

**Internationalisation in Higher Education and English as a teaching and learning tool:  
what are the implications in all Brazilian Education?**

**A internacionalização na Educação Superior e o inglês como instrumento de ensino e  
aprendizagem: quais são as implicações na Educação brasileira?**

**La internacionalización de la educación superior y el inglés como herramienta de  
enseñanza y aprendizaje: ¿cuáles son las implicaciones para la educación brasileña?**

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**Abstract**

It is evident that there is no language better than other, however English seems to be necessary if people want to dialogue and take part in the global knowledge and civilization. This article has the aim to discuss about having English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Higher Education, when there are implications about learning and teaching English in all Brazilian Education. For this, the methodology of this study is qualitative, considering publications in this thematic and focusing on debate considering two subtitles: Higher Education teaching in English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) - learnings and challenges; and, when the university internationalisation is affected by implications in all Brazilian Education. In this way, the debate has to be set up in all levels of Brazilian education because the English language knowledge taught at Brazilian Basic Education does not fit to the students' needs when they are going to Brazilian universities to have disciplines mediated through English. It is necessary to study, in future investigations, if people from Brazilian institutions are really assuming the internationalisation and if this situation brings more quality and learning possibilities to all Brazilian education.

**Keywords:** Brazilian university internationalisation; The English language; Challenges in Education.

## Resumo

É evidente que não existe língua melhor que outra, porém o inglês parece ser necessário se as pessoas querem dialogar e participar dos conhecimentos e das civilizações globais. Este artigo tem por objetivo discutir sobre a questão de ter o Inglês como Meio de Instrução (EMI) no Ensino Superior, quando há implicações sobre a aprendizagem e o ensino do Inglês em toda a Educação Brasileira. Para tanto, a metodologia deste estudo é qualitativa, enfoca o debate em publicações na temática e considera dois subtítulos: Ensino Superior em Inglês como Meio de Instrução (EMI) - aprendizagens e desafios; e, quando a internalização universitária é afetada por implicações de toda a Educação brasileira. Desse modo, o debate deve se instaurar em todos os níveis da educação brasileira, pois a língua inglesa ensinada na Educação Básica brasileira não é significativa, o suficiente, de modo que os estudantes possam ter disciplinas mediadas pelo inglês quando chegam às universidades brasileiras. É necessário estudar, em investigações futuras, se as instituições brasileiras estão realmente assumindo a internacionalização e se esta posição traz mais qualidade e possibilidades de aprendizagem para toda a Educação brasileira.

**Palavras-chave:** Internacionalização da universidade brasileira; Língua inglesa; Desafios na educação.

## Resumen

Es evidente que no hay idioma mejor que otro, sin embargo, el inglés parece ser necesario si la gente quiere dialogar y participar en el conocimiento y la civilización global. Este artículo tiene el objetivo de discutir sobre tener el inglés como medio de instrucción (EMI) en la educación superior, cuando hay implicaciones sobre el aprendizaje y la enseñanza del inglés en toda la educación brasileña. Para ello, la metodología de este estudio es cualitativa y se centra en publicaciones y en el debate considerando dos subtítulos: La enseñanza de la educación superior en inglés como medio de instrucción (EMI) - aprendizajes y desafíos; y, cuando la internalización universitaria se ve afectada por implicaciones en toda la Educación brasileña. De esta manera, el debate debe establecerse en todos los niveles de la educación brasileña porque el idioma inglés que se enseña en la Educación Básica brasileña no es lo suficientemente significativa para los estudiantes que van a tener disciplinas mediadas a través del inglés en las universidades brasileñas. Es necesario estudiar, en futuras investigaciones, si las personas de las instituciones brasileñas realmente están asumiendo la internacionalización y si esta posición trae más calidad y posibilidades de aprendizaje a toda la educación brasileña.

**Palabras clave:** Internacionalización de la universidad brasileña; Idioma en inglés; Desafíos en educación.

## 1. Introduction

Despite the economic recession, Brazil has developed socially and economically, especially in the last three decades. With this growth, there was a significant improvement in the qualification of Brazilian Higher Education Institutions, which made them more adjusted to global standards and requirements. Internationalisation was included in the context of the development achieved in Higher Education, which does not only involve the relation among countries, but the relation among cultures in all world (Hans de Wit, Fiona Hunter, Laura Howard, 2015); internationalisation that is one of the criteria in Brazilian universities evaluation.

In Brazil, the government and private initiative seeks to invest in the perspective of internationalisation and academic mobility since the 1950s, when was created the financing units for bilateral projects among different countries in the world, such as the Coordination for Continuing Development of Higher Education Personnel (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior/CAPES) and the National Council of Scientific and Technologic Development (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico/CNPq). In this way was created the Brazilian Scientific Mobility Program (Programa Ciências sem Fronteiras), which was formed from joint actions (Brazilian Ministries, including the Ministry of Education and Culture/Ministério da Educação e Cultura - MEC). This program aimed to enable the internationalisation, expansion and innovation of science and technology, promoting formative and cultural experiences to Brazilian academic students and professionals, in several areas of knowledge.

According to Bido (2016, p. 61), the Brazilian Scientific Mobility Program, which started in 2012, brought “a possibilidade de acesso ao conhecimento em âmbito internacional, de apresentação do potencial dos brasileiros nas interações acadêmicas, da troca de experiências culturais e do contato dos estudantes com alguns expoentes do meio científico

mundial”<sup>1</sup>. Based on these experiences, Brazil moves in the internationalisation scenario. Especially through CAPES, the university has been permeated by exchanges, when the new model of internationalisation is assumed as strategy and policy in Brazilian Universities (Morosini, 2006).

In this context, in this study, the aim is to discuss about having English as a tool for teaching as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Brazilian Higher Education, considering the definition of EMI from Dearden (2015, p. 02), who says EMI is the "use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English". The proposal is linked to the objective and brings to discussion the English language taught and learned in Brazil. Form the subtitles Higher Education teaching in English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) - learnings and challenges; and, when the university internalization is affected by all Brazilian Education, in this last topic, especially, it is considered the English language teaching and learning in Brazilian High Schools/Basic Education.

Carried out a critical analysis from the main literature on internationalisation, which is defined as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2008, p. 21), the methodology for this study is qualitative. It focus on a debate that starts by the questions around mediating teaching through English in Higher Education and the quality of English teaching in all Education in Brazil, which are interconnected with some preview studies (Leffa, 2002; Dearden, 2015; Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Cunha & Reschke, 2016; Bido, 2016, Morosini, 2006; Finardi & Porcino, 2015, De wit et al., 2015, Knight, 2008; Knight, 2012; British Council, 2015).

It is known that the English language is the working idiom in most international organizations, it remains to be seen if, in Brazil, English can be the path by which Brazilians will engage in dialogue with the world. Currently, there is already a mobilization in this perspective, but there is still a need for institutional debate, reflection, research, especially on concrete actions so that the challenge of effective English learning is taken on in Brazil.

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<sup>1</sup> “the possibility of access to knowledge at an international level, the presentation of the potential of Brazilians in academic interactions, the exchange of cultural experiences and the contact of students with some exponents of the scientific world (*Translation from the author of this article*).

In this situation, it is necessary to recognize that the English language should be considered since it is in Basic Education context. The inequality in the English language teaching is shocking, as it favors only some Brazilians, resulting in unequal opportunities. Private Basic Education Schools are usually able to implement proposals that result in language proficiency, however Public Basic Education Schools generally does not have fluent teachers and cannot articulate teaching work and pedagogical activities with quality, for reasons ranging from lack cultural exchanges and support, high number of students per class, differences in knowledge about the language and in it. Another implication is the

[...]falta de políticas linguísticas e de internacionalização que reconheçam o papel do inglês no cenário atual é a indesejável dissociação dos papéis da língua inglesa, ora sendo vista como formadora na educação básica, ora como tendo um papel instrumental nos cursos livres e nos programas de internacionalização<sup>2</sup> (Finardi & Porcino, 2015, p. 114).

Therefore, there are dichotomies, implications and inequalities that affect learning and teaching quality, which points to the need for studies and emerging actions. In dialogue with Leffa (2002, p.03), who explains that the language “is not just an instrument for communication, but an environment with culture that creates us and shapes us”, this text proposes a reflective debate and raises itself as a possible generator of future research and of rethinking the training of the English language Basic teachers in Brazil. If one of the challenges is internationalisation, the other is to understand the value of English as a language of global communication (Crystal, 2003), to finally recognize this language as a mediator and mobilizer to promote teaching and learning qualification carried out in Brazil and then the possible internationalisation of Brazilian Education.

## **2. Methodology**

The methodology for this study is a critical analysis from the main literature constructed on internationalisation conception. It has a qualitative approach and focus on reflection and debate considering the thematic studied, having English as a Medium of

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<sup>2</sup> [...]lack of language and internationalization policies that recognize the role of English in the current scenario is the undesirable dissociation of the roles of the English language, sometimes seen as a trainer in basic education, sometimes as having an instrumental role in free courses and internationalization programs (*Translation from the author of this article*).

Instruction at Brazilian universities and the following questions: a) is it possible to have English as a Medium of Instruction at Brazilian universities when the Brazilian Basic Education do not build a great knowledge about this idiom? b) if Basic Education does not have great teaching and learning in Brazil (British Council, 2015), is the university internationalisation going to exclude the students from Brazilian Basic Education?

The perspective to mediating teaching through the English language in Higher Education brings some challenges like the pedagogical strategies for teaching and learning in one international language, internationalisation and academic mobility, when students come to Brazil from other countries and/or Brazilian ones go to study abroad. In this debate some authors 'studies are guiding this writing (Leffa, 2002; Dearden, 2015; Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Cunha & Reschke, 2016; Bido, 2016, Morosini, 2006, Finardi & Porcino, 2015; De Wit et al., 2015; Knight, 2008; Knight, 2012; British Council, 2015). This study did not observe phenomena in loco or deal with the observed experiences, but seeks to resume the knowledge already published regarding the theme that design this text, which brings reflection from the implications identified in this issue.

### **3. Discuss and results about Higher Education teaching in English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) – learnings and challenges**

Based on the discussions proposed by professor Leffa (2002, p. 29), the time he says that “when a language is used multinationally it does not necessarily replace the local languages, but works in complementary distribution with them, fulfilling different functions”. Therefore, discussing the English language as a mediator in university disciplines implies recognizing that language as a resource that brings possibilities, but do not bring the hegemony of that language, nor even the imposition of a culture over others.

It is fact that the English language opens borders for communication, information, training and formative processes. In this approach, English contributes to science development, research and it also brings an invaluable contribution to Education. In this internationalisation movement, Martinez (2016) says how Brazilian universities are working in this way. In the author's study carried out between 2011 and 2016, which refers to the Federal University of Parana (PUCPR / Brazil), Martinez describes how this institution stands

out with its work in mediated disciplines through English. This institution already offered fifty-five disciplines in English; a large number compared to other Brazilian institutions.

Hence, in order to identify institutions and studies carried out that consider internationalisation, Finardi and Ortiz (2015) compared two Brazilian institutions, one private and one public, in the specificity of the Administration course and identified that both participate in academic mobility programs, however, these institutions do not present internationalisation proposals and policies. These authors concluded that

[...]a fim de promover a internacionalização do ensino superior, é necessário investir em programas de mobilidade acadêmica do tipo IN, cujo maior obstáculo é a barreira linguística, tendo em vista que nossas universidades não oferecem cursos de ou em inglês como componentes curriculares<sup>3</sup>(Finardi & Ortiz, 2015, p. 119).

In view of university institutions and their internationalisation movements, there is a challenge that is posed to professors regarding the pedagogical dynamics that make possible to teach and learn through English in the distinct disciplines, in different areas of knowledge. Dearden & Macaro (2016, p. 479) explain that there is “a distinct lack of awareness of a need to change pedagogy in order to help students (whether home or international) cope with content delivered through a second language”.

The professors’ awareness of revision in their pedagogical proposal is essential and it allows university professors to put themselves into the position of learners. In this perspective, university professors need to create teaching and learning environments, significant interaction spaces and they still need to listen to students’ needs. In Martins’ words (2020, p. 73), to “ser capaz de se tornar consciente acerca de algo ou alguém, é preciso se encontrar com o Outro, reconhecê-lo para se tornar consciente da existência única e singular do humano<sup>4</sup>”.

The understanding of internationalisation policies and practices and the recognition of the implications can be discussed by peers in training groups, while they can practice the

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<sup>3</sup> “in order to promote the internationalization of Higher Education, it is necessary to invest in academic mobility programs like *IN* type, whose greatest obstacle is the language barrier, since our universities do not offer courses in or in English as curricular components” (*Translation from the author of this article*).

<sup>4</sup> “be able to become aware of something or someone, it is necessary to meet with the Other, to recognize him/her to become aware of the unique and the singular existence of the human” (*Translation from the author of this article*).

English language, while the debate strengthens the experiences and brings confidence in the language using. This shared activity has the formative meeting importance, which results in significant acts for professors, expands the repertoire of pedagogical dynamics, enables criticality and creativity and it can encourage autobiographical research considering the construction of knowledge about teaching and learning. These collaborative activities get so interesting because professors may become aware of that they are part of entire process and their understanding, about language as an additional element in their teaching proposal, becomes essential.

In this dynamic, the participants build a geography of performance and belonging with shared responsibilities and learning that can spread beyond the local institution. The reflexive, critical and innovative activity in the pedagogical act is a [trans]formative activity because it makes possible to rethink about teaching (Martins, 2018). By consolidating their pedagogical planning in an innovative format, professors can understand and recognize the English language as a knowledge mediator, they can review their teaching and learning instruments and strategies, their procedural and systematic assessment and its nuances and can identify the relevance to be a professor that is also a researcher. In this kind of meeting sharing, they can still obtain the competence in public speaking, in the management of technologies, in academic writing and in recognition of emotions, demands of teaching and researching, such as dialogue with others and publications.

For the effective internationalisation of Brazilian Higher Education Institutions, it is necessary to recognize the need for a [tras]formative movement in these institutions, because internationalisation implies pedagogical dynamics that have the English language as an essential tool for the mediation of teaching and learning processes. Given this scenario, there are other and new challenges for Higher Education professors, as they need to communicate in English in a country that has other languages (Indigenous, Signs, Portuguese, etc).

One implication in this context is the need to express in another language that “we do not know enough of the foreign language and culture to understand what we hear or say what we really mean. We are still too confined to our own linguistic and cultural experiences” (Leffa, 2002, p. 34). This is an inference that generates advances if professors revisit their formative processes and their pedagogical proposals and teaching performances.

With the demands of university teaching, professors turn to training themselves and the others in a cooperative way (Martins, 2018). Then, they can strengthen the institutional

project of internationalisation where they work through actions that are intertwined in the qualification of all Educational system. As highlighted and questioned by Cunha and Reschke (2016, p, 03) the “esforço da ciência precisa estar a serviço da qualidade de vida para todos. Esse deve ser o intuito da internacionalização, quando compreendida com base na solidariedade. Estaremos, no Brasil, assumindo essa condição?”<sup>5</sup>. In this perspective, the subtitle that follows seeks to bring to the debate the implications of the internationalisation of Higher Education in an educational setting that does not guarantee quality in the English learning and teaching, especially in Public and Basic Education.

#### **4. Discuss and results about when the challenges to the university internationalisation are to all Brazilian Education**

When the English language is the idiom in which classes and academic activities are conducted, students also need to qualify in the direction of acquiring proficiency for effective communication in English. Thus, development and innovation in international relations bring co-responsibility in professors and teachers’ formative processes (Martins, 2018). This joint responsibility must be shared in all Brazilian education, between professors, teachers and students, since everyone needs to seek to be able to participate in the global dialogue.

However, for a student to reaching Higher Education communicating in English, it is Basic Education qualification that needs to be restarted in Brazil (British Council, 2015). According to British Council (2015), there are several problems in teaching Brazilian Public Basic Education.

Muitos dos problemas observados no âmbito do ensino do inglês são característicos do sistema de ensino público como um todo, afetando tanto escolas municipais quanto estaduais, de norte a sul do país. As principais dificuldades encontradas são indicativas de ambientes de alta vulnerabilidade social, onde se encontra violência dentro e fora da escola, excesso de alunos nas salas de aula, turmas desniveladas, falta de recursos didáticos, alunos com problemas básicos de leitura e escrita e a

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<sup>5</sup> “science effort needs to be at the service of quality of life for all. This must be the intention of internationalization, when internationalization is understood based on solidarity. Are we, in Brazil, assuming this condition?” (*Translation from the author of this article*).

existência de funcionários com contratos de trabalho precários e insatisfação com seus salários<sup>6</sup> (British Council, 2015, p. 09).

It is known that the teaching and learning dynamics in Basic Education are not aimed at verbal communication, then understand what is heard and speak to others is not really possible. Thus, it seems pertinent to ask: - shouldn't there be a minimum level of knowledge in the English language for students in High School? Shouldn't there be a requirement for a minimum level, like by intermediary for professors and academic students when they start working/entering into any Higher Education institution?; - what proficiency English level do professors and students need to get to take part into English university activities?

It may seem difficult to imagine a Brazilian reality in which students leave High School feeling able to communicate into English. But, if we do not think about this qualification, what kind of internationalisation would we be talking about in Brazil? Is this country ready to join at the international level, in research processes, in academic mobility and in teaching and learning? What other difficulties cross the universe of Brazilian Education?

In the complexity of teaching in Higher Education, the mediation of activities in the English language represents a greater challenge, however this immersion in the world can bring benefits to all Education, as long as it is reconsidered in the general teaching and learning in the wide Brazilian scenario. Relevant points for the debate are: the quality of Basic Education, the access to universities for those students who leave High School, the initial and continuing training of English-speaking teachers who work in Basic Education, the cultural, the economic and social conditions and, the level of English students' proficiency who are entering into Higher Education. All these issues are intertwined in the problematic of Brazilian internationalisation.

Thus, joint actions for the internationalisation should also consider transformations needed in Basic Education, in the proposals of teacher training courses, in Higher Education

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<sup>6</sup> Many of the problems observed in the context of English teaching are characteristic of the public education system as a whole, affecting both municipal and state schools, from the north to the south of the country. The main difficulties encountered are indicative of environments of high social vulnerability, where violence is found inside and outside the school, excess of students in classrooms, uneven classes, lack of didactic resources, students with basic reading and writing problems and the existence of employees with precarious employment contracts and dissatisfaction with their salaries (*Translation from the author of this article*).

pedagogy, in the relevance of research as indispensable at different levels of Education. An emerging transformation in English teaching and learning in Basic Education is evident as necessary so that the arrival and permanence of students from High School are carried out, are not elective and not in social exclusion. Even if knowing English does not guarantee the participation in the world, “not knowing English is a guarantee to exclusion. We are entering a society where the most precious asset is knowledge – and knowledge cannot be sufficiently acquired if English is not used” (Leffa, 2002, p.49).

Perhaps we can return to pertinent questions that concern the training of teachers for Brazilian Basic Education, as these professionals are whom form the future academics. These Basic School teachers are the ones that can make the difference if they avoid excluding these students, permitting they be able to go to university. Based on the specific area of the English language, it is known that if students have an English proficiency level that is compatible with the minimum level B2 of knowledge, determined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Common European Framework of Reference - CFRE), then, they will be in the way of participating in the international world.

It can be inferred that the internationalisation of Brazilian universities engenders necessary and emerging actions that are linked to Basic Education in Brazil, since the qualification of Brazilian universities is conditioned to the English language knowledge, which is built during the twelve years of students’ schooling in Basic Education. As Martins (2018) mentions, the methodology for language teaching needs to be part of the training of English language teachers in order to invest in the quality of pedagogical activity in Basic Education and, consequently, in the qualification of language learning. It is worth emphasizing that, finally, Brazilian Curriculum Base (BNCC) started to recognize the importance of policies for English in this level of Brazilian Education. It is also understood that internationalisation can help in the development of international and intercultural knowledge, skills and values (Knight, 2012).

It is relevant that a project that considers the macrostructure of Brazilian Education is carried out, thus the participation is not only for some Brazilians or for few ones, but it is in a perspective of inclusion and for all. Today, by the year 2020, it is necessary to [re]start the educational qualification, even in the shadows of a pandemic, and with regard to the English teaching and learning, it is necessary to design a teaching for global communication, considering each person, by the way that this person sees and recognizes the world.

Learning a language is beyond a code or a system and it is a challenge to all Brazilian Education and they are some of the implications. Learning English brings a new possibility to move people critically and collectively into the others 'culture and into the one's own values, because language is an unrepeatable condition of having the humanity into interaction. To debate about internationalisation is a kind of proposing to recognize where Brazil is, for what and why considering the world. In this way, this country needs to keep researching, cooperating, dialoguing to be part of. Talking about English, Brazilian Education have to restructure the curriculum to focus on global knowledge and on social reality understanding.

## **5. Final Considerations**

By understanding the internationalisation as necessary, there are some implications, challenges and also possibilities to Brazilian Education. In addition to the current pandemic scenario, which affects the world and that requires the restructuring and reinvention of students, teachers and professors in facing the new design of activities mediating by technologies, the present conditions affect, not just the Education, but also Brazilians in all circumstances and conditions. Consequently, reflecting and proposing actions to qualify Education is the responsibility of altogether, especially education professionals and managements. It is opportune to form a culture of practice and cooperation that allows the internalization and permits construction of knowledge.

Reflective teaching practice and sharing need to be encouraged, as well as should be created communities of practice that study practical strategies and pedagogical techniques to relearn how to teach by using the English language as a classroom mediator. In this perspective, research proposals that aim to know what is happening in Higher Education institutions are pertinent and should be initiated and promoted, especially from interviews with Brazilian professors and students that are in the process of internationalisation, in order to know and verify how researching, teaching and learning activities are going on with those involved.

In this way, investigations aimed at observing moments of interaction in the English language interactions, into face to face or into distance methods are relevant to map the challenges and advances in academic communication that is launched in the English language. Another possibility of researching could seek to know the teaching work and

English learning in Brazilian Basic Education. In this perception, pedagogical residency programs (Becker, 2020), research that engenders the continuing training of English teachers in Basic Education and the constant dialogue between university and school are urgent and essential.

It is worth underlining the importance of listening to academic community to learn how the internationalisation movement has impacted all formative processes, knowledge productions and societies. In this perspective, based on some studies on English as a medium of instruction - a growing global phenomenon, Dearden (2015, p. 02) concludes and recommends that exist “an urgent need for a research-driven approach which consults key stake-holders at a national and international level and which measures the complex processes involved in EMI and the effects of EMI both on the learning of academic subjects and on the acquisition of English”.

In this scenario in which approximately 2,400 Brazilian Higher Education institutions are located, considering public and private, with more than 30,000 undergraduate courses, it is necessary to investigate how the new way of communication, through the English language, has been motivated, studied and perceived by those who are involved in it. Still in relation to this language, it is pertinent to investigate about what it has represented, especially with regarding to English fluency in a territory with this kind of geographic, economic, social and cultural diversity; and considering that the speakers practice just a little in English in their routine.

It is fact that challenges at all times bring interesting possibilities. The teaching of academic disciplines into English in countries where the mother tongue is not English may initially represent an arduous path that requires persistence, adjustments, investments and constant studies. However, this challenge can become a great possibility of improvements in the students' formative process, in the continuing education of teachers in Basic Education and professors in universities and; as well, it can bring an evolution in the quality of researches, in communication, in teaching and learning in all Brazilian Education.

In Brazil, the organization and effectiveness of Higher Education and its internacionalisation implies urgent debates in the direction to implementing qualified projects also in Brazilian Basic Education. Then, the English students' knowledge is engendered, reasoned and qualified before these students can get into Higher Education. Unfortunately, Brazil still presents its fissures and disinvestments, which implies in urgent shared actions

with focus on internationalisation among different educational levels. By going international, Brazilian institutions seek to dialogue with the world, receiving students and professors from other institutions, as well as they continue to enable Brazilians to exchange and qualify their lives and cultural experiences.

As can be seen, all Brazilian educational system, from Basic to Higher Education, can affect the internationalisation in Higher Education, for the reason that Brazil does not have so much investments and great qualification in Public Basic Education (British Council, 2015). In this way, investigations around Education and internationalization have to be constant, specially while taking into account the possible and necessary presence of the English language in all Brazilian Education.

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