to the institution returned to their countries. This return took place at a time when the voluntary tutoring project was being expanded, through strategies aimed at advancing the performance of Brazilian students and allocating scholarships to tutors (until now, tutoring activities occurred without any perspective of financial remuneration).

We verified that the body's main concern was to guarantee the safety of foreigners who still remained in the country under institutional supervision and the maintenance of follow-up during remote teaching. The crisis experienced during the pandemic sensitized ASSIN professionals to positively get prepared for this and other possible crises. For this reason, an emergency booklet was prepared, along with the social tutors, who also made themselves available to act, not only in activities that were already taking place, but also in medical follow-ups and other emergency situations involving foreigners. For this more effective follow-up, the scholarship, as financial compensation, is essential.

Another ambition of ASSIN, for a post-pandemic future, is to more effectively include foreign students in university extension projects, favoring the development of activities more related to courses and increasing their engagement with the Brazilian academic community.

*We had some time to better think about the actions [...] so when everything goes back to normal, the idea is that we have a better basis to work in this tutoring system and the other thing that was also evident is that we need to do, not only as a tutoring system, but as a whole, a preventive booklet and with that [...] the tutors could be involved in the case of sinister events like these, the pandemic, something more serious. So we are also working on a project, like an emergency booklet [...] so everything would be connected to these points, it would be the cultural aspect, something cultural, something academic, the part of the reception of the students, when they arrive, the welcome scavenger hunt [...] and also we wanted to take the opportunity to add these more serious things too, for example medical monitoring of foreign students, in case of a serious situation, as was the case with the pandemic, everyone having their function, not only to accompany the student and not that voluntary accompaniment, but something closer. That's why we decided to try to do this by offering them the scholarship (INTERVIEW WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF ASSIN, 2020).*

Therefore, in order to establish the ideals of the university's internationalization plan, especially the quest to improve social tutoring and the involvement of students with foreigners, a project that sustains and strengthens the bond between funding agencies and tutoring students is essential. Far beyond the voluntary interest, there is also work that needs to be valued, since it deals with social relationships that need to be in tune with the teaching/learning of all those involved in the construction of knowledge.

## Final considerations

When thinking of voluntary tutoring as an indispensable action for effective internationalization, especially IaH, we must stick to policies and funding aimed at students

who enroll in the selective tutoring process. These students, knowing that they are subjects who are greatly and constantly involved in academic work, are people who need encouragement and appreciation, as they seek meaningful formation. For this reason, valuing these students in the important role they perform is essential with certification and financial compensation, in the form of a scholarship, as ASSIN is committed to.

Given the above, we believe in internationalization as an action that drives the economic, social, political and cultural development of the society. Internationalization must be developed based on humanist values, aiming to multiculturally develop all those involved in the process (Brazilian and foreign students). However, we believe that there are still many ways to go, in view of the advancement of institutional development plans, not only at UFSJ, but also at other Brazilian universities. Higher education institutions must firmly grasp the autonomy they have in search of equity in the offer of scholarships in the various sciences. Internationalization at Home can act in the fight against precariousness, with the expansion of the budget for internationalization, so that the social tutoring function is no longer voluntary, thus comprising an important driver of internationalization.

Institutions recently created, such as UFSJ, present greater difficulties in the development of their internationalization, above all, with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic that paralyzed the meager activities that were developed in the past. However, the creation of strategies to promote Internationalization at Home can improve and enhance this intercultural contact between foreign and Brazilian students, favoring relationships like some that we had the opportunity to witness during the trips and monitoring of the tutors. By promoting activities that go beyond the classes commonly held at universities, such as cultural trips, the university now offers foreigners and Brazilian tutors unique opportunities to learn about our country, culture and history.

Future work may contribute to a longer follow-up of actions like this, identifying even how PAL classes are given and their relationship with foreigners from Portuguese-speaking countries. In addition, it is interesting to contemplate the continuity of relations between foreigners and Brazilian tutors, since in some cases, the relationship of friendship established in tutoring expands, making the foreigner a point of support for the Brazilian student in a situation of exchange abroad.

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