

2018-2019

UK-Brazil English Collaboration Call

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# Framing English language applied research



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# **Framing English language applied research**

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Summary

A word from the British Council Brazil	5
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Language and education for a globalised world	7
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English language policies as a main component of the internationalisation process

I	Do you need perfect language skills to give a good class in English?	12
II	Big data opens a new path to better research writing	20
III	Policy, language and literacy in a changing landscape	28
IV	What do you need to teach academic English?’	36
V	EMI and the perspective of English as a <i>lingua franca</i>	44
VI	There is more to internationalisation than classes in English	52

Improving English language teaching and learning in the public school system at lower and upper secondary levels

VII	Exploratory practice: a look from within language teaching	64
VIII	Can a mobile app support English teaching in classrooms?	72

UK-Brazil English Collaboration Call: supported projects	81
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## A word from the British Council Brazil

**Martin Dowle**

Country Director, British Council

Mindful of the drive for internationalisation of universities in Brazil and the introduction of English as a compulsory subject in lower and upper secondary education in 2020, the British Council launched a call two years ago for academics in our two countries to examine some of the barriers that are impeding progress in English language learning in the country.

Altogether, 18 universities – 11 in Brazil and seven in the United Kingdom – were involved in eight funded projects from December 2018 to July 2019, engaging another ten institutions indirectly. The National Council of State Funding Agencies (CONFAP) in Brazil was a key partner in the development of the research call and matched the funding by the British Council by engaging some of the State Funding Agencies. The subject areas varied from the use of artificial intelligence in English teaching to the development of academic English policies and the role of English in the internationalisation of the higher education sector in Brazil.

The overall message of much of the research is that we should be flexible and open to experimentation and innovation, while not letting the best be the enemy of the good. Progress in Brazil towards significantly increasing the number of professors, teachers and researchers able to read, write and teach effectively in the English language has been painfully slow. There is a lack of data regarding level of proficiency of academics in general, but the statistics produced by the federal government initiative *Idiomas sem Fronteiras* (Languages Without Borders) gives a sense of the gap. According to the study, only three per cent of the students have reached C1 level in the

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Greater fluency in English among academics and administrators really does need to be an integral part of the internationalisation process in Brazilian universities. It is noteworthy that there is considerable variance in the emphasis which different universities are placing on this issue. Many academics may be afraid to teach in English because they think that their level of English is not high enough. But as one of the articles in this collection suggests, maybe it is not really necessary for academics to have the highest level of English in order to be able to conduct lessons using English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) – an increasing requirement in many Brazilian higher education institutions. But the question to reflect upon remains: what is the level of English professors need in order to conduct lessons in EMI? Is there a minimum level requirement?

Raising standards in teacher training is another huge challenge that the Brazilian education system faces, and universities have a significant role to play in improving training for future cohorts of teachers as they pass through the higher education system. In the coming years there will need to be more effective continual learning for in-service teachers, and a greater role for universities in understanding the difficult situations that teachers often have to deal with in their day-to-day work.

The publication of these essays coincides with an exciting four-year initiative by the UK's Prosperity Fund to improve standards of English teaching and learning in the Brazilian public education system, drawing on the resources of the English teaching sectors in both Brazil and the United Kingdom. I hope the articles in this volume, based on joint research between our two countries, help inform the general debate within which the new fund will be operating.





## Language and education for a globalised world

**Cíntia Toth Gonçalves**

Head of English, British Council Brazil

The road to improving levels of English in Brazil is long and encompasses primary, secondary and tertiary education. Some numbers demonstrate the scale of the challenge.

According to the 2014 survey *Demands on English Learning in Brazil*, designed by Data Popular Research Institute for the British Council, only 5.1 per cent of Brazilians over the age of 16 say they have some knowledge of English. This rate of self-perception doubles to 10.3 per cent when young people aged between 18 and 24 are considered. Therefore, between 90 and 95 per cent of the Brazilian population do not consider themselves as English speakers at any level.

The scenario is not very different when we look at universities. Research from the *Languages without Borders* programme shows that most (77 per cent) of the academic community in Brazilian universities have basic to lower-intermediate proficiency in English, that is, only up to B1 level within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

With these challenges in mind, the British Council has focused on supporting partnerships between Brazilian and British universities to foster innovative ways to improve English Language Learning (ELL) and English Language Teaching (ELT) at secondary and tertiary levels. We believe that the creative and robust work of these partnerships can have a positive effect on the quality of secondary education and internationalisation at the university level, contributing to the design and implementation of innovative, sustainable and scalable practices.

The 2018–19 **UK–Brazil English Collaboration Call** enabled eight projects focusing on secondary and tertiary education. It is worth noting that the 11 Brazilian and seven British partnering institutions further engaged another ten institutions indirectly, with over 570 participants, including lecturers, students and administrative staff, among others. The call granted almost £113,000 in total: roughly £58,000 from the British Council, £15,000 from the Brazilian Research Foundations (FAPs) and more than £39,000 from universities and other sources.

These collaborations encompass two areas of research that differ, but both concern the English language.

First, *English language policies as a main component of the internationalisation process* incorporates the strengthening of language policies at the institutional level in universities working with the ‘internationalisation at home’ agenda. This line of research bears special importance since the national programme, *Science Without Borders*, has been phased out, and different strategies and approaches are being adopted, going beyond undergraduate mobility.

In this research area, we selected six projects that range from the perception of lecturers, students and other members of academia of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) to an indication of how proficient teaching staff should be in English in order to deliver classes in the language. The pieces of research also analyse the concept of English as a lingua franca and how it can strengthen internationalisation processes when combined with other policies, such as support for international co-operation and for academic production in a foreign language.

Second, *Improving English language teaching and learning in the public-school system at lower and upper secondary levels* addresses the improvement of teaching and learning of the English language at the lower (equivalent to Key Stage 3) and upper (Key Stage 4) secondary levels in Brazil. The two projects selected examine the training and self-perceptions of English teachers, as well as the use of new technologies as an aid for classroom teaching. This line of research is especially relevant when we consider that the majority of Brazilian young people (85 per cent) are enrolled in public primary and secondary schools.

Training and capacity-building of teachers have been important factors in the improvement in the quality of foreign language education. It is even more important now – from 2020 onwards English will be a compulsory subject for students at lower and upper secondary schools in Brazil. Considering that less than half (45.3 per cent)<sup>1</sup> of more than 62,000 English teachers have adequate training or background in foreign languages, this is an important subject to research.

The 2018–19 **UK–Brazil English Collaboration Call** aimed at bringing these crucial subjects to light, and its results have been further discussed in academic papers and presentations. In some cases, they have led to new research projects. Some research pieces have been featured in articles in academic journals and general media, and others will result in e-books or guidelines for language policies in higher education institutions. All of them are gaining public relevance in many different ways, and this publication highlights the strengths of each research piece.

Through this publication, the British Council aims to help these universities share their research outcomes with other institutions and beyond the academic community, with policymakers and wider society. Our goal is not to be exhaustive, nor to report on each piece of research in great technical detail. The academic papers that will result from these pieces of research will serve that purpose. We want to tell the stories of these collaborations – what was done, where, by whom, how and with what result.

I hope you enjoy the publication and discover new aspects of English education in Brazil, internationalisation processes and some of the solutions being sought to face the challenges in the area.

<sup>1</sup>Retrieved from the 2019 British Council report *Políticas Públicas para o Ensino de Inglês: um Panorama das Experiências na Rede Pública Brasileira* (Public Policies for English Teaching: an Overview of the Experiences at the Brazilian Public School System).





## LINE OF RESEARCH

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English language policies as a main component  
of the internationalisation process

# Do you need perfect language skills to give a good class in English?



The research evaluated if there is a minimum level of proficiency lecturers need to effectively teach their subjects through English

## AT A GLANCE

English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is an important approach to internationalisation of higher education worldwide. When it comes to language proficiency levels lecturers need to deliver classes, though, every institution seems to have its own thresholds and parameters. Do lecturers necessarily need to have advanced language proficiency in order to teach effectively? This is the question the project **‘Is there a minimum level of English proficiency to teach in a university EMI context?’** sought to answer. The study was led by Dr Ron Martinez (Federal University of Paraná) in collaboration with Cambridge Assessment English through Siân Morgan and Hugh Moss. It took place from December 2018 to June 2019 and analysed how the language proficiency of lecturers affects students’ perception of the understanding of content, with implications for the internationalisation of universities. In total, 22 lecturers took an EMI preparation course and presented a 20-minute lecture assessed by students. The results showed that lecturers with B2 level and higher – according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) – were considered by most students apt to teach in English. The study points towards further investigation but already holds relevance for institutional policy and language teaching within university environments.

## How proficient in English does an EMI lecturer need to be?

Mastering a specific subject is often not enough to deliver a satisfactory class with English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI): lecturers should also have a good command of the language itself. However, is it strictly necessary to have ‘advanced’ English skills to deliver a good class? Is there a minimum threshold below which the understanding of a lecture becomes too difficult? These questions are hard to answer since there is not much research in this area, says Dr Ron Martinez, a lecturer at the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR).

A 2018 review from the University of Oxford, led by Professor Ernesto Macaro, points out that the current knowledge of teachers’ linguistic competencies needed to teach EMI is rather superficial, and ‘there is no definitive national or international benchmark for the level a teacher needs to be able to teach in English.’

This lack of knowledge can hinder the formulation of language and internationalisation policies in universities in Brazil and worldwide. To Dr Martinez, lecturers need a reference point regarding the minimum language proficiency they need in order to deliver EMI classes. Such a standard, he says, is extremely important for the academic community. The search for solid evidence could open up the path to discussion about language proficiency to support EMI parameters and policies.

English proficiency levels are not generally high among the academic community in Brazil. Evidence from the *Inglês sem Fronteiras* (English Without Borders) programme shows that, in 2015, a considerable part of the Brazilian academic community (77 per cent) had basic or lower-intermediate fluency, ranging between A2 (43 per

cent) and B1 (34 per cent) levels. Only 20 per cent had intermediate (B2) English proficiency, while three per cent had advanced knowledge (C1) of the language, according to the European Common Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

A minimum threshold for English proficiency in EMI can be an important tool for countries like Brazil to internationalise its universities and higher education institutions, even if general proficiency levels are low, Dr Martinez says. It is hard for Brazil to use the same standards as, for example, the Netherlands, where English is widely spoken. ‘In Europe, many institutions require lecturers to have a minimum C1 level in CEFR to teach classes in English. This is possible in countries where a substantial percentage of the population is proficient, but would condemn EMI to failure here in Brazil,’ he says. ‘And there is no empirical evidence that C1 is the minimum proficiency level necessary to enable classes in EMI,’ he continues. Discovering a minimum threshold would be of invaluable importance to this debate.

If Brazilian and foreign students can understand class content of a lecture given with intermediate English proficiency, it could mean that an advanced level of English is not the minimum threshold required from lecturers to deliver EMI classes



## How the research was carried out

The main objective of the project **‘Is there a minimum level of English proficiency to teach in a university EMI context?’** was to measure students’ perceptions of intelligibility of EMI classes given by Brazilian teachers.

From December 2018 to June 2019, Dr Martinez and PhD candidate Candida Palma selected 40 students, mostly from graduate courses from Brazil (27), non-native English speakers from other countries (nine) and native English speakers from the United States (four). They were selected from a range of nearly 500 students that had taken a course in academic writing in English by Dr Ron Martinez in 2017 and 2018 and had high self-reported proficiency. The researchers also invited 26 lecturers from UFPR and state universities to take part in an EMI training course. Students and academics had their CEFR English levels assessed through the Linguaskill test, provided by Cambridge Assessment English, part of the University of Cambridge. Proficiency levels of students were generally high, while lecturers’ levels varied.

After the EMI course, each lecturer gave a 20-minute class to their peers on a specific subject and was interviewed straight after finishing the lesson. The classes were video-recorded and later accessed by students for blind evaluation (they did not know about the lecturers’ CEFR levels), using the Test of Oral English Proficiency for Academic Staff (TOEPAS). Each student evaluated three lectures in total, so each lecture was assessed by more than one student.

Setting up the evaluation procedures was a complex task. Candida Palma says that recruiting students and lecturers to participate in such a long-term project was especially challenging. ‘Students had to get training in using TOEPAS, then watch videos which demanded time and attention and later discuss them, and, finally, be interviewed. It was a long process.’ Dr Ron Martinez says that, besides that, the team created a website to host the edited videos for students to watch and make their own observations.

## Some findings

Some results were already expected by the researchers. ‘We knew beforehand that lecturers with an advanced proficiency level (C1 CEFR) would likely be fully capable of delivering their lessons in English – and some would not have any trouble with technical terms because the literature they normally use is already in English,’ Palma says. ‘It is when proficiency levels are lower that we had our doubts,’ she continues.

The research team had a few surprises with some of the project’s results. The majority of Brazilian and foreign students (76 per cent) considered that B2 level (intermediate) was enough for them to understand the lecturers, ‘even in cases when the subject was very different from the students’ (student-evaluators’) area of study,’ says Palma. It suggests students and lecturers do not expect perfection from each other when it comes to language skills. ‘There is mutual co-operation, understanding and tolerance concerning EMI classes,’ she adds.

Such results suggest that if Brazilian and foreign students can understand the content of a lecture given with intermediate English proficiency, it could mean that advanced levels are not the minimum threshold required from lecturers to deliver EMI classes. This finding points towards the need for further investigation, and is possibly an encouragement for more academics to embrace EMI with positive perspectives for internationalisation in Brazilian universities.

## What the community said

The research stimulated reflection and practice of EMI in groups beyond the lecturers involved in the training and evaluation. Mariza Túlio, a lecturer of English at the State University of Ponta Grossa (UEPG), says the EMI course given during the project was fundamental for her practice and it was a sort of ‘meta activity’ for her. ‘I am an English lecturer in the Arts Faculty, so we teach English as a subject through the use of English as a language itself – which is a bit different from teaching other subjects in English,’ she says.

**‘We receive frequent queries regarding the minimum proficiency level required to EMI. However, variations in EMI contexts worldwide mean that there isn’t a single recommendation that could apply globally to all EMI contexts’**  
*Hugh Moss, Cambridge Assessment English*

The research has already had some practical effects. ‘The course provided me with knowledge of EMI practices and also with the capacity to teach EMI to other lecturers at UEPG,’ Mariza Túlio continues.

She co-ordinates the EMI training at UEPG and thinks the research’s notion that lecturers do not need very high English proficiency to teach in the language corroborates the wider and



more organic internationalisation process in higher education, since the community gets more motivated. 'In our training, we got better feedback from lecturers than we expected. They were motivated, saying they wanted to implement EMI in their practice because they felt they had overcome their insecurity of not being proficient enough to teach in English,' she adds.

The greatest challenge, Túlio says, is to raise awareness of the importance of EMI and to stimulate acceptance by students and lecturers of the approach as part of the internationalisation process – 'which is not only about academic mobility, but also includes publishing papers and setting up international research collaborations, among other actions,' she observes.

## Brazil-UK connection

Dr Ron Martinez says the partnership with Cambridge Assessment English was of fundamental importance to the research project. Senior research manager Siân Morgan was one of the UK partners providing the language test, the evaluation, and support for analysis of results. Morgan and Dr Martinez were introduced by Hugh Moss, senior education adviser at Cambridge Assessment English, who supported the idea of a joint proposal and also collaborated on the study, besides being involved with another selected proposal under the **UK-Brazil English Collaboration Call** (see page 52).

The British partners point out that, from their institution's point of view, the findings of the study are important because very little research has been done to address the question of what is the minimum level of English that teachers should have in order to deliver EMI classes.

'Cambridge Assessment English receives frequent queries regarding the minimum proficiency level required to EMI. However, variations in EMI contexts worldwide mean that there isn't a single recommendation that could apply globally to all EMI contexts and more research is needed to establish a minimum English language level for EMI lecturers which takes into account local contextual differences. This study may provide some evidence to add to the body of literature on the subject,' says Moss.

The research results might help narrow a gap in respect of an important aspect of EMI and internationalisation of higher education institutions worldwide. Moss and Morgan say the findings provide evidence to inform language policies of universities – and are 'a welcome step towards objectivity in decision making which will benefit teachers, learners and policymakers'.

## What's next

Results of the research have been presented to academics in language studies from several countries – and Dr Ron Martinez has received invitations from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge to discuss preliminary findings. 'Policymakers want to discuss research results to help them think of possible applications,' he says. More immediately, the Federal University of Paraná will be using the research to inform EMI policy at the institution, starting this year.

The research tried to answer a few questions but helped others surface. 'Even though 76 per cent of evaluations of classes by teachers with a B2 CEFR level were positive, we still have the other 24 percent of assessments that were negative, Dr Martinez says. 'Understanding why some B2 level lecturers were assessed more negatively

than others involves a degree of complexity. Some students said that their understanding was hindered by too many pauses, as well as hesitation and the use of many words in Portuguese,' he continues.

These impressions raise other questions that deserve further investigation. The research was undertaken in a different context from the one lecturers are used to in their everyday lives – they were teaching their peers, not their students. Besides, they were being recorded and, for many, it was the first class they ever gave in English or in such an interactive way and in front of a camera.

The research brings up new questions: would pauses and hesitations have the same effect in the habitual context of these lecturers? 'My hypothesis is that perception would be different.

To confirm that a B2 proficiency level is enough, it would be necessary to undertake further research on these terms, within these habitual contexts. Lecturers who were negatively assessed could be considered to be good enough in their usual classes,' Dr Martinez concludes.

The researchers also presented the study during the event *UK-BR Internationalisation of Higher Education and Language Policies*, promoted by the British Council, from 27 to 31 January 2020. The programme included a seminar, a workshop, meetings and visits to universities in the UK.





LEAD RESEARCHERS



**Dr Ron Martinez** is a lecturer at the Federal University of Paraná, where he is an adviser to the President on internationalisation policy. He is an expert in applied linguistics and a specialist in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) and English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP).



**Siân Morgan** is a senior research manager at Cambridge Assessment English, part of the University of Cambridge. She has taught in the UK, Italy and the USA, and among her interests are learning-oriented assessment, performance assessment and assessment literacy.

FURTHER COLLABORATIONS

- Candida Palma, PhD candidate at UFPR and EMI guest lecturer at the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná and Positivo University.
- Hugh Moss, senior education adviser within the Consultancy Services team of Cambridge Assessment English.

>> FURTHER READING

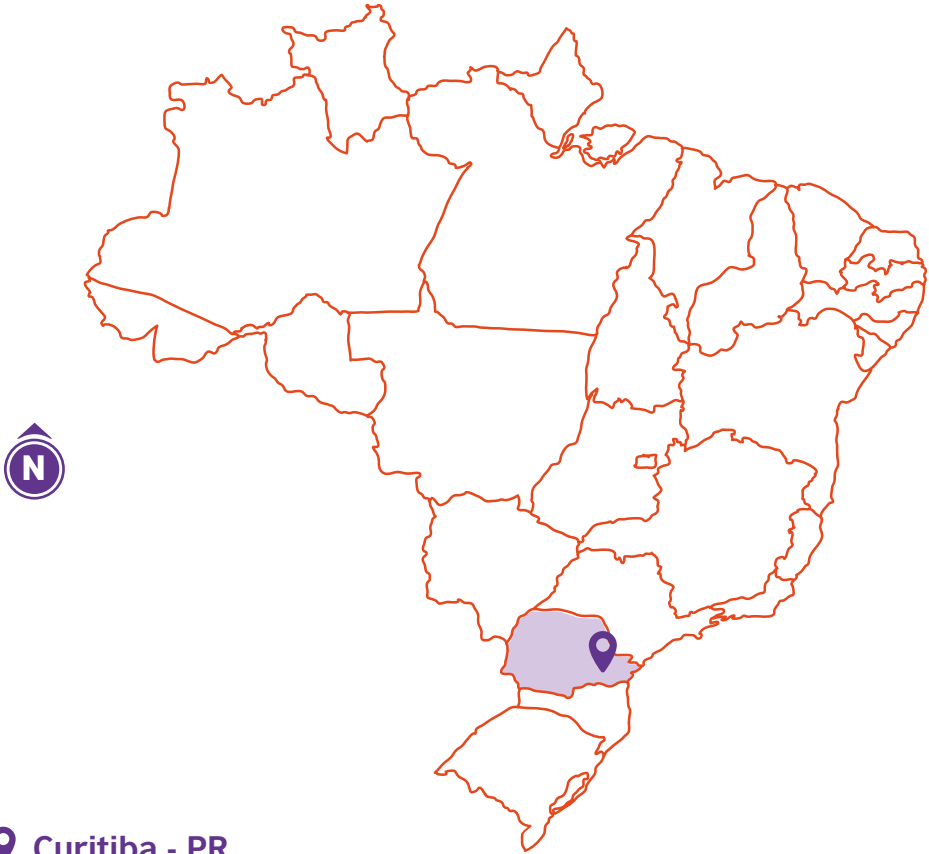
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Is there a minimum level of English proficiency to teach in a university EMI context?

**Focus:** To assess the minimum necessary proficiency level lecturers need to teach effective classes using English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)  
**BR institution:** Federal University of Paraná (UFPR)  
**UK institution:** Cambridge Assessment English  
**When:** December 2018 to June 2019  
**Where:** Curitiba, Paraná state  
**Number of participants involved:** 73, including lecturers, students and academic staff  
**Funding:** £6,000 – Araucaria Foundation £2,000; British Council £4,000



Curitiba - PR

Is there a minimum level of English proficiency to teach in a university EMI context?

- Federal University of Paraná (UFPR)
- Cambridge Assessment English

## II. Big data opens a new path to better research writing



Big data from language corpora helps Brazilian researchers and English teachers develop Academic English writing skills

### AT A GLANCE

Researchers need a good knowledge of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in order to publish their work in international journals. If, on the one hand, reaching a high level of written fluency is a challenge for many academics and graduate students in Brazil, on the other hand, most language teachers do not have a good grasp of EAP to help researchers improve their skills. EAP differs in terms of vocabulary and discourse from General English used in everyday situations and demands time and training from learners. With this challenge in mind, Ana Frankenberg-Garcia (University of Surrey), Ana Bocorny and Simone Sarmento (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul) and Paula Tavares Pinto (São Paulo State University) developed the project **‘Supporting the Internationalisation of Brazilian Research: Combining EAP Tutor Training and Academic Writing Autonomy’**. It took place from December 2018 to June 2019 and included four workshops to provide English teachers with tools to improve EAP teaching in university settings, as well as instruments for researchers from different fields to improve their academic writing.

### The need for English for Academic Purposes for internationalisation

There is little controversy about English being the language of science, and it is widely used in high-ranking academic publications. However, proficiency in General English does not equate to the ability to write a scientific paper, considering that Academic English has many specificities and complexities that differentiate it from everyday English.

In Brazil, lack of academic English writing skills might be holding researchers back. Despite being the 13th country with greatest research output worldwide, according to the 2019 report *Research in Brazil: Funding Excellence*, Brazil is below the world average in the top ten per cent of most highly cited papers. In addition, increase in international collaboration dropped between 2016 and 2018 in comparison to the 2013–15 period. The level of international collaboration can be related to the citation impact of Brazilian research, says the report.

‘Brazilian research is of very good quality, but most of it stays in the country because many researchers do not publish in international journals – so they generally stay out of the global sphere of influence in academia,’ says Dr Ana Frankenberg-Garcia, Reader in Translation Studies at the University of Surrey, in the United Kingdom. ‘English teachers also lack knowledge of Academic English, so there is a great demand for this sort of training – for both language teachers and researchers,’ she adds. Such training could benefit academics who do not work in English-medium institutions and English teachers who are not acquainted with scientific writing.

Brazil needs more research on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) – ‘and we know little about the specific necessities of Brazilian scholars. We noticed, through the *Idiomas Sem Fronteiras* (Language Without Borders) internationalisation programme, that there are no training schemes in EAP for lecturers and tutors,’ says Dr Simone Sarmento, senior lecturer in the Modern Languages Department of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS).

With this demand in mind, Dr Ana Frankenberg-Garcia (University of Surrey), Dr Ana Bocorny and Dr Simone Sarmento (UFRGS) and Dr Paula Tavares Pinto (São Paulo State University (UNESP) developed the project **‘Supporting the Internationalisation of Brazilian Research: Combining EAP Tutor Training and Academic Writing Autonomy’**, which focused on the improvement of academic writing skills for English teachers and researchers from different areas, at both UNESP and UFRGS.



## How the research was carried out

The research consisted of offering four three-day technology-enhanced workshops on Academic English writing, at UNESP and UFRGS, in April and June 2019. One of the objectives was to introduce participants to techniques of corpus linguistics – an area of study that gathers large collections of written text to enable the extraction of information about a specific language, such as English, or a specific type of language, like academic writing in English. Corpus linguistics draws on software specifically designed to analyse vast numbers of texts and see how words are used in specific contexts. ‘We used corpora, or collections of selected publications in English to teach how to write in this language. We based our method on real-life data that can show us how language is most commonly used in specific fields of research,’ Dr Frankenberg-Garcia says.

In total, 53 English teachers and 72 researchers took part in the workshops. The 125 participants came from 30 different institutions, mostly in São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul states, and among the researchers were academics and doctoral and Masters students from several areas, including engineering, agricultural sciences, humanities, social sciences and health.

‘There was a high demand for these workshops. We had five to six times more candidates than the number of participants we could accommodate,’ says Dr Simone Sarmento. Among the selection criteria were the level of academic experience and English proficiency of participants. ‘It was important to have attendees with specific questions on academic writing based on their experience – as well as adequate language proficiency (at least a B2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) since the workshops were not focused on general language learning,’ she adds.

The workshops made use of online corpus-based resources to improve academic writing skills. Teachers and researchers were put into mixed groups so that they could learn from each other. They worked with online linguistic tools, including resources that assembled large quantities of language data from academic papers, to improve their use of collocations (combinations of words) and terminology. The Macmillan English Dictionary, Academic Phrasebank, ColloCaid, SkELL and Sketch Engine were some of the tools used.

The success of the initiative did not come without a few challenges. One of them, according to Dr Sarmento, was making up for the limited language proficiency levels of some of the teachers and academics. ‘Some of the instructors were not able to fully support the researchers, and some academics could not communicate well in English, though they had excellent knowledge of their disciplines. However, in general, we had a very positive evaluation of the experience,’ she says.

*‘I had never had formal training for scientific writing before. All the tools introduced (at the workshop) were very useful and I intend to use them in the next edition of my undergraduate course’*  
**Dr Ana Chies, UFRGS**

## Some findings

The attendees’ perception of the workshops was highly positive. The initiative met or even exceeded the expectations of all the participants.

The aim of the project, says Dr Frankenberg-Garcia, was to stimulate autonomy among researchers and teachers regarding academic writing in English ‘so they would not need someone proficient in English to help them with questions they have regarding phrasing and writing their scientific papers. We took a data-driven, empirical approach to learning, where language is learnt by noticing how words are used in large quantities of text.’

The research team identified some of the needs Brazilian researchers have regarding questions about academic writing – using the most suitable terms and collocations to give the text a natural flow is one of them. ‘Most participants had never heard of the corpus linguistics tools we introduced, and they really liked those resources,’ Dr Sarmento says. ‘We also noticed a gap in the training of language teachers to be able to work with Academic English. Most are proficient English users, but do not have a good knowledge of that specific realm,’ she adds. In that regard, language teachers should have stronger support from universities and institutions for better training in Academic English, says Dr Frankenberg-Garcia.

## What the community says

The workshops opened up a new perspective for English teachers and academics on what they could do with their writing and subject-specific language skills. Dr Maria do Socorro Rangel, a senior lecturer in Mathematics at UNESP, says the course was very productive and the tools introduced were very useful. ‘I am already using them for the scientific papers I am writing at the moment. As native Portuguese speakers, we tend to use similar language structures even when writing in English – and the tools help me see that some of the terms I was using were not the most commonly used in my area,’ she says. ‘We were helped with using tools to identify plagiarism, for example... I really liked the course and would do it again if it were possible,’ she completes.

José Victor de Souza, an undergraduate student in the Arts Faculty of UNESP and English teacher in the Languages without Borders (LwB) programme, also says the workshops had a positive effect on his daily life. ‘The course’s greatest achievements were the resources and tools we learnt to use, which drew from authentic, real-life examples. Those tools provide an invaluable contribution to my planning of coursework material and exercises. I always use them to answer students’ questions,’ he says – especially when questions are related to the frequency that some words and expressions are used in English.

**Corpus linguistics draws on software specifically designed to analyse vast numbers of texts and see how words are used in specific contexts.**

### Brazil–UK connection

To Dr Ana Chies, astronomy lecturer at UFRGS, the course was very useful as well, especially because at the time the workshops were held, she was teaching an undergraduate course on scientific writing in English at her university. ‘I had never had formal training in scientific writing before. All the tools introduced were very useful and I intend to use them in the next edition of my undergraduate course. Creating our own database with papers from the area truly helps students write in a more effective manner – and knowing how to use dictionaries certainly adds to their efficiency.’ The opportunity to undertake interdisciplinary work was also one of the highlights of the workshop. ‘It is great to see there is such a rich department nearby – we should work together more often,’ she suggests.

The partnership between UNESP, UFRGS and the University of Surrey started before the **UK–Brazil English Collaboration Call** – in 2018, Dr Paula Tavares Pinto spent a semester developing post-doctoral research at the University of Surrey. ‘This was when the partnership with UNESP started, but we had known each other for longer, from corpus linguistics conferences,’ Dr Frankenberg-Garcia declares.

As to the co-operation with UFRGS, Drs Frankenberg-Garcia, Sarmiento and Bocorny also knew each other from academic events. ‘We strengthened our collaboration in a workshop on corpus linguistics which I was invited to give at a conference in Rio Grande do Sul in 2017 – and in 2018, I got a Santander staff mobility grant to spend a week working with Dr Simone Sarmiento at UFRGS,’ Dr Frankenberg-Garcia says. ‘When this call came, it was exactly what we were looking for, as we had been working together and were planning to develop a research project. It was the support we needed to take this proposal forward’.

### What is next?

The research team hopes the workshops were able to stimulate participants to share their knowledge of the tools they had access to – creating, then, a chain reaction to reach a wider audience.

According to Dr Tavares Pinto, the research team is going to broaden the study through CAPES Print projects. Dr Frankenberg Garcia will be at UNESP once more when she teaches a discipline with Dr Tavares Pinto – who is also planning, alongside some PhD students, to visit the University of Surrey in the near future. The relationship between researchers and teachers, their use of tools and overall evaluation will also be the subject of a paper to be presented in conferences.

The workshops revealed some focus points and room for improvement in EAP training for language teachers in university settings. Dr Simone Sarmiento observes that undergraduate curricula are already extensive and ‘it would be particularly hard to make any changes to include this specific aspect in course syllabi. However, even so, our proposal is that universities offer this training through extracurricular or specialisation courses. It is important to make this sort of practice available somehow.’

The researchers also presented the study during the event *UK-BR Internationalisation of Higher Education and Language Policies*, promoted by the British Council, from 27 to 31 January 2020. The programme included a seminar, a workshop, meetings and visits to universities in the UK.

### >> FURTHER READING

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LEAD RESEARCHERS



**Dr Ana Frankenberg-Garcia** is a reader in Translation Studies at the University of Surrey. She is an expert in translation, lexicography and assisted writing, and has worked with corpus linguistics applications in these domains. She is principal investigator of the ColloCaid project, and was chief editor of the bilingual Oxford Portuguese Dictionary and joint project leader of the COMPARA corpus.



**Dr Simone Sarmento** is a senior lecturer in the Modern Languages Department of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. She is a specialist in English language teaching and teacher training and has focused her research on educational and language policy, internationalisation, corpus linguistics and English for Academic Purposes (EAP).



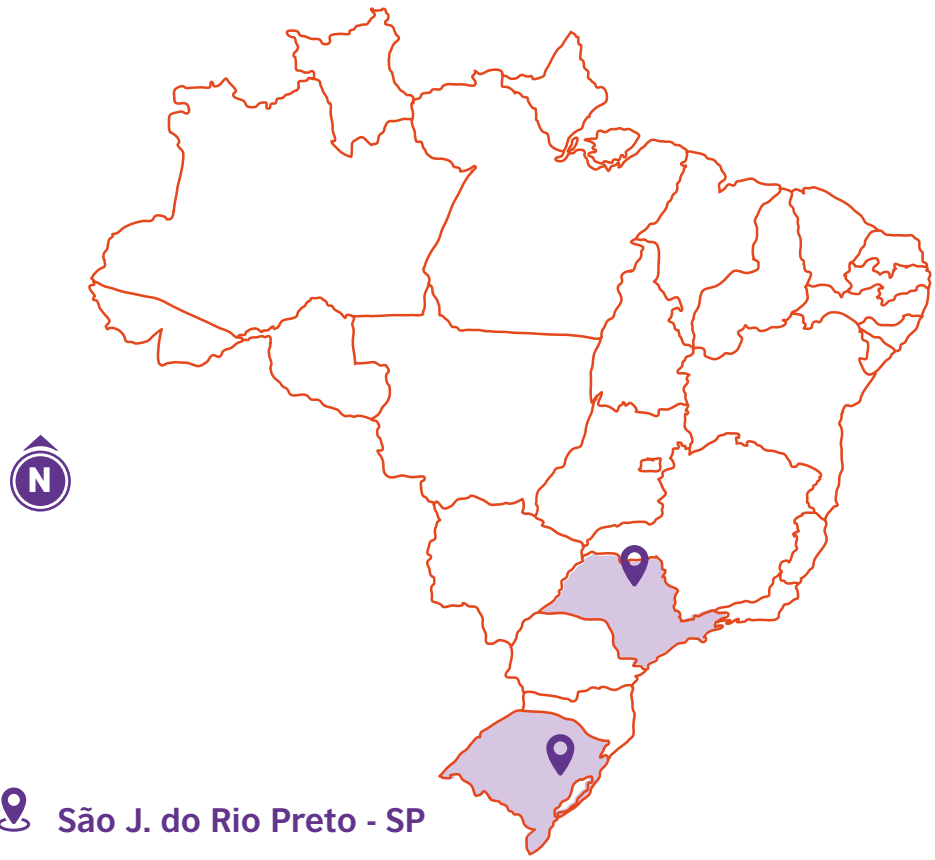
**Dr Ana Eliza Bocorny** is a senior lecturer in the Modern Languages Department of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Among her areas of expertise are corpus linguistics and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and she has worked with teacher training in terminology and digital resources to support writing and reading in English for Research and Publication Purposes (ERPP).



**Dr Paula Tavares Pinto** is a senior lecturer in the Modern Languages department of São Paulo State University (UNESP) in São José do Rio Preto. She is an expert in translation and linguistic studies, working also with corpus linguistics and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). She currently co-ordinates CAPES/Fulbright English Teaching Assistant and English at UNESP programmes to support the institution's internationalisation.

Supporting the internationalisation of Brazilian research: combining EAP tutor training and academic writing autonomy

**Focus:** To promote the improvement of knowledge of Academic English by researchers and to prepare English teachers to attain a better grasp of academic writing so they can teach it  
**BR institutions:** Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), São Paulo State University (UNESP)  
**UK institution:** University of Surrey  
**When:** December 2018 to June 2019  
**Where:** Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul state, and São José do Rio Preto, São Paulo state  
**Number of participants involved:** 134 (workshop participants, research team and local organisation)  
**Funding:** £20,199.78 – UFRGS £2,500; UNESP £2,500; Sketch Engine £5,199.78; British Council £10,000



📍 São J. do Rio Preto - SP

📍 Porto Alegre - RS

Supporting the internationalisation of Brazilian research: combining EAP tutor training and academic writing autonomy

- 🏛️ São Paulo State University
- 🏛️ Federal Uni. of Rio Grande do Sul
- 🎓 University of Surrey

## Policy, language and literacy in a changing landscape



Policymaking on language and internationalisation is also related to how people perceive and interact in a textually mediated world

### AT A GLANCE

What kinds of policy initiatives related to internationalisation have been discussed and how are they unfolding in Brazilian universities? In what areas of academic life and in what disciplines do they occur? These were some of the main questions the research project **'The changing language and literacy landscapes of Brazilian universities: English in policy development and in practice'** sought to tackle. The study took place from December 2018 to August 2019 at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) and University of Brasília (UnB) in partnership with the University of Birmingham. It analysed the perspectives and experiences of academics and policy-related social actors from the Brazilian institutions through ethnographic research. Besides contributing to building an understanding of the two local contexts, the study also provided pointers for future research on language and internationalisation in higher education in Brazil.

### Changing landscapes

In Brazil, there are recent policy moves regarding internationalisation in public universities in response to the CAPES PrInt programme – an Institutional Programme for Internationalisation of the Higher Education Improvement Coordination. The government funding initiative, launched in 2017, aims to encourage strategic plans, research networks and mobility, among other activities, in order to develop the international environment for higher education.

With this landscape in mind, Brazilian researchers from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) and the University of Brasília (UnB) collaborated with a team at the University of Birmingham, in the United Kingdom, to study how this process is taking place, what its implications are and areas of research which it would be fruitful to pursue.

UFMG and UnB are both located in large metropolitan settings and are campus-based, having circa 67,000 students. Another commonality is that the two institutions had been selected for CAPES PrInt.

According to Dr Izabel Magalhães from UnB and one of the lead researchers, the study is especially relevant to the foreign language policies of universities because 'the process of internationalisation results in lecturers and university authorities communicating in languages other than Portuguese – including on the universities' websites.' This specific study, she says, 'analyses the ongoing change in language policy'.

### How the research was carried out

To conduct the research, the team analysed the policymaking for language in an educational context, and took into account texts being used and produced in this environment – how people interact in a textually mediated world through written or read texts, on paper or on screen, in academic activities such as research, teaching, learning and administration. These are all social practices that take place in institutional life, and they were analysed through the lens of a theoretical framework that built on the turn to ethnography in research into language policy and planning and the new literacy studies.

According to Professor Castanheira, this ethnographic approach follows 'particular conceptions of culture, language, insiders' and outsiders' perspectives, and involves reflexivity on the part of researchers when building research knowledge'. Conducting interviews, making observations of particular events, taking field notes and document analysis are some of the procedures that researchers follow in ethnographic inquiry.

The research team used interview techniques with members of staff from UFMG and UnB in two different groups. One group had nine social actors involved with policies – creating, interpreting and appropriating university-wide policies related to internationalisation, in particular those related to CAPES PrInt. The other group had nine academics from different disciplines, with experience in international research collaboration prior to CAPES PrInt.

The researchers also studied policy-related documents, including materials from seminars and calls for proposals related to government funding for CAPES PrInt.



Dr Izabel Magalhães says the greatest challenge to this type of research was the ‘undertaking of an ethnographic study in only seven months – this sort of analysis demands attention to several details in terms of both observation and information collection, as well as a deep reflexivity process’.

However, it was possible to overcome this challenge, according to Dr Andrea Mattos, senior lecturer at UFMG and part of the research team, by designing a methodology that considered time constraints and by concentrating most of the efforts on information generation and gathering. Moreover, the fact that most researchers in the team have a lot of experience in academic research, and work in federal universities, also strengthened the process: ‘We were able to understand the time pressures from the insider point of view of Brazilian academics,’ Dr Mattos says.

Professor Marilyn Martin-Jones (University of Birmingham (UoB) adds that the research benefited considerably from having a large team, with six out of its eight members with prior experience of ethnographic work being fully involved in the field work from March to July 2019. She also notes that the dialogue between the Brazilian team members and those from UoB during research meetings enabled the team to achieve greater reflexivity.

*‘Through our publications, we hope to demonstrate the value of not viewing policymaking as a binary process of policy creation and implementation, but as a situated and multi-faceted institutional process’*

**Professor Marilyn Martin-Jones**

### Some findings

Both UFMG and UnB were selected for CAPES PrInt – 2017. However, activities oriented towards internationalisation started several years before the institutions received the funding. Academics, students and university staff had already been building international research networks for a long time. Individual academics and research groups designed and submitted their own projects for financial support from different funding bodies before any unified policies were in place.

An important finding that came from the historically taken observations was that it is particularly difficult to design policies that encompass distinct environments, contexts and needs. ‘Given the heterogeneity of academic institutions, it is impossible to develop policies in a homogeneous way, and this was a significant finding of the research,’ says Professor Izabel Magalhães.

The researchers observed that the two institutions had created committees, by means of an institutional-wide brief, to oversee internationalisation initiatives and both had prepared an institutional plan. There were commonalities in the directions taken in their institutional strategies, but there were also some differences in the nature and range of initiatives that were being taken, with members of staff in different institutional roles having the responsibility for taking the initiatives forward.

When analysing the ways in which language and literacy practices mediated the activities of participants in the study, one of the highlights is the importance of access to and use of a wide range of digital tools and resources. They provide access to ‘key intellectual resources, achieving international visibility as a researcher and developing collaboration with scholars in other contexts’, as the researchers write in their report.

As some interviewees started academic collaboration before the current communication technologies, what makes a difference in their current working life is the ease and the speed with which communication takes place, because of digitisation. However, some participants pointed out that there is also a cost in terms of workload.

The research also resulted in pointers for future studies and practices in areas such as language policymaking, curriculum development, teaching and learning practice, university administration and the relation between language and internationalisation in higher education. These aspects will be further addressed in academic publications, but a summary is available online at [www.britishcouncil.org.br/en/uk-brazil-english-collaboration-call](http://www.britishcouncil.org.br/en/uk-brazil-english-collaboration-call).

### What the community says

The research follows the route some Brazilian federal universities are taking towards internationalisation. One example is UFMG itself, which adopted a new internationalisation policy in May 2018. It manages, for example, the expansion of access to foreign languages and cultures. The preference for actions, teaching and learning languages – including Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) and Portuguese as an additional language – is one of the resolutions the policy encompasses. It also makes support available for linguistic training of the academic community.

To Silvia Alencar, pro-vice-rector for graduate courses at UFMG and one of the participants in the study, the research fully fits into this policy because ‘it analyses internationalisation at home and several mechanisms for the expansion of knowledge of English.’

Since 2018, she says, the Office for Graduate Courses has encouraged the offer of subjects in English, as well as teacher training to provide courses in the language. In her view, the analysis provided by the research will be an important asset to strengthen policies and actions already taking place at UFMG, such as the graduate internationalisation programme CAPES PrInt, which promotes mobility among students and researchers from Brazil and abroad to establish partnerships between research groups.

## Brazil–UK connection

The partnership between the teams in Brazil and the UK started long before the **UK–Brazil English Collaboration Call**, with joint research spanning a decade. In 2008, Professor Marilyn Martin-Jones founded a research group in the School of Education of the University of Birmingham with a focus on multilingualism, the *MOSAIC Group for Research on Multilingualism*, and Drs Castanheira and Magalhães have been active contributors.

Dr Magalhães has known Professor Martin-Jones since 1982 and says this is the third project they have developed together. ‘The first was collaborative research between 1992 and 1999 with funding from the Brazilian government and the British Council, involving the University of Brasília, UNICAMP and Lancaster University (UK). The second was the organisation of a special edition of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, which started with a panel we organised in 2010 at the University of Southampton,’ she recalls.

To Professor Martin-Jones, these connections and the deep commitment of all team members to the research topic were crucial to the success of the project. ‘Otherwise, it would have been impossible to achieve so much in such a short time,’ she emphasises. She also remarks that the involvement of four senior Brazilian academics in the study was important to enable the team to ‘approach the processes of policy change currently at work in higher education in Brazil from a historical perspective’.

**To understand how language policies evolve and take root in higher education institutions, the team of researchers drew their methodology from anthropological and ethnographic studies.**

The research added not only to the study and practice of internationalisation of higher education in Brazil but also to the researchers’ personal experiences. Professor Martin-Jones says she ‘personally benefited enormously’ from the research. ‘I learned a good deal about higher education in Brazil, about the nature of the working lives and literacy practices of Brazilian academics and about how much they achieve while working in more challenging circumstances than in the Global North,’ she asserts.

## What is next?

The partnership between the Brazilian and British universities will unfold in more activities in the near future, with several of them on the horizon. Professor Martin-Jones mentions the Birmingham Brazil Forum for research collaboration, which the University of Birmingham launched on 16 July 2019. The programme, she says, will provide the basis for further research co-operation with the five Brazilian members of the research team. ‘It will also open up opportunities for extending the work described here, through collaboration with other researchers in other universities in Brazil. In addition, it will create opportunities for the provision of capacity building in research methodology in the ethnography of language policy and the ethnography of literacy in higher

education settings. This capacity building will be designed for PhD candidates or early years post-doctoral researchers in these fields,’ she details.

Professor Martin-Jones also points out plans for a special issue of a journal based on the symposium the researchers are organising for the Congress of the *International Association for Applied Linguistics* (AILA) in the Netherlands in August 2020. Under the title *Internationalisation, digitisation and the changing language and literacy landscapes of universities*, the symposium will bring together contributions from academics in Brazil, China, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the USA.

There are plans also to submit a research paper to a special issue of *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada* (Brazilian Journal of Applied Linguistics), which will sit alongside other studies about language policy and practice in higher education in other countries in Latin America.

‘Through our publications, we hope to demonstrate the value of not viewing policymaking as a binary process of policy creation and implementation, but as a situated and multi-faceted institutional process,’ Professor Martin-Jones says.

The researchers also presented the study during the event *UK-BR Internationalisation of Higher Education and Language Policies*, promoted by the British Council, from 27 to 31 January. The programme included a seminar, a workshop, meetings and visits to universities in the UK.

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LEAD RESEARCHERS



**Maria Lucia Castanheira** is a professor from the Education Faculty of the Federal University of Minas Gerais and former director of CEALE (Centre for Literacy Research). Among her areas of expertise are education, culture and language, with significant experience in ethnographic research on formal and informal literacy practices.



**Dr Izabel Magalhães** is an associate professor in the Institute of Letters (Instituto de Letras) of the University of Brasília. She is an expert in applied linguistics, and among her areas of research are discourse analysis, literacy, the relation of gender and language, education and disability, and ethnographic methodology.



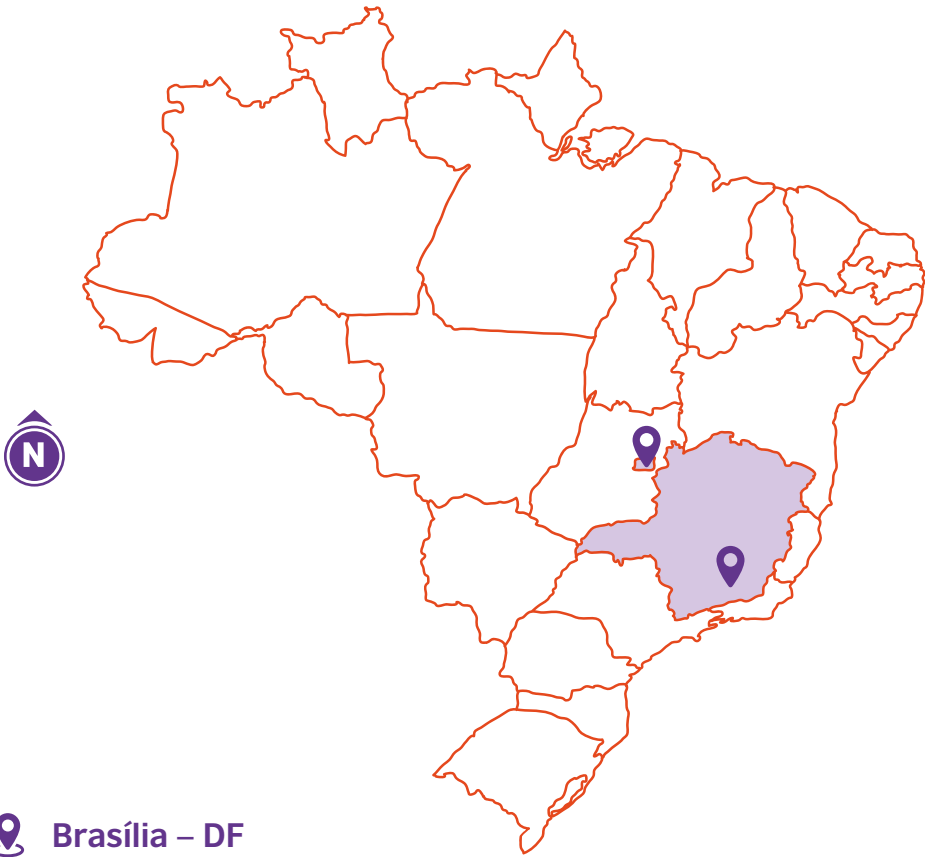
**Marilyn Martin-Jones** is an emeritus professor in the MOSAIC Group for Research on Multilingualism, School of Education of the University of Birmingham. She has researched multilingualism for over four decades, and among her areas of expertise are multilingual literacies, interaction in multilingual classrooms and ethnographic research methodologies.

FURTHER COLLABORATIONS

- Dr Ana Souza, visiting lecturer in the Institute of Letters (Instituto de Letras) of the University of Brasília.
- Dr Andrea Machado de Almeida Mattos, senior lecturer in the Arts Faculty of the Federal University of Minas Gerais.
- Dr Gilcinei Carvalho, senior lecturer in the Education Faculty of the Federal University of Minas Gerais.
- Dr Eleni Mariou, lecturer in Educational Linguistics in the School of Education of the University of Birmingham and member of the MOSAIC Group for Research on Multilingualism.
- Dr Elizabeth Chilton, lecturer in Language, Literacies and Education in the School of Education of the University of Birmingham and member of the MOSAIC Group for Research on Multilingualism.

The changing language and literacy landscapes of Brazilian universities:  
English in policy development and in practice

**Focus:** To understand how language policies evolve and take place in two higher education institutions and observe how the use of language in online and offline text production is bound up with this process  
**BR institutions:** Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) and University of Brasília (UnB)  
**UK institution:** University of Birmingham  
**When:** December 2018 to August 2019  
**Where:** Belo Horizonte, in Minas Gerais state, and Brasília, Federal District  
**Number of participants involved:** 26 (including teachers and members of staff from both universities)  
**Funding:** £18,471.65 – UFMG £706.93; UnB £928.85; University of Birmingham £4,200; CNPq £2,635.87; British Council £10,000



📍 Brasília – DF

📍 Belo Horizonte– MG

The changing language and literacy  
landscapes of Brazilian universities:  
English in policy development  
and in practice

🏛️ University of Brasília

🏛️ Federal University of Minas Gerais

🎓 University of Birmingham

## IV. 'What do you need to teach academic English?'



The research concerns the perceived needs of teachers of English for Academic Purposes to improve and develop their practice

### AT A GLANCE

The study and practice of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) provides the academic community with tools to improve international scholarly communication. There are, however, many gaps in knowledge regarding teacher education and needs when it comes to teaching Academic English. What set of skills, experience and knowledge does EAP instruction require from teachers? What challenges do novice and experienced teachers have in the area? These were a few of the questions the research project **'Facilitating Internationalisation in Brazilian Higher Education contexts: Developing expertise in teaching English for Academic Purposes'** sought to answer. The collaboration developed from January to July 2019 was led by Dr Marília Ferreira (University of São Paulo – USP) and Dr Carole MacDiarmid (University of Glasgow) comprising interviews with 18 EAP teachers at USP to explore their experiences. The aim was to suggest changes to the English major curriculum and to EAP teacher education at the university.

### What are the teachers' needs regarding Academic English?

Internationalisation in higher education has brought with it the increasing use of English for academic communication between expert and students. At the same time, it raises the need to support academic staff and students in using English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

However, in the fields of English language teaching and education, there is still a lack of extensive knowledge of the needs of teachers working in EAP in many countries, including Brazil. Structured and informed EAP teacher education programmes, then, are not developed to their full capacities due to this gap.

In Brazil, research on EAP began in the 1990s, and recently studies have been carried out in the context of *Idiomas Sem Fronteiras* (Languages Without Borders or LwB) programmes at universities. Some studies have explored teacher education but seem to view EAP teacher education to be the same as General English. A 2015 paper from Drs Adriana Dellagnello, Leonardo da Silva and Ms Nara Rocha from the Federal University of Santa Catarina showed EAP related to General English in terms of student learning and teacher training. In their narrative, they discuss the experiences of two teachers who are part of the LwB programme in Santa Catarina and share views on their training and classroom practice. They build on students' prior knowledge of everyday General English as a gateway to EAP, for example – showing that these modalities of language teaching may be deeply intertwined.

Other theoretical perspectives towards analysing EAP teacher education include views on different English teaching methodologies, such as the communicative approach. Studies on EAP have also looked at, for example, materials development and teacher identity. However, although these studies in the LwB context explore important areas, more needs to be done to take into account the complexities and key concepts of EAP.

This led Dr Marília Mendes Ferreira at the University of São Paulo (USP) to develop a project to explore the specificities of Academic English teacher training. The first step was to find out how EAP instructors themselves view the area and their needs. 'There is a lot of discussion about internationalisation, but there is a basic question – if we don't have well-trained lecturers who are aware of the role the English language plays in a university that wants to become more international, the goal becomes harder to achieve,' she says. Higher education policies, Dr Ferreira continues, necessarily need to include the training of these professionals, 'and it is not only about improving student proficiency to pass exams – it is not only about General English.'



To Dr Carole MacDiarmid, EAP manager at the University of Glasgow, in the United Kingdom, and partner for the study, the research is highly relevant because the demand for mastering Academic English is increasing globally. Internationalisation of higher education institutions is expanding, but there is little research into the needs of EAP teachers worldwide. ‘We hope this study will help inform the design of EAP teacher education courses – of which there are very few. So it is very important to have as informed a picture as possible of EAP provision and teacher needs in different contexts,’ she says.

***‘I learned about how I can help students own their textual production and acquire abilities that can be transferred to different genres, instead of just providing empty information focused on a single student production’***  
***Daniela de Jesus Carvalho, USP***

## How the research was carried out

In total, 18 participants were interviewed and asked to talk about how they view and understand their needs regarding teaching Academic English. They all teach at USP, in four different EAP programmes, and have varied experience with EAP teaching. Most are graduate students with little publishing experience, while one has over two decades of experience teaching English in a university context and has published academic work.

Participants were brought together in focus groups of three or four and were asked about the challenges they face when transitioning to EAP teaching, as well as about the skills, knowledge and experience they deem necessary to face such challenges. They were also given prompts, for example aspects included in the BALEAP competency framework for EAP teachers (2008).

Interviews lasted about one hour each and were then transcribed for analysis. A series of codes were applied in order to organise the material for study – for example, what linguistic aspect was the teacher talking about: was it about discourse or grammar itself? How did they see the role of disciplinary knowledge? What practical teaching skills did they need and what did they know about their learner needs? Researchers then classified these comments according to the main themes the aspects conveyed.

## Some findings

One of the most important findings was how important specialised knowledge is for EAP teachers, and how challenging this is. The teachers’ own experiences of academic study were also important, as this helped them to understand student needs. Another finding of the study was that for this group of participating teachers, vocabulary and grammar are as important elements to their practice as the structure and organisation of academic texts. But they also consider their role to be that of assistants who help students communicate meaning and express ideas. It often relates not only to the use of language within the classroom itself, but also to the effect of this practice on teachers’ deeper identity.

Dr Ferreira suggests there are some challenges Academic English teachers will face which General English ones probably will not, such as matters related to the specificities of very different subjects EAP teachers must deal with. Interviewed teachers acknowledged it is not realistic to have a deep understanding of different fields. Working with students as a source of specific knowledge and vocabulary is, according to the participants, a way to face this challenge.

‘There should be more research on the transition of General English to EAP teaching and how it relates to teacher identity since the teacher is no longer the one who retains all the knowledge. The teacher wields the language, but the students are the experts in their specific area,’ Dr Ferreira says.

Some identity questions emerge from that tension, she continues. How can teachers and students collaborate to help each other? How can teachers make the most of and channel the knowledge of their students? What is the role of teachers when they do not retain knowledge in specific areas? The research does not answer these questions, Dr Ferreira points out, but sheds light on teachers’ perspectives to bring attention to such themes to support further investigation in the area.

The research also explores the notion of how teachers perceive the language they work with. EAP, Dr Ferreira cautions, is not the same as General English and has many specificities that general language books do not convey. It is also not just a simple case of translating from English to Portuguese. ‘There is a gap between the use of a mother tongue in colloquial contexts and in academia – the academic discourse is challenging both for natives and non-natives of a given language,’ the researcher says.

Personal experience with academic writing, in this sense, was the element of greatest impact on teachers’ perceptions of how challenging EAP teaching can be: the more writing experience they had, the more prepared they felt to instruct students in EAP to help them convey meaning and express ideas.

Based on these findings, the researchers produced the e-book *Resources for English for Academic Purposes teacher education*, which summarises the major challenges identified in the research and provides toolkits for EAP teachers. The publication is available on the British Council Brazil’s [website](#).

## What the community says

The research also raised a few questions that made participants think of their daily practices as EAP teachers.

Daniela de Jesus Carvalho, a PhD candidate in English at USP, says the research made her think of her practice as a tutor of the Academic Literacy Laboratory and a higher education teacher, in terms of the range of topics she must have in mind when approaching the text of a student. 'I learned about how I can help students own their textual production and acquire abilities that can be transferred to different genres, instead of just providing empty information focused on a single student production,' she says.

More than that, Carvalho also 'noticed the need to study academic literacy in anglophone contexts more deeply', which, in the end, motivated her to develop part of her doctoral research at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 2019. English teacher Gabriella Pavesi emphasised that the project's focus groups provided space for instructors to share their experiences. 'For me, it was very productive to notice how similar our observations were, and also to learn from our differences. It certainly contributed to my development as a teacher. As we reflected on our shared experiences, I could rethink how to improve my practice,' says Pavesi.

## Brazil-UK connection

The **UK-Brazil English Collaboration Call** provided the bond between the researchers, who had not met before working together on this study. Dr Carole MacDiarmid explained how a colleague at the University of Glasgow, who had visited USP, put her and Dr Ferreira in contact when the Call was announced.

The collaboration between the universities of Glasgow and São Paulo was very interesting and useful, Dr MacDiarmid explains. 'A broader knowledge of a different EAP context, of which I knew very little about, as well as the varied needs of the teachers, will be able to help inform EAP teaching courses here in Glasgow. It will also improve professional development activities EAP teachers can do themselves,' she says.



## What is next?

Regarding plans for the future, the researchers will present the results at international conferences. They also want to explore EAP teacher development in more depth in a similar project – by extending either the number of participants or the number of Brazilian universities involved. 'We have not discussed the details yet, but we are thinking of investigating specific questions regarding teachers' identities and their relationship to their teaching subjects – there are needs for an enlargement of the concept of language itself,' Dr Ferreira observes.

Dr MacDiarmid adds that they hope to develop the project by widening the investigation to a broader range of contexts 'and possibly exploring EAP teacher development provision and course design'.

*'There should be more research on the transition of General English to EAP teaching and how it relates to teacher identity since the teacher is no longer the one who retains all the knowledge. The teacher wields the language, but the students are the experts in their specific area'*  
**Dr Marília Ferreira, USP**

Dr Marília Ferreira also considers the partnership for the research to have been very successful. 'We had several Skype meetings to debate possible approaches to a proposal before we agreed on this one,' she says. 'We saw there was a gap in this area that could eventually be attractive for sponsorship – and here at USP we had different profiles of teachers involved in EAP education.'

Both researchers see room for expansion of the partnership facilitated by the research project. 'We want to keep this collaboration going and we are looking for grant calls next year,' Dr Ferreira says.



## LEAD RESEARCHERS



**Dr Marília Mendes Ferreira** is a senior lecturer of Applied Linguistics in the Department of Modern Languages of the University of São Paulo. She has been working with academic literacy in English for more than a decade and created USP's Laboratory of Academic Literacy.



**Dr Carole MacDiarmid** is the English for Academic Purposes Manager at the English for Academic Study Unit of the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Glasgow. She is an expert in teacher development and runs graduate courses in Teaching English for Academic Purposes at the University of Glasgow.

## >> FURTHER READING

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## Facilitating internationalisation in Brazilian higher education contexts: developing expertise in teaching English for academic purposes

**Focus:** To understand the attitude of English teachers towards English for Academic Purposes and their perceived challenges and needs in the field

**BR institution:** University of São Paulo (USP)

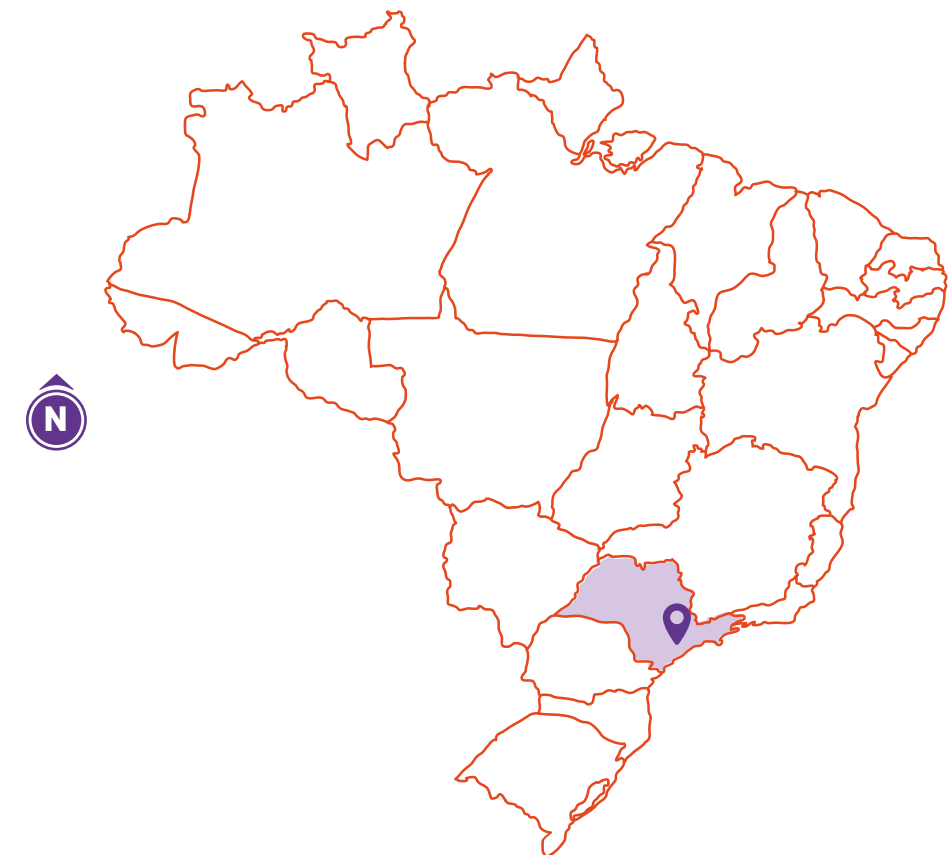
**UK institution:** University of Glasgow

**When:** January to July 2019

**Where:** São Paulo city

**Number of participants involved:** 18 (including language teachers, student instructors – undergraduate and graduate – and a programme co-ordinator)

**Funding:** £12,571.67 - USP £1,820; University of Glasgow £751,67; British Council £10,000



 **São Paulo – SP**

Facilitating internationalisation in  
Brazilian higher education contexts:  
developing expertise in teaching  
English for academic purposes

 University of São Paulo

 University of Glasgow

## V. EMI and the perspective of English as a lingua franca



This study focused on understanding how the academic community in two universities in Paraná sees practices and policies related to EMI and how it is connected to the idea of English as a lingua franca

### AT A GLANCE

When it comes to internationalisation, different institutions vary in their views and ways to implement language policies, especially English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). However, how does that happen? How do attitudes towards EMI change among universities, and what are some challenges to implement it? The project **‘English as a Medium of Instruction in two state-funded Brazilian higher education institutions from an English as a lingua franca perspective: policy in practice’** sought to answer these and other questions in two institutions of Paraná state – State University of Londrina (UEL) and State University of Maringá (UEM). The study took place from February to July 2019 in collaboration with Goldsmiths, University of London, and addressed policies on attitudes to and practices in EMI by interviewing administrators, postgraduate lecturers and their students. It showed that there are policies for EMI in place in both universities, but the activities are mostly driven by willing academics and students rather than by institutions. It also found that the view towards EMI is rather positive, as English is seen as the language of science, but the research team points out the importance of taking into account a critical understanding towards the phenomenon of EMI. More awareness in that sense may help overcome obstacles to EMI, particularly if its delivery is communication-oriented rather than language- or content-oriented.

### Language policies and practices in real life

English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is widely adopted as one of the internationalisation strategies of higher education institutions. Its pervasiveness is growing in Brazil, but little is known about what drives institutional policies towards EMI and how students, academics and staff in Brazilian universities interpret them. There is no in-depth study from the country regarding this, according to a recent international review in the area. In order to contribute to expanding and deepening this knowledge, the research **‘English as a Medium of Instruction in two state-funded Brazilian higher education institutions from an English as a lingua franca perspective: policy in practice’** was developed by Drs Telma Gimenez and Michele El Kadri (State University of Londrina (UEL) and Luciana Calvo (State University of Maringá (UEM) in collaboration with Dr Alessia Cogo (Goldsmiths, University of London).

The team also considered that English is perceived as the academic language in the Brazilian context as in many others worldwide, but there is also little research about the potential benefits and implications of English as a lingua franca (ELF) into EMI teaching. The ELF research perspective ‘problematizes the centrality of standard language ideologies and the normativities deriving from the unquestioned acceptance of native speakers’ norms,’ as the researchers write on their report.

Developing the investigation in two state universities in Brazil also adds relevance to the study. Dr Gimenez says that federal universities are the majority among the institutions that indicated they had internationalisation programmes of some sort for the British Council and FAUBAI’s *Guide to English as a Medium of Instruction in Brazilian Higher Education institutions 2018-2019* (which presented an overview of the internationalisation scenario in Brazilian universities). UEM and UEL are well regarded in Paraná and have many aspects in common collaboration with Goldsmiths, University of London, and addressed policies, attitudes and practices on EMI by interviewing administrators. So Drs Gimenez, Calvo and El Kadri wanted to find out why. ‘We wanted to explore what drives the use of EMI in contexts where the great majority of students are Brazilian and speak Portuguese, with very small numbers of students coming from abroad. Many members of the academic community view this practice as an opportunity to hone their language skills in an environment of great significance,’ Dr Gimenez says, ‘even if the focus of EMI is mostly on communication and not on the language itself.’



## How the research was carried out

The researchers contacted many members of the academic community in both universities, including administrators, postgraduate lecturers with some involvement with EMI and their students, and 114 of them took part in the study.

Some graduate students participated in focus groups, and some lecturers who were working with EMI in their classes registered their views in semi-structured interviews. Another group of participants attended workshops held at UEM and UEL to share their perceptions, and others responded to online questionnaires. The team also made observations in classrooms and in a workshop in order to support data interpretation.

By using these procedures, researchers wanted to address policies, attitudes and practices, grasping perceptions about the institutional language context related to English and how EMI fits into them, as well as the sets of ideas – or language ideologies – informing EMI policies at both universities. It included learning about students' and lecturers' attitudes towards EMI, the challenges they identify in implementing it and how they see the roles of English and Portuguese within the classroom. To gain a wider understanding of language policy in the institutions, the researchers also analysed policy documents at UEM and UEL.

**The study points out that despite assessing EMI as mostly positive, many lecturers are also concerned about deepening language inequalities as a potentially negative consequence.**

The research took place between February and July 2019 and, as Dr Gimenez says, it was mostly an exploratory study with no intention of being exhaustive. It was particularly challenging to gather information about who is working with EMI at the universities because 'institutions are at a very initial stage of information gathering about internationalisation, and such content is not in one place only – and not all lecturers working with EMI register what they are doing,' the researcher says. The team then used previous information they had and contacted more participants in an EMI training workshop that had taken place at both institutions. Referral of colleagues was also important.

## Some findings

The team observed that both universities have specific language policies to support internationalisation practices. However, one has a stronger tradition of EMI implementation (and it might explain why it has more courses taught in English) than the other one. Both institutions plan to offer more graduate courses using EMI in the near future since they see this practice as strongly linked to internationalisation, visibility and reputation. To Dr Michele El Kadri, this institutional perception was one of the team's greatest findings. 'Administrators are starting to recognise the importance of EMI programmes, which has led to an increase in the number of courses offered with EMI,' Dr El Kadri says.

Another important finding of the investigation is that participants are more interested in the communicative element of EMI than the linguistic aspects of the language. 'They are more concerned about stating their ideas intelligibly than getting all the linguistic aspects right,' Dr Gimenez says. Giving classes in English, she

continues, is related to other EMI activities such as writing papers and attending and giving lectures in international environments. 'Lecturers want to get their students used to employing English, so they will not have difficulties in attending seminars and writing papers. English is very much perceived as a tool for academic communication,' she notes.

In this sense, Dr Michele El Kadri adds, the awareness of English as a lingua franca can contribute to overcoming hurdles in EMI usage when the focus is on communication and not on linguistic aspects. It entertains the notion that it is possible to mix a bit of Portuguese with English for the sake of intelligibility – and that it is perfectly acceptable. 'Our study allowed us to go beyond the notion of EMI as centered on either language or content when some questions related to these parameters can be settled with the focus on communication,' she says.

On the other hand, there is not much appraisal of lecturers who want to use EMI in practical terms. 'Lecturers do not get more office hours to prepare their EMI classes, nor do they have more chance of getting tenure, nor do they even get additional pay as a result of using EMI. There is a general perception of lack of concrete institutional support,' Dr El Kadri says.

Analysing such perceptions, the team also points out a general lack of critical understanding towards the phenomenon of EMI as a whole, the impact it has on contexts and institutions, and the language ideologies it may contribute to. The pervasiveness of English in the academic setting is that participants consider it natural that 'good research is written in English'. This set of ideas, or linguistic ideology, creates a perception of hierarchy among languages, 'where English

is given a higher status, while Portuguese and Spanish (the other language international students often use at Brazilian higher education institutions) are considered unviable for scientific work,' the authors write. The team found out that despite assessing EMI as mostly positive, many lecturers are also concerned about deepening language inequalities as a potentially negative consequence.

## What the community says

The research has stimulated participants to think of different ways of using English as a tool for communication in their classes and academic duties – even those who were already familiar with the concept. One of them was Dr Sandra Schiavi, lecturer and head of UEM's International Office, who has worked with EMI since she took part in a training workshop in 2016, and currently teaches three disciplines in English in the graduate courses of Economy and Management.

She notices how considering English as a lingua franca changes many things in communication within a classroom. 'Our students and lecturers normally fear using English, but allowing the use of Portuguese together with it helps to break the foreign language taboo,' Dr Schiavi says.

Emphasis on the adoption of active methodologies in using EMI was an important aspect of the research to her too. At the International Office, Dr Schiavi notices many lecturers get encouragement to adopt EMI after they have taken part in a course or workshop on the subject in which they have seen demonstrations of methodologies. 'They then understand that using EMI is actually simpler than it seems to be. I normally say that using a foreign language is not a matter of status, but of communication.'

Although effective communication does not demand expert proficiency, Dr Schiavi points out, language fluency is still a barrier to internationalisation – be it for technical (linguistic knowledge) or cultural reasons. Foreign languages, she says, are still viewed as taboo in academia. In that regard, she expects that UEM's participation in the Internationalisation Laboratory of the American Council on Education, for which they have been recently selected, will help them 'work with internationalisation in a comprehensive way, taking on language barriers to leveraging other aspects, boosting further EMI practices'. Thus, further activities will build on initiatives like this research, she concludes.

### Brazil-UK connection and what is next

The partnership between UEL and UEM in research and practice of EMI spans a decade. Drs Gimenez, El Kadri and Calvo have worked on several other projects and initiatives over the last few years. The connection with Goldsmiths, University of London was the new element brought by this study – and it worked particularly well, says Dr Luciana Calvo.

Dr Cogo considers the partnership with the Brazilian colleagues to have been especially relevant to the research she is developing in the United Kingdom. The researcher is a specialist in the linguistic diversity within the English language and how English diversifies around the world depending on the context in which it is used, especially in learning environments. 'This investigation added another context – Brazil – which I was already familiar with, though not with EMI in Brazilian institutions. The study is also very important because EMI research is starting in Brazil and it was particularly encouraging to see the results we got from it,' she says.

'An interesting aspect we could notice,' Dr Cogo says, 'was that the EMI initiatives we observed are really grassroots, started by lecturers who wanted to internationalise their classes and help their students in that regard. Actions are more driven by willing academics and students than by institutions.'

*'The perspective of English as a lingua franca defies notions of what it means to have "perfect English skills" and what forms native speaker patterns'*  
Dr Luciana Calvo, UEM

The scenario is radically different from what she observed in Asia, for example, where EMI actions are very much shaped by a top-down approach. In Asian countries, EMI is really widespread, and initiatives are very institutional, she says, and universities provide strong support and advertising for programmes, as well as agreements with several international institutions and entire campuses running on EMI. 'I do not mean one way is better than the other – I am actually critical of completely top-down approaches. Nevertheless, I do think that completely bottom-up ones are also very challenging to maintain. For successful EMI to take place, there needs to be some institutional investment, and this is one of the recommendations we make,' she says.

### What is next?

The team plans to develop further studies together, building on what they achieved with the 'English as a Medium ...' research. 'We do not necessarily want to replicate this study – but we want to expand it with an ethnographic approach analysing lecturers teaching their classes using the English as lingua franca (ELF) perspective. In this project, we focused on perspectives, views and attitudes of people in academia in relation to EMI, but did not really analyse practices,' Dr Calvo says. 'Our intention is to observe the practices of lecturers and students now – we want to examine strategies, techniques and resources lecturers use while giving classes using EMI, as well as challenges students face when attending these lectures,' she continues.

The researchers intend to keep the focus on ELF and EMI because they consider it to be a relevant perspective for discussing language in the university internationalisation debate. EMI has become more and more present and 'the ELF perspective contributes to the reflection by the academic community on linguistic ideologies and to the understanding of other language-

related aspects,' Dr Calvo observes. ELF sheds light on questions such as what it means to have 'perfect English skills', what forms native-speaker patterns, or if the use of Portuguese must necessarily be banned from classes in English. 'The perspective of English as a lingua franca defies these notions,' Dr Calvo points out.

Since the end of the research, the team has taken part in a few events to showcase some of the results. There was an oral presentation at the Multilingualism Research Group at Goldsmiths in June 2019, and another at the 2nd Brazilian English as a Medium of Instruction Seminar (BEMIS2), which took place in October 2019 in São Paulo. There are also plans to submit a paper to the Journal of English as a Lingua Franca and the Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada (Brazilian Journal of Applied Linguistics) in 2020. The researchers also presented the study during the event *UK-BR Internationalisation of Higher Education and Language Policies*, promoted by the British Council, from 27 to 31 January 2020. The programme included a seminar, a workshop, meetings and visits to universities in the UK.

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LEAD RESEARCHERS



**Dr Telma Nunes Gimenez** is the chair of the graduate programme in Language Studies at the State University of Londrina. She is an expert in teaching and learning of foreign languages and in teacher training and has developed research in English as a lingua franca over almost two decades.



**Dr Michele El Kadri** is a lecturer in the Centre of Arts and Human Sciences at the State University of Londrina. She is an expert in applied linguistics, and among her areas of research are teacher education and changes in ideology and identity throughout the educational process.



**Dr Luciana Calvo** is a professor in the Department of Modern Languages (DLM) and in the Graduate Program on Letras (PLE) at the State University of Maringá (UEM). She is an expert in teacher education and teaching and learning of foreign languages. She co-ordinated the English Institutional Scholarship Program for Teaching Initiation at UEM.



**Dr Alessia Cogo** is a senior lecturer in Applied Linguistics/Sociolinguistics at Goldsmiths, University of London, where she directs the Master's degree in Multilingualism, Linguistics and Education. She researches the diversity of English, especially transcultural phenomena like English as a lingua franca.

FURTHER COLLABORATIONS

- Leonardo Amaral, Henrique Rodrigues de Oliveira, Izabela Margonar and Thaís Stelzer – English undergraduate students, UEL.
- Vanessa Bragança and Débora Monteiro – English teachers and grantees of the Paraná Speaks English programme.

English as a medium of instruction in two state-funded Brazilian higher education institutions from an English as a lingua franca perspective: policy in practice

**Focus:** To understand how EMI fits into language policies at the state universities of Londrina (UEL) and Maringá (UEM) and what administrators, lecturers' and students' attitudes towards it are

**BR institutions:** State Universities of Londrina (UEL) and Maringá (UEM)

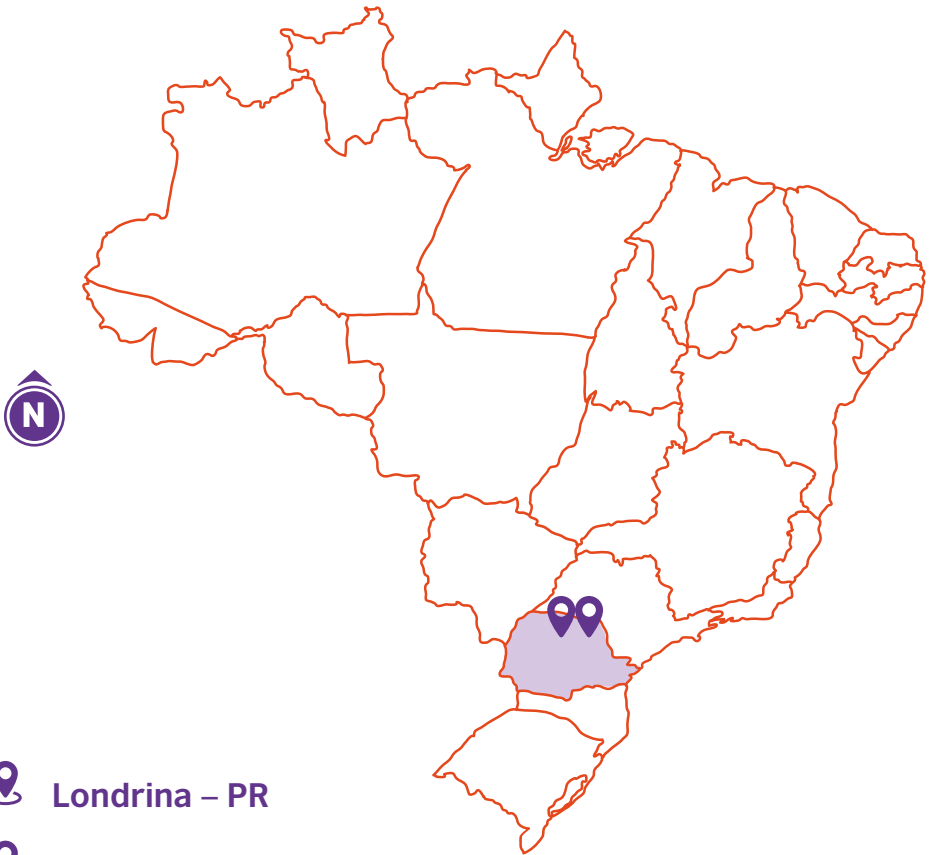
**UK institution:** Goldsmiths, University of London

**When:** February to July 2019

**Where:** Londrina and Maringá, Paraná state

**Number of participants involved:** 114, including administrators, postgraduate lecturers involved with EMI and their students from both UEM and UEL

**Funding:** £9,915 – Araucaria Foundation £4,000; British Council £5,915



 **Londrina – PR**

 **Maringá – PR**

English as a medium of instruction in two state-funded Brazilian higher education institutions from an English as a lingua franca perspective: policy in practice

 State University of Londrina

 State University of Maringá

 Goldsmiths, University of London

## VI. There is more to internationalisation than classes in English



This research explored perceptions of the academic community of what it takes to internationalise

### AT A GLANCE

Even though English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is a growing phenomenon that helps internationalisation of universities worldwide and in Brazil, little consideration has been given to professional development. The project **‘EMI training for university professors: a potential tool for internationalisation’** delves into this issue in universities within the *Paraná Fala Idiomas* (Paraná Speaks Languages) programme in Paraná state. The research took place between November 2018 and August 2019 and involved 59 participants, among them lecturers, students, rectors and other academic staff, in seven state institutions. The study co-ordinated at State University of Northern Paraná (UENP) had the collaboration of Cambridge Assessment English.

### How does EMI affect internationalisation policies?

Internationalisation of higher education institutions is commonly seen as an opportunity to improve collaboration, curriculum, funding, communication and language skills, among other aspects. English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is an increasing approach to facilitate this process in countries where English is not the first language.

In their 2017 book, Ruth Breeze (Navarra University, Spain) and Carmen Sancho Guinda (Polytechnic University of Madrid, Spain) remind readers of the challenges in implementing EMI that go beyond the linguistic ones such as teaching methods, which also shift when the language in use changes: ‘lecturers face the challenge of not only having to update their teaching methodology but also having to do it in a foreign language,’ they write.

In order to tackle issues like teacher development in Paraná state, southern Brazil, the public programme *Paraná Speaks Languages* is undertaken by Paraná’s Technology and Higher Education Superintendency (SETI) and involves the strengthening of the internationalisation process in universities throughout the state. Its objective is to improve academic and scientific communication in foreign languages, including courses for the academic community (lecturers, students and staff).

It started in 2014 with *Paraná Fala Inglês* (Paraná Speaks English), and *Paraná Fala Francês* (Paraná Speaks French) was added thereafter. Now the programme is starting to include more languages. The programme offers English and French language classes to the academic community of Paraná state universities at no cost. ‘Since classes are face-to-face, we haven’t reached the number of students we would like

to. We have assisted over 2,000 students, but there are 100,000 students all over Paraná state,’ says its co-ordinator, Dr Eliane Segati Rios Registro, from the State University of Northern Paraná (UENP).

A tiny number of students in all Brazilian public universities come from other countries, and offering subjects in English could help change this scenario. ‘At some universities abroad almost 50 per cent of all students are international. In Brazil, on average, they are less than one per cent,’ Dr Registro says. Internationalisation, however, does not depend only on offering subjects in English. Other elements, such as the acceptance of research papers in high-impact international journals, are also crucial in this regard, the researcher adds.



Dr Registro, who is also the head of the International Office at UENP, targeted one of those issues with the research **‘EMI training for university professors: a potential tool for internationalisation’** within the British Council’s **UK–Brazil English Collaboration Call**. The study, she says, was especially beneficial as it provided teacher training in delivering classes in English and also developed guidelines for the implementation of EMI, elaborated with a consensus among the academic community members who were directly or indirectly involved in the process. ‘In this call, we saw a great opportunity to develop group research to strengthen and develop our language policies aimed at the internationalisation of universities in Paraná,’ Dr Registro says. ‘We wanted to analyse the effect of EMI on language policies aimed at internationalisation, and what regulations are needed to support the internationalisation process in our universities,’ she adds.

**‘It is crucial to have EMI as an organic policy at universities, giving the structure and incentive for teachers to adopt it’**  
**Dr Plínio Marco de Toni,**  
**Midwestern Parana State University**

## How the research was carried out

In order to achieve the goals of the research, it was necessary to understand how prepared lecturers in the Brazilian state of Paraná felt about delivering classes in English. Understanding how students take part in these classes, as well as observing how institutions view the role of EMI in the internationalisation process, were also goals for the research team.

There were 62 participants, including lecturers, students, deans for graduate and undergraduate courses, heads of international offices and rectors from seven institutions in Paraná: the state universities of Paraná (UNESPAR), Western Paraná (UNIOESTE), Londrina (UEL), Ponta Grossa (UEPG), Maringá (UEM), Midwestern Parana (Unicentro) and Northern Paraná (UENP). The lecturers’ areas of subject knowledge ranged from the Humanities to Biomedical, Social and Earth Sciences. The 2018–19 *Guide to English as a Medium of Instruction in Brazilian Higher Education Institutions* was a starting point for the research, since it provides an overview of where, in Paraná and other Brazilian states, graduate and undergraduate courses are offered using EMI.

The English proficiency level of lecturers was assessed through Linguaskill, an online, multi-level test designed for this purpose. Most of the 13 lecturers who took the test had an English language proficiency level of B2 (intermediate) or higher, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Lecturers then completed Cambridge English’s Certificate in EMI Skills, a 40-hour online course in webinar format designed for higher education institutions, and were encouraged to give courses, workshops or lectures using the methodology they had learned.

## Some findings

In different times in the study, the participants were surveyed online about their views on EMI, on lecturers’ preparedness to deliver classes in English and on means to make EMI effective in their institutions. They were also asked about their views on how to improve the implementation of an effective EMI approach at their institutions. The data collected was then analysed by the group of researchers.

‘Our greatest challenge was the general strike in the universities while we were developing research,’ Dr Registro says, since some lecturers could not offer their courses during this period. ‘But we managed to carry out the activities anyway when classes were back on,’ she states. The obtained evidence, she says, is very relevant to understanding the EMI scenario at state universities in Paraná and led to EMI policy improvement in the state. In order to promote the initiative, lecturers and students who engage in EMI deserve recognition and for their efforts to be praised.

The first aspect the researchers noticed, says Dr Registro, was the need for improvement in English proficiency levels of the academic community in Paraná state. ‘We saw that several lecturers who took the EMI course have been stimulated to expand their international network of collaborators and to increase their mobility and specific research goal attainment. Engagement with the project has inspired them to offer subjects online in English with colleagues in other countries to better equip the students for internationalisation as well,’ she says.

From the point of view of decision makers, one of the findings of the study was that among the aspects they consider crucial to internationalisation policies are support for programmes such as Paraná Speaks Languages, better infrastructure, partnerships with other universities and encouragement from the community. Some of the interviewed policymakers observed that it is important to get to know the lecturers better in order to design effective language policies – having a clear picture of what their levels of English proficiency are can be very useful in this sense.

Decision makers view EMI as an important tool for internationalisation, whose use can be more effective with well-designed policies, such as the insertion of EMI activities in graduate/ undergraduate curricula and support for academic writing courses.

They acknowledge that the choice of offering classes in English does not depend only on lecturers – it requires an institutional arrangement to facilitate it. ‘There is a range of instruments and procedures that are important to assist in the implementation of the use of EMI in universities. We cannot focus on the language aspect only. It is not only a matter of language proficiency and teaching methodology,’ Dr Registro emphasises. Offering elective subjects in English, partnerships with universities abroad to increase academic mobility and programmes stimulating international research collaboration are some policies that can take internationalisation, in its broader sense, further.

Most of the lecturers who participated in the research agree with that view. According to the study, they believe that EMI should be treated from an institutional perspective – a strategic plan should be created that includes language policies and actions to motivate lecturers to engage in its implementation. However, the great majority (12 out of 13) showed enthusiasm for teaching their subjects of expertise using English, and are aware that the methodology needs to be different from that of classes taught in Portuguese (because it is much more demanding, as reported by lecturers who use EMI). According to Dr Registro, improvement in language proficiency and training in EMI methodology, plus an institutional incentive for lecturers to give classes in English, could result in stronger EMI practices in the universities that took part in the research. Programmes to promote English proficiency of both students and lecturers, as well as training in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), could be, as participant lecturers point out, an important step towards stronger EMI policies.

Regarding the 27 students who took part in the project and attended classes in EMI, most (22) thought that the decision to deliver classes in English was the lecturers’. It is lecturers, students observed, who should decide when to deliver EMI classes, considering how prepared and comfortable they feel about the prospect. There was clear consensus that lecturers do need support and incentives to promote EMI in their teaching practice. Opportunities for mobility, the offer of bonuses and adequate resources, career development recognition and a fair workload were some actions they suggested. As to support for students themselves, most agreed that provision of language support and opportunities for mobility, as well as expansion of the range of subjects offered in EMI and training in Academic English, would be of great importance to the development of more effective EMI policies in universities. In the best-case scenario, mixing English and Portuguese would enable better understanding.

## What the community says

The research was an opportunity for many students, lecturers and decision makers to think about the possibilities enabled by EMI and what it takes to explore them. Dr Cristina Pátaro, a lecturer at Paraná State University and vice-coordinator of the graduate course on Society and Development, considers the most interesting aspect of the research to have been ‘the possibility to let go of the fear of giving classes in English and to show students this process can be productive’.

She and her team worked with a class of graduate students with different English proficiency levels, who were interested in the initiative but apprehensive about not being able to follow the seminars. In the end, most of the class thought the experience was very positive and they all learned very much. ‘We noticed communication is possible and this is also an opportunity to learn the language, gain fluency and work with content. The work does not yield as much as it would if we were working in our native language, but we discover other things that are also important to academic learning,’ she says.

Dr Plínio Marco de Toni, a psychology lecturer at the Midwestern Parana State University, has consistently used EMI in his classes for the last three years but has been familiar with it for longer. The research was an opportunity for further reflection on what he already does and, for him, there should be at least one subject taught in English in each department of his university. University policies normally state that only non-compulsory subjects may be offered in a foreign language and compulsory ones should be taught in Portuguese.

**One of the project’s goals was to support the creation of structured guidelines for the development of EMI in universities. The expectation is that these guidelines can, in the future, be of use to the higher education sector**

‘It is not so simple – lecturers are interested, but we do not get much incentive from the university or the state system,’ he says. Dr de Toni also points out that giving classes in a foreign language can be an extremely demanding activity. ‘Even if you speak the language fluently ... one thing is to give a single class, another is to teach a whole course for a year or a semester. So you need more time to prepare classes – and without incentives, it is very hard for the university to maintain an EMI programme with several courses and subjects,’ he adds.

Using EMI can be demanding, but it has several rewards and advantages at the end of the process, Dr de Toni says. Because of the subject he teaches using EMI, he has been able to bring over colleagues from other countries, and students have been able to contact lecturers and students from abroad, either in person or online. ‘We have been able to have classes through Skype with foreign experts and interact with them and with students from other countries. For example, I have students from India talking to my students in Brazil, and I think this contact is very important,’ he says. ‘It is crucial to have EMI as an organic policy at universities, giving the structure and incentive for teachers to adopt it.’

## Brazil–UK connection

To Dr Registro, one of the important benefits of the research was the partnership with Cambridge Assessment English, represented by one of its senior education advisers, Hugh Moss. ‘His expertise and experience contributed greatly to our discussion of the initial proposal and brought maturity to the vision we had for the project. Besides that, the collaboration enabled the offer of the EMI course and the test to our lecturers – so it helped us to understand how linguistic skills impacted the process of teaching and learning by using the English language in our universities’.

The partnership also facilitated the expansion of networks for Dr Registro’s research group. ‘It was important for us to think of future projects as well, and the collaboration went beyond the reaches of the research, having a positive effect on Paraná Speaks Languages in many ways,’ she says.

The collaboration with the State University of Northern Paraná, Moss says, contributed to a greater understanding of the higher education sector in Paraná and the specific challenges of introducing EMI. ‘In turn, this has enabled Cambridge Assessment English to consider how it can best support the process of internationalisation and the highly impressive work being undertaken jointly by Paraná’s Technology and Higher Education Superintendency and Paraná Speaks Languages to improve proficiency levels and the academic and economic mobility of students and university lecturers,’ he observes.

## What is next?

Some results of the research have been presented at conferences in Brazil. Two of them were the first and second editions of the Brazilian English as a Medium of Instruction Seminar (BEMIS), the first held in late October 2018 in Curitiba, and the second in late October 2019 in São Paulo. The research was also presented at the Brazilian Association for International Education 2019 Conference (FAUBAI 2019) in mid April 2019 in Belém, Pará state.

As part of the project’s goals, the researchers intend to publish the guidelines created within the study in order to support the development of language policies and EMI in universities of Paraná. The expectation is that the guidelines can also, in the future, be of use to the higher education sector in general.

After the project’s conclusion, both Dr Registro and Moss convey that the collaboration between UENP and Cambridge Assessment English is set to result in further actions in time to come. Moss says the expectation is to offer support to lecturers in the future, through further use of Cambridge English’s language tools. They also aim to ‘continue accurately assessing students’ levels of English, so they can be given appropriate language support,’ he says.

‘We intend to continue fostering the partnership through further projects – especially because we are still receiving information from lecturers who used EMI until August 2019, when the project ended,’ says Dr Registro. This information will be important to help measure the effect of the research and strengthen language policies and internationalisation processes in Paraná state universities.

The researchers also presented the study during the event *UK-BR Internationalisation of Higher Education and Language Policies*, promoted by the British Council, from 27 to 31 January 2020. The programme included a seminar, a workshop, meetings and visits to universities in the UK.





## LEAD RESEARCHERS



**Dr Eliane Segati Rios Registro** is a lecturer at the State University of Northern Paraná, where she co-ordinates the International Office. She is also the co-ordinator of the Paraná Speaks Languages programme and is a specialist in English teacher training, having worked with the internationalisation of higher education institutions for more than a decade.



**Hugh Moss** is a senior education adviser within the Consultancy Services Team of Cambridge Assessment English, part of the University of Cambridge. He has over 26 years of experience within English language teaching (ELT) and has given expert advice and consultancy to ministries of education and educational bodies worldwide.

## FURTHER COLLABORATIONS

- Dr Larissa Giordani Schmitt, lecturer at the Centre of Education, Communication and the Arts at the State University of Western Paraná.

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## EMI training for university professors: a potential tool for internationalisation

**Focus:** To investigate lecturers' perceptions and attitudes towards English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) within participating universities of the Paraná Speaks Languages programme

**BR institutions:** State Universities of Paraná (UNESPAR), Western Paraná (UNIOESTE), Londrina (UEL), Ponta Grossa (UEPG), Maringá (UEM), Midwestern Parana (Unicentro) and Northern Paraná (UENP)

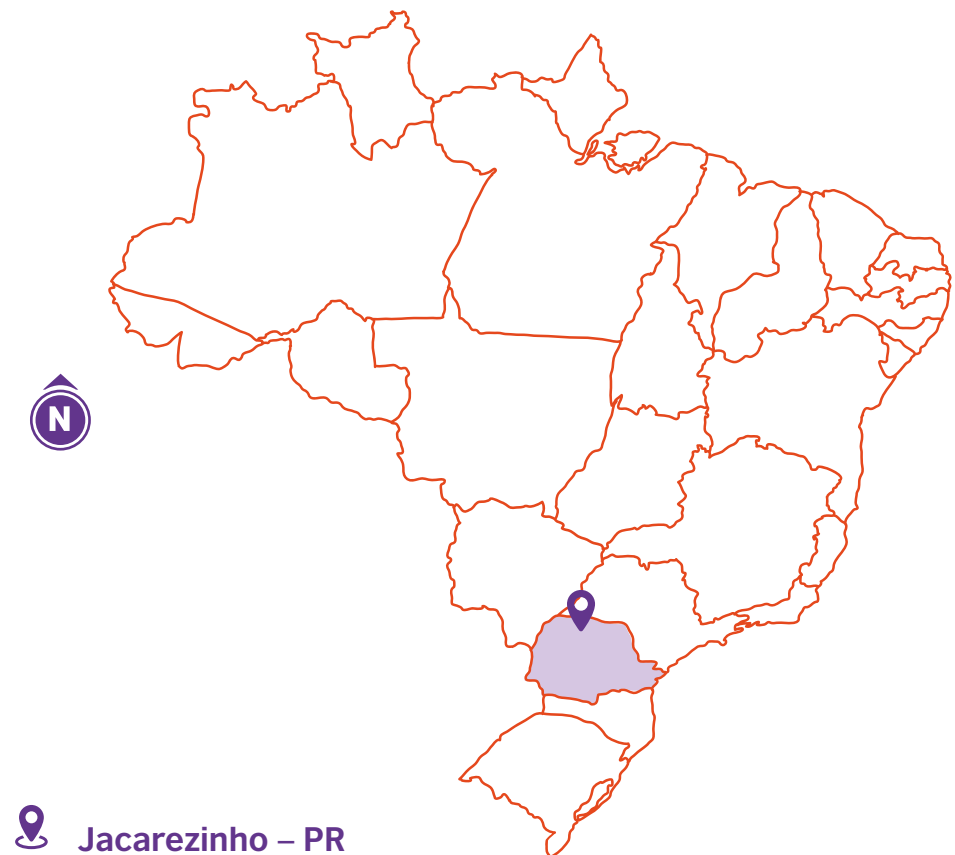
**UK institution:** Cambridge Assessment English

**When:** November 2018 to August 2019

**Where:** Paraná state

**Number of participants involved:** 62, including lecturers, students, rectors, deans for research and graduate courses, deans for undergraduate courses, heads for the International Offices

**Funding:** £10,134.45 – Araucaria Foundation £4,134.45; British Council £6,000



**Jacarezinho – PR**

English as a Medium of Instruction in EMI training for university professors: a potential tool for internationalisation

State University of Northern Paraná

University of Cambridge



## LINE OF RESEARCH

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**Improving English language teaching and learning  
in the public school system at lower and upper  
secondary levels**



## VII. Exploratory practice: a look from within language teaching



The effects of an approach to teacher development is under analysis in this research

### AT A GLANCE

Trying to understand quality of life in the classroom may foster greater empathy between teachers and students. Classrooms can also be spaces where curiosity, as well as autonomy, is stimulated. These are a few principles of Exploratory Practice (EP), the subject of investigation by researchers from Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro and Rio de Janeiro State University. In partnership with Regent's University peers and other academics in Brazil and in the United Kingdom, the group sought to understand the perception of 44 in-service teachers about EP, how they use it in their daily lives and how it affects their teaching practice. The study **'Sustainability of Exploratory Practice (EP) in Rio de Janeiro: a case study of former ELT pre-service teachers'**, took place from December 2018 to July 2019 and consisted of an analysis of undergraduate curricula at the Catholic and state universities in Rio de Janeiro to see where EP was inserted — and later on, included semi-structured interviews with the teachers to find out their views on Exploratory Practice. The approach proves to be relevant and transformative of the way teachers act toward, view and relate to students.

### Exploratory Practice as a tool for teachers' critical thinking

Early-career teachers might believe there is a disparity between what is studied in professional development courses at university and the reality they face inside the classroom. A 2008 book written by Dr Thomas Farrel, from Brock University (Canada), analysed many aspects of the perception of unpreparedness of novice teachers and their learning experiences — and many other studies, including Brazilian research, attempt to tackle the gap between training and practice.

It is in this scenario that Exploratory Practice (EP) emerges as a possible approach to decreasing such asymmetries. Dr Inés Kayon de Miller and her colleagues at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) and other institutions in the UK have worked on developing and investigating the core ideas of EP over the last three decades. Together with Dr Isabel Moraes Bezerra, from Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ) and Dr Assia Slimani-Rolls from Regent's University, Dr Miller proposed a research project under the British Council's **UK–Brazil English Collaboration Call** to investigate how 44 teachers who graduated between 2008 and 2018 at PUC-Rio and UERJ viewed their teaching processes from the perspective of Exploratory Practice. The researchers wanted to understand the effect of this approach on the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) by these professionals — and the nature of the relationship they established with the students as they adopted EP.

EP is not easy to define: it borrows from many teaching methods, such as project-based learning and the communicative approach, but it is not designed as a structured teaching methodology per se. According to Dr Miller, 'it is an attitude. More than a teaching method,

Exploratory Practice is an ethical approach to teaching, a way of "being" inside a classroom.' Students, she says, are encouraged to ask, not hold back questions — including the ones which might be, at first sight, unrelated to the class subject. These questions may express or help make explicit a curiosity and a context that the oblivious teacher may not be aware of and miss the opportunity to explore. 'Students might ask why they must do homework, for example. Instead of giving an answer right away, the teacher can propose a project in which learners interview other people and find the answer by themselves.' Aspects of Exploratory Practice include encouraging students to practise their autonomy, by valuing their questions as materials that can be used in class.

Dr Adriana Nóbrega, a research collaborator from PUC-Rio, says that the research was especially relevant to understand how these teachers, who studied Exploratory Practice at PUC-Rio and UERJ, use this approach in their classrooms. 'We wanted to see how these teachers were faring and how EP was helping them in their daily lives. This research is also important for us, as teacher educators, to rethink our practices with future students,' she says.

*'The research was an excellent opportunity for the teachers to express their individualities and agencies as political actors.'*  
**Maria Isabel Cunha, PUC-Rio**



## How the research was carried out

The entire research was carried out from December 2018 to July 2019. In total, 44 teachers took part. All of them had previous contact with Exploratory Practice in their curriculum, as they completed their undergraduate courses at PUC-Rio and UERJ's Teacher Education College between 2008 and 2018. Several went on to specialisation and graduate courses and, at the time of the study, most worked in primary and secondary education in the state and private school systems in Rio de Janeiro — some also taught English in private language schools.

In order to assess the effect of Exploratory Practice on the lives of these teachers, the team of researchers performed semi-structured interviews with them in a series of discussion meetings. This was an attempt to comprehend the challenges they faced inside the classroom and how they used EP, as well as how they perceived the approach was present in their education at university.

The researchers also analysed the curricula of teacher education courses at PUC-Rio and UERJ's Teacher Education College to advance their understanding of how teachers' reflexivity and critical thinking – as well as Exploratory Practice itself – is discussed in teacher education at these institutions.

This preliminary study of the teacher education curricula currently implemented at both universities enabled the research team to realise that the aspired attitudes of reflexivity, critical thinking and collaboration stand out in the descriptions of certain teacher education courses, such as the teaching practice (*estágio*) courses. According to Dr Miller, these aspects could be made more explicit in the course descriptions of other subjects 'in order to show the overall reflexive and critical postures that are intended in both undergraduate programmes'.

One aspect that both Drs Miller and Moraes Bezerra stress regarding the research methodology is that the interviewed teachers were not perceived as research subjects who would only provide information for further analysis. Teachers' views were explored in several ways in an attempt to construct a body of knowledge in which they were active participants. 'To us, each of them was seen as a colleague that would make the most of the meetings as opportunities to reflect on being a teacher, their teaching practice and everything related to it in the contexts where they work,' observes Dr Moraes Bezerra.

This methodological design was especially significant for the sustainability of a community that can question their daily teaching practice. According to Maria Isabel Cunha, a research collaborator from PUC-Rio, 'the research was an excellent opportunity for the teachers to express their individualities and agencies as political actors.' Language teachers, she adds, get very little social respect or support from the government or society, 'so they might feel they are not entitled to have an opinion or anything important to say'.

## Some findings

The meetings and analyses led the team to conclude that the teachers perceived Exploratory Practice as an important tool for their activities. It was useful for enhancing the awareness of the quality of life inside the classroom, since the approach fostered more trust and understanding in the teacher-student relationship.

Even in difficult contexts, 'these teachers try to understand what is happening in their students' lives, and how their circumstances affect classroom relationships and interfere in the teaching-learning process,' says Dr Isabel Moraes

Bezerra. 'For many of them, it is exactly the humanistic approach of Exploratory Practice that keeps them in the classroom and does not let them abandon their teaching careers,' she adds.

Dr Adriana Nóbrega also considers that the study's greatest outcome was the perception of what Exploratory Practice means to the teachers who took part in the research. She voices a concern that she and the other researchers have about presenting the results. 'We prefer to call these conclusions "understandings" and not "results". It was interesting to appreciate what the teachers understand of Exploratory Practice as an ethical and inclusive approach and what is relevant in this process for them,' she says.

The greatest understanding enabled by the research, in Dr Inés Miller's view, was the perception that teachers who adopt Exploratory Practice in their classrooms tend to listen more attentively to their students. 'If a student has to deal with a certain difficult family situation, for example, his/her teacher will give him/her attention and try to accommodate his/her emotional state. The teacher will not just look away and move on,' she says. 'We bring our lives into the classroom – they don't stay outside while we are there. And this is a notion which has a direct correlation with quality of life,' Dr Miller adds.

***'Exploratory practice is a special form of practitioner research enabling teachers and learners to work together towards a better understanding of their classroom'***  
***Dr Assia Slimani-Rolls, Regent's University London***

There was also a concern over the sustainability of Exploratory Practice in teachers' daily activities because rigid course schedules and syllabi leave little space for reflection in general. However, the teachers involved in the research seem to have found ways to manage such constraints. Maria Isabel Cunha says that there was a strong stance on racial and gender identity in this group of teachers – and the work they have developed with EP has possibly made the most of the reflective and critical thinking abilities they already possessed. 'There was a strengthening of their positioning and they reflected critically not only on the content they teach, but also on their jobs. This was very interesting and important – and one of the most important understandings of the research,' Cunha says.

## What the community says

In terms of effects, Cunha emphasises that after completing their undergraduate courses, many professionals have gone on to graduate courses 'and have a very clear notion of their professional role in society – and a strong perception of their mission as teachers. By "mission" I don't mean "charitable work", but their social and political mission in society, which is especially interesting with regard to Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics,' the researcher says.

This is the case for Renan Silva da Piedade, a PhD candidate in Language Studies at PUC-Rio and an assistant lecturer in the English language graduate specialisation course at the same university. Exploratory Practice, he says, gives him space to discuss what takes place outside the classroom. 'When I am asked about what I feel, see, notice, and what difficulties I have ... this opens doors for me to talk about pain and the experiences I go through. This brings a notion of

space and voice. It is time we take a leading role in our own practices as teachers,' he explains.

Such space and voice enabled by Exploratory Practice, Piedade says, create 'a great sensation of belonging, as if this approach were a network of relationships: teachers talk to teachers, who talk to students, who talk to each other and co-ordinators, who talk to teachers ... and so on, in a network of people who try to comprehend what is happening to them.' All these relationships are fostered, from a practitioner research point of view, 'to produce not only a thesis and other academic work but also a critical perception of what takes place in our daily lives and in our teacher-student relationships,' he adds.

### Brazil-UK connection

The collaboration between Dr Miller and Dr Assia Slimani-Rolls started long before the **UK-Brazil English Collaboration Call**. In the 1980s and 1990s, both were doctoral students under the supervision of Dr Dick Allwright at the University of Lancaster, UK. They have been working together over the last decade, developing and investigating the theoretical framework of Exploratory Practice. 'It is a special form of practitioner research, enabling teachers and learners to work together towards a better understanding of their classroom environment,' Dr Slimani-Rolls says.

'The proposal we submitted to the British Council is the result of many years of collaboration,' says Dr Miller. 'Based on Professor Allwright's work, we started with a small group of researchers in Brazil and in the UK that met at events and worked on exchanges. We participated in and organised several events on Exploratory Practice,' she adds.

The collaboration was smooth throughout the development of the study and resulted, according to Dr Slimani-Rolls, in the joint dissemination of the research outcomes in at least three events by the end of 2019. They took place in three different universities in the United Kingdom: Regent's University London, the University of Greenwich and the University of Southampton.

The researchers will also present the research conclusions at AILA 2020, the World Congress of Applied Linguistics that will take place in August 2020 in Groningen, the Netherlands. 'This successful collaboration will, no doubt, continue in the future and more precisely lead to further dissemination in several types of publications,' Dr Slimani-Rolls indicates.

### What is next?

There are many aspects of Exploratory Practice to analyse in future actions. For Dr Isabel Moraes Bezerra, there is much to be done regarding the thinking about ethical and inclusive research based on this approach, 'as well as thinking of other ways of doing research with human beings and what concerns them, whether in a school environment or not'.

The research team believes that the information gathered at the meetings still needs further scrutiny in order to expand the study's focus to include other relevant questions that have arisen but are not necessarily the core topic. 'We hope the review of the results will indicate which paths we should follow next,' Dr Moraes Bezerra adds.

Despite the success, the researchers are not considering replicating the study. According to Dr Moraes Bezerra, 'reproduction implies treating different people and contexts homogeneously as if there were no cultural, social and historical differences.'

Their next action would be to broaden the research, involving teachers or graduate students in the analysis. 'We would certainly keep the proposal of mutual development and collaboration, because that has been very positive,' says Dr Moraes Bezerra. This positive aspect, she emphasises, should not be understood in the sense that the participating teachers said what the researchers wanted to hear. 'On the contrary, we could ask questions that were not necessarily what we expected or were of a very sensitive nature. These were questions we would not be able to ask in surveys or interviews in which people are treated as mere

informants. This is the reason we stress the need for an ethical positioning towards the trust with which these people report their experiences to us,' she points out.

Dr Inés Miller emphasises that involving teachers in the analysis is important for an approach that does not view them as mere sources of information. In the near future, the team will organise analysis meetings so that participating teachers can give their own perspectives of the research. 'We have to strive against less inclusive ways of researching,' Dr Miller says.

The researchers also presented the study during the event *UK-BR Internationalisation of Higher Education and Language Policies*, promoted by the British Council, from 27 to 31 January 2020. The programme included a seminar, a workshop, meetings and visits to universities in the UK.

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LEAD RESEARCHERS



**Dr Inés Kayon de Miller** is a senior lecturer in the Language Studies department at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro. She is a specialist in applied linguistics and has worked with initial and continuing teacher education, especially in the development of Exploratory Practice, for over two decades and focuses on how the approach is used in classroom environments.



**Dr Isabel Cristina Rangel Moraes Bezerra** is a lecturer at the Rio de Janeiro State University, where she co-ordinated the Linguistics Studies area of the graduate programme in Liberal Arts and Linguistics at the Faculty of Teacher Training. She is a specialist in applied linguistics and has worked with Exploratory Practice for more than a decade.



**Dr Assia Slimani-Rolls** is the Head of Research and Professional Development Research at the Institute of Languages and Culture at Regent's University London. She is a specialist in applied linguistics and has focused her research on how Exploratory Practice creates a better environment for teaching and learning in classrooms.

FURTHER COLLABORATIONS

- Dr Adriana Nogueira Accioly Nóbrega, lecturer in the Liberal Arts department at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro.
- Beatriz Maciel, Diego Nunes, Thais Borges and Thelma Côrtes, PhD candidates in the Liberal Arts department at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro.
- Dr Judith Hanks, senior lecturer in Language Education at the University of Leeds.
- Maria Isabel Azevedo Cunha, co-ordinator of the specialisation course of English Language at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro.
- Dr Richard Kiely, reader in TESOL (Teaching English as Second or Foreign Language), Applied Linguistics in Modern Languages and Linguistics at the University of Southampton.
- Walewska Gomes Braga, English teacher at Escola Municipal Santo Tomás de Aquino, Rio de Janeiro.

Sustainability of exploratory Practice (EP) in Rio de Janeiro:  
a case study of former ELT pre-service teachers

**Focus:** To analyse how Exploratory Practice can promote teachers' and students' deeper understandings of the quality of their classroom lives

**BR institutions:** Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) and Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ)

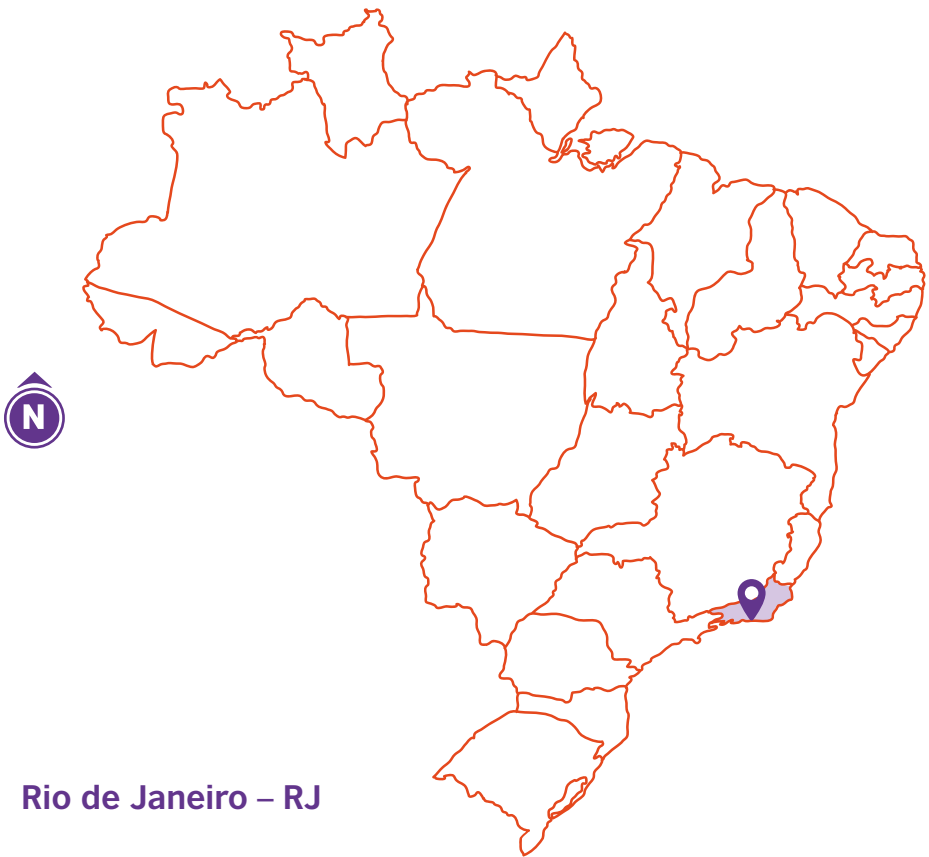
**UK institution:** Regent's University London

**When:** December 2018 to July 2019

**Where:** Rio de Janeiro city

**Number of participants involved:** 55 (including teachers and consultants)

**Funding:** £27,646 – PUC-Rio £4,298; UERJ £3,610; Regent's University London £5,680; CAPES £4,602; British Council £9,456



 Rio de Janeiro – RJ

Sustainability of Exploratory Practice  
(ep) in Rio de Janeiro: a case study of  
former elt pre-service teachers

 Pontifical Catholic University  
of Rio de Janeiro

 Rio de Janeiro State University

 Regent's University London



## VIII. Can a mobile app support English teaching in classrooms?



This research observed how the Duolingo app could be a tool for improvement in student engagement and learning

### AT A GLANCE

Fluency or a high level of proficiency in English is not common in Brazil – and the hardships faced by the public school system is one of many possible contributing factors. Could this change with the adoption of digital devices or mobile apps for language learning? With this question in mind, researchers from the Federal University of Ceará, in partnership with Bournemouth University, developed the research **‘Learning English at Brazilian Public Schools with New Technologies’**, which involved 84 sixth graders (key stage 3) in two public schools in Fortaleza, capital of Ceará state. It took place from December 2018 to July 2019 and its main objective was to stimulate the use of Duolingo among students and observe possible impacts on overall English learning. While the use of the app showed a slight increase in student performance, the gains in methodological terms were the greatest strengths of the study.

### Technology and language teaching in public schools

The notion that one ‘doesn’t learn more than the present tense conjugation of the verb “to be”’ at public schools is widespread in Brazil and is related to the need for public policies regarding teacher training and curriculum development, among other aspects of English language teaching in basic education. This is particularly challenging when considering that English is a major tool for international communication.

According to the 2014 report *Learning English in Brazil*, organised by the Data Popular Institute for the British Council, 5.1 per cent of the population aged 16 or above declare they have some knowledge of English. The rate doubles among younger people between 18 and 24 years old, with 10.3 per cent of Brazilians in this age bracket stating they speak English at some level. The report also shows that among those who speak English in Brazil, a minority (16 per cent) have advanced or fluent language levels, while the majority have either basic (47 per cent) or intermediate (32 per cent) fluency.

Technological tools, on the other hand, becoming more accessible to all social classes. According to the Regional Centre of Studies for the Development of Information Society (CETIC), which measures the growth of internet access in Brazil every year, 70 per cent of the Brazilian population have access to the internet, and 97 per cent go online through their smartphones. More interestingly, around half the rural population and individuals from the lowest social classes (D and E, with a family monthly income of up to £385) have access to the internet.

Recent studies, such as Vaida Žegunienė and Malgorzata Karczewska’s (2018), point out that internet connection and new technologies affect language teaching and learning. In Taiwan, for example, a 2016 study by Yu-Lan Huang and Dian-Fu Chang showed that the use of mobile apps such as Busuu and Duolingo among university students not only improved their language learning but also increased their levels of motivation and satisfaction in doing so.

Could, then, this pervasiveness of mobile technology leverage English learning among students of public schools? This is what the project **‘Learning English at Brazilian Public Schools with New Technologies’** aimed to look into.

Dr Lídia Cardoso, a lecturer at the Federal University of Ceará and one of the research’s co-ordinators, says they tried to use a new approach to bring students closer to English, which is generally taught in Brazilian public schools from the sixth grade onwards.

A previous study developed by Dr Cardoso and her colleague Dr Pâmela Toassi, also from the Federal University of Ceará, showed that students are generally motivated to use mobile apps such as Duolingo to improve their language skills – and go on to use them at home, outside school hours. **‘Learning English ...’** is relevant to foreign language teaching, according to Dr Toassi, who is also a co-ordinator of the study, because it ‘reaches out to classrooms in public schools through an intervention aiming to improve the teaching–learning process, besides enabling co-operation between the university and schools’.

## How the research was carried out

Two schools were at the core of the investigation: Escola Municipal de Tempo Integral Nossa Senhora de Fátima (Nossa Senhora de Fátima City Full-Time Schooling), with 56 participating students, and Escola João de Freitas Ramos (João de Freitas Ramos School), with 28 participants. Both schools are located in Fortaleza, in north-eastern Brazil, and all the 84 students were sixth-graders. ‘We were positively surprised by the number of students that were willing to take part in the study,’ says Dr Pâmela Toassi. ‘There is a widespread notion that parents and communities do not engage in this sort of research, but this level of interest shows totally the opposite,’ she adds.

Participant students were divided into two groups: the first made use of the Duolingo mobile app outside school classes, and the second, the control group, had extra English classes but didn’t use the app. Students took a language test at the beginning of the study period and then, at the end of it, they took the same test and had their scores compared.

The timescale had its drawbacks, though. The study took place throughout the first half of 2019, which, according to Dr Toassi, was itself a challenge. To her, ‘it would have been ideal to develop such a study over a longer period than the seven months it took’, in order to be able to make more thorough observations.

*‘This piece of research reaches out to classrooms in public schools through an intervention aiming to improve the teaching-learning process, besides enabling co-operation between the university and schools’*

*Dr Pâmela Toassi,  
Federal University of Ceará*

To observe if and how technology would affect English learning among public school students, it was important to provide at least half of the 84 students with smartphones. Even though mobile communication is widespread in Brazil, its distribution is still uneven in many regions – which proved to be another challenge, since only 16 students had smartphones available. The small sample, according to Drs Toassi and Cardoso, did not invalidate the study or make it unfeasible, as it also led to some findings and food for thought in terms of methodology.

## Some findings

There was an improvement in terms of learning among the students involved in the study, according to Cardoso. The group of 16 students using Duolingo had a slightly better performance than the pupils who did not use the app. The fact that the app is freely available might have been an extra motivator. ‘One thing we observed,’ Dr Cardoso says, ‘is that many students, when aware of language learning apps, are going to use those tools on their own because they are digital natives’. This is an exercise of autonomy that can lead to empowerment, she observes.

The study also confirmed the need to engage students in more classroom hours to improve language learning. In general, public school students in Brazil, the researcher points out, only have around 50 minutes per week of English classes. ‘Given the complexity involved in foreign language acquisition, this should be reconsidered in order to curtail learning restrictions,’ Dr Cardoso says. Any intervention that engages students in learning a foreign language, Dr Toassi agrees, ‘can contribute to the improvement of the teaching-learning process in public schools’.

## What the community says

The development of a study like this is itself a way of giving visibility to English teaching in public schools. To Janaína Andrade, a teacher and co-ordinator at João de Freitas Ramos School, and one of the participants in the study, this very elemental touchstone is highly relevant because ‘English teaching at a school level is particularly weak in Brazil – the meagre investment in it results in demotivated students and teachers.’

She says that the possibility of working directly with students in research like this was a way to renew their interest in learning and motivation to learn a foreign language. The use of technology as a component of the learning process was also a way of bringing the daily lives of students into the classroom, since ‘it was possible for their learning practice to continue uninterrupted, even when they were not in the school environment,’ Andrade adds.

The use of tools like Duolingo in the research’s activities had an impact in the school she works in. ‘Students came to activities even outside school hours and intensified their learning through the use of technological resources that were available to them’, she enthuses.

Janyelle Alves, an English teacher to sixth-graders at Nossa Senhora de Fátima School and also a participant in the research, agrees with that perception. She says that most of her students were more participative inside the classroom, risked more and asked her about topics that had not been approached in class yet. ‘I felt like their confidence increased a bit more in relation to the language,’ she says, ‘and I have noticed that their questions have changed a bit. They used to ask more random questions, but then it seems they were focusing better on the subjects and asking questions that were more specific to what we were studying,’ she adds.





## Brazil–UK connection and what is next

Alves' students' vocabulary learning also seems to have improved. 'It is as if they have noticed the importance of learning it,' the teacher says.

On the other hand, students who were already frustrated with learning English did not really improve their perception of their relationship with the language. 'It is still challenging to them and they do not engage much,' she says.

Even though she needs to tackle this challenge, Alves says she wants to keep using the methodology. 'It was a very good improvement, even though the time frame for the research was short,' she adds.

Beyond the study development, another important aspect of the research was the strengthening of bonds between Drs Toassi and Cardoso and Dr Bernhard Angele, senior lecturer in Psychology at the University of Bournemouth.

Drs Toassi and Angele were collaborators since 2017 on a project that analysed how skilled bilingual readers process cognates – or words that are spelled the same across two languages and share the same meaning (*total* in English and Portuguese, for example), and interlingual homographs (also known as false cognates, like *sensible* in English and *sensível* in Portuguese).

*'Students are intensifying their learning through the use of technological resources that are available to them'*

*Janaína Andrade,  
João de Freitas Ramos School*

The research, Dr Angele says, 'was funded by the Royal Society and was much closer to my main research interests as a cognitive psychologist as it had a focus on language and especially reading'. In a visit to Fortaleza due to the collaboration, he learned about the study Drs Toassi and Cardoso were developing together, examining the use of technology for the strengthening of language learning. Dr Angele says he found the idea extremely interesting because, compared to the

research he was developing, 'this research has a much more direct impact on the lives of students, which I appreciate.' Later on, the team identified the British Council call for projects as a potential way for them to work on a proposal together. For Dr Pamela Toassi, 'the collaboration has been profoundly enriching', and they intend to keep working together on further research activities. Dr Lídia Cardoso agrees with her colleague and says that 'the extent of learning from this investigation has been great for the whole team.'

Dr Cardoso also stresses the importance of the **UK–Brazil English Collaboration Call** in bringing their research to fruition and deepening the collaboration, which will continue in a subsequent study in the UK, with funding from the Bournemouth University Impact Development Fund.

This next step, says Dr Angele, will enable a follow-up study involving more students and a longer time span. There are high expectations for this next stage. He stresses that if the study can show that integrating language learning apps into the curriculum is a low-cost method of improving student language learning outcomes, this finding can potentially affect not only English instruction in Brazil but also language teaching in other countries.

Such an outcome could possibly influence foreign language teaching in the UK itself. This area, Dr Angele says, 'has been notoriously neglected, and the number of students learning foreign languages is falling.' The adoption of mobile learning apps in the UK could, then, 'enable schools to offer more languages and provide students with more practice without requiring many more resources,' he expects.





LEAD RESEARCHERS



**Dr LÍdia Amélia de Barros Cardoso** is a lecturer at the Department of English Language Studies, Literature and Translation at the Federal University of Ceará. She is a specialist in methodologies for foreign language teaching and applied linguistics, and has researched the adoption of technology in language learning and teaching since 2012.



**Dr Pâmela Freitas Pereira Toassi** is a lecturer at the Department of English Language Studies, Literature and Translation at the Federal University of Ceará, where she is also a lecturer in the Graduate Program in Translation Studies. Her field of research spans language acquisition, multilingualism, foreign language teaching and learning, teacher education and reading and translation.



**Dr Bernhard Angele** is a senior lecturer in Psychology at Bournemouth University. His current research focuses on the interconnection of reading processes and language acquisition – more specifically, on how readers allocate their attention to follow lines of text and shift their gaze at the proper rate for language processing.

>> FURTHER READING

BRITISH COUNCIL (2019). Public policies for English teaching. An overview of Brazilian Public Network Experience. São Paulo: online.

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HUANG, Y, CHANG, D. Fuzzy detecting the effect of mobile game-based learning for university students. TOJET: *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, Nov. 2016, Special Issue, pp. 1070–1080.

ŽEGUNIENĖ, V, KARCZEWSKA, M. Global and innovative tools in English language learning: strengths or threats? *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*. v. III, 25–26 May 2018, pp. 580–593.

SOUZA, GMB. CARDOSO, LAB, TOASSI, PFP. Duolingo as a tool to improve vocabulary writing in English as a foreign language. *Letras em Revista*, v. 09, n. 01, Jan./Jun. 2018.

Learning English at Brazilian public schools with new technologies

**Focus:** To use the Duolingo mobile app to see how language learning among sixth-graders in public schools improves

**BR institutions:** Nossa Senhora de Fátima City Full-Time Schooling, João de Freitas Ramos School and Federal University of Ceará (UFC)

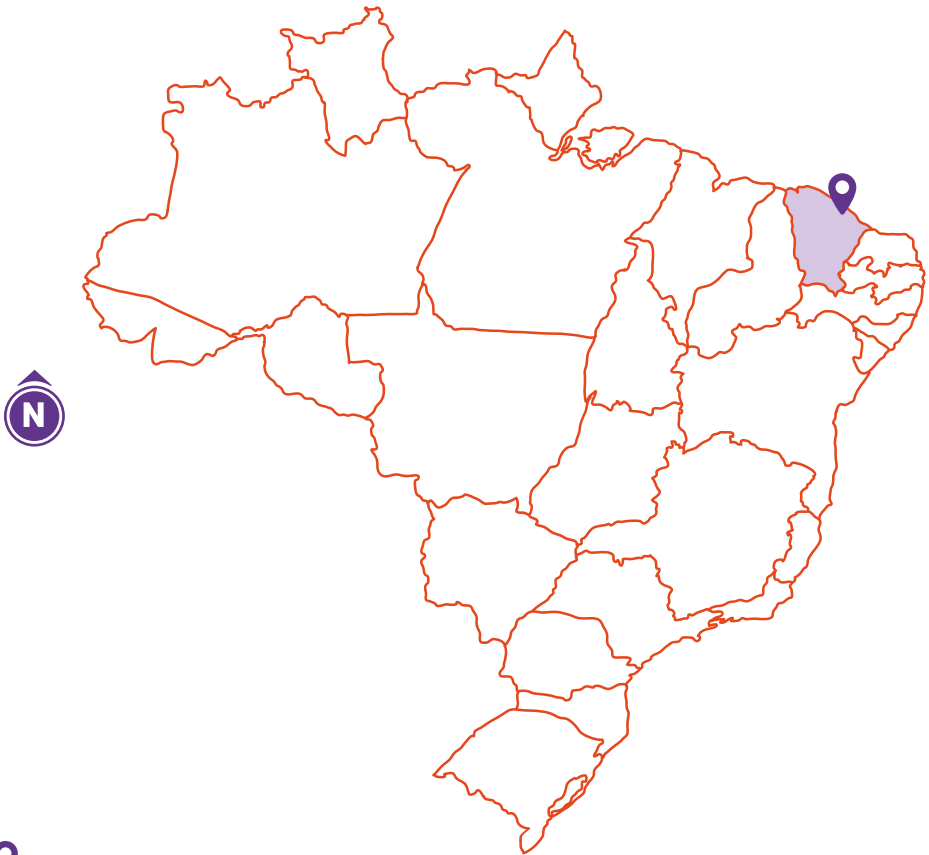
**UK institution:** Bournemouth University

**When:** December 2018 to July 2019

**Where:** Fortaleza, Ceará state

**Number of participants involved:** 95, including students, teachers and one school co-ordinator

**Funding:** £8,040 – FUNCAP £4,750; British Council £3,290



Fortaleza – CE

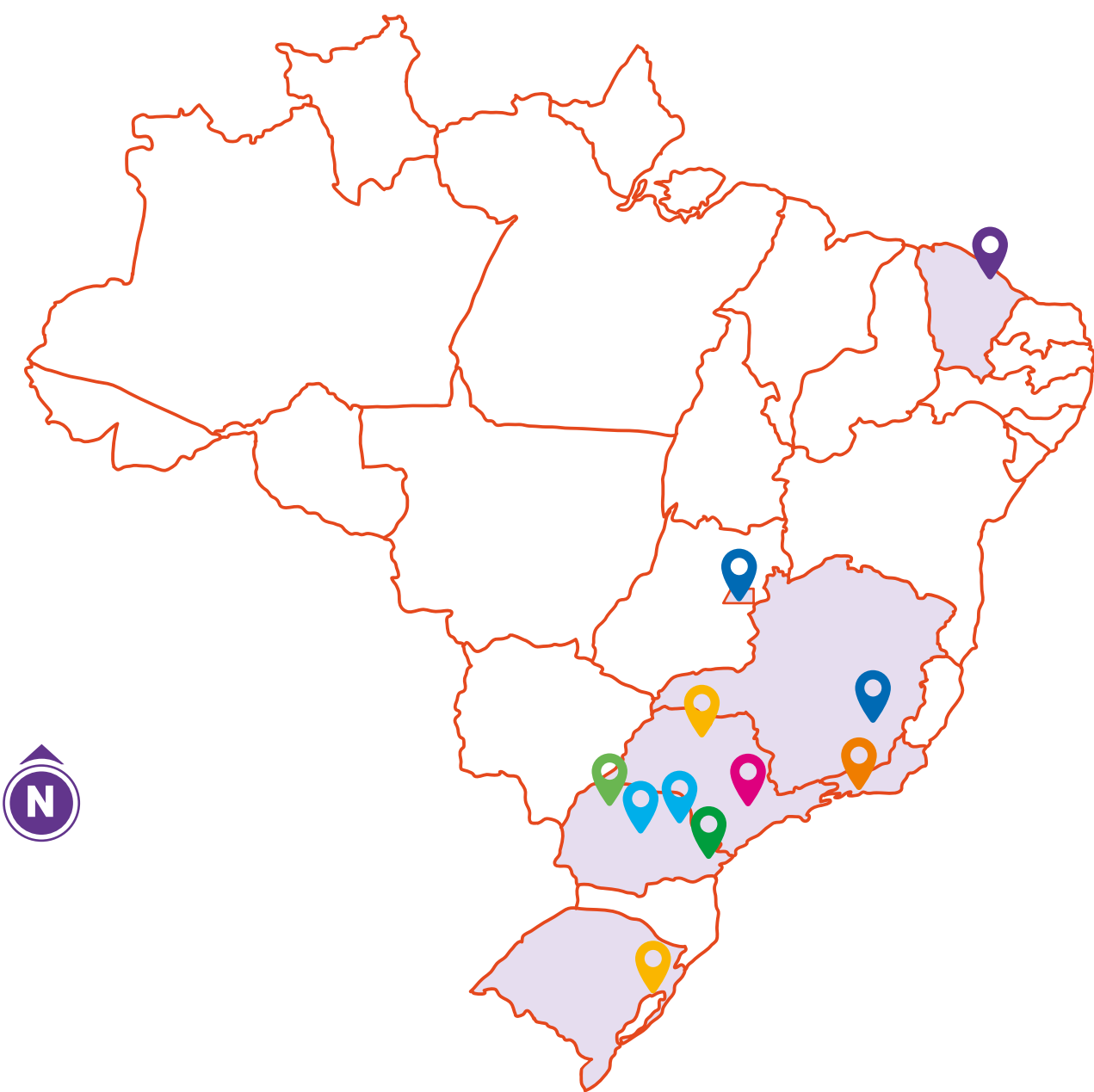
Learning English at brazilian public schools with new technologies

- Federal University of Ceará
- Bournemouth University



## UK-Brazil English Collaboration Call: supported projects

# UK-Brazil English Collaboration Call: supported projects



## São Paulo – SP

Facilitating internationalisation in Brazilian higher education contexts: developing expertise in teaching English for academic purposes

University of São Paulo

University of Glasgow

## Fortaleza – CE

Learning English at Brazilian public schools with new technologies

Federal University of Ceará

Bournemouth University

## Rio de Janeiro – RJ

Sustainability of exploratory Practice (ep) in Rio de Janeiro: a case study of former elt pre-service teachers

Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro State University

Regent’s University London

## Belo Horizonte – MG

## Brasília – DF

The changing language and literacy landscapes of Brazilian universities: English in policy development and in practice

Federal University of Minas Gerais

University of Brasília

University of Birmingham

## Porto Alegre – RS

## São J. do Rio Preto – SP

Supporting the internationalisation of Brazilian research: combining EAP tutor training and academic writing autonomy

Federal Uni. of Rio Grande do Sul

São Paulo State University

University of Surrey

## Curitiba – PR

Is there a minimum level of English proficiency to teach in a university EMI context?

Federal University of Paraná (UFPR)

Cambridge Assessment English

## Londrina – PR

## Maringá – PR

English as a Medium of Instruction in two state-funded Brazilian higher education institutions from an English as a lingua franca perspective: policy in practice

State University of Londrina

State University of Maringá

Goldsmiths, University of London

## Jacarezinho – PR

EMI training for university professors: a potential tool for internationalization

State University of Londrina

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