

# The Changing Language and Literacy Landscapes of Brazilian Universities

## *Paisagens de língua e letramento em mudança nas universidades brasileiras*

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## Introduction

This special issue of *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada* (RBLA) has three broad aims: (1.) to throw light on the range of changes that are taking place in the language and literacy landscapes of Brazilian universities; (2.) to consider the nature and significance of these changes and the challenges arising from them, and (3.) to bring together examples of research by scholars, in different fields of Applied Linguistics, who have adopted detailed, critical and insightful approaches to the study of the changes unfolding in higher education institutions in Brazil.

The studies included here contribute to recent theory-building and advances in qualitative methodologies in different areas of Critical Applied Linguistics. They provide us with a broad and illuminating perspective on the changes currently at work in different areas of higher education in Brazil, while adopting a critical perspective that takes account of local issues and the wider social, historical and ideological contexts in which the issues are arising. The different fields of Applied Linguistics include the following: (1.) Critical ethnographic approaches to language policy processes (*e.g.*, Johnson, 2013;



Tollefson; Pérez-Milans, 2018). (2.) Critical research into English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) (e.g., Park; Wee, 2012; Jordão 2019; R'boul, 2022). (3.) Critical approaches to academic literacy (on and offline) and to academic writing in a global context (e.g., Castanheira; Green; Dixon, 2007; Barton; Lee, 2013; Lillis; Curry, 2010, 2018; Tusting *et al.*, 2019). (4.) Critical, reflective research into changes in the working lives of academics ushered in by digitization and the advent of mobile technology (e.g., Goodfellow; Lea, 2013; Tusting *et al.*, 2019); (5.) Critical research into different forms of higher education provision for the teaching of Portuguese as an Additional Language (PAL) to international students, to students from the Global South and to students of migrant or refugee origin (e.g., Bizon; Cavalcanti, 2018; Diniz; Neves, 2018; Finardi; Scherre; Vidon, 2019). (6.) Critical approaches to language policy and practice associated with inclusion into higher education and research focusing on the challenges posed by academic literacies for minority groups, such as Deaf students needing assistance from Sign Language interpreters (e.g., Lang, 2002; Bisol, 2010; Fernandes; Moreira, 2017) and students of Indigenous origin (Freire, 2018; Maher, 2018; Carvalho; Schlatter, 2022).

In this Introduction, we provide an overview of the broad political, historical, and social context in which changes are taking place in higher education in Brazil, along with detailed insights into the nature of some of the changes and the challenges they pose. The article is organised as follows. In Section 2, we begin with a brief overview of global developments in higher education. In Section 3, we focus on developments in Brazilian universities due to internationalization. This section also includes wider debates and theory-building, in Brazil and elsewhere, about the nature and significance of internationalization. In Section 4, we consider the nature and significance of digitization and the changing communicative landscapes of higher education. Then, in Section 5, we turn to the changes taking place in the student population in Brazilian universities and to recent debates in the field of Portuguese as an Additional Language (*Português como Língua Adicional* – PLA). First, we consider national governmental policy and institutional strategies relating to inclusion of students from historically minoritized groups and then we consider the epistemic debates about the nature of the provision for PLA for members of these different groups. The last section, Section 6, provides a summary of each of the eight articles that have been brought together in this special issue.

Table 1, in the next page, provides a preliminary overview of the articles. They all draw on research of a qualitative nature, including different approaches to interviews and critical, ethnographic approaches to the study of language and literacy practices. They focus on different social actors in Brazilian university settings. The research participants include academics in senior management positions, academics involved in individual or group-based research, academics involved in teaching, and a wide range of students (international students, teacher trainees, and students from historically minoritized groups). The qualitative methodologies adopted across the articles enable the authors to bring the voices of these different social actors to the fore, and give us access, as readers, to the participants' *emic* perspectives on the changes taking place in their universities, in different regions of Brazil.

Table 1: The articles in this special issue

Authors	Titles	Nature of the changes addressed
Izabel Magalhães	Times of change in a Brazilian university: Insights from research into the language, literacy, and the digital practices of academics	Changes associated with internationalization and digitization, with a focus on the writing that academics do in their working lives
Telma Gimenez, Alessia Cogo, Luciana C.S. Calvo & Michele El Khadri	English language hegemonies in the internationalization of two State universities in Brazil – unintended consequences of EMI	Changes associated with internationalization, with a focus on the consequences of EMI
Martilyn Martin-Jones, Ana Souza & Gilcinei Carvalho	Internationalization of higher education in Brazil: Institutional strategies and different discourses about language in one federal university	Changes associated with internationalization, with a focus on policy-related strategies, actual practices, and different discourses about language
Ana Cecília Bizon & Louise Hélène Pavan	Narratives of students and alumni from a degree program in Portuguese as an Additional Language (PAL): Signs of the potential for building <i>an other internationalization</i>	The potential for building another vision of internationalization through a degree program in PAL
Bruna Frazzato	Portuguese as an Additional Language (PAL) in a Brazilian university: Encounters in language learning spaces and conflicts in ways of knowing	The changing student population in Brazilian universities: Issues emerging from research with international students
Elisa Mattos & Leandro Rodriguez Alvez Diniz	“Whoa, but I’m not like this, I don’t even know how this happens.” Literacy practices and experiences of students from migrant backgrounds in a Brazilian public university.	The changing student population in Brazilian universities: Issues emerging from research with students of migrant origin
Simone da Costa Carvalho & Margarete Schlatter	Shifting away from a normative/ hegemonic language assessment in graduate programs in Brazil, and espousing a social justice agenda: Insights from assessment practices with Indigenous and Deaf students in two universities	The changing student population in Brazilian universities: Issues emerging from research with Indigenous students and Deaf students
Terezinha da Costa Rocha	The participation of Deaf students in higher education in Brazil: Ethnographic insights into the communicative processes involved in navigating academic literacy practices	The changing student population in Brazilian universities: Issues emerging from research with Deaf students

The special issue ends with an Afterword by Karin Tusting and Soledad Montes Sanchez. These scholars are members of the Literacy Research Group at Lancaster University, UK. Karin Tusting recently led a landmark study of the changes in the nature and scope of academic work, academic literacies and knowledge production in contemporary university contexts. The publication based on this study (Tusting *et al.*, 2019) draws on ethnographic research, in different universities in the UK, which charted the ways in which the writing practices of academics were being transformed, as academic work was being reconfigured in the wake of new forms of governance, the use of digital resources and the internationalization of higher education. Soledad Montes is a scholar, practitioner and editor in the field of Writing Studies. As a founding

member of the Latin American Association of Writing Studies in Higher Education and Professional Contexts (ALES), she has played a key role in developing writing programs in Chilean universities. Her research covers writing across the curriculum, academic literacies and writing in life course transitions.

## 1 Global developments in higher education

Over the last three decades, we have witnessed several significant developments in higher education across the world. Some of these developments stem from internationalization, from increased neo-liberal competition in the higher education market (Mayr, 2008; Mautner, 2010) and the emergence of global university ranking systems (Sum and Jessop, 2013; Jessop 2018). There has also been increasing corporatization of higher education, along with new procedures for close monitoring of the performance and output of academics (Strathern, 2000; Robertson, 2014), and a move away from traditional forms of academic autonomy. In addition, there have been far-reaching developments in the use of digital tools and technologies in research, in the creation of academic networks, in teaching and course provision and in university governance. Other developments stem from the increase in the number of students entering university, and increasing diversity within the student population. This is due to the broadening of patterns of international student recruitment and, in some parts of the world, due to national policies promoting inclusion at higher education level.

These global shifts in academic institutions have played out in different ways in different national contexts, as policies for higher education have been developed. They have ushered in significant changes in the language and literacy landscapes of universities which have, in turn, created new opportunities and ways of working, but also considerable challenges ‘on the ground’ for academics, administrative staff and students. The articles in this special issue of *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada* provide revealing insights into specific ways in which these opportunities and challenges arise in the day to day lives of staff and students in local university settings in Brazil. The articles address challenges arising in all the areas of university life mentioned above.

## 2 Internationalization of higher education in Brazil

### 2.1 Shifts in governmental policy and institutional strategies

Internationalization of research in Brazil began in the twentieth century, with outward mobility of academic staff and postgraduate students. Most scholars went to the Global North (Calvo and Alonso, 2020). Individuals applied for funding to pursue further study or to engage in research collaboration abroad. Support for individuals opting for outward mobility came from government agencies such as CAPES and CNPq. CAPES (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* – Coordination

for Higher Education Staff Development) was created in 1951, as a foundation within the Ministry of Higher Education in Brazil. Its role is to promote research quality and to evaluate higher education institutions in the country. CNPq (*Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* – National Council for Scientific and Technological Development) is an agency within the Brazilian government's Ministry of Science and Technology which promotes scientific and technological research and the development of human resources for research in Brazil.

In the twenty-first century (in July 2011), a new funding program was introduced for students, at all levels, who were enrolled in degree programs in STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics) and who were opting for outward mobility. This program was called *Ciências sem Fronteiras* (Sciences without Borders). This program was accompanied by a scheme, entitled *Inglês sem Fronteiras* (English without Borders), which was designed to support the learning of English in Brazil (Finardi and Guimarães, 2017). Moving away from the privileging of English as a language of research, the scheme was later redesigned and other languages, such as French, German, Japanese and Spanish, were included along with English (Souza, 2023).

The *Ciências sem Fronteiras* (Sciences without Borders) scheme was discontinued in 2015, during a period of “government cost-cutting and austerity” (Martinez, 2016, p. 221). In recent years, there have been significant policy moves at the federal level towards “Internationalization at home” and towards the development of new regimes for research funding. In 2017, a new policy called CAPES-PrInt was introduced for universities which received federal funding. PrInt stands for *Programa de Internacionalização* (Internationalization Program). CAPES-PrInt focuses on support for postgraduate programs, rather than for individual scholars. Applications for funding are submitted by universities and then allocated to research programs. In Brazilian universities, postgraduate programs are the institutional spaces where research, doctoral programs and postgraduate teaching come together. Broadly speaking, CAPES-PrInt funding covers research in programs that are deemed to be of international quality, along with the development of international research networks, the outward mobility of Brazilian academics and doctoral students, and inward mobility of international scholars. It also covers the development of curricula with global dimensions, research-led teaching and, in principle, it provides for the use of languages such as English, French and Spanish as well as Portuguese. The conditions of applications for funding are challenging. In the initial phase of CAPES-PrInt, funding was mostly granted to university departments and postgraduate programs in federal universities which were ranked from 5 to 7 on the national scale (with 7 being the highest rank).

As a result of internationalization, increased competition between higher education institutions in Brazil and developments in national policy-making, there has been a continued trend towards corporatization of Brazilian universities. Large scale applications for research funding, such as those submitted to CAPES-PrInt are managed at university level. And, in a manner similar to that in other universities around the world (Strathern, 2000), corporate practices, such as the auditing of the research output of academics, and their professional activities, have been put in place. Like their counterparts in other countries, Brazilian academics are obliged to keep regular records of their publications and sources of research funding.

## 2.2 Internationalization: Debates about the use of English in research

As in other national contexts beyond the anglophone world, there has been considerable debate among Brazilian academics about the choice of language for their research activities and for knowledge-building. There is, for example, considerable debate about whether or not, in the current research evaluation system, journal articles published in English should receive higher ranking than those published in Portuguese. Moreover, as we see in the articles by Gimenez *et al.* and by Martin-Jones, Souza and Carvalho, in this special issue, there are different views across disciplines about the use of English in academic publications, with the main divide being between the sciences, engineering and the health sciences, on the one hand, and humanities and the social sciences on the other hand. Those in the hard sciences publish mostly in English, and prioritise the publication of articles in journals, whereas those in the humanities and social sciences produce a range of publications, in English and in Portuguese (or other languages) and their publications include not only journal articles, but also single and jointly authored books and edited volumes. The publishing practices of the latter group involve considerable reflection about the choice of language for each type of knowledge-building that they are involved in. Moreover, looking beyond formal publications in English, across disciplines in Brazilian universities, there is often ample use of Portuguese (or other languages) in actual research practice (*e.g.*, in the gathering and analysis of data). In a recent comparative study of multilingualism in research practice, Curry *et al.* (forthcoming 2024), highlight the epistemological and intellectual value of embedding multilingualism in the research process. They also argue that “foregrounding the production of knowledge in multiple languages challenges the ideology of English as the presumed global ‘academic lingua franca’ that currently dominates discussions in research and practice” (Curry *et al.*, forthcoming 2024).

## 2.3 Internationalization: Debates about the use of English in university teaching

As we see in the article by Gimenez *et al.* included in this special issue, there has been considerable debate in Brazil about the use of English in university teaching. This area of debate echoes wider discussions in the research literature on English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in the field of Applied Linguistics. As Jordão and Martinez (2021) have rightly observed, arguments in Brazil, and elsewhere, about the value of EMI as a means of gaining access to globalized forms of knowledge are often based on narrow assumptions about the nature of language. In this discourse, languages are portrayed as ‘objects’ or ‘disembodied tools’. As the authors put it:

Language in this view is conceived as some sort of transparent system of communication, mediating the production of knowledge ... the assumption is that there is *one* and the *same* English language regardless of where it is (or has been in the world), or which person is producing English (Jordão; Martinez, 2021, p. 580, italics in the original)

The focus of the empirical work reported by Gimenez *et al.*, in this collection of articles, was on the issues generated by the implementation of EMI, on a relatively small scale, in two state universities in Brazil. In their article, they highlight in detail some of the consequences of EMI for both academic staff and for students. For example, the staff and students participating in their study talked about the impact of using only English on their sense of identity and, also, on collegiality. The academic staff also referred to the negative impact on student learning and on student enrolment. Reflecting on the broader findings of their research, Gimenez *et al.*, argue for the opening up of spaces for the articulation of different voices and the fostering of more multilingual approaches to learning and teaching in higher education contexts in Brazil, in spaces where it is appropriate.

## 2.4 Historical perspectives on knowledge-building and critique of internationalization

In several of the articles in this special issue, there are references to the growing critique of dominant discourses about internationalization in higher education in Global South countries such as Brazil, and there are references to the need for historical analyses of the entanglement, over time, of knowledge-building within the higher education sector, with modernity and coloniality. There are also references to critical historical research which builds on the account by Mignolo (2011) of ‘the darker side of Western modernity’ and the ways in which historical processes unleashed by colonization laid the foundation for modernity in Europe. In addition, we are reminded of the principles and beliefs associated with knowledge-building that were forged in European universities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These were principles and beliefs such as Cartesian logic, the belief in the neutrality of science and ideologies about language and cultural hierarchies, which were transplanted to universities in the Global South during the colonial period. Then, as Quijano (2007) has shown, such principles, beliefs and ideologies endured well beyond the fall of European empires, resulting in a continued coloniality of power.

Still today, some local epistemologies and forms of knowledge-building produced in the countries of the Global South are still viewed as ‘less advanced’ than what Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 28) called “Western-Euro-US-centre” forms of knowledge-building, in their work on decoloniality. Other scholars writing in this decolonial vein, in the twenty-first century, have called for moving beyond the dominance of northern epistemologies and the recognition of other forms of knowledge-building. This is the theme of the volume edited by Santos, Nunes and Meneses (2007) entitled: *Another knowledge is possible: Beyond northern epistemologies*. The title of their opening chapter is: “Opening up the canon of knowledge and the recognition of difference” (Santos; Nunes; Meneses, 2007, p. 1).

More recently, attention has turned to a critique of the internationalization of higher education and to a critique of the ahistorical and apolitical discourses about the globalization of the knowledge economy (Buckner and Stein, 2020). Writing from a Brazilian perspective, Bizon and Frazzato (2023) critique the “fable” underpinning the internationalization of higher education and emphasise that universities in Brazil have different histories and they are situated in diverse regions and have specific responsibilities vis-à-vis local populations. Yet, higher education policies and institutional strategies are still guided by hegemonic discourses about the advantages that accrue from internationalization oriented to knowledge-building and

teaching in universities in the Global North. Also writing from a Brazilian perspective, Jordão and Martinez (2021, p. 580) critique this orientation in the following terms: “The idea of the Global North as a standard to be reached by non-Global North institutions, scientists, scholars, professors and their students is very much present in common-sensical practices of internationalization”. They also critique internationalising agendas which are “based on the promotion of sameness as an ideal”, arguing that conformity with the linguistic, cultural and epistemic norms of dominant groups can only lead to inequalities. What is clearly needed is not conformity but ways of dealing with difference.

### **3 Digitization and the changing communicative landscapes of universities**

In this section, we turn to changes in universities due to the ever-widening use of digital tools and technologies. In universities across the world, the use of digital resources has reconfigured the communicative landscape and this process has been closely bound up with the processes of change discussed earlier *i.e.*, internationalization, corporatization of universities, and increasing asymmetries of power in knowledge-building. Digitization and the advent of mobile technology has also had a major impact on the working lives of academics, students, and administrative staff, bringing some opportunities but, also, considerable challenges.

Research into the digitization of different dimensions of university life has grown apace (*e.g.*, Goodfellow; Lea, 2013; Tusting *et al.*, 2019), providing detailed insights into the specific nature and impact of developments in different university contexts. As Tusting *et al.*, (2019, p. 79) have observed, a broad distinction can be made between “tools and platforms provided by universities, such as Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and online library resources” and, on the other hand, “social media, smart phones and portable devices which academics may bring into the workplace from their everyday lives”.

These different kinds of digital resources have already reshaped (and continue to reshape) the ways in which academics do their teaching and student assessment, the ways in which they conduct and write up their research, and the ways in which they carry out administrative and managerial tasks. Inevitably, there are disciplinary differences in the use and reliance on particular digital resources, and, as Tusting *et al.* (2019) have shown us, there are individual differences in the use and take-up of different digital tools, and particular forms of software. This relates to the nature of the work that they are undertaking, and to the ways in which they are endeavouring to build their role as academics.

Digitization in higher education has brought some opportunities for academics. These include: (1.) the increased speed of communication, across distances or within a local institution, via email or via platforms such as WhatsApp; (2.) greatly enhanced access to online library and archival resources; (3.) new means of research collaboration and file-sharing (on a national or international scale); (4.) new means of video-conferencing, conducting online meetings and committees or participating in online seminars. University web pages also provide ways of representing research and of making visible different forms of educational provision.

At the same time, digitization has introduced new kinds of workload challenges into the lives of academics. These challenges include the following: (1.) The use of VLEs to provide distance and



blended learning involves extended collaboration between academics and administrators, along with the time-consuming uploading of different digital resources, for teaching and student assessment. (2.) The use of digital tools and platforms, in managerial practices such as documenting research outputs and quality assessment, also places considerable demands on the working hours of academics. These tools and platforms take different forms in different national contexts. As we see in the article by Magalhães, in this special issue, academics in Brazil are required to upload details of their publications onto a digital platform called Lattes. They are also required to update these details on a regular basis. This digital platform contributes to the assessment of research quality by university management committees and, eventually, at state or federal government level. (3.) The use of email also creates considerable workload challenges, since email correspondence covers all aspects of the working lives of academics. Moreover, due to the development of mobile technology, it is now possible to deal with email on different devices – on smartphones, iPads or lap-tops, and to read, respond to and send email messages, on and off campus, at different times of the day, including before or after official working hours and at weekends. This, and other aspects of the work of academics, crosses spatial and temporal boundaries and carries on away from the office. As Tusting *et al.* (2019, p. 81) put it: “Work ceases to be a place, it becomes an activity, a practice which can ‘take place’ anywhere”. The main challenge for academics lies in endeavouring to maintain time and space for research-related activity and reflection. Given the nature of the challenges introduced by digitization, some commentators have argued that the advent of digitization has led to the construction of “an accelerated academy” (Carrigan, 2015) which puts additional pressure on academics.

The research, by Tusting *et al.* (2019), that we have cited several times in this section, was guided by an ethnographic and social practice approach to literacy. It included the building of techno-linguistic biographies (Page *et al.*, 2014) with academics, in different British universities, who participated in the research. Tusting *et al.*, (2019, p. 20) describe the advantages that accrued from the adoption of techno-biographic style interviews, with a focus on language and literacy practices. As they put it: “Techno-biographies gave us a vital window into academics’ lived experiences with technology; the subtle and nuanced ways in which the use of different digital technologies enables and constrains practices of knowledge creation”.

This approach to interviewing was also adopted in a research project conducted in two federal universities in Brazil<sup>1</sup>, along with policy-related interviews. Insights from this research project into the lived experiences of Brazilian researchers with technology are included in two articles that are included in this special issue, namely those by Magalhães and by Martin-Jones, Souza and Carvalho. The main aim of this research was to investigate changes in institutional policies and academic practices taking place in two universities in Brazil, in the wake of internationalization and digitization, and to provide an account of the impact over time on the working lives of academics in different disciplines. The Brazilian academics participating in this research indicated that they were experiencing a range of opportunities and challenges due to digitization of higher education, that resembled those documented in the study in British universities, carried out by Tusting *et al.* (2019). Thus, for example, one participant (the Director

<sup>1</sup> The title of this small scale project was: *The changing language and literacy landscape of Brazilian universities: English in policy development and in practice*. It was carried out in 2019 and it was funded by the British Council (Brazil), the University of Birmingham, the Instituto de Letras, UnB, the Faculdade de Letras, UFMG and by two travel grants from CNPq. The research team included 5 Brazilian researchers: Maria Lucia Castanheira, Gilcinei Carvalho, Izabel Magalhães, Andrea Mattos and Ana Souza, and 3 British researchers: Elizabeth Chilton, Eleni Mariou and Marilyn Martin-Jones.

of the International Office at one Brazilian university) shared with members of the project team his worries about the challenges that he and his colleagues faced due to email overload.

However, there are also differences in the ways in which digitization and the use of mobile technology have been shaping the working lives of the Brazilian academics below. We give two examples below.

Firstly, in Brazil, publication practices differ from those in other countries. While the publication of books takes place in partnership with academic publishers, academic articles are mostly published online by professional associations or by academics in university departments or research units. In this way, open access is ensured. However, international journals only make limited provision for open access. Thus, Brazilian academics need to navigate different options for publishing their research.

Secondly, as well as navigating different routes to publication, Brazilian academics face challenges related to ensuring that tasks related to teaching and administration are carried out. For example, in the article by Magalhães for this special issue, we read about one academic's reliance on the use of WhatsApp and her smartphone as a means of communicating with students and sharing course details, when university administrators were overwhelmed and not able to support students. This meant that her working life regularly crossed the boundary between the university and her home. This reliance on personal devices for communicating with students is quite common among Brazilian academics, and these forms of communication often involve boundary crossing.

We turn now to another significant area of change taking place in Brazilian universities. This area of change provides the focus for four of the articles in this special issue. It presents a range of challenges and it has also given rise to highly innovative reflections on the role and scope of the teaching of Portuguese as an Additional Language at university level.

## **4 The changing student population in Brazilian universities**

In recent decades, the increasing diversity in the student population in Brazilian universities has been due to two factors: Firstly, there has been an increase in inward mobility, with students entering Brazilian universities from countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Secondly, the presence of students from historically minoritized groups is increasingly significant due to the enactment of recent legislation promoting inclusion in higher education. These groups include Deaf students, students from historically-minoritized Brazilian communities of African or Indigenous origin and students of migrant and refugee origin. Since most teaching and learning at higher education level in Brazil continues to be through the medium of Portuguese, the significant growth in the number of students with different linguistic and cultural origins has led to the strengthening of the field of Portuguese as an Additional Language (*Português como Língua Adicional – PLA*) and to new debates and original lines of theory-building about forms of support for different groups. Some of these lines of theory-building are illustrated in this special issue.

## 4.1 Increased inward mobility of students, with different backgrounds and learning needs

In the Global North, income from international student fees makes up a significant proportion of university income, especially in countries (*e.g.*, the UK) where state funding for higher education has been significantly reduced. In settings such as these, international students are positioned as consumers of the knowledge on offer, including language knowledge (*e.g.*, preparatory language courses, such as English for Academic Purposes).

In Brazil, the inward flow of international students, at undergraduate and graduate levels, is more mixed. Some students come with funding from their own countries or as part of international university partnerships involving Brazilian higher education institutions. Some come as part of a ‘year abroad’ requirement for an undergraduate degree program in language. Others come from other countries in the Global South – in Africa, The Caribbean and Latin America – as recipients of Brazilian government scholarships.

All students entering Brazilian universities, who do not speak Portuguese as their first language, are required to take a language proficiency test called CELPE-Bras. This test was first introduced by the Ministry of Education in 1994. As Schlatter and Garcez (2018, p. 212) have noted,

a CELPE-Bras certificate is required for the admission of foreign nationals to Brazilian universities, and it is mandatory for all recipients of around 800 scholarships granted every year by the Brazilian government to students in undergraduate programs (PEC-G [...]) and graduate (PEC-PG) student exchange programs.

There has been a significant increase in the numbers taking the CELPE-Bras test since the late 1990s and the demand for Portuguese courses of different types has grown significantly. Schlatter and Garcez (2018, p. 213) reported in 2018 that “Portuguese is taught to speakers of other languages in most of Brazil’s more than 60 state-funded universities”. However, innovation in university-level teaching, in teacher education and in theory-building in the field of Portuguese as an Additional Language has been led, for a number of years, in universities such as those represented in this special issue.

As the research into the teaching/learning of PLA has developed, and as researchers have begun to focus in on the language practices and ideologies unfolding in particular kinds of language programs, in particular higher education contexts, critical perspectives have been opened up. For instance, Bizon and Cavalcanti (2018) provide detailed insights into the lived experiences of two students from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) who were doing a preparatory course for the CELPE-Bras PEC-G test. The students’ narratives revealed the ways in which they were positioned by those teaching them, the prejudice and racialization that they experienced and the ways in which they navigated these learning conditions. Bizon and Cavalcanti argue that little account was taken of the students’ linguistic and cultural resources or of their prior learning experience. Citing Santos (2002), they say that these resources and their prior learning were viewed as “absences” when compared with the forms of culture and canonical knowledge embedded in university programs. They conclude that: “Projects of mobility and internationalization that

do not anticipate the potential for dialogue that is opened up in the context of diversity will fail to provide fertile ground for knowledge-building” (Bizon; Cavalcanti, 2018, p. 237).

The article by Frazzato, in this special issue, also focuses on the ways in which international students are viewed in Portuguese learning spaces. Her focus is on: (1.) the challenges facing students from East Asia due to the lack of attention, among teaching staff, to their linguistic and cultural resources and ways of knowing; and on (2.) the ways in which these students were expected to conform to “a homogeneous and westernized form of internationalization”.

As the field of Portuguese as an Additional Language has developed, examples of more critical and reflective forms of provision have emerged. Take, for instance, the account by Schlatter and Garcez (2018) of a teacher education program for primary and secondary school teachers from Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau and São Tomé: This program involved dialogue with participants, along with activities designed to build on the linguistic and cultural resources that the participants were bringing to the program.

Another example is included in the article by Bizon and Pavan in this special issue. They draw on research that was carried out with students and alumni in a teacher education program in Portuguese as an Additional Language at a Brazilian university. Their research showed how new visions for internationalization can be fostered in teacher education programs that are based on an “expanded linguistic education”, which includes a critical, social approach to language, and a commitment to building an understanding of the linguistic and cultural knowledge resources that international students bring to their learning of Portuguese.

## **4.2 Affirmative action and inclusion for historically-marginalized groups**

As Cunha (1980) has shown, during the colonial era and the Empire, and throughout the Republican period (up to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century), higher education in Brazil was mostly restricted to a privileged elite. However, in 1988, the federal government made the first moves towards democratising access to education, by introducing the principle that public education (including school and higher education) should be free for all. The democratization of access to higher education unfolded through a series of developments. In the early 2000s, governmental scholarships were made available to assist working-class students in paying private university tuition fees. In 2012, the government required higher education institutions to reserve fifty per cent of their places on undergraduate programs for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, for those who had had all of their schooling in the public sector and for those who self-identified as Indigenous or of African descent. In 2016, students with disabilities were also included, since they met the quota criteria. Moreover, as Rocha points out in her article for this special issue, access to higher education for Deaf students was further facilitated by the official recognition of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) in 2002 and by legislation in favour of Libras in educational and non-educational settings in 2005.

Three of the articles in this special issue address the challenges facing historically minoritized groups as they enter higher education in Brazil. Mattos and Diniz write about their research into the lived experiences of students of migrant and refugee origin, from Haiti and Syria. Rocha gives a detailed research account of the in-class challenges facing Deaf students, and the nature and varying scope of

the support that they receive from Sign Language interpreters. And, Carvalho and Schlatter present their research into the challenges faced by Indigenous students, and students from other groups now entering universities in Brazil for the first time, during formal assessment processes. As all these authors show, the challenges facing each of these groups stem from the very nature of the academic institutions that they are entering, from the long-established conventions of knowledge-building, from the nature of the academic literacies they encounter and from the ways in which they are perceived and positioned as newcomers, and as underprivileged students.

Each of these three groups of minority students need different kinds of support in their learning at university level and particularly in navigating the academic literacies associated with university level study, in the classroom and beyond. In each of the three articles in this special issue, we read in detail about the specific challenges facing student in each group. Academic literacy practices are central to the lines of argument in all three of the articles, so we will comment briefly here on the ways in which these academic literacies are understood in critical educational and applied linguistic research in Brazil.

A major shift in theory-building relating to literacy took place from the 1980s onwards (Street, 1984; Bloome; Green, 1992; Barton, 2007). In the field that has come to be known as Literacy Studies, the practices of reading, writing and using texts came to be understood as having a profoundly social and ideological nature, shaped by the power dynamics at play in different contexts. Brazilian scholars (*e.g.* Soares, 1985; 1995; 1998a;1988b; 2004; Kleiman, 1995; Castanheira, 2004; Castanheira; Green; Dixon, 2007; Castanheira; Street; Carvalho, 2015) made a significant contribution to these lines of theory-building and to the development of ethnographic approaches to literacy in educational settings. In Brazilian Portuguese, the term ‘*letramento*’ has been adopted to signify this view of reading and writing, in order to capture the social and ideological nature of literacy practices, and to distinguish these key aspects of literacy from the long-dominant view of literacy as being associated with individual ‘skills’ and with the cognitive processes associated with the acquisition of reading and writing ‘skills’ (processes known as *alfabetização* in Portuguese).

Within this broad critical tradition of Literacy Studies, there is a distinctive strand of research into academic literacies. In this research, the focus has been on written genres and on discipline-specific conventions for building knowledge in writing (*e.g.* the work of Lillis; Scott, 2007), and into the ways in which literacy practices and conventions are bound up with relations of power and prestige within academia. In their article for this special issue, Mattos and Diniz emphasise that power imbalances embedded in this area of knowledge-building in academia have very long roots, and that research into academic literacies and knowledge-building in countries of the South, like Brazil, needs to incorporate historicized perspectives, as well as taking account of contemporary power asymmetries, especially when related to students from historically marginalised groups. Citing Hernandez-Zamora (2019, p.7-8), Mattos and Diniz call for a decolonial and historicized view of literacy which “involves questioning how access to written culture changes between classes and social groups throughout history and in individual histories”.

## 5 The articles in this special issue: Research undertaken in different university contexts in Brazil

In this final section, we provide further details about each of the eight articles in this special issue. They represent a range of research that has been undertaken in different universities in central and southern Brazil, including federal and state universities. As shown in Table 1, in our Introduction, the articles address two kinds of changes in the language and literacy landscapes of higher education in Brazil, along with the opportunities and challenges ushered in by these changes. Some articles focus primarily on internationalization and the digitization of university life; others focus primarily on the changes associated with the increasing diversity in the student population. Together, the articles provide a revealing account of the nature and scope of the changes at work in higher education in Brazil, along with the consequences of those changes for both academics and students.

The article by Magalhães has the title: “Times of change in a Brazilian university: Insights from research into the language, literacy and digital practices of academics”, and it is based on team research (see footnote 2 for research project details). It investigates the specific nature of the changes taking place in the language and literacy landscape of one federal university in Brazil, in the wake of internationalization and increased digitization of research, teaching and administration. Drawing primarily on techno-linguistic biographies with university staff, and on ethnographic observations, this article provides close examination of the impact of internationalization and digitization on the working lives of academics.

As readers of this article, we gain insights into changes over time in the academic literacy practices of the research participants and in their uses of texts (online and offline), in their research, and in teaching and university administration and we see how they position themselves with regard to these changes. We also see them making strategic language choices as they take account of the increasing dominance of English within international research networks and in academic publishing. In addition, we see them taking up opportunities opened up by the increasing range of digital resources already available in 2019, while also dealing with the new challenges related to increased workload and working across time zones in sustaining international research networks.

The article is clearly framed with reference to: (1.) the recent sociolinguistic literature on the prominent role of language and communication in late modernity and in the globalised knowledge economy; (2.) a social practice view of literacy; (3.) research into the refashioning of the writing that academics do, due to the advent of mobile technology and the ever-increasing digitization of academic literacy practices.

The article by Gimenez, Cogo, Calvo and El Khadri is entitled: “English language hegemonies in the internationalization of two state universities in Brazil: Unintended consequences of English medium instruction”. This article is based on team research in two state-funded universities in Brazil. It thus provides new knowledge regarding the impact of English-medium instruction (EMI) as part of wider policy moves towards internationalization in Brazilian universities. The lines of argument developed across the article are embedded in ongoing research debates in Applied Linguistics about EMI, about the consequences of EMI for academics and for students, and about alternatives such as bilingual/translingual approaches to learning/teaching at higher education level, and the use of English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF).

The section entitled “Findings and discussion” brings the voices of the research participants to the fore (both academic staff and students), demonstrating the value of detailed, qualitative research into the language dimensions of internationalization in specific local settings, and into the lived experiences of academics and students. Here, we gain insights, as readers, into what the authors call “the unintended consequences of internationalization”, including the negative impact on learning content, language hierarchization, the emotional impact (for staff and students) stemming from lack of confidence in the use of English; tensions between staff who are more or less willing to take on EMI; the impact on student enrolment and, ultimately, the impact on students’ sense of identity and concerns about the ways in which they are perceived by the universities where they are based.

The article entitled “Internationalization of higher education in Brazil: institutional strategies, policy initiatives and different discourses about language in one federal university” has been co-authored by Martin-Jones, Souza and Carvalho. This article draws on team research which was carried out in one federal university in Brazil (see footnote 2 for details). The article draws together insights of two kinds: (1.) the range of institutional strategies and policy initiatives being developed at the university in response to internationalization, and to shifts in governmental policy for higher education; and (2.) the views of academics in different disciplines regarding these policy processes, and the ways in which these views reflected wider discourses about the nature and scope of knowledge-building in different disciplines, local involvement in international research networks and the use of different languages in research and teaching.

The data gathered for this project included policy-related interviews with academics in different fields of study at the university and individual life history interviews with a techno-linguistic focus. The lines of data analysis presented in this article builds on recent lines of theory-building in the ethnography of language policy. The article thus charts the processes involved in the creation of the university’s internationalization policy, the ways in which it was being interpreted by different groups of academics and the actual practices (and challenges) ‘on the ground’ as different aspects of the university’s policy were being appropriated.

The article by Bizon and Pavan is entitled: “Narratives of students and alumni from a degree program in Portuguese as an Additional Language: Signs of the potential for building *an other internationalization*.” This article draws on a research project which focused on a historically significant language degree program at a leading university in Brazil, and on the narratives of participants (past and present). The research project combined ethnography with narrative analysis, building on critical traditions in both fields.

As readers of this article, we learn about the history and significance of this degree program as an early model of provision within the area of Portuguese as an Additional Language, due to its vision regarding the need for “an expanded linguistics education,” incorporating critical sociolinguistic approaches to the study of language. We also encounter the voices and views of students involved in the program, along with those of recent alumni. In the narratives of the alumni, we see how involvement in the program has changed their views about internationalization and about engagement with linguistic and cultural diversity among international students learning Portuguese. Drawing on the voices and lived experiences of students (past and present), Bizon and Pavan demonstrate the potential of language degree programs of this kind, which incorporate more critical, social views of language, for fostering other ways of conceptualizing internationalization and for dealing with difference.

The article by Frazzato is entitled “Portuguese as an Additional Language at a Brazilian university: Encounters in language spaces of learning and conflicts in ways of knowing.” It focuses on the learning and teaching of Portuguese as an Additional Language (PAL) in the context of inward bound student mobility to Brazil and, specifically, in the context of non-degree student mobility as part of year-abroad schemes for students from East and South-East Asia (China, Japan and South Korea). As Frazzato observes, such schemes constitute part of wider circuits of mobility across an increasingly multipolar world.

In this article, Frazzato presents an analysis of three interviews: two with university teachers of Portuguese and one with a Japanese student. She shows how the two teachers differed in the ways in which they represented students from Asia, focusing on their learning styles and ways of knowing. Here, we see a contrast in the discourses of the two teachers, between a preoccupation with construction of what Jordão and Martinez (2021) have called “sameness”, and conformity with the communicative norms of Brazilian academia and, on the other hand, a commitment to finding ways of engaging with difference. We also see that the teacher preoccupied with constructing sameness, also saw students’ silence in class, and their preoccupation with acquiring grammatical knowledge, as problems or deficits.

In her analysis of the interview with the Japanese student, Frazzato focuses on his lived experience of being the only Asian student attending a Portuguese class where the other learners were all Spanish speakers. She shows how, in his account of the interactional constraints he experienced, he drew on a view of culture and language as fixed entities, and portrayed differences between people from the East and from the West. However, he did not echo the deficit discourse of one of his teachers. In concluding, Frazzato provides thought-provoking proposals regarding the need for greater discussion, amongst those involved in the teaching of Portuguese as an Additional Language, about ways in which the diverse linguistic, cultural and epistemic resources of international students such as this one could be addressed.

The article by Mattos and Diniz is entitled “Whoa, but I’m not like this, I don’t even know how this happens.” Literacy practices and experiences of students from migrant backgrounds in a Brazilian public university.” The empirical focus of the article is on the specific situated experiences of students of migrant origin, as they participated in different academic literacy events in a Brazilian university. The critical study of academic literacy lies at the heart of this article and it informs the discussion of university policies in Brazil regarding internationalization and internationalization at home (IaH).

In this article, Mattos and Diniz provide a detailed account of the lived experiences and practices of four research participants, two of Syrian origin, and two of Haitian origin, representing them, wherever possible, in their own words. Their experiences at the university included the following: ‘mismatches’ between their expectations (given their personal histories) and the realities of academic study in this context; difficulties in negotiating identities in different settings; challenges involved in the production of academic texts; and difficulties in dealing with the registration and enrolment system of the university and with different categories of courses.

Keylines of theory-building related to academic literacy are drawn upon in this article. They include: (1.) the New Literacies movement, (2.) the Brazilian notion of *letramento*, (3.) research in which developing academic literacy is viewed as socialization into specific genres and ways of writing, as use of particular kinds of multimodal resources, as navigating conventionalized forms of disciplinary knowledge and content and as bound up with specific cultural values, and (4.) recent research which foregrounds ideological aspects of academic literacy and the ways in which institutional practices and asymmetrical power relations contribute



to the definition of what counts as knowledge. The concluding section then points to a gap in some of the research literature, *i.e.*, the lack of a historical dimension which would provide a means of developing the critical component of current research on academic literacy by adopting a decolonial perspective.

The article by Carvalho and Schlatter is entitled: “Shifting away from normative/hegemonic language assessment in graduate programs in Brazil and espousing a social justice agenda: Insights from assessment practices with Indigenous and Deaf students in two universities.” The article addresses the challenges for affirmative action and inclusion of historically marginalized students within graduate programs in Brazil. The focus is on mandatory assessment procedures and the challenges arising from the use of one particular form of assessment, namely, foreign language reading proficiency tests, which were being applied in graduate programs in the universities where the research was based. These tests were being applied towards the end of a graduate program (*e.g.* before students began work on a thesis).

At the heart of the article, we read about these specific language assessment practices in the two universities in Brazil where the research was carried out. Firstly, we read about the challenges facing an Indigenous student in one of the universities (a young woman – a speaker of Guarani – who was completing a Master’s degree). We also read about the adjustments made in the assessment practices to take account of the student’s cultural and linguistic background. Secondly, we read about attempts, at the second university, to adapt the practices involved in the administration of foreign language proficiency texts, to take account of the specific communicative resources and repertoires of students from different minority groups, in this case, Deaf students and Indigenous students.

The research presented in this article was guided by a critical linguistic view of language assessment regimes, of the one-language-one-nation discourse underpinning language testing and on the ways in which such tests provide a means of gate-keeping access to privileged positions within academia. Carvalho and Schlatter call for the introduction of assessment practices of a more dialogic nature, which would provide scope for fuller use of the resources within the communicative repertoires of minority students *e.g.*, the spoken genres of Indigenous languages or the Signs of Libras (Brazilian Sign Language). They also argue that such moves away from standardized testing regimes would require greater awareness of asymmetries of power within academia and a commitment to moving away from normative/hegemonic approaches, and working towards approaches based on social justice.

The article by Terezinha da Costa Rocha is entitled: “Bilingual education policies and the participation of Deaf students in academic literacy practices.” The article is based on much needed research into educational policy and practice in the context of the inclusion of Deaf students in higher education in Brazil. The article opens with an informative account of policy processes that have contributed to the democratization of access to higher education in Brazil, in the last decade or so. This is followed by an account of specific policies related to provision of support for Deaf students, involving the appointment of Sign Language interpreters and the use of Libras, alongside Portuguese, in university classroom contexts.

We are then introduced to a research project that was carried out by Rocha in one federal university in Brazil. The project showed how language policy, related to the use of Libras in supporting in-class participation of Deaf students, was being translated into classroom practice. The empirical work was ethnographic in nature and combined an interactional approach to the study of bilingual education practices, with a focus on academic literacies. We read in detail about one classroom literacy event. We see how different participants in the event – three Deaf students, two Sign Language interpreters, the university professor

leading the session and the hearing students – participated in this event, and we see how the Deaf students understood the significance of the literacy practices associated with the event. Rocha’s detailed analysis of this event highlights: (1.) the way in which the Deaf students supported each other; (2.) the key role of the Sign Language interpreters in enabling them to grasp the significance of specific literacy practices, and (3.) the ways in which the Sign Language interpreters liaised with the administrative staff based in the university’s Inclusion Department, with responsibility for implementing the policy of inclusion for Deaf students.

This article clearly demonstrates the value of engaging in detailed ethnographic research into the ways in which language policies, aimed at inclusion in higher education for Deaf students, are being translated into day-to-day classroom practice in different university settings in Brazil. The detailed analysis of classroom practices is framed with reference to the research literature on policies of inclusion, academic literacy practices and the ethnography of literacy.

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