International Student Mobility as a promoter of educational and institutional ties: the case of the Confucius Institutes in Brazil

Mobilidade Estudantil Internacional como promotora de laços educacionais e institucionais: o caso dos Institutos Confúcio no Brasil

La movilidad estudiantil internacional como promotora de vínculos educativos e institucionales: el caso de los Institutos Confucio en Brasil

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Abstract

This article uses the social studies of science and technology (STS) analytical framework. It intends to fill a gap in the literature, observing the subject case-by-case, among mainly Brazilian issues, while relating this data to the international literature on the subject of Confucius Institutes and international student mobility. This study covers an unprecedented and recent topic in the area of international student mobility, which can contribute to outreach activities in Brazilian universities, improve diplomatic relations between Brazil and China, and university outreach projects with an interdisciplinary and Latin American focus. A qualitative and quantitative perspective was developed considering bibliometric maps for interdisciplinary studies, which can contribute to future perspectives, especially in science, technology, and society research.

Keywords: Confucius Institute, International Student Mobility, Higher Education, Mandarin

Resumo

Este artigo recorre ao quadro analítico da área de Estudos Sociais da Ciência e Tecnologia. Pretende-se preencher uma lacuna na literatura, observando o assunto caso a caso, entre fatos principalmente brasileiros, ao mesmo tempo que se relacionam esses dados com a literatura internacional sobre o tema dos Institutos Confúcio e da Mobilidade Estudantil Internacional. Este estudo é um tema inédito e recente na área de Mobilidade Estudantil Internacional, que pode contribuir não apenas para as atividades de extensão das universidades brasileiras, mas também para o aprimoramento das relações diplomáticas entre Brasil e China e para projetos de extensão universitária com enfoque interdisciplinar com foco na América Latina. Metodologicamente, desenvolveu-se uma perspectiva qualitativa mas também quantitativa, considerando mapas bibliométricos para estudos interdisciplinares, que podem contribuir para perspectivas futuras, especialmente na área de Ciência, Tecnologia e Sociedade.

Palavras-chave: *Instituto Confúcio, Mobilidade Estudantil Internacional, Ensino Superior, Mandarim*

Resumen

Este artículo utiliza el marco analítico procedente del área de Estudios Sociales de la Ciencia y la Tecnología (CTS). Pretende-se llenar un vacío en la literatura, observando el tema caso por caso, entre hechos principalmente brasileños, al mismo tiempo, conectando estos datos con la literatura internacional sobre los Institutos Confucio y la Movilidad Estudiantil Internacional. Este estudio es un tema reciente y sin precedentes en el área de la Movilidad Estudiantil Internacional, que puede contribuir no solo a las actividades de extensión de las universidades brasileñas, sino también a la mejora de las relaciones diplomáticas entre Brasil y China y a los proyectos de extensión universitaria con enfoque interdisciplinario. Metodológicamente, se desarrolló una perspectiva cualitativa pero también cuantitativa considerando mapas bibliométricos para estudios interdisciplinarios, que pueden contribuir a perspectivas futuras, especialmente en el área de Ciencia, Tecnología y Sociedad.

Palabras clave: *Instituto Confucio, Movilidad Estudiantil Internacional, Educación Superior, Mandarín*

1. Introduction

The topic of internationalization of education in Brazil and Latin America has aroused the interest of several researchers (Maués & Bastos, 2017; Chaves & Castro, 2016). Government initiatives to expand and improve the insertion and sharing of university experiences globally have been relevant but also the target of criticism. The focus of these internationalization policies needs to be expanded and improved so that Brazilian and Latin American university systems can fulfill their educational and social mission.

Thinking about the Confucius Institutes (CIs) means reflecting on the training of professionals from all areas, focusing on those who know the Chinese Language in an interdisciplinary way. They are professionals who can establish academic exchange with China and bring new and innovative knowledge to Brazil. In addition, such reflection directs the academic community to think about new ways of teaching and learning, students' ability to articulate internationally, in a plural, cooperative way, and be attentive to different perspectives and worldviews. Since 2004, China has created more than 700 Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms worldwide to promote its language and culture and thus shape its image, as Hu et al. (2022) point out. Despite this impressive number, the Confucius Institutes have yet

to be studied, especially in terms of their actual structure, mode of operation, and activities, as seen in an article by the present authors (Martinelli et al., 2022).

Establishing international cooperation is essential for institutions such as the Confucius Institutes, the development agencies that finance scholarships abroad, the Brazilian and Chinese consulates, the universities that organize these exchange programs, and students who leave the country to expand their academic curriculum by going abroad. As a result, foreign dialogue between countries is strengthened, which can boost the creation of new science, technology, and innovation policies and bilateral agreements. Clear public policies in academic exchange are essential for allowing access to international programs of international mobility, combating cultural racism, and promoting accessibility to the consulates that coordinate Brazil-China relations. Thereby, the expeditious hiring of local teachers is proposed, as is the speeding up of visa emissions and the general avoidance of bureaucracy for an activity as opportune as the Confucius Institutes (CIs), including with the Sino-Brazilian Commission of High Level of Concentration and Cooperation (COSBAN), the highest bilateral cooperation body coordinated by the respective vice presidents of Brazil and China (Paulino, 2019; Martinelli et al., 2022).

Some of the contributions of this article can be highlighted. First, this is the result of a Master's Dissertation carried out at the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCAR-Universidade Federal de São Carlos), which included a literature review done digitally and non-digitally, the latter usually from indications by field research actors, in addition to an analysis of documents suggested by the research actors. Second, this is an unprecedented and recent topic in the area of international mobility, which can contribute to the outreach activities of Brazilian universities, the improvement of diplomatic relations between Brazil and China, and university outreach projects with an interdisciplinary and Latin American focus (Martinelli et al., 2022). Third, at the methodological level, a qualitative perspective was used with a quantitative one for interdisciplinary studies, which can contribute to future studies, especially in Science, Technology, and Society (STS). Fourth, still at a methodological level, this article results from a crossing survey in the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases, using the VOSviewer software, with semi-structured interviews (Bernard, 2006) and content analysis of the articles (Bardin, 2016), resulting in a metanarrative analysis (Wong et al., 2013; Greenhalgh et al., 2005, 2022) that is, a systematic and content analysis (Bardin, 2011) (quali-quanti) of the literature covered. Finally, this article intends to fill a gap in the literature, observing the subject on a case-by-case basis, among prominent Brazilian cases, in a microphysical way, connecting these data

with the international literature on Confucius Institutes and international student mobility at the macro level. This crossing of perspectives does not seem to have been done yet.

2. Methods

This research started with the following question: How did International Student Mobility through CIs contribute to the performance of Brazilian public universities? Within this research, a multilevel analysis was carried out (focusing on the micro and macro levels), interweaving qualitative and quantitative viewpoints using mixed methods. Thus, the phenomena were observed at a macro level, through structural patterns and large-scale trends, bringing together elements of Economics and International Relations, but also at a micro level with the case study of CIs from UNESP and UNICAMP (Universidade Estadual de Campinas), using semi-structured interviews, document analysis on the institutions' websites between 2018 and 2022. It focused on the definition of the concept, the description of characteristics, and the identification of situations in which the combination of techniques was analytically desirable, based on the author's material made available through semi-structured interviews, which guided this empirical-theoretical search.

The main recommendations of the literature were considered and examples of concrete situations were used to illustrate how the triangulation of techniques can be used. Bibliographical and Bibliometrics studies were carried out to better understand academic exchange using keywords for this quantitative approach. The research focus was on the number of articles published per year on the subject, the theoretical niches that fit the selected keywords (Pritchard, 1969; Faria *et al.*, 2011; Martinelli *et al.*, 2022), and the content analysis of some of them (Bardin, 2016). The interviews (Bernard, 2006) were used as a guide to compose the literature review and the material made available by the research actors.

Denzin (1970, 2011) stated that combining different theories, methods, and data sources might help overcome the natural and humanistic bias that affects studies with a single studies modus operandi, single observer, and single theory approaches. The mixed methods approach is, in fact, the destiny of social sciences and interdisciplinary studies (Ostrom, 2007). Therefore, complex realities require systemic methods and perspectives that need to go beyond binary

standards to deal with them, especially in heterogeneous and asymmetric cases, as is the Brazilian case. Views that combine micro, meso, and macrophysical perspectives are needed to answer the questions that stand out.

Thus, a metanarrative approach is proposed (Greenhalgh, 2005, 2022 and Wong *et al.*, 2013), which combines systematic quantitative research with narrative research on the content (Bardin, 2016) of the articles found in the quantitative research databases. This methodology is widely used for interdisciplinary areas, review articles, and exploratory field research. The metanarrative method has been used in studies in the health area, widening the discussion (Day *et al.*, 2020; Sinclair *et al.*, 2017; Jenkins *et al.*, 2018; Vanderloo, 2014; Garvin & Eylis, 1997; Wong *et al.*, 2013; Greenhalgh *et al.*, 2005, 2022), as well as in different areas of knowledge, such as environmental studies (Fage-Butler *et al.*, 2022), literacy studies in Chinese culture (Li *et al.*, 2022), and sustainability and global governance (Billi, 2022).

In addition, the case study covered two objects, UNESP -CI and UNICAMP - CI, with semi-structured interviews, website analysis, and observation of the phenomenon. The first author had two years of experience at UNICAMP - CI as a regular student in the Basic Mandarin course, inserting herself in the case and observing the CIs phenomenon closely. Based on this introduction to the institution, the semi-structured interviews were conducted with the leading specialists in the area.

3. Quantitative measures: systematic literature review

3.1. Sample characterization

(1st Phase) Research Planning – The study started with the following questions: (i) How is the production of scientific articles in the Mandarin area at a global level? (ii) How is the production of scientific articles in the International Student Mobility area at a global level?

(2nd Phase) Database Research – The Scopus Database was consulted.

(3rd Phase) Research Methods in Databases - Keyword analysis and VOSviewer software were used.
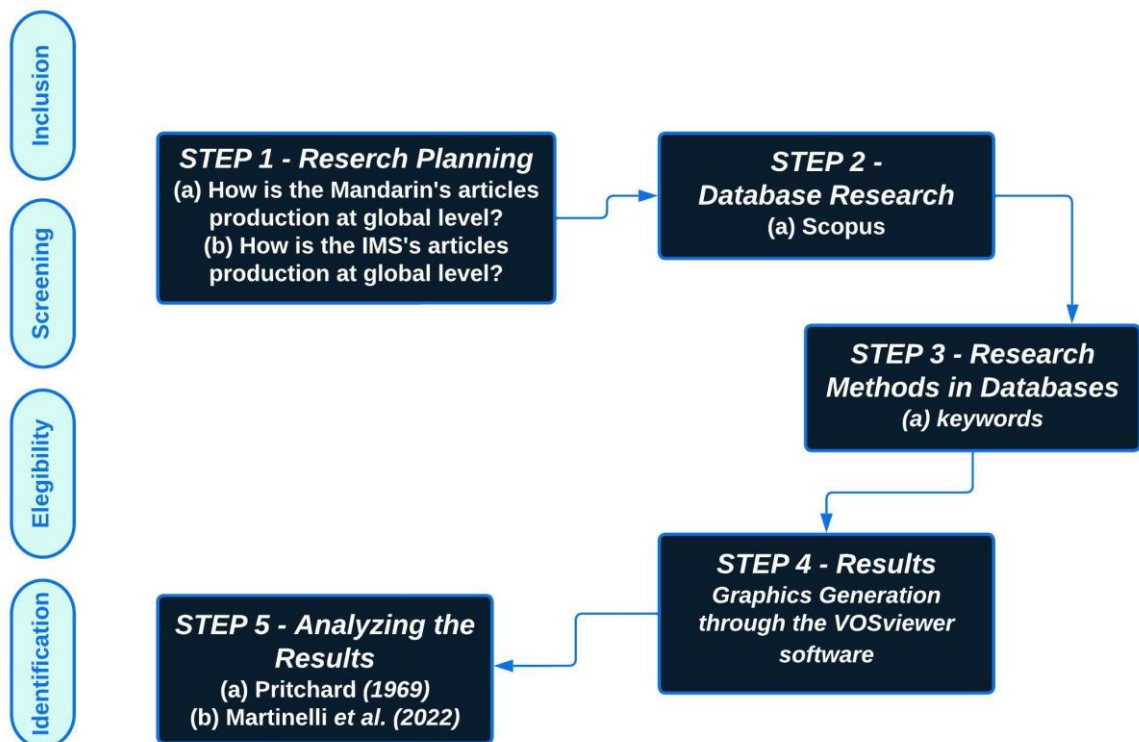
(4th Phase) Results

Figure 1

Search Results
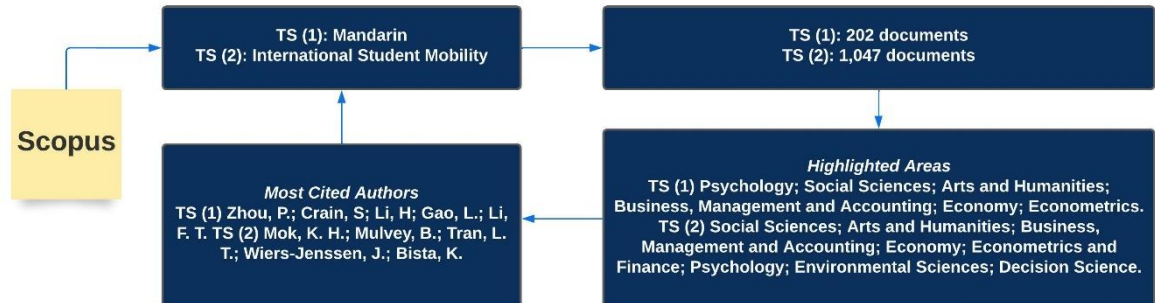
(5th step) Analysis of Results.

These steps can best be summarized by the following scheme.

Figure 2

Bibliometric search figure

Source: Adapted from Fernandes *et al.*, 2022, Jenkins *et al.*, 2018, Vanderloo, 2014.

3.2 Graphs in cluster forms

At this phase, the mathematical-statistical results were presented first and, later, the interpretative reflections on the graphs. The article selected two keywords: "Mandarin" and "International Student Mobility". Charts for Confucius Institutes are found in Martinelli *et al.* (2022).
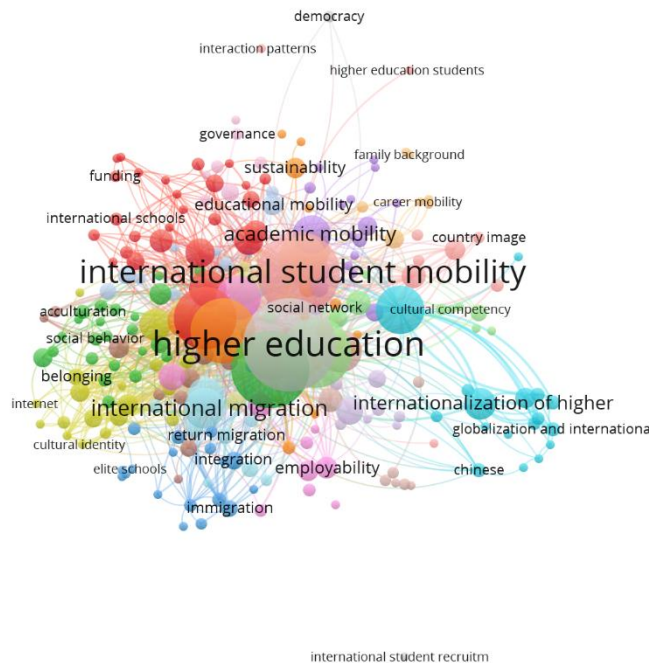
Graph 1

Scientific Indicators around the keyword "Mandarin"
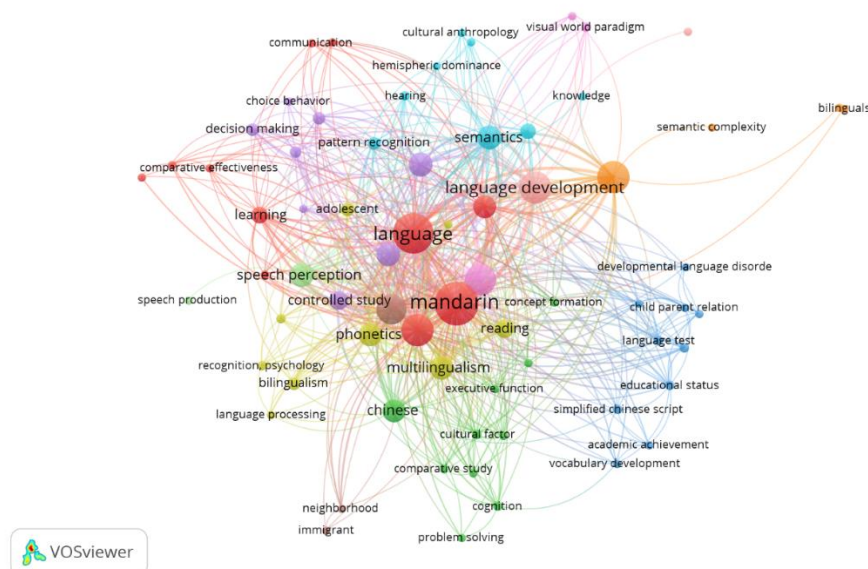
Graph 2

Scientific Indicators around the keyword "International Student Mobility"

Besides being linked to the keywords "Higher Education" and "Academic Mobility," the selected term "International Student Mobility" is associated with "International Migration," which reinforces that International Mobility enables migration and, due to the evidence of the word "Employability," can lead to greater employability of those in an exchange situation. Thus, there may be a decrease in the prejudice against this international community as they achieve some employability. On the other hand, the term "Elite schools" stands out, as well as "Integration." This means that even if there is a predominance of cultural elites in International Student Mobility (ISM), they end up needing to integrate with the minority groups in exchange situations, which can be something natural in the process of globalization and internationalization of cultures. After all, as the term "Belonging" points out, the feeling of belonging to something strong and smooth, uniting educational and democratic boundaries. In addition, "Cultural Identity" is marked by the intertwining of differences and the strong ties of cultural identity, which, in a certain way, academic exchanges reinforce when experiencing a life of contrasts abroad.

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4. Discussion: qualitative measures

4.1. Confucius Institutes worldwide

The world's first CI was built in June 2004 as a pilot institute in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. However, the first official CI was built in Seoul, Republic of South Korea, on November 21, 2004, modeled after European experiences, such as the British Council and Alliance Française. They were part of the Chinese government's plan to use culture and language to develop friendly relations with other nations.

The Confucius Institute (Simplified Chinese: 孔子学院; Traditional Chinese: 孔子學院), headquartered in Beijing, is linked to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, whose purpose is to promote China's language and culture to support the Chinese language teaching, and favor cultural exchange around the world through the association of the Confucius Institutes. The name of the Institute honors the remarkable Chinese thinker Confucius. It results from commercial relations between Brazil and China countries, which began in 2002 and spread to teaching and research relations (participant P1 in an interview with the author).

The Confucius Institute program started in 2004 and cooperates with colleges and universities worldwide. Funding is shared between HANBAN and host institutions. There is also a program dedicated to providing teachers and instructional materials to secondary schools. Many Portuguese-speaking countries signed a contract with the Confucius Institute program. In Portugal, there are CIs in the following higher education institutions: University of Lisbon, University of Coimbra, University of Minho, University of Algarve, University of Aveiro, Polytechnic Institute of Viseu, Polytechnic Institute of Castelo Branco, and Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, in addition to having a partnership to support the teaching of the Chinese language in some public secondary schools in Portugal. The program also provides teachers and instructional materials to secondary schools (Hanban, 2019, 2022; Kwan, 2013, p. 112). The CIs are non-profit organizations based on the following essential services (Instituto Confúcio UNICAMP, 2022):

- Teach the Chinese language;

- Train instructors capable of teaching the Chinese language;

- Provide resources for Chinese language teaching;

- Administer Chinese proficiency tests such as Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK and HSKK);

- Provide information and consultancy services related to education, culture, and other areas;

- Conduct Language and Cultural exchange activities between China and other countries.

The primary purpose of CIs is to promote Chinese language education worldwide, improve cultural and educational exchanges, promote cooperation with other countries, strengthen multiculturalism, and seek to create a world in harmony with differences. According to UNICAMP - CI's website, the HSK is the official Chinese proficiency exam measuring students' ability to communicate in Chinese in their daily lives, academia, and professional fields. The first two HSK levels assess reading comprehension and listening skills, while the others also assess writing skills. The HSKK is the oral test that evaluates Chinese students' basic, intermediate, and advanced levels of knowledge. According to the website, the Chinese government, companies, and universities in the country recognize these exams. Therefore, passing the exam is a prerequisite for anyone applying for scholarships or job openings in China (Instituto Confúcio UNICAMP, 2022).

From a geopolitical point of view, the debate is whether China and the United States of America (USA) have mutually established cultural institutions by implementing the Confucius Institutes in the same way as the American Cultural Center. Although the Confucius Institutes and American Cultural Centers differ in institutional formation and management, they fulfill the role of public diplomacy as a "quasi-diplomatic agency" that attracts a wide range of cultural activities. According to Lien and Tang (2022), the stagnation of American cultural centers in China and the crisis of the Confucius Institutes in the United States have the same source: political pressure. Thus, the development trajectories of both Institutions are closely related to the development and change of Sino-American political relations, as in the perspectives of Brazil-China relations (Lien & Tang, 2022).

In this process, China's attitude is relatively moderate in maintaining the continuous development of friendly bilateral relations. At the same time, the United States is concerned about the rise of China as its economic and strategic rival, which will change Chinese policy and impose strict political controls. In this regard, the China-U.S. trade dispute and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have further worsened relations between China and the US, according to these authors, and the prospects of the Confucius Institutes in the United States are worrying. However, despite the many uncertainties, the future of the Confucius Institute still needs to be explored. (Lien and Tang, 2022).

On the other hand, the Chinese literature on the subject has developed a concept called National Image Building (NIB), which consists of the country's efforts to improve the impressions and attitudes other countries hold towards it. The NIB expectations include a warmer reception of people, products, and investments in the host country. Regardless of country size or power, NIB has become standard worldwide, but there has yet to be a consensus regarding its effectiveness. According to Hu *et al.* (2022), there is a vast and somewhat consolidated literature on strategies and means to provide NIB, such as through foreign investment, creation of cross-border cultural industries, and involvement in international communication. Nevertheless, the extent to which these efforts work and how they work still need to be researched (Hu *et al.*, 2022).

Most of the latest articles on CIs worldwide will point toward the reputational implications of CI closures for China. In light of the NIB literature, they likely manifest themselves in two aspects: (i) the promotion of economic exchange and the improvement of mass attitudes, since they reach more than the academic portion of the population, integrating the entire community interested in learning of Mandarin (Martinelli *et al.*, 2022). Regarding China's image, the "shut-down" effect refers to the negative impact of a CI closure on China's economy, while the "ice cream" effect is related to its reputation among US citizens and all other host countries. The United States has recognized the Chinese symbol, and the Chinese government has also recognized the role of credit institutions in its soft power-building strategy. However, as a result, nearly every CI closure sparks public debate about the relationship between China, United States, and Brazil.

Interestingly, university statements about CI closure are generally not politically connected or negative. The closure sends a negative signal, creating a tendency in the US media

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to associate the CI's closure with political propaganda, technical and financial espionage, and concerns about academic freedom. This reasoning uses the closure of the CI to validate China's supposedly objectionable behavior, thus tarnishing China's image, a much-discussed issue today, as Hu *et al.* (2022) point out. The CIs must resist and show their possibility of helping in the multilingual and multilateral development of Brazilian and foreign public universities. After all, soft power could happen the other way around. What seems to happen is that the United States uses geopolitical disputes and commercial interests as a backdrop to anchor its criticisms of CIs.

Some articles investigated the intercultural experiences lived by the Confucius Institute teachers during the triple crisis, that is, the pandemic, the hostility to the Confucius Institutes (CIs) and the rampant racism, leading to the closure of many Institutes, making Chinese language teachers return to China (Lu & Hua, 2022; interview with the author, August 2018). Thus, the NIB, as well as the attitude of many professors, corroborates an attitude of resilience critical to maintaining Chinese-American relations.

The data demonstrate how teacher resilience, as a multifaceted and dynamic construct, offers an analytical approach to understanding how teachers respond to uncertainty and unpredictability in their professional lives. It is important to emphasize that when understanding the experience of CI teachers during the triple tension (Brazil-US-China), according to Gu and Dia (2013), the relevance of co-learning, mutual support, and solidarity becomes evident in playing a significant role in building teacher resilience. The authors complement the earlier observation about the role of personal, relational, and organizational conditions in teacher resilience (Gu and Day, 2013).

4.2 The Confucius Institute in Brazil

In Brazil, there are Confucius Institutes installed in public and private institutions of University Education in the five regions of the country: Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP), Universidade Estadual Universidade de Campinas (UNICAMP), Universidade de Brasília (UNB), Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Universidade de Pernambuco (UPE), Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC), Universidade do Estado do Pará (UEPA), Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado (FAAP), Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RIO). In 2018 and 2019, two

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other CIs were created in the states of Amazonas and Maranhão, known as "UNESP Confucius Institute Classrooms", which, in practice, are a continuation of UNESP- CI work in São Paulo (Hanban, 2022; Paulino, 2019).

The first CI was created in Brazil at UNESP in partnership with the University of Hubei on November 26, 2008. The UNICAMP-CI emerged from a partnership with the University of Beijing on March 23, 2015. Figure 3 illustrates the creation of CIs in Brazil, despite the closure of some units and the digital transformation of language teaching activities:

Figure 3
**Timeline of CIs in Brazil**
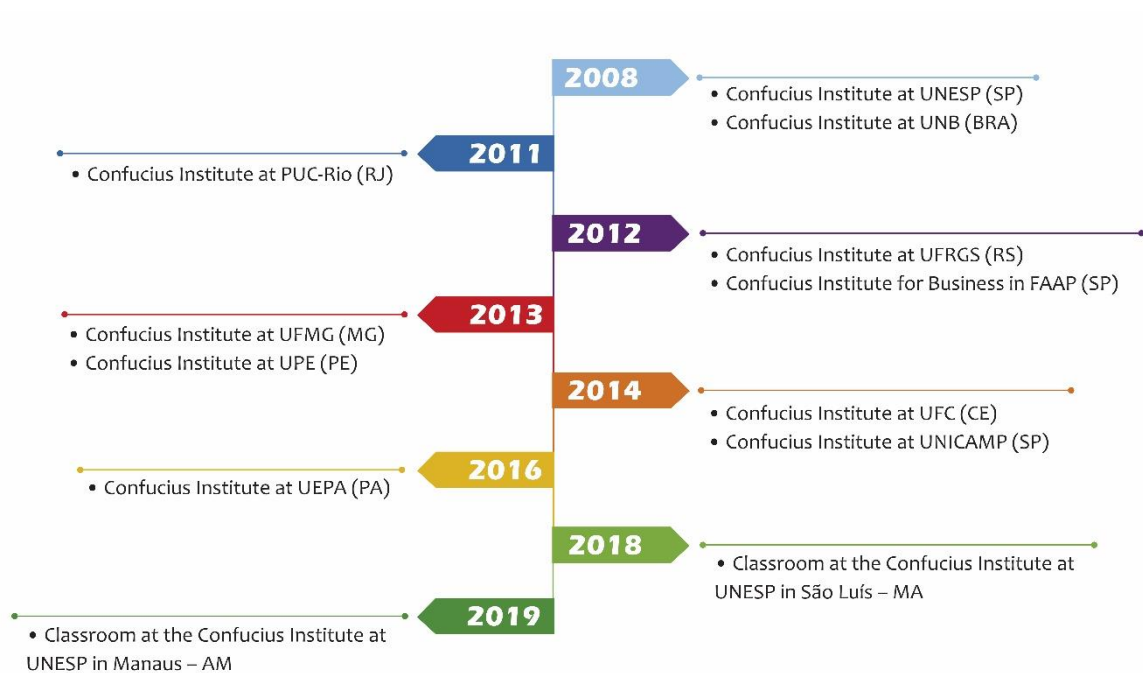
Source: Created by authors, based on Paulino, 2019.

According to data from the UNESP- CI (Paulino, 2019), it is worth mentioning the distribution of students from CIs in São Paulo regarding their functions in the local academic community. After all, much of the resilience during the pandemic came about precisely through a local attitude and many social spheres.

Graph 3

Percentage distribution of Confucius Institute students at UNESP, according to origin in the community (2019)
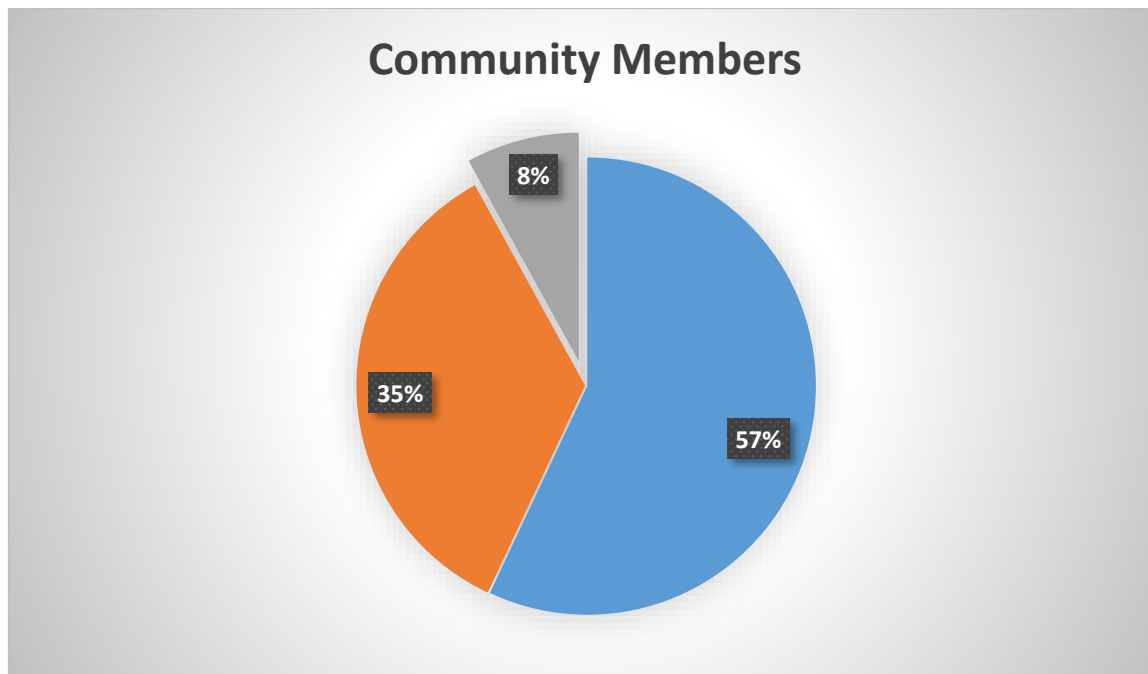
Graphic Legend

☐ UNESP students

☐ Community Members

☐ Public High Schools students

Source: Confucius Institute UNESP (Paulino, 2019 adapted).

The following figure opens up a range of interpretations regarding how the active community in CIs is distributed. Most people who attend CIs are students at the host university, such as UNESP or UNICAMP. On the other hand, several CI students come from the community where the CI is, normally from within the universities. That has mostly changed in recent times. Thus, analyzing how the students have been finding opportunities to leave the country with fellowships is challenging. On the other hand, what has been the relationship between their activity areas at universities and funding opportunities for academic exchanges with China?

The mission of the Confucius Institute at UNESP is to teach the Chinese language, disseminate Chinese culture and history, and strengthen cultural and academic exchange between Brazil and China. Similarly, the mission of the Confucius Institute at UNICAMP – the

result of the agreement between UNICAMP and the Headquarters of the Confucius Institute in China (Hanban), in partnership with Beijing Jiaotong University (BJTU) – is to contribute to international cooperation between countries, spreading the Chinese language and promoting crucial cultural events for the academic community. At both São Paulo universities, CIs offer Chinese language and culture courses by highly qualified professionals, accredited by Hanban, to teach Mandarin as a foreign language. Articles with general information about China are also offered to expand communication and cooperation between both countries in economy, trade, culture, technology, and other areas. In addition, they seek partnerships with local Chinese companies to serve as a communication bridge between China and Brazil, providing employment, research, and scholarship opportunities.
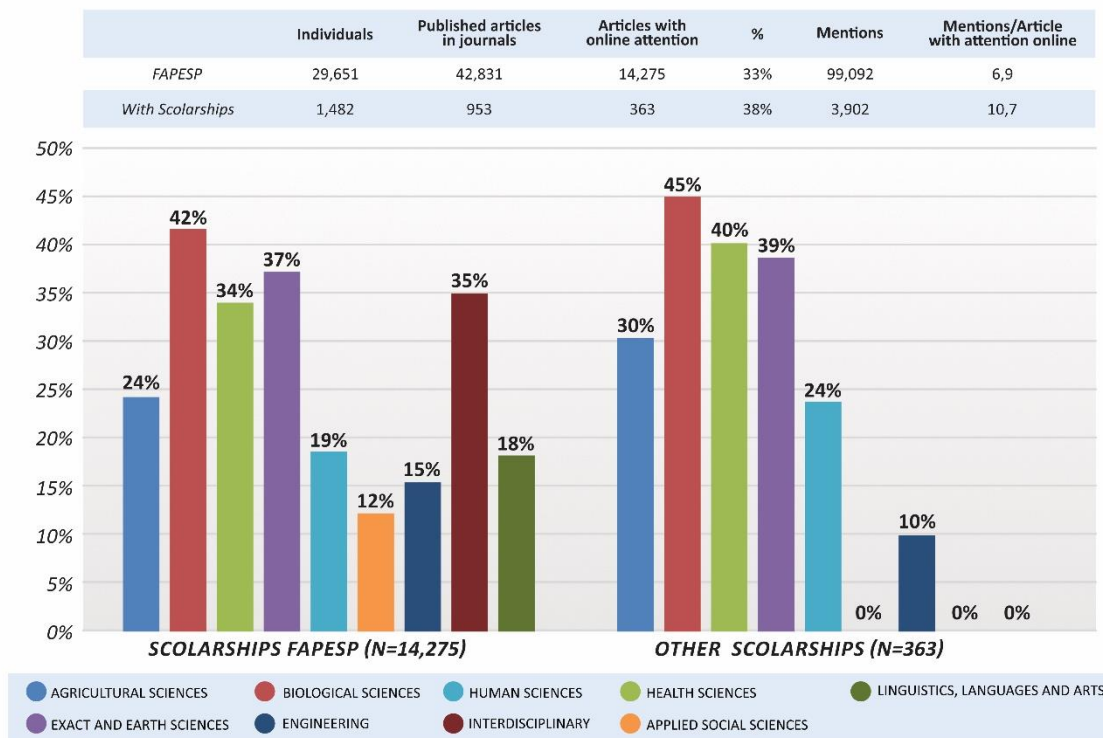
The CIs at UNESP and UNICAMP promote cultural events to disseminate Chinese culture. These events at UNESP take the format of lectures on entrepreneurship in China. At UNICAMP, the focus is on a more intense cultural agenda, with the Dragon Boat Festival, Moon Festival, and the celebration of the International Day of the Confucius Institute, among others, bringing Chinese customs and habits to the local community. They also promote events that publicize the studies of the Brazil-China group at UNICAMP, short courses in the area, and Chinese cinema exhibitions.

Regarding exchange opportunities, UNICAMP-CI offers scholarships and work experience opportunities in Beijing Jiaotong, as well as opportunities to participate in the Beijing Jiaotong University Summer Camp. Santander Universidades, Universia Intercâmbios, and Faculdades Integradas Rio Branco also participate in the exchange agreements at UNESP-CI.

Figure 4

Relationship among areas of expertise, number of scholarships, and number of articles published

	Individuals	Published articles in journals	Articles with online attention	%	Mentions	Mentions/Article with attention online
FAPESP	29,651	42,831	14,275	33%	99,092	6,9
With Scolarships	1,482	953	363	38%	3,902	10,7

Fonte: FAPESP adapted, 2022

The figure above shows a relationship between undergraduate students' activity areas, the number of scholarships, including traditional ones (FAPESP, CAPES, and CNPq), and the number of publications by area of activity. It is a way of thinking about whether students with scholarships produce more, if this is related to the field of work, and how research is funded.

The undergraduate students with FAPESP scholarships and other types of awards are the ones who leave the country most of the time. In addition, the areas of biological, health, exact and earth, and agricultural sciences are the ones that receive more scholarships and are more likely to send their students abroad. On the other hand, the interdisciplinary areas have a higher number of FAPESP grants and a high probability of having their peers abroad. This situation only happens with fellows in areas with other forms of funding. Finally, human sciences, engineering, linguistics, arts, and applied human sciences have the lowest percentage of producing scientific articles, receiving scholarships, and, consequently, going abroad.

The CIs demonstrated the importance of teaching abroad as a transformative and pluralistic learning experience. According to Fernandez-Alvarez *et al.* (2022), in recent years,

many studies have been carried out that demonstrate the value of teaching abroad concerning both teacher training and professional development and its benefits, able to raise extraordinary effects on students. Many different aspects were investigated in these studies (Fernandez-Alvarez *et al.*, 2022).

Driscoll *et al.* (2014) reveal the development of intercultural competence in a transformative learning experience in the training of teachers who work abroad, which affects their professional socialization, as well as the results of increasing their confidence as leaders and teachers in the learning process. Cusner (2007) emphasizes the improvement of intercultural communication and, in addition, the ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with people whose attitudes, values, knowledge base, and skills may differ significantly from one's own. In addition, studies show how training internationally-minded teachers can affect young people in schools and recommend engaging in interpersonal and intercultural communication and learning, generating innovative multicultural practices (Driscoll *et al.*, 2014; Cusner, 2007; Fernandez-Alvarez *et al.*, 2022).

Therefore, Internationalization has become an essential issue in evaluating both Chinese economy and Brazilian higher education in the search for partners abroad, as evidenced by the two-way flow of students and professors with international experience (Spangler & Prudence, 2016). In addition to expanding the reach and influence of Chinese universities, the Confucius Institute offers valuable opportunities for teacher education and professional development with a global vision. Their article highlights the many benefits of teaching abroad, which should encourage more teachers to participate in Confucius Institute programs or other international programs, including mobility and experience, to enhance professionalism (Spangler & Prudence, 2016).

Bodycott and Walker (2000) conducted a case study in a university environment in Hong Kong. They focused on the contrast between East and West to address issues of language and communication, social and cultural distance, and teaching strategies appropriate to intercultural contexts. They conclude that intercultural understanding must be present in curricula and a shared goal and responsibility of students and teachers. The case studies are fascinating because they envision education as an eternal quest to take into account cultural differences, the (different) desires of populations, and diversity in the form of resources (natural, human, financial) available; that is, different forms of knowledge production, as science is culturally

constructed and situated and it incorporates local knowledge alongside universal knowledge, in a kind of dance between microphysical and macrophysical realities (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Velho, 2011, 2019; Ostrom, 2007; Martinelli, 2020).

It is worth emphasizing the importance of collaborative practices and adaptive management of policies and programs to develop critical sense and maturity by expanding knowledge and culture, as well as preparing students and teachers as citizens for their future activities. Furthermore, CIs can act more incisively in forming the Chinese language with an interdisciplinary character, focusing on more diverse areas of knowledge since they can cover different areas of knowledge and have great potential to implement interdisciplinarity in their pedagogical practice. It is essential, therefore, to understand the issue of the Confucius Institutes as a university outreach agenda capable of promoting social inclusion, an interdisciplinary focus, and multilateralism (Pereira et al., 2015).

Finally, on the other hand, the literature gap that this work intended to fill was to observe the theme on a case-by-case basis, among the prominent Brazilian cases, in a microphysical way, connecting these data with the international literature on Confucius Institutes and international student mobility at the macro level. The intention was precisely to connect the documents and interviews addressed and indicated by the empirical evidence with the discussion on the theme of international student mobility, explicitly focusing on discussions about the Confucius Institutes in the world. Therefore, given the new Brazilian political configuration, it is pertinent to investigate the possible reconfigurations of Brazil-China relations and new developments of university outreach with a focus on the Confucius Institutes. Considering the possible economic opening between both countries, there may be more space for these initiatives and educational stimuli. Possible correlations between CIs practices and internationalization programs, such as Sciences Without Borders, CAPES-Print, CNPQ, and FAPESP, are also relevant as the funding agencies will provide more opportunities to increase the number of students with scholarships, which can impact

The ranking of Brazilian universities and improve higher education in general. More than ameliorating China's image, as the international literature points out, CIs are an intrinsic way of improving the quality of life of university students and the community that attends them, opening new educational and networking horizons towards Internationalization.

5. Conclusions

The operating model of Confucius Institutes is based on the cooperation of two universities, one local, which manages the Confucius Institute, and the other Chinese, which sends professors and takes care of the pedagogical part, offers numerous advantages. However, this model also creates some difficulties for the functioning of Confucius Institutes in Brazil and throughout Latin America, especially when the local universities are public universities affiliated with the federal or state governments. These challenges are related to Brazil's socio-economic situation, the Brazilian public universities' structural rules, and the country's legislation, which directly interferes with Brazil-China cooperation relations (Paulino, 2019).

Therefore, research on the CIs must be deepened, including through anthropological approaches that study the operation of CIs in-depth, to formulate new public policies based on more specific empirical data on how these Institutes think and act. In this sense, promoting science and technology, especially interdisciplinarity, has a solid economic and cultural impact. Universities and the entire country benefit in due course from these initiatives. Moreover, Confucius Institutes are a fundamental form of university outreach that improves the students' profiles and offers a real possibility of expanding the curriculum through these mechanisms of international student mobility. It is also worth a deeper study on this student activity using a specific bibliography on university outreach. This bibliography recognized the gaps in the area, especially regarding the lack of robust empirical research and more specific anthropological work, demographic, and historical perspectives, faced by the need for studies that qualitatively map the arena of CIs, paying attention to the challenges of Brazilian and Chinese administrations.

Finally, in addition to the contributions highlighted in the discussion proposed here, it is pertinent to think about new relations of teachers' international mobility, in this case, of Mandarin teachers. After all, mobility programs for teachers can improve the challenges and opportunities of host-university students. On the one hand, teachers come to Brazil to teach Chinese as a foreign language, and on the other hand, they need to leave the country to improve their pedagogical and linguistic dynamics. As some sources point out, the internationalization of students is possible with teachers' internationalization (Postiglione & Altbach, 2022; Mesquita et al., 2022).

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