

English Language Hegemonies in the Internationalization of Two State Universities in Brazil: Unintended Consequences of English Medium Instruction

Hegemonias do inglês na internacionalização de duas universidades estaduais brasileiras: consequências indesejadas do ensino por meio do inglês

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ABSTRACT: A larger qualitative study, which we draw upon here, investigated the perceptions of academics and students, in two state funded universities, regarding internationalization and the use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI). In this article, we focus on their concerns about EMI policy, drawing on interviews and focus groups. The range of concerns that were identified during this study were: the negative impact on content learning, language hierarchization, the emotional impact (confidence in using English), low student enrollment, exclusion, (re)



production of inequality, impact on identity and collegiality. Taking account of these findings, we argue that it is important for language policymakers in both institutions to consider the concerns of academics and students as part of their planning process, and to address them responsibly.

KEYWORDS: English Medium Instruction; unintended consequences; academics and students; Brazil.

RESUMO: Com base em um amplo estudo qualitativo que investigou as percepções de docentes e discentes em duas universidades públicas estaduais sobre a internacionalização e a adoção do Ensino por Meio do Inglês (EMI), este estudo teve como foco suas preocupações sobre essa política, com dados colhidos por meio de entrevistas e grupos focais. As preocupações identificadas foram: o impacto negativo sobre o aprendizado do conteúdo, hierarquização linguística, impacto emocional (confiança no uso do inglês), baixa taxa de matrículas, exclusão, (re)produção de desigualdades, impacto sobre identidades de discentes e docentes. Tendo em vista esses resultados, argumentamos ser necessário que tomadores de decisões em ambas as instituições considerem no planejamento e tratem com responsabilidade as preocupações de docentes e discentes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ensino por Meio do Inglês; consequências indesejadas; docentes e discentes; Brasil.

Introduction

In the last decade, English medium instruction (EMI) has gained traction both as a context of language practice around the world and a research area (Galloway, 2020; Bolton; Bacon-Shone; Botha 2022; R’Boul, 2022; Alam; Devarajoo; Meganathan, 2022; Macaro; Aizawa, 2022, among others). In Brazil, it has been introduced in higher education as one key strategy in the internationalization of universities (British Council, 2016; 2018; Martinez, 2016) and is increasingly being taken up as a research topic in Applied Linguistics.

In the review carried out by Gimenez et al. (2021) the authors classified 30 EMI studies published between 2010-2020 as exploratory, descriptive or explanatory- speculative. The majority of the studies investigated beliefs, motivations and attitudes in general and specific aspects like the teacher’s role, pronunciation in EMI settings, intelligibility and language proficiency i.e., a mix of linguistic and pedagogical aspects deemed relevant in this context. The aim of this review was to explore areas for development if EMI is adopted as an institutional policy. Most of the exploratory articles were considered “accommodation oriented”, whereas a smaller number were classified as “reconfiguration oriented” (Park, Wee, 2012). There were studies where the findings pointed to the need to consider how EMI could be more inclusive. The descriptive case studies offered a closer look at actual EMI enactment and there was a larger number of studies that questioned the inexorability of this practice in Brazilian universities. Reflections on the consequences of EMI were part of the third group of essays. They highlighted the need to avoid jumping on the “bandwagon” by interrogating the motivations and (un) intended effects of a policy that privileges English in educational settings where the majority of the students speak Portuguese.

One article in this latter category was by Jordão (2019), who reflected on the tensions around the role of English in higher education in Brazil, emphasizing how entangled the relationships with English are for researchers and academics, as well as EMI students. This entanglement is explained as something that affects other parts of the world but especially contexts of coloniality. She maintains that

The tension [...] between attraction to the perceived benefits brought by legitimate use of English and repulsion towards its bond to neo-liberal politics and oppressive practices shows the entanglement of desire and resistance in relation to the English language, as entanglement that can be found all over the world. (Jordão, 2019, p. 34)

Jordão also comments on the impact of English on the professional identities of Brazilian researchers and academics in her institution:

We realized how complex its [English] presence is in our institutional practices, and how damaging a perceived lack of English can be to our identities as scientists. Most of us complained about how diminished we felt when faced by English users we judged as more proficient than us, for we seemed to refer to the native speaker construct to measure ability, ours and others, using English. (Jordão, 2019, p. 41)

These identity tensions are also explored in the narratives of academics and teachers in EMI contexts around the world, who reflect on their role and identity as related to English and therefore to colonialism/coloniality (Quijano, 2007; Mignolo, 2011), while on the other hand, being aware of their potential to deconstruct and resist English dominant practices. As Jordão (2019) maintains

To me, such [EMI] practices are constituted from dimensions that at times reinforce the colonialism of English, and at other times deconstruct and resist it, evidencing how entangled adaptation, resistance and transformation can be in our institutional practices. (Jordão, 2019, p. 43)

The review by Gimenez *et al.* (2021) builds a picture of the reception of EMI in Brazilian higher education institutions as one policy position along a continuum of unquestioned acceptance or as a means of identifying ways of developing more critical perspectives that acknowledge the conflicts emerging from new language practices.

Thus far, research in Brazil indicates that EMI has been either explicitly or implicitly incorporated into policy documents and that, to a large extent, is dependent upon the initiatives of individual academics (Baumwol; Sarmiento 2016). The degree of EMI implementation varies from institution to institution and seems to be strongly associated with funding incentives through guidelines for internationalization. A content analysis of CAPES¹ guidelines for different knowledge areas indicated that while some explicitly mentioned “English medium classes” as a goal and indicator of internationalization, others were less direct (Gimenez; Oliveira; Carneiro, 2021). These authors speculated that the predominance of EMI guidelines in the Life Sciences (Agrarian Sciences, Biological Sciences and Health Sciences) could be “due to the fact that these areas have greater power to generalize research results and international collaboration and in which English functions as the lingua franca of science with hegemony over other foreign languages”. Another initiative, among others, by the same agency, CAPES-PrInt, aims at supporting strategic internationalization projects in priority areas; with a view to stimulating international collaborative networks and improving the quality of the academic research output at graduate level.

¹ CAPES stands for Coordenadoria de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal do Ensino Superior, a federal funding agency subordinated to the Ministry of Education and which is responsible for the assessment and distribution of resources to Brazilian graduate Programs.

In addition to this external pressure to favor English as an academic lingua franca, especially at graduate level, where the bulk of research is produced, academics may also feel they need to follow the trend in order to increase their professional profile both internally and externally and start teaching in English. Martinez and Palma (2022, p. 28) hypothesize that EMI in Brazil is “a new kind of ‘must have’ product” that many universities are reluctant to buy into and rightly so. For them, Brazilian academics enjoy unparalleled freedom, and “have therefore let their EMI practices be guided by what best suits them, their students, and their particular disciplinary and pedagogical realities.” Thus, according to these authors, the EMI characteristics in Brazil may be very different from practices in other parts of the world.

Doing research in different contexts may yield greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities identified by academics and students who have experienced or are experiencing EMI. Considering the recency of EMI in Brazilian higher education institutions and the relative autonomy of academics to introduce this practice, it is important to consider what kind of concerns they have and what kind of language policy can best address them.

Thus, in the study reported in this article, we investigated the perceptions of academics and students, in two state-funded universities, relating to this recent trend towards internationalization, and in particular, their concerns regarding the unintended consequences of English as a medium of Instruction (EMI). The personal voices of the academics presented here will hopefully provide some insights into their experiences and into the attitudes evoked by EMI and help us think critically when adopting EMI in our contexts. The range of perceptions and concerns, with negative overtones, that were identified included the following: the negative impact on learning, language hierarchization, the emotional aspect of EMI (*e.g.*, confidence in using English), low student enrollment, exclusion, (re) production of inequality, impact on identity and collegiality. Given these results, we argue, in concordance with Kirkpatrick (2014), for addressing EMI from a lingua franca perspective and for valuing multilingual approaches and resources in this context. We start by briefly presenting some research on academics’ experiences, attitudes and perceptions of EMI. Then, we present the methodology of our study. It was part of a larger exploratory study that had the overall objective of investigating EMI policies, attitudes and practices from an English as a Lingua Franca perspective in two state-funded Brazilian universities (Gimenez *et. al.*, 2020). We present the data focusing on the unintended consequences of using EMI. We then end the article discussing the need to find ways to address such consequences.

1 Research on experiences and perceptions of EMI

A good deal of research in EMI has focused on attitudinal reactions and perceptions of non-native English-speaking academics to EMI. This research shows that although many academics feel positive towards the introduction of EMI in their programs, they are still concerned about the challenges they face. For instance, a review carried out by Galloway (2020) reports perceived benefits related to increasing revenue and institutional rankings, developing language competencies student and staff employability and increased access to teaching materials. However, challenges were also identified. With regard to implementation, the challenges included increased workload, lack of pedagogical guidelines and simplification of

academic content, along with challenges in hiring staff to teach in English and communication problems faced by the administrative staff when dealing with international students. In a similar vein, Block (2021) discusses the impact on an academic's ability to question some assumptions underpinning EMI policies, *e.g.*, the assumption that they are neutral, coherent, disembodied, knowledge-driven and always good. One academic that he interviewed felt an impact on her sense of identity and said that she felt diminished when she had to teach in English and experienced fear when having to do so.

A recent focus of EMI research has been on the role of multilingualism in the classroom, especially on the advantages of a multilingual perspective in EMI teaching. Recent studies in English-speaking countries and postcolonial settings have suggested that attitudes towards L1 use in EMI are becoming more positive, with multilingual resources being accepted or actively promoted in the classroom².

However, this is not necessarily the case in other EMI contexts where the learning of English has been seen as foreign language learning or where English is used mainly as a lingua franca. One aspect of tension in academics' reports of their attitudes towards EMI is the use of L1 in the classroom. Despite all the research showing the advantages of a multilingual classroom, the overall understanding seems to be oriented towards running EMI classes completely in English. In Spain, for instance, Breeze and Roothoof (2021) report that, in a study of 60 academics, almost half believed using the L1 in EMI is not allowed and resorted to it in class only in specific situations (as a form of support for a student to enhance understanding, to provide emotional support or to assist in some other way). A range of factors had variable impact on these attitudes, such as previous teaching experience, difference across disciplines, teachers' perceived language skills and even age.

Kirkpatrick (2014) has raised some areas of concern related to the use of EMI. The first relates to the fact that forcing students to use a language which is not their first language, especially one in which they are unlikely to have as great a level of proficiency as in their first language, can have an impact on their content learning. The second concern raised by Kirkpatrick is that it may seriously disadvantage students if universities do not ensure that they also provide systematic ongoing English development courses which are integral to a student's degree. The third concern that he raises relates to the disadvantages that students may face when learning through a language that is not their first. These disadvantages can be exacerbated by two common aspects of policy implementation: the insistence on an English-only policy and the fact that the English accepted is generally based on a native speaker model. Thus, Kirkpatrick stresses that universities, which have adopted EMI programs, need to revise their policies and allow for: (1.) the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF); and (2) the encouragement of bi-and multilingualism.

2 Methodology

The data generated for this study was part of a larger exploratory study³ that had the overall objective of investigating EMI policies, attitudes and practices from an English as a Lingua Franca perspective in two state-funded Brazilian universities (Gimenez *et al.*, 2020). The two state-funded univer-

² (ELTJ special issue; Channa (2012) in Pakistan, or Marie (2013) in Rwanda).

³ Ethics Committee approval CAEE 04178918.8.0000.5231, dated January 30, 2019.

sities are located in Paraná, a state in the south of Brazil. They were created about five decades ago and are both ranked among the 50 best universities in Latin America. They are also the two largest and most prestigious ones from that state⁴.

When our research was conducted, these universities had adopted slightly different EMI strategies and were at different stages of EMI implementation. Both institutions had official language policy documents reflecting their internationalization policy. The status of the documents differed, with Institution B having specific resolutions approved by the University Council and Institution A making an addendum to existing legislation (in the case of the internationalization policy) or assigning a provisional role to the document (in the case of the language policy). These documents date from 2018, due to the development of a requirement by funding agencies that institutions should have official documents outlining their internationalization and language policies in order to apply for funding. Therefore, the initiatives to institutionalize the role of languages in internationalization were externally-driven, especially in the context of the calls from the CAPES-PrInt and the Languages without Borders programs. These agencies were acknowledged as strong drivers of the local EMI initiatives by the research participants.

The English language appeared in Institution B's internationalization policy, with an explicit reference to English as a lingua franca (ELF), and an indication that this might help the interactions with speakers of other languages. The official endorsement of ELF at this level of policy-making suggests that Institution B acknowledged the variability of English and its widespread use by non-native speakers and placed it within a multilingualism perspective.

In order to answer the research questions of the original study⁵, and upon approval of the ethics committees of both universities, we generated data using an online questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, between April and June 2019. Classroom observations were outside the scope of the project, but we were able to attend two EMI classes and one EMI workshop held in institution B during that period, in order to develop a better perspective for the data analysis. Institution A had no EMI classes at the time the research was conducted (first semester of 2019).

Considering the lack of systematic information about EMI offered in Institution A, in order to identify possible research participants, emails were sent to the coordinators of the graduate programs (this approach was endorsed by the University Graduate Office). The message informed them about the research objectives and asked them to forward the questionnaire (available in Portuguese on Google forms) to academics who had an interest in participating in the research and who had already taught courses in English or were willing to start teaching in English. This was considered necessary to guarantee that the research participants would have some engagement with EMI. At Institution B, the International Cooperation Office provided a list of academics who were teaching in English, since they had a database of those academics. We then sent a message to these academics with an invitation to take part in the study.

⁴ According to the World University Rankings 2023, UEL. Available at: <https://www.aen.pr.gov.br/Noticia/Universidades-estaduais-do-Parana-voltam-aparecer-com-destaque-em-ranking-internacional>. Accessed on: 23 mar 2023.

⁵ 1. What is the institutional (implicit or explicit) language policy in relation to English? 2. How does EMI fit into the institutional language policy? What kind of institutional support is given to EMI? 3. What language ideologies are informing the EMI institutional initiative? How do they relate to ELF? 4. What are the lecturers and students' attitudes towards EMI? Is EMI a source of (dis)empowerment? 5. What kind of challenges do lecturers and students identify in relation to the implementation of EMI? 6. What is the role of English and Portuguese in the classroom? What do they reveal about the language skills required in this context?

The questionnaire had three sections: (a) personal information; (b) EMI experience; (c) opinion on a series of statements using a Likert scale (1-5). We obtained 19 responses: 12 from Institution A and 7 from Institution B, as shown in Table 1. Although our objective was not to adopt a quantitative approach, those responses indicated that a very small proportion of academics were involved or interested in EMI in both institutions (less than 0,01%). Institution A had 49 graduate programs and Institution B 54 programs at the time of data collection.

Table1: Academics with interest in EMI who answered the questionnaires

Disciplinary areas	Institution A	Institution B
Electrical Engineering	Male	
Physiological Sciences	2 female	
Law	Female	
Food Science	Female	
Agronomy	Female	
Microbiology	Female	
Nursing	Female	
Veterinary Science	Female	
Biochemistry		Male
Animal Husbandry		Male
Computer Science		Male
Physiotherapy	Female	
Health Sciences		Female
Economics		Male
Physical education	Male	Female
Business Administration		Female
Discipline not identified	1	
Total	12 (2 male, 9 female, 1 NI)	7 (3 male, 4 female)

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in English or Portuguese with three academics who had taught in English in the past and with five academics who were teaching in English during the first semester of 2019, as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Interviewees who had adopted EMI in the past

Disciplinary area	Institution A	Institution B
Health Sciences		Female
Pharmacy		Female
Experimental Pathology	Male	

Table 3: Interviewees who taught EMI courses in 2019-1

Institution	Course	Gender
Institution B	Bacteriophages as an alternative for innovation of diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases	Female
Institution B	Economic Sociology and Sociology of Markets	Male
Institution B	Research Day in Neuroscience (lectures)	2 male
Institution A	Research Day in Neuroscience	Male

Also, fourteen graduate students from Institution B took part in the research. They were from three different academic fields: Bioscience applied to Pharmacology, Accountancy and Pharmacy. Data was gathered in focus groups with students from the same area.

For the wider project, the aim of the interviews was to gain insights into the participants' perceptions of the use of English as a medium of instruction and whether a lingua franca perspective⁶ was guiding their practices. Two validation workshops were held: one in Institution A and another at Institution B, with the purpose of presenting the initial research findings and holding focus group meetings. The group meetings were led by the researchers and involved different participants: (a) graduate students who were attending EMI courses in Institution B, and (b) academics and language teachers responsible for English language classes offered by the institutions with the support of a governmental program - Paraná Speaks English⁷.

The graduate student focus groups (average length 40 minutes, N = 14) aimed at investigating their perspectives on their experience in EMI classes and in other activities associated with internationalization, as well as their opinion about English in this process. The participants in the validation workshop focus groups (21 in Institution A and 22 in Institution B) shared their impressions on internationalization policies and the use of English in this process. During these focus groups, a selection of three quotes, taken

⁶ By English as a Lingua Franca we mean the use of English as a contact language for the communication of speakers from different linguistic backgrounds.

⁷ Parana Speaks English is a strategic program from the state of Paraná (Brazil) that aims at developing the language proficiency of the academic community for internationalization activities by offering language courses free of cost.

from the questionnaire responses, with contrasting approaches to the use of Portuguese in EMI classes, were given to them to comment. These focus groups lasted for approximately one hour. Both interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

For this article, we have conducted a thematic analysis. This has been guided by the following research questions: (1.) For the academics and students involved in these focus groups, what were the perceived effects of EMI provision? (2.) What future effects did they anticipate? The transcripts were read individually by each researcher and the thematic categories emerged from these individual readings. Here, we concentrate on the concerns expressed by both students and teachers regarding the unintended consequences of EMI. These were the themes that had negative overtones. They included: the negative impact on learning, language hierarchization, the emotional impact (lack of confidence in using English), low student enrollment, exclusion, (re) production of inequality, impact on identity and collegiality. This set of categories emerged after each individual researcher had analyzed the same data extract and reached 100% agreement. For the purpose of this article, when presenting excerpts from the interviews and focus groups, participants are identified as A for academics and S for the students, followed by a number. In reproducing excerpts from the data, we have not translated them, we have maintained the original language used, without editing. We believe this is in tune with the theoretical framework that acknowledges the legitimacy of people's language practices.

4 Findings and discussion

The overall finding in our study was that, although the academics who were participating felt reasonably positive about the introduction of English and the increase in its use in their programs, and found ways of coping, EMI generated a range of challenges and concerns for some. The concerns expressed by academics and students form the focus of this article.

One of the unintended consequences of using EMI related to the fact that the use of English exacerbated difficulty in learning content. That is, although language learning is one element in EMI classes, the participants demonstrated concerns related to **content learning**. The academics and the student participants worried about content complexity (even when taught in Portuguese), and about “missing some information about the content learned” during the classes:

Excerpt 1:

A2: [...] *I was worried about the level of English. How, could we professors try to be understood by the student? Because depending on the content it is so hard in Portuguese. And then, I thought: if it is too hard in Portuguese, if they have some difficulties to understand Portuguese, how can they deal with this content in English?* (Focus group, Institution A)

Excerpt 2:

S1: *Uma desvantagem que pode ser é que haja uma perda de conteúdo por parte do aluno, às vezes você entende algo naquele entendimento dinâmico e você deixa passar algum detalhe que seja importante.* (Focus Group with the students - Institution B)

Excerpt 3:

S2: [...] *E desvantagem, não sei, talvez perder alguma informação, talvez não acompanhar alguma coisa....* [...] (Focus Group with the students-Institution B)

As we can observe in these three first excerpts 1-3, both academics and students showed some concerns related to content learning in EMI classes. They were not sure if students would be able to follow classes in English to learn the content - that is the main aim of EMI (content learning). These concerns are not unique to the Brazilian context. Kirkpatrick (2014) has argued that in contexts where students are unlikely to have a great level of proficiency, learning in English may seriously disadvantage students.

In our data, it seems that a multilingual approach to EMI was favored as a way to diminish this feeling as students and academics were able to use their first language as a resource to better understand the content. The participants understood that if EMI is implemented as “100% in English”, it may not be totally beneficial:

Excerpt 4:

A3: [...] *totalmente em inglês não tenho certeza se é tão benéfico porque o nível de proficiência em inglês que a gente requer é requisito deles, não sei se é exatamente o suficiente para o cara desenvolver uma disciplina em inglês e aproveitar 100%, então acaba que em português ele consegue se expressar melhor, você consegue identificar melhor as dificuldades dele e falar “é uma dificuldade de conhecimento, não é uma dificuldade de idioma”. Então eu não sei se é 100% benéfico pra gente.* (Interview, A3, Institution B)

In this excerpt, it seems that A3 is skeptical in relation to English being advantageous. He seems to take a realistic view of the teachers and students' skills in English and is concerned about the inequalities that may result from an English-only policy. Indeed, Kirkpatrick (2014) pointed out that an English-only policy may lead to serious implications, with students feeling they can only consult materials that are written in English and believing that materials written in a language other than English are not as scholarly or as important as those written in English. The same participant argues for the use of L1 in EMI classes: He also argues that although the students have to read texts in English, when they are in class and have to interact, the context changes, and therefore, classes in Portuguese may be more conducive to learning:

Excerpt 5:

A3: *Então, eu acho que o aprendizado deles em português... apesar de eles terem que ler artigos em inglês, você processar a ideia e se expressar no seu idioma é outra coisa.* (Interview, A3, Health Sciences, Institution B)

Views like this on the need for a multilingual approach echo Kirkpatrick's (2014) claim that the disadvantages regarding the learning of content in English may be exacerbated by insistence on the use of English-only. There is also empirical research that has shown that the use of L1 helps students with their learning of the L2 (Macaro, 2009), as well as the learning of content, because it can help make the content comprehensible. Another study by Calvo *et al* (2022) has shown that all their participants considered using

a multilingual approach (mixing Portuguese and English) in class to be beneficial, with some of them questioning an English-only approach, arguing that it did not facilitate student learning.

In addition, there is wider research, based on multilingual classroom settings, which has demonstrated that translanguaging needs to be encouraged, so that students can use all their linguistic resources in the learning process (Kirkpatrick, 2014). This research is in consonance with heteroglossic views of language and dynamic concepts of bilingualism (Garcia, 2009).

Worries related to content learning were echoed in the contributions made by the students participating in this study. They pointed out that the EMI classes demanded more concentration, dedication, attention and effort. For example, S1, in Excerpt 6 below, says that, because of this extra attention and effort, he learns the content in a deeper way.

Excerpt 6:

S1: [...] *No início você ainda tem muita dificuldade, tem que estar 100% focado, prestando atenção.* [...]
 [...]

 S3: *Acho que requer o dobro de dedicação, né? A gente aprender o inglês e aprender os conceitos que a gente vai discutir* [...]
 [...]

 S1: *O esforço que você dedica é maior, e a fixação em contrapartida também fica maior. Aí a questão é que você lê com mais atenção já que são termos técnicos do idioma, às vezes da área que você tá pesquisando, então assim, esse esforço maior ao menos pra mim acaba gerando uma fixação maior quando é em inglês.* ((Focus Group with students, Institution B)

Because students have to make extra efforts to learn the content in EMI classes, devoting more attention, dedication and concentration to the content, the academics also have to adopt different pedagogical strategies to deal with this increase in difficulty, as we see in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 7:

A7: [...] *eu já tive a experiência da disciplina anterior e aí o que eu tive que fazer, eu adaptei a disciplina. O que significa ajustar a disciplina? Diminuir o número de textos, né, trabalhar um texto por aula, né e o EMI me ajudou, o que eu fiz, coloquei esse tipo de discussão em grupo, pra tentar fazer com que eles trabalhassem com o Inglês de uma outra maneira. Porque se eu esperasse que eles só falassem sobre o texto mesmo antes deles discutirem entre eles, talvez ficasse meio difícil. Usei algumas daquelas ferramentas lá que eu tive no curso lá do EMI pra tentar ajudar. Isso ajudou muito. Tanto aqui quanto na outra disciplina ajudou bastante. O que eu acabei fazendo aqui é, deixar o curso mais introdutório ainda, um curso de sociologia econômica bem introdutório, bem básico* (Interview, A7, Institution B)

Another unintended consequence has to do with **language hierarchization**. As we have highlighted in a previous study (Gimenez *et al.*, 2022), English is often portrayed as the natural language of science, as “the obvious choice” at higher education level (Kirkpatrick, 2014), and one that is “perfect” for publication, while Portuguese is generally portrayed as the language to be used when you feel “stuck”. Such views contribute to the idea that English is more desirable and more valuable than the other languages. Language hierarchization in higher education and non-critical acceptance of such language hierarchies con-

tribute to the ways in which the status and value of English and Portuguese are constructed. Strategic language choices in favor of Portuguese can act as a means of challenging these language ideological processes.

In our data, there are few examples of how language choices have been challenging dominant representations of the value of English vis-à-vis other languages: rather, most of the time the participants maintained and reinforced the representation that English is more valuable than other languages. The student accounts portrayed in Excerpt 8 exemplify this. Through the metaphor “pedra no sapato” (literally, “a stone in the shoe”), for example, S4 reinforces the view that English is something that you have to learn, even though you do not want to; and S5 claims that “you have no choice” but to learn English.

Excerpt 8:

S4: *Acho que é uma pedra no sapato que a gente tem que aprender a... não tem jeito.*

[...]

S5: *Não tem escolha. Eu não gosto de inglês, se eu pudesse gostar o meu dinheiro em outra língua eu iria fazer espanhol, mas se eu fizer espanhol na minha vida acadêmica não vai servir pra nada, a não ser pra recreação, então é uma coisa que tem que fazer.* (Focus Group with students, Institution B)

The views of these two students echo the idea of EMI as an unstoppable train (Macaro, 2015), in which teaching in English seems to be the central defining feature of the degree of internationalization (Jordão *et al.* 2021). The two students appear to be resigned to this fact and suggested that “there is nothing you can do about it”. At the same time, they made it clear that they were not comfortable with this situation.

Concern was also expressed about **emotional aspects** of EMI, especially related to **confidence in using the language**. Feeling the pressure of teaching in English for external evaluation processes, some academics accepted the challenge of having to do so even though they felt embarrassed about their level of proficiency. For example, in the following excerpt, A8 reports the tension between feeling relieved that he could use English in his teaching and being embarrassed about his command of the language:

Excerpt 9:

A8: *I don't know, I feel ashamed because my English is not perfect, I know that but I can communicate, yes? And when I was living in Germany my colleagues were PhD students and all day they tried to correct me, and I felt ashamed. But, at the same time, I feel lucky because I can speak in English, not perfect, but I can. [...] but I felt, hmm... I felt bad because they speak English better than me.* (Focus group, validation workshop, Institution B)

The emotional impact of engaging in EMI has also been portrayed in other studies (Marson, 2022; Pun; Thomas, 2020; Sah, 2023). For example, Pun and Thomas (2020) stress that the ‘English’ in EMI is often the main challenge. In the same research, Pun and Thomas point out that the most prevalent strategy reported as a means of dealing with this challenge is the use of L1. In another study with academics, Marson (2002) points out that academics reported insecurity when teaching due to their level of English. In a further study conducted by Sah (2023), in Nepal, with students from different disciplines, we learn that students who did not have an EMI schooling background felt negative emotions, such as shame and anxiety, in their day-to-day learning experience. The article concludes with the following observation: “the

neoliberal desire for EMI can create a discourse of mixed emotions, also leading to emotional challenges and discrimination against some students” (Sah, 2023, p. 1).

Another unintended consequence is that **language choice affects student enrolment**, that is, EMI limits students’ enrolment and participation. Academics in both institutions in our study, reported very low student enrolment in their English-medium courses, with only 5 or 6 students signing up, and generally some convincing was needed by the academics involved or by program coordinators. As we see in the excerpts below, several academics in our study reported that students were “afraid of the language” (A9, Institution B - Excerpt 10), afraid of using the language in a written evaluation (A1, Institution A) and lacked proficiency (A7, Institution B).

Excerpt 10:

A9: Eu tive cinco alunos de graduação em farmácia, e esse é outro limitante. As pessoas tem medo da língua. As pessoas tem medo de fazer uma disciplina em inglês. Então quando eu ofereci, eu achei que eu fosse – não sabia nem se eu ia conseguir por a disciplina a rodar. Então, consegui botar com cinco alunos, e foi uma experiência interessante porque o que eu percebi? Que as dificuldades que os alunos tiveram com a disciplina sendo dada em inglês eram exatamente as mesmas que os alunos tinham com a disciplina dada em Português. (A9, Interview, Institution B)

Excerpt 11:

A1: At first, they were like “in English??” and they looked at the schedule, went to my office and asked “in English?? Will we have an evaluation? Will we have to write in English? How is it going to be??” so I explained them how would it be and they were okay – “The evaluation will be the presentation, we will have to discuss an article...” so they were like “Oh, okay... we won’t have to write anything.” [laughs] And they I had only 6, but I think that 6 is a good number to start. (A1, Workshop panel, Institution A)

Excerpt 12:

A9: E aí como abriu para alunos não regulares, aconteceu o que eu imaginava que ia acontecer, só um outro aluno regular se matriculou, também por um certo convencimento da coordenadora do programa por saber que é importante oferecer disciplina em inglês, a gente já tinha tentado ano passado, não conseguimos oferecer. E aí eu recebi as outras inscrições (inaudível) e outras 5 alunas não regulares. E eles tinham sido informados que a disciplina era em Inglês muitos deles sem ter fluência as notas do ANPAD baixas, mas eu achei melhor aceitar, porque na minha experiência anterior, mesmo os alunos que não tinham nota tão boa conseguiram participar, conseguiram levar, né. Já tinha funcionado muito bem. Dos 5, uma desistiu e ficaram 4. (A9, Interview, Institution B)

As we can see from these excerpts, a course taught only in English had a negative impact on student enrolment. One way to deal with this challenge is to offer a bilingual course so the students and the professor do not feel so anxious about language use in class and, before enrolling for the course, the students would know that use of Portuguese would be permitted and welcome in class. In Brazil, most students are Brazilians who speak Portuguese and there are few international students, so it is difficult to avoid Portuguese in classroom interactions.

Sah (2022) carried out interviews with various EMI researchers from different settings. In one of these interviews, Martinez (a Brazilian researcher) acknowledges that, in Brazil, because professors and students share the same language, English and Portuguese can be used in the classroom. For the author, “a useful role for languages other than English, or how languages other than English are used is also a very interesting research agenda moving forward” (Martinez in interview for Sah, 2022, p. 129).

A related consequence of low student enrolment is inequality. Several academics in our study anticipated that some students *would be left out*, because in Brazil, most of those who have a relatively good command of the English language come from the elite:

Excerpt 13:

A10: Of course, there are people who are just a little bit lazy, so taking up challenges is not their favorite idea. But I can think of a different reason, one that is common, especially in the humanities department, which is the idea that EMI can make the university the territory of the elite, because we are a monolingual country. (Focus group, Institution A)

Excerpt 14:

A11: Então, é que eu acho o inglês uma língua muito elitizada na verdade, por que estar... por exemplo, estar aqui na faculdade já elitizado, então já diminui o número assim de pessoas, de estar inclusas, então o número de pessoas que estudam aqui e falam inglês é menor ainda. Então eu acho que esse é o único problema. (Focus group, Institution A)

Excerpt 15:

A12: Quem não desenvolve, acaba se auto excluindo desse sistema que já existe, ou é excluído do sistema. Depende da perspectiva. (A12, Interview, Institution B)

Lack of access to English seems to be the determining factor for the **feeling of exclusion**. The excerpts that follow also refer to the unequal distribution of English among Brazilian students. A3, Institution B (Excerpt 16) remarks that, typically, higher levels of proficiency are not required because of the impact on enrollment and students want to appear to be “good students”. The academic represented in Excerpt 17 (A13, Institution A) echoes this and points out that, in Brazil, the emphasis on the learning of English is generally in the private sector and those who can afford this type of education have higher proficiency levels. The academic featured in Excerpt 18 (A4, Institution B) comments on the need for a minimum level of English so students can follow the courses on offer.

Excerpt 16:

A3: E vai ter pouca gente, por quê? Justamente por causa dessa parte do nível, porque se a gente pegar “não vamos cobrar um nível de proficiência maior” os alunos não vão entrar e daí não quer dizer que ele não é um bom aluno, ele simplesmente não sabe inglês daquele nível. (A3, Interview, Institution B)

Excerpt 17:

A13: *Eu tenho ideia de que eles não iriam se sentir, sei lá, confortáveis... Por que não têm conhecimento. Muitas vezes também eu acho que fica difícil para eles irem atrás de poder aprender o inglês, por que ou você aprende nas escolas particulares, que é caro, e aqui dentro da Instituição A tem o que? Tem o IsF e o Paraná fala Inglês. (A13, Focus group, Institution A)*

Excerpt 18 :

A4: [...] *as vezes quando é muito técnico, acho que acaba dificultando, um pouco, porque se o aluno, ele não tem esse inglês pelo menos técnico, fica difícil. Ai a aula parece que não evolui, sabe. Ele tem essa dificuldade, que eu vi que os professores que tavam ministrando sentiram e também nivelar os alunos né porque se a gente já abre uma disciplina assim em inglês como eu falei você eu fiz corte pra tentar ter que os alunos, que todos conseguissem cursar, pelo menos entender e compreender dentro da disciplina. Mas a gente percebe se a gente não faz isso, você tem aluno que não sabe nada em inglês, que se inscreve na disciplina e não tem condições de tá fazendo.*

R: *então você acha que tem que ter um nível de proficiência mínimo? Pros alunos cursarem a disciplina*

A4: *Tem, tem que ter. Se a gente não tem, não vai. Eles não acompanham. (A4, Interview, Institution B)*

Thus, as we can see from some of the excerpts above and below, one serious unintended consequence of EMI, is therefore, the danger of **(re)producing inequalities**. That is, the imposition of mandatory courses in EMI can lead to deeper inequalities in the Brazilian higher education scenario (A3, Institution B, Excerpt 19).

Excerpt 19:

A3: *Na verdade, concordo que possa reforçar a desigualdade. Se for obrigatório e se for 100 %. (A3, Interview, Institution B)*

Those who have not had the opportunity to learn English to a higher level before entering university should not be required to attend courses taught in English. In Excerpt 20, S2 mentions “multiple barriers”, citing EMI as one type of barrier (S2, Focus Group with students, Institution B).

Excerpt 20:

S2: *Tem muita barreira ainda né? Igual essa palestra dela mesmo, da P, eu que to responsável pela divulgação do curso do active learning, então muitos mandaram mensagem perguntando se seria em português ou inglês. Então..... pergunta é.. **só vou fazer se não for em inglês.** (S2, Focus Group with students, Institution B, our emphasis)*

Another unintended consequence of EMI is the **impact on students' identities**, especially when they opt for non-participation. In Excerpt 21, another student comments on how EMI may shape identities because not engaging in EMI classes might lead to the students being seen as young people who do not want challenges, who are insecure, or who feel discouraged and thus unmotivated.

Excerpt 21:

S6: *É que, infelizmente, já que não é uma parcela tão pequena assim, eu falo pela minha experiência de vida, porque tem muita gente que ela se sente desencorajada, ela é insegura, então a partir disso ela evita de verdade então ela se sente insegura e ela acaba se afastando, e infelizmente esse tipo de pessoa elas também tendem a motivar outras pessoas a se desinteressarem também. Elas falam “ai não, mas vai ser tudo muito difícil, se vai realmente conseguir, se acha que dá conta?”. Esse tipo de pessoa acaba desencorajando, eu já vi infelizmente casos assim e eu acabo pensando as pessoas não estão seguras também já vão tender a isso aí.* (S6, Focus Group with students, Institution B)

We documented similar consequences regarding **the identities of academics**. Academics who engaged with EMI generally portrayed themselves as people who “accepted the challenge”, “who studied a lot”, “who practiced EMI” (A4, Institution B) and those who were bold enough to teach in English no matter what their level of English was (A1, Institution A). These accounts represented academics’ identities as people who had faced the challenge, and “done the job”.

Excerpt 22:

A1: *She was the one who was asking me, incentivizing me to teach in English and she was [unintelligible] enough [laughs]. And she (P1) teaches a very difficult class about microbiology, for me it’s a very difficult topic, and she just doesn’t care if she says anything wrong, she just doesn’t care, and I think “She is right!”, “If she can do it, I can do it too.” So, she offered a special topic, not a course in the [unintelligible], she defined a topic and told me that this year she is planning to do it again. And now I have to ask her “Let’s do it again!”, so this is my turn.* (A1, Workshop panel, Institution A)

Excerpt 23:

A4: *[...] que aceitam o desafio, porque não é fácil. Eu precisei estudar muito, e até praticar meu inglês, que já estava meio enferrujado, pra poder ministrar a disciplina. E vejo também em relação a funcionários, técnicos, como é que vai lidar com esse sistema então eu acho que é essencial.* (A4, Interview, Institution B)

There were also academics who did not engage with EMI. These members of staff were represented as academics who are “stuck”, who “do not want to change” and “do not care” (A1, Institution A) and as people who “are afraid to be judged” (A3, Institution B).

Excerpt 24:

A1: *I think they are stuck. “It’s working the way I’m doing, why change? I don’t want to change, I don’t want to have another problem.” And now I understand them. In this specific moment we are having problems because a lot of professors are retiring from the department. 5 of them have retired, so we are in a small number, so we have a lot of things to do and it’s like one more thing to do, so they don’t want to change. And before that, it was because of... I don’t know, they just don’t care. It’s like that, they don’t care. I tried to explain to them the importance because I was working on the project related to my speech and, in all meetings, I asked them about internationalization, “we have to do this, we have to improve that”, but they didn’t want to... And they told me “You are young! You have this spirit to do that. I’m old, I will keep doing the way I’m doing...”* (A1, Workshop panel, Institution A)

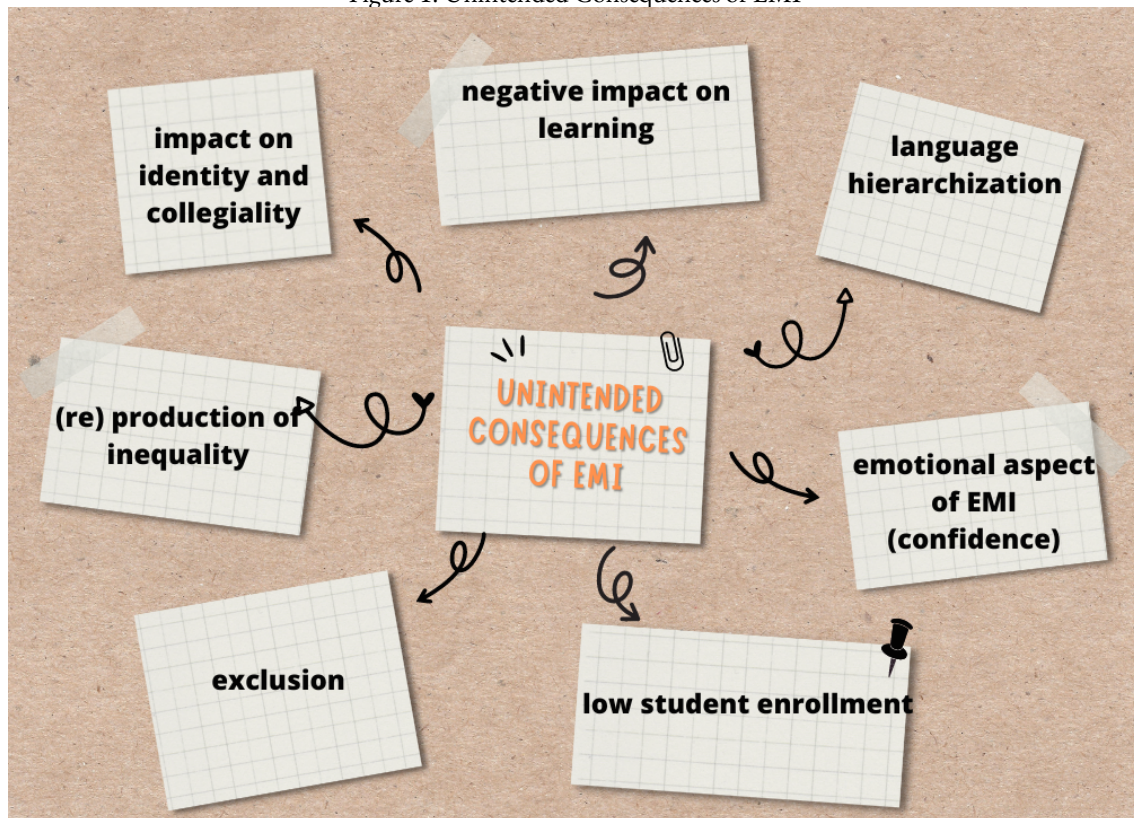
As we see in Excerpt 24, the academics in our study assumed their own identities, and positioned others, in relation to EMI and classified themselves and others through the use of the pronouns “We” and “They”. Drawing on Derrida, Silva (2012) affirms that the most common form of classification is binary opposition. In the last two excerpts above, the participants simply divided their academic world into two symmetrical groups– with the “we” group always being privileged. The research participants in the ‘we group’ were the ones who were implementing EMI” and so those in this group were positioned as those who internationalize, who try and innovate, while those who do not are the ones who “hold back innovation”. Such demarcation of difference “is the key component of any classification system” (Woodward, 2011, p. 41), as in order to affirm the primacy of one identity, it seems necessary to not only place it in opposition to another identity but to also claim that it is “real”, “authentic”, “pure” or simply better than the other. These ways of characterizing and contrasting academics’ identities in local contexts can have negative consequences for collegiality. It can also reinforce the view of English in EMI as an emblem of innovation and as the language associated with scientific excellence, thereby reinforcing the hierarchization of languages.

Final thoughts

In this article, we have shown how we investigated the perceptions of academics and students, focusing on their concerns and on the unintended consequences of adopting English as a medium of Instruction (EMI). By bringing to the fore the personal voices of the academics and students at two state-funded universities, we aimed at highlighting the issues that should be taken into account when choosing to use English as a medium of Instruction.

Our data analysis showed that academics and students do worry about the implementation of EMI, and its unintended consequences. To the participants in our study, the most harmful consequences include the negative impact on learning the academic content, the impact on staff and student sense of identity, the emotional aspects of EMI (related mostly to confidence in using English), low levels of student enrollment and the danger of excluding those students who have not had privileged access to English prior to university entrance – a factor that might well reinforce the (re) production of inequality.

Figure 1: Unintended Consequences of EMI



Source: The authors

Based on these results, we concur with scholars such as Kirkpatrick (2014), Calvo *et al.* (2022) and Marson (2023) regarding the importance of addressing EMI from a lingua franca perspective. We would also argue that multilingual approaches and resources should be valued in this context as ways of dealing with the concerns related to language in university education in Brazil and reducing the dangers of exclusion. Bilingual courses could also be an option. This could involve the use of different languages in texts and in talk in university classrooms. This would also be a way to challenge the view of EMI as being 100% in English.

Taking this idea further, we suggest that there are examples of ways forward in recent research into translanguaging and into the fluid language practices observed amongst people in multilingual settings outside institutional contexts. As García and Lin (2016) have argued, pedagogical approaches that build on and foster such practices could play a central role in university classes where participants can use all their linguistic and semiotic resources in their day-to-day meaning-making.

Also, when applying an ELF perspective on EMI, speakers using English as a lingua franca can construe their participation and language performance in a different way. As Jenkins (2018) has put it: “good English in ELF contexts is not related to its native-likeness... no one user’s way of using English is intrinsically better than another user’s: it all depends on how effective they are as communicators in their specific ELF interaction contexts” (Jenkins, 2018, p. 13).

Finally, we argue for a critical perspective on EMI, demanding that university staff should discuss their language education policies and provide room for fostering debate and different narratives on the implications of adopting EMI. Kirkpatrick (2014) highlights that most of the unintended consequences of EMI are due lack of understanding among the policy makers who push for English only-policy. Collective spaces should be created that allow academics and students to think about the role and nature of EMI.

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