

**AN OVERVIEW OF IN-CLASS HOURS DEDICATED TO ENGLISH
INSTRUCTION IN UNDERGRADUATE LANGUAGE TEACHER
EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN BRAZIL: TO BE OR NOT TO BE
PROFICIENT? THAT IS THE QUESTION!**

*Um Panorama das Horas de Aula Dedicadas à Instrução de Inglês em Cursos de
Licenciatura em Letras no Brasil: Ser ou Não Ser Proficiente? Eis a Questão!*

Miriam Sester RETORTA

Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná

msester@utfpr.edu.br

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4891-5659>

Ana Valéria Bisetto Bork GODKE

Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná

bisetto@utfpr.edu.br

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5911-6564>

ABSTRACT: The low proficiency in English among the Brazilian population is a concern addressed by various researchers (Rodrigues, 2022; De Souza Silva; Oliveira, 2022; David, 2016; British Council, 2014, 2015; Paiva, 2003; Brasil, 1998). Despite discussions about the quality of English education at the elementary and secondary levels, there is a gap in understanding the preparation of future English teachers in Brazilian higher education institutions. This study provides an overview of undergraduate programs in Portuguese/English and English in Brazil, emphasizing the hour load dedicated to formal language instruction. Based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001) and studies on language proficiency of English teachers in different countries (Cinganotto, 2016; Roux, 2012; Uri; Aziz, 2018; Nagai; O'Dwyer, 2011), a quantitative study was conducted. Data were collected on the e-MEC platform and a descriptive statistical analysis was carried out. The study reveals that many undergraduate programs in Brazil lack adequate English language instruction. The low number of hours dedicated to English instruction in most programs prevents future teachers from becoming proficient enough to teach the language, potentially resulting in negative consequences for English language learning in the country.

KEYWORDS: English proficiency; teacher education programs; Brazilian universities.

RESUMO: A baixa proficiência em inglês entre os brasileiros é uma preocupação abordada por diversos pesquisadores (Rodrigues, 2022; De Souza Silva; Oliveira, 2022; David, 2016; British Council, 2014, 2015;

Paiva, 2003; Brasil, 1998). Apesar da discussão sobre a qualidade do ensino de inglês nos níveis fundamental e médio, há uma lacuna na preparação de futuros professores nas instituições de ensino superior. Este estudo oferece uma visão geral das licenciaturas em português/inglês e inglês no Brasil, destacando as horas-aula dedicadas ao ensino formal da língua. Baseado no Quadro Europeu Comum de Referência para Línguas (CEFR, 2001) e em estudos sobre proficiência linguística de professores de inglês em diferentes países (Cinganotto, 2016; Roux, 2012; Uri; Aziz, 2018; Nagai; O'Dwyer, 2011), um estudo quantitativo foi realizado, cujos dados foram coletados na plataforma e-MEC, e uma análise estatística descritiva foi realizada. O estudo revela que muitas licenciaturas no Brasil carecem de um ensino adequado da língua inglesa. A baixa carga horária dedicada ao ensino da língua inglesa na maioria dos programas impede que os futuros professores se tornem proficientes o suficiente para ensinar o idioma, o que pode trazer consequências negativas para o aprendizado da língua inglesa no país.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Proficiência em inglês; licenciatura em letras; universidades brasileiras.

INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of English as a compulsory subject in the Brazilian school curriculum is not a recent issue. It dates back to 1809 when Dom João VI, the King of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil, and the Algarve, decreed that English and French were taught in schools to strengthen commercial relations. However, subsequent reforms in the Brazilian educational system have consistently failed to prioritize the teaching of foreign languages, hindering effective participation in an increasingly globalized world.

English became legally required in high schools through the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDB, 1996) in 1971, but it was not until 1976 that it became mandatory in secondary education. In 1996, the LDB recognized the need to teach foreign languages in junior schools (grades 6-9). According to the LDB, article 35-A, paragraph 4 stipulated that English would remain mandatory in high school, with other languages like Spanish that are offered depending on teacher availability in state educational systems. In 2020, Law No. 746/16 established that English became the only compulsory foreign language in regular education starting from the 6th grade, which garnered criticism from teachers of other languages.

Although formal teaching of English started 300 years after colonization, foreign language teacher education programs at undergraduate level were only launched a century later. In 1934, the first undergraduate course in Languages and Literatures was founded at the State University of São Paulo (USP), while the first legislation establishing a minimum curriculum for teacher language higher education programs was only implemented in 1962 (Paiva, 2003).

Despite the regulations introduced since 1962, little is known about the skills and competences of the future teachers that the English/Portuguese or English Language Teacher Education Programs (LTEP) prepare for the labor market, as there is no form of accreditation to assess them. Limited time allocated to teaching English in LTEP can be a significant hindrance to improving the English proficiency of teachers in Brazil. According to Paiva (2003), the number of hours offered by LTEP in Brazil is insufficient for undergraduate students to achieve the necessary proficiency to effectively teach the language in elementary, junior, and secondary schools.

The scenario presented highlights to the potential repercussions of the English

language teaching inefficiency in Brazil, as indicated by Figure 1. These consequences include limited access to academic exchange programs, a shortage of publications in international journals, and inadequate linguistic qualifications to compete in a globally-oriented job market for both pre-service and in-service teachers.

Figure 1 – Ranking of English language proficiency in Latin America.



Source: Education First: English Proficiency Index of 2021.

Various studies (Rodrigues, 2022; De Souza Silva; Oliveira, 2022; David, 2016; British Council, 2014, 2015; Paiva, 2003; Brasil, 1998) have examined the reasons behind the low English proficiency levels in junior and high schools in Brazil. Among the reasons, such studies include the marginalized status of foreign language teaching within the educational system, deficient educational policies, poorly equipped classrooms, limited class time for English instruction, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient oral skills of teachers, and inadequate teaching materials.

This study focuses on the preparation of future English language teachers in undergraduate programs and aims to investigate how these programs are equipping students with language learning and proficiency skills. The assumption is that if

universities fail to provide students with a curriculum that enables them to achieve a minimum level of proficiency, it raises concerns about the quality of the English language taught in junior and high schools.

In this article, we present the results of a study conducted to provide an overview of the Portuguese/English and English undergraduate teacher education programs in Brazilian universities regarding the number of class hours devoted to formal teaching of the English language. The questions that guided our research were: How many hours of English instruction are these students (future teachers) exposed to in their undergraduate programs? Is the number of hours devoted to the formal teaching of the English language sufficient for these students to achieve a minimum level of proficiency?

In preparation for data collection, the study aimed to determine the minimum language proficiency level required for English language teachers in Brazil to effectively teach junior and high school students. To address this, the researchers consulted The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001), as well as standards from other countries, as references for this study, such as Malaysia (Uri; Aziz, 2018), Italy (Cinganotto, 2016), Colombia (Roux, 2012), and Japan (Nagai; O'Dwyer, 2011). These references provided preliminary parameters for the study. Subsequently, an extensive study was conducted to address the aforementioned research questions.

The paper is organized into four sections. The first section discusses the theoretical assumptions that serve as the basis for the study. The second one outlines the methodology and describes the data collection process. The third section presents the results obtained from the data analysis. The fourth and final section focuses on the implications of the study's findings and engages in a discussion surrounding their significance.

DEFINING THE EDGES

The English language has been increasingly recognized as a means of development and integration in various countries worldwide, rather than being perceived as a threat to non-English-speaking cultures. This shift in perspective acknowledges the use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) to facilitate connections, disseminate knowledge

in scientific, commercial, industrial, and artistic domains, and promote exchanges. Brooker (2018) highlights this evolving paradigm in their review of research on the role of English as a catalyst for socio-economic development.

With the acceleration of globalization and the integration of the world economy, English is increasingly viewed as a means of achieving competitive economic advantage. English has also become a key strand in the debate on what makes good human capital and what skills are needed by labor in order to produce economic value. English skills can attract mobile flows of capital and inward investment from multinational firms. English is also often cited as part of the '21st century skill set', and a 'must have' for participation in the global knowledge economy. This is particularly relevant to developing countries, which regard English as the key to higher value, knowledge-based economic activities which can accelerate progress up the value chain (Brooker, 2018, p. 2).

The global significance of the English language has influenced the approach to its teaching. Within the European context, the Council of Europe (2001), in collaboration with educators from Europe and beyond, has been committed to establishing language policies. This effort resulted in the creation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001) which takes into consideration the diverse linguistic and cultural interests, needs, and demands of European Union (EU) members. Due to the broad dimension of the framework, the language and teaching paradigm which underlie the CEFR (2001, p. 21) is the action-oriented approach which "views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e., members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to complete in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action".

The CEFR provides language teachers and educators with a set of principles and ideas to develop curricula for professional improvement. It also serves as a useful tool for assessing a learner's language proficiency. One advantage of using the CEFR is its adaptability to different educational frameworks, allowing for customization based on cultural and social needs. However, in Brazil, few institutions, including junior and high schools and universities, have adopted the CEFR's standardization, even though there is no tailored framework specifically designed for the Latin American context. Another advantage of adhering to the CEFR is its alignment with international certification standards offered by universities worldwide. This can be beneficial for undergraduate

students aspiring to become English teachers, as well as those seeking to pursue graduate studies abroad, as these certifications often require a minimum level of language proficiency.

Regarding its different levels, the CEFR categorizes language proficiency levels based on a six-level scale, ranging from A1 to C2, which reflects students' progression in mastering the language. The levels are defined by competences and sub-competencies, grouped into three broad categories: Basic User, Independent User, and Proficient User. The CEFR also suggests the estimated course hours required to achieve these levels which can be further subdivided and adapted according to the specific needs of a local context. Table 1 presents the different proficiency levels, along with the minimum course time necessary for students to progress towards higher proficiency levels.

Table 1 – Common European Framework Guided Learning Hours.

CEFR Level	Cambridge English Exam	Number of Hours (approximate)
C2	<i>C2 Proficiency - previously known as Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE)</i>	1,000—1,200
C1	<i>C1 Advanced - previously known as Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)</i>	700—800
B2	<i>B2 First - previously known as Cambridge English: First (FCE)</i>	500—600
B1	<i>B1 Preliminary - previously known as Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)</i>	350—400
A2	<i>A2 Key - previously known as Cambridge English: Key (KET)</i>	180—200
A1	<i>A1 Starters/Movers - previously known as Cambridge English Starters/Movers (YLE)</i>	90-100

Source: Cambridge Assessment English (2022).

Table 1 displays the estimated number of instructional hours required for a European student to achieve each proficiency level. However, it is acknowledged that these suggested times by Cambridge Assessment English (2022) may vary significantly depending on the specific population being considered. In the case of South America, students might require more instructional hours due to factors such as the geographical distance from English-speaking countries, limited physical infrastructure in schools (Brasil, 1998, p. 18), and the low proficiency levels of many public-school English

teachers (Brasil, 1998). It is reported that around 85% of English teachers in public schools in Brazil, according to the 2017 School Census by the Ministry of Education (MEC), have low levels of language proficiency (INEP, 2017). A more recent study in 2022 indicated that over 70% of teachers still possessed only a basic level of English proficiency, highlighting the persistent issue (INEP, 2022).

While Brazil adheres to the Ministry of Education's national guidelines for foreign language teaching, numerous countries worldwide have embraced the CEFR levels to certify their English teachers, guaranteeing a baseline level of proficiency (Council of Europe, 2001). Italy, for instance, introduced the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) framework into its educational system in 2003 as part of a Reform Law. In terms of language proficiency, the Italian CLIL established a C1 level of competence in the foreign language (CEFR) for their secondary school teachers. According to Cinganotto (2016), the Ministry of Education established a teacher profile specifying different skills and competences that a CLIL teacher should develop in order to be fully qualified. Besides language competence, two other dimensions need to be worked on: subject-specific knowledge, and effective teaching methodologies.

In South America, a study conducted by the British Council (2003) and referenced by Roux (2012) revealed that 63% of English language teachers in Colombia had a low proficiency level in English (A1-A2). In response, the City Council of Bogotá introduced an English Language Program in 2003 to enhance the city's international competitiveness by increasing the number of English/Spanish bilingual individuals between 2004 and 2014. This initiative was followed by the Ministry of Education's national policy, known as Bilingual Colombia or National Program of Bilingualism, implemented from 2004 to 2019. Aligned with the CEFR standards, this program targeted students at the elementary, middle, high school, and undergraduate levels, aiming to improve their English language proficiency. With regard to teachers' proficiency, the government established a minimum of high intermediate for the year 2009 (B2 level). Roux (2012) points out that,

[...] both public schools and universities have also played an important role in the implementation of the foreign language policy in Colombia, particularly to promote the British teaching qualifications. The National University of Colombia and Universidad de la Sabana, Coruniversitaria, de Ibagué, Atlántico, del Norte, in Barranquilla, and Tecnológica de Pereira, for example, permanently offer the In Service

Certificate of English Language Teaching (ICELT) for university teachers and the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) for elementary and middle school teachers (Roux, 2012, p. 189).

Although our focus is mainly on the standard of proficiency in-service teachers should achieve, it is important to highlight that Colombia's language policies, specifically the National Bilingual Program, have faced significant criticism. Usma Wilches (2009, p. 137) argues that these policies, despite their goal of increasing the number and proficiency of Spanish-English bilingual individuals, have led to inequality, exclusion, and stratification. The criticism stems from the exclusion of indigenous and most foreign languages from discussions surrounding bilingualism and second/foreign language learning in the country.

Malaysia has been implementing the CEFR as part of its efforts to enhance English language proficiency among students since 2013. According to Uri and Aziz (2018), the English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC) and the English Language Teaching Center (ELTC) have been collaborating with the Ministry of Education to introduce the CEFR into the educational system. This process follows a three-phase roadmap aimed at reforming English language teaching in Malaysia by 2025. The initial phase focused on improving teachers' English proficiency through training programs. The second phase involves defining appropriate CEFR levels for each educational stage, while the third phase focuses on evaluating and revising the measures implemented. As stated by Uri and Aziz (2018), the implementation of the CEFR has garnered positive results, with teachers recognizing the need to enhance their own proficiency to facilitate students' progress. However, some teachers still struggle with low proficiency and resistance towards incorporating the CEFR into their teaching plans. Overall, the implementation of the CEFR represents a significant advancement for Malaysia's education system, although challenges lie ahead.

In Japan, the Action Oriented Plurilingual Learning Project (AOP project) was initiated at the Keio Research Center for Foreign Language Education. According to Nagai and O'Dwyer (2011, p. 142), "the project aimed to promote continuity and transparency in foreign language education across all levels of the Keio educational system, including elementary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, and

university departments”. At the tertiary level, according to O’Dwyer and Nagai (2011, p.144) . To address this issue, reforms incorporating the CEFR have been implemented in the English curriculum. However, the authors suggest that while educators and researchers acknowledge the significance of global language proficiency standards, they believe that a specific adaptation of the CEFR is necessary for the Japanese context. The authors raise a concern regarding the adaptation of the CEFR standards for language proficiency in Japan. They question the extent to which the local standard based on the CEFR aligns with the original CEFR proficiency levels. They find it ironic that the CEFR, which is valued for its global applicability, is used to create a local standard that becomes less globally relevant. The authors emphasize the challenge of devising a local standard while ensuring alignment with global proficiency levels (Nagai; O’Dwyer, 2011, p. 150).

In the Brazilian context, a similar concern arises regarding the applicability of European standards of proficiency in English. As English is considered an additional language in Brazil, with Portuguese and Brazilian Sign Language being the official languages, there is a question of how feasible, achievable, and desirable the European standards are for Portuguese-speaking students. Given the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), defined by Seidlhofer (2011, p. 7) where “English serves as a communicative medium among speakers of different first languages”, further questions emerge. How can ELF teachers approach the recommended CEFR standards? How can proficiency levels be improved without aiming for native speaker proficiency? What levels of proficiency can be considered acceptable, considering that the majority of English users worldwide are non-native speakers? These questions highlight the need to adapt language proficiency standards to the specific linguistic and cultural contexts in which English is taught and learned.

Despite the potential criticisms and limitations of the CEFR, it remains the most widely used framework for guiding educational systems, institutions, teachers, and material designers lacking alternative frameworks. In the absence of a specific South American framework, the CEFR at the B2 level was chosen for this study. This choice aligns with the recommendations of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and provides clear performance expectations for students at different schooling stages. Furthermore, the CEFR can contribute to improving teaching quality through curriculum understanding and evaluation of teaching and learning. While

this piece of research analyzed data based on the CEFR proficiency concepts, it acknowledges the need for further studies to explore the relationship between the advocated CEFR proficiency levels and the actual proficiency levels achievable by Brazilians.

In the context of Brazilian studies that center on teacher education programs at the undergraduate level and the proficiency level of pre-service teachers, we highlight studies conducted by Gimenez (2011), Busnardi and Fernandes (2011), Borges (2015), Gallardo and Kobayashi (2019), and Kobayashi and Gallardo's (2021).

In the article Narrative 14, Gimenez (2011) discussed the precariousness of English language teaching in the country and highlighted the lack of educational policies for foreign language learning in undergraduate courses in Brazil, which contributed to an inadequate teacher education of English language teachers.

Busnardi and Fernandes (2011) conducted a study addressing the evaluation of foreign language teacher proficiency in the Brazilian context, with a general discussion on English language teaching programs in the country. They emphasized the linguistic-communicative and professional competencies necessary for a teacher to become proficient in the language they would teach after the beginning of their undergraduate courses. The authors proposed that future teachers' proficiency be assessed through a specific examination for the teaching profession, the EPPL (Proficiency Examination for Foreign Language Teachers), aiming to create a feedback loop within language teacher education programs to minimize the perceived deficiencies in Brazilian education.

Borges' study (2015) began with the researcher's personal experience as an English teacher in Basic Education and Higher Education, highlighting the difficulties faced in this trajectory. The study focused on the teacher education of future English teachers at the State University of Goiás (UEG), especially in listening comprehension and speaking skills. Borges argued that many students and even professors lacked effective communicative competence in English, negatively affecting the quality of language teaching in the country. Various factors were identified, such as course choice for convenience, lack of resources, and cultural influences. A mismatch in students' oral proficiency was observed, with deficiencies even among the most advanced ones. Effective communication in English was highlighted as crucial, but lack of student motivation and traditional teaching methods represent obstacles. The study emphasized

the importance of the communicative approach and identified problems in the curriculum implementation and teacher education courses.

Gallardo and Kobayashi (2019) analyzed the perception of English proficiency level and the knowledge about assessment of teachers in teacher education programs from a Bachelor's degree course in Languages (Portuguese-English). Through a simulated international test and a questionnaire, the study aimed to compare the students' proficiency level with their perception, as well as to identify the aspects that guided the assessment process of pre-service teachers. The partial results indicated that, although students succeeded in the assessments throughout the course, they lacked clarity about their own English proficiency. The simulated test showed lower proficiency levels than the students' beliefs, even after they received information about the different skill levels. Regarding assessment, most students considered writing as the easiest skill to learn, but also mentioned oral assessment and portfolios, without, however, clarifying what they considered important to assess. These partial results suggested the importance of English language teaching courses offering proficiency exams throughout the program, especially for future language teachers, aiming to qualify them in assessment and certification. Additionally, official documents regulating these courses should address research on the conception of proficiency and establish the minimum level required for a language teacher.

Kobayashi and Gallardo's (2021) study examined English proficiency levels among students in a Portuguese/English Language course at a public university. It questioned the effectiveness of proficiency tests in monitoring students' progress from enrollment to graduation. The research incorporated insights from faculty, course coordinators, and experts in teacher education and language assessment. Key findings included the inadequacy of the English proficiency test for classifying students, as it fell short of the required minimum proficiency for classroom engagement. There was also debate over the necessary English level for entering the job market, particularly in education, without consensus on the B2 level. The study noted a lack of mandatory assessment for future English teachers, as highlighted by course participants.

Future research should aim to provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, and the conclusions drawn from the experiments, potentially organized into subheadings.

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This research lies in the field of Applied Linguistics. As far as the investigation method is concerned, our research consists of a descriptive study within the quantitative paradigm (Gil, 2008) which, due to its nature, gives the researcher the opportunity to survey quantitative data in order to understand the characteristics of a particular population or phenomenon.

Concerning data collection, we began by looking for information on Portuguese/English and English undergraduate teacher education programs on the e-MEC platform¹. Within the e-MEC platform, we consulted the Advanced Query Report tab to access the data related to our research question. Next, we focused our search on the following terms: Portuguese-English undergraduate teacher education programs and English undergraduate teacher education programs². During our search, we found other terms such as 'Languages - licensed to teach Portuguese and/or English' and 'Language - licensed to teach English'³. Subsequently, we selected only the undergraduate programs, which were active and ruled out the ones that were being phased out. We then created a spreadsheet divided into the following parts: institution code; name of the university; acronyms; name of programs; degree (licentiate or bachelor's); modality (in-person or distance learning); status (active or phasing out); states of Brazil. We also included the total number of course hours of each program; the hours allocated to the teaching of English; the hours allocated to the teaching of writing in English⁴; total number of hours for subjects somehow related to the teaching of English and the sum of the three previous columns (hours dedicated to the teaching of English + hours dedicated to the teaching of writing in English + hours for subjects related in some way to the teaching of English). Finally, we added the percentage of the sum of the three previous columns (total of hours for the teaching of English) compared to the total of hours for the program and the link to the website where we were able to collect all the detailed information we needed.

¹ E-MEC is the Ministry of Education site where all the undergraduate and graduate programs in Brazil are registered.

² Letras português-inglês e Letras inglês.

³ Letras com habilitação em português-inglês ou Letras com habilitação em inglês.

⁴ We decided to separate the teaching of the English language from the teaching of writing in English because we understand that the latter is not necessarily taught in English. However, later we decided to consider the teaching of writing in English along with any other discipline that could be added to our sheet such as Communication in English, English I, II, Oral communication, among other discipline titles.

The inclusion criterion for the spreadsheet involved both public and private universities that provide program information on their official websites. Institutions without program information available on their websites were excluded from the analysis. To organize the data, separate tabs were created for each region of the country, including the North, Northeast, Central-West, Southeast, and South. Figure 2 displays the spreadsheet with the fifteen distinct parts mentioned earlier, reflecting the regional breakdown.

Figure 2 – Spreadsheet of collected data.

Institution code (IES)	Higher Education Institutions	Acronyms	Name of programs	Degree - License or bachelor	Learning modality (in person or distance learning)	Status (active or phasing out)	State of the Federation	Total hour load of each program	Hour load dedicated to the teaching of English	Hour load dedicated to the teaching of writing in English	Hour load of subjects somehow related to the teaching of the English language	The sum of the three previous columns	Percentage of total hour load dedicated to the teaching of English compared to the total hour load of the program
	LETRAS - INGLÊS												
38	UNIVERSIDADE DO ESTADO DO PARÁ	UEPA	LETRAS - INGLÊS	Licenciatura	Presencial	Em Atividade	PA	2966	240	0	0	240	8.1%
549	UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO ACRE	UFAC	LETRAS - INGLÊS	Licenciatura	Presencial	Em Atividade	AC	3580	480	120	120	720	20.1%
549	UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO ACRE	UFAC	LETRAS - INGLÊS	Licenciatura	Presencial	Em Atividade	AC	3566	480	60	120	660	18.5%
569	UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARÁ	UFPA	LETRAS - INGLÊS	Licenciatura	Presencial	Em Atividade	PA	3124	0	68	544	612	19.6%
699	FUNDAÇÃO UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE RONDÔNIA	UNIR	LETRAS - INGLÊS	Licenciatura	Presencial	Em Atividade	RO	3360	560	0	0	560	16.7%
1422	CENTRO UNIVERSITÁRIO DO NORTE	UNINORTE	LETRAS - INGLÊS	Licenciatura	Presencial	Em Atividade	AM	3229	66	0	0	66	2.0%
3849	FUNDAÇÃO UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO TOCANTINS	UFT	LETRAS - INGLÊS	Licenciatura	Presencial	Em Atividade	TO	2850	420	0	0	420	14.7%
18440	UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO SUL E SUDESTE DO PARÁ	UNIFESSPA	LETRAS - INGLÊS	Licenciatura	Presencial	Em Atividade	PA	3284	0	136	136	272	8.3%
4	UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO AMAPÁ	UFAM	LETRAS - INGLÊS	Licenciatura	Presencial	Em Atividade	AM	2865	360	120	120	600	20.9%
5701	UNIVERSIDADE DO ESTADO DO AMAPÁ	UEAP	LETRAS - INGLÊS	Licenciatura	Presencial	Em Atividade	AP	4180	560	0	0	560	13.4%
383	UNIVERSIDADE DA AMAZÔNIA	UNAMA	LETRAS - INGLÊS	Licenciatura	Presencial	Em Atividade	AM	3360	0	0	60	60	1.8%

Source: The authors.

The data were collected at two different periods: in 2018 (before the COVID pandemic) and in 2022 (after the COVID pandemic). We decided to re-collect the data in 2022 because many programs had been phased out while many others had been designed and implemented. The second data collection started in December 2021 and is highlighted on the sheet. This time 2,359 registered programs were found on the e-MEC platform, which included all foreign languages, such as Spanish, French, German, Polish, Japanese and Italian, amongst others.

It is worth mentioning that only the universities registered on the e-MEC platform were taken into consideration, and the documents used to search for information were the political-pedagogic projects⁵ and/or the course syllabus⁶ found on the institutions' websites. Table 2 presents the number of programs found on the e-MEC platform as well as when the data were collected.

Table 2 – Number of programs found on the e-MEC platform.

Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	Programs registered	Quantity of programs found
08/12/2018	Total number of registered programs (including all foreign languages taught: Spanish, French, German, Polish, Japanese, Italian, etc).	2,496
09/02/2019	First filter of data - Total number of registered programs: Portuguese/English and English undergraduate teacher education programs in the five regions of Brazil.	508
05/09/2019	Second filter of data - Total number of registered programs: Portuguese/English and English undergraduate teacher education programs in the five regions of Brazil which have detailed information of programs on the pedagogical political projects and/or the course syllabus on the Internet.	227
12/01/2021	Total number of registered programs (including all foreign languages: Spanish, French, German, Polish, Japanese, Italian, etc).	2,359
02/02/2022	Filter of data: 1. All programs which were not related to the Portuguese and English languages were discarded. 2. Online courses (synchronous and asynchronous), courses which were suspended due to legal issues (suspension of PROUNI ⁹ and FIES10), courses which were neither accredited nor initiated. or the ones which were 'In Supervision - Sanctioning Procedures' were also discarded. 3. The Bachelor's programs were disregarded because these programs in Brazil do not license students to teach. 4. Programs which did not have a website or websites with incomplete information, i.e., programs which did not offer information about the political-pedagogic projects and/or the course syllabus were discarded. Programs which were being phased out were excluded.	286

Source: Portal e-MEC (2023).

⁵ The "Projetos político-pedagógicos" (PPP) are educational instruments that provide guidance for the functioning of educational institutions. They reflect the pedagogical approach and practices of a school or university, outlining the direction for management and educational activities.

⁶The "Matriz curricular" in Portuguese refers to the curriculum framework. It is a mandatory document that outlines the goals and objectives of a course, as well as the intended learning outcomes and assessment strategies for students.

The first data were collected between December 12, 2018 and February of the following year. In this phase, we obtained a total of 2,496 records of undergraduate teacher education programs, including all foreign languages listed in the programs. The first filter of the research began on September 2, 2019. We restricted the data to 508 programs because only Portuguese/English and English undergraduate teacher education programs in the five regions of Brazil were taken into consideration, all the other languages being discarded. The second filter started on September 5, 2019 and we removed the programs that did not offer a website or websites that did not contain detailed information such as the course syllabus and/or the political-pedagogical projects⁷. After this filter, 227 Portuguese/English and English undergraduate teacher education programs remained.

From December 2021 to February 2022, after the pandemic, we decided to start collecting again all the necessary information from the e-MEC platform. Programs which had been phased out were removed and new ones included on the 2018 spreadsheet. A filter was conducted from February 2022 to May 2022 and all the programs not related to the Portuguese and English language teacher education programs were discarded. We also eliminated online programs (synchronous and asynchronous), and programs which were suspended due to legal issues (suspension of PROUNI⁸ and FIES⁹) as well as programs which were neither accredited nor initiated. The ones which were 'In Supervision - Sanctioning Procedures' were also not considered. Programs which did not have a website or had websites with incomplete information (information about the pedagogical political projects and/or the course syllabus) were left out as well. Neither did we consider the Bachelor's programs because these programs in Brazil do not license students to teach. This left us with 194 Portuguese/English teacher education programs as well as 92 English undergraduate courses.

⁷ A political-pedagogical project of a course should encompass the set of organizational and operational guidelines that express and guide the pedagogical practice of the course, its curriculum structure, syllabi, bibliography, the professional profile of undergraduates, and everything related to the course development.

⁸ The PROUNI (Programa Universidade para Todos) is a government initiative in Brazil designed to provide opportunities for higher education to economically disadvantaged students. Established in 2004 and officially recognized through Law no. 11,096 of January 13, 2005, the program offers full and partial scholarships for undergraduate and specific courses in private higher education institutions.

⁹ The FIES (Fundo de Financiamento Estudantil) is a program in Brazil initiated by the Ministry of Education to provide financial assistance to students pursuing higher education in private universities. Established in 1999 through Executive Order No. 1827 and officially regulated by Law No. 10,260 on July 12, 2001, the program aims to support students by offering loans for their educational expenses.

With regard to data analysis, we conducted a descriptive statistical analysis of the dataset which contained the percentage of course hours devoted to the formal teaching of English on the Portuguese/English and English undergraduate teacher education programs compared to the total number of hours of these programs and to English proficiency level B2 (CERF) according to different groups of regions, states and program types (Portuguese/English versus English undergraduate teacher education programs). All the analyses were carried out using the R statistical software¹⁰. For each group of programs, descriptive statistics of the percentages were presented. In addition to the average, the descriptive statistics established included the sample size, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values, and quartiles (the values below which a certain percentage of observations fall). The interquartile range, which is the difference between the 3rd and 1st quartiles, is also mentioned as another measure of data variation.

We also present the box plot of the percentage in each group. The box plots in this study should be analyzed as follows: from bottom up, there is the first horizontal segment (base of the box) that represents the first quartile (25% of the observations have a value below the first quartile) and the last segment (top of the box) represents the third quartile (75% of observations have a value below the third quartile). Taking into account that the SD is high in most of the analyses, we decided not to use the mean to describe our data because the outcomes would not be reliable.

These procedures allow us to interrelate our data with the CEFR indicators, as well as to compare them to other countries' English teaching realities, according to the bibliographical review of the cases of Italy, Japan, Malaysia, and Colombia. In brief, this research will perform a triangulation between the data concerning class hours, language proficiency in English and the indicators as well as our critical analysis concerning the in-class teaching hour load of the English language at universities in Brazil. It is worth mentioning that only the universities registered on the e-MEC platform were taken into consideration, and the documents used to search for information were the political-pedagogic projects and/or the course syllabus found on the institutions' websites.

¹⁰ R Core Team. R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria, 2018.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data will be presented in five parts. First, we will talk about the number of programs in each region. Second, we will show the descriptive statistics as a percentage of the total hours of the courses devoted to the teaching of English compared to the overall number of hours of the Portuguese/English and English programs for each of the five regions of Brazil. In the third part, the variable ‘total of hours devoted to the teaching of English compared to the total of hours of the two different programs available in Brazil, Portuguese/English versus English’, is examined again for each of the five regions. In Part 4, we will be comparing the total of hours devoted to the teaching of English from each region with the number of hours students should be exposed to in order to reach a B2 level according to the CEFR. Finally, we will make the same comparison as in Part 4, but considering the two different programs available in Brazil, Portuguese/English versus English, in the five regions.

The number of programs offered in Brazil is proportional to the number of inhabitants in each region. Table 3 shows the number of Portuguese/English and English undergraduate teacher education programs found in the five regions.

Table 3 – Number of Portuguese/English and English undergraduate teacher education programs.

Region	2018	2018	Total	2022	2022	Total
	Portuguese/English undergraduate teacher education program	English undergraduate teacher education program		Portuguese/English undergraduate teacher education program	English undergraduate teacher education program	
The North Region	7	9	16	7	11	18
The Northeast Region	25	31	56	33	36	69
The Central-West Region	30	2	32	35	6	41
The Southeast Region	62	11	73	84	17	101
The South Region	33	17	50	35	22	57
Total in Brazil	157	70	227	194	92	286

Source: Portal e-MEC (2022).

As regards the number of programs in Brazil, the region that offers the highest number is the Southeast, with a total of 101 as shown in Table 3, due to the fact that it is

the most populated region in the country. The Northeast region offers a total number of 69 programs, followed by the South region with 58. The Central-West and North regions have 41 and 18 programs respectively. The low number of programs in the North is possibly due to geographical constraints, as the Amazon rainforest covers around 80% of the region. However, the region needs more programs since education is essential to help develop and improve its economy and social life (IPEA, 2022). We may argue that the more English a population knows, the more integrated they can be educationally and economically, intensifying commercial, academic and cultural bonds (Brooker, 2018). Furthermore, knowing the English language opens up job opportunities other than teaching.

The second part of the analysis, presented in Table 4, indicates the percentage of course hours devoted to the teaching of English compared to the programs' total number of hours, for each Brazilian region.

Table 4 – Descriptive statistics for percentage of the total course hours devoted to the teaching of English compared to the programs' total number of hours, for each Brazilian region.

	N	Mean	SD	IQR	Minimum	1 Quartile	Median	3 Quartile	Maximum
Central-West	41.0	13.4	5.0	5.6	1.7	10.2	13.5	15.8	26.6
North	18.0	11.8	6.6	10.9	1.8	5.6	14.1	16.4	20.9
Northeast	69.0	14.3	6.5	6.7	0.0	11.0	14.2	17.6	30.4
South	58.0	16.4	7.3	8.1	1.1	11.0	16.0	19.1	40.1
Southeast	101.0	9.5	4.8	6.4	0.0	6.5	9.6	12.9	19.7

Source: The authors.

Table 4 draws attention to the programs from the Southeast, which offer a median of 9.6% of total course time devoted to the teaching of English, the lowest in the country. This also shows a contradiction since the Southeast is, according to Human Development in Brazilian Macro-regions (Brasil, 2016), the wealthiest and most developed region in Brazil. The programs in the South region have a median of 16% of total course time dedicated to the teaching of English, the highest in the country, while the programs in the North, Northeast and Central-West offer medians of 14.1%, 14.2% and 13.5%. Here, we wish to emphasize that the subject that students will teach when they graduate is English, which is why we believe that it should take up a much larger proportion of the total class time in the curricula of these programs. Other researchers such as Borges (2015) and

Gallardo and Kobayahsi (2019) had already advocated for the need to improve the curricula of teacher education programs.

Turning our attention to the two different teacher education programs - Portuguese/English and English - we assume that the English programs offer higher percentages of course time dedicated to the teaching of the language as these programs do not have to share the total course time with the Portuguese language and literature, as happens on the Portuguese/English teacher education programs. Table 5 and Figure 3 show a comparison of the two different programs available in Brazil.

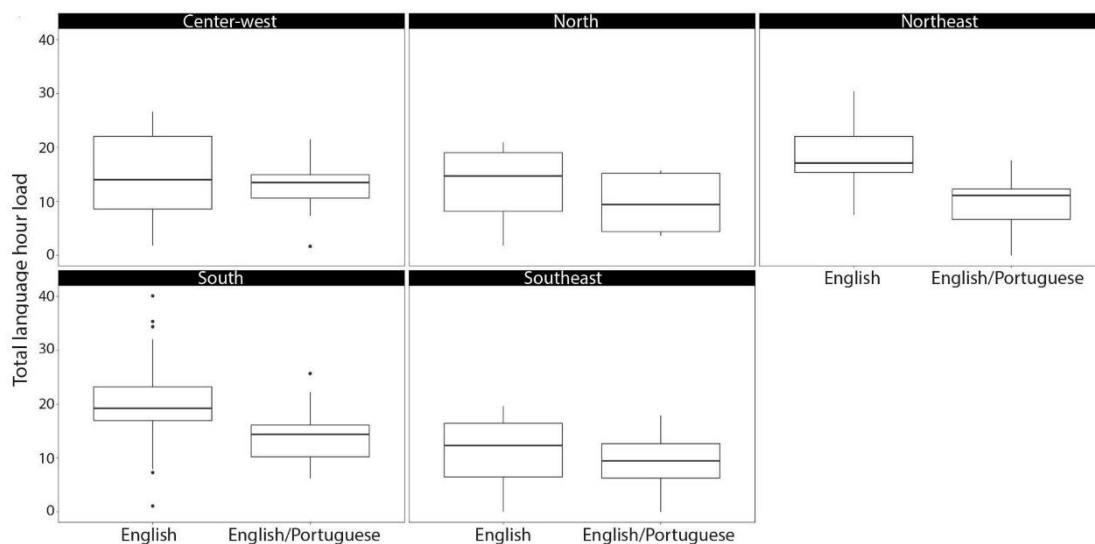
Table 5 – Descriptive statistics of the total hour load of the language by the total hour load of the programs regarding the two different kinds of programs by regions.

	N	Mean	SD	IQR	Minimum	1 Quartile	Median	3 Quartile	Maximum
Central-West English	6.0	14.7	9.7	13.5	1.9	8.6	14.0	22.1	26.6
Central-West English/Portuguese	35.0	13.2	3.9	4.4	1.7	10.6	13.5	15.0	21.5
North English	11.0	13.1	7.0	10.9	1.8	8.2	14.7	19.0	20.9
North English/Portuguese	7.0	9.7	5.6	10.8	3.6	4.4	9.4	15.2	15.7
Northeast English	36.0	18.4	5.4	6.7	7.5	15.4	17.1	22.1	30.4
Northeast English/Portuguese	33.0	9.8	4.2	5.6	0.0	6.7	11.1	12.3	17.6
South English	22.0	20.2	9.3	6.2	1.1	17.0	19.3	23.2	40.1
South English/Portuguese	35.0	14.0	4.4	5.9	6.2	10.2	14.4	16.2	25.7
Southeast English	17.0	11.0	6.2	10.0	0.0	6.5	12.3	16.5	19.7
Southeast English/Portuguese	84.0	9.2	4.5	6.4	0.0	6.3	9.5	12.6	17.9

Source: The authors.

The region that offers the fewest English undergraduate teacher education programs is the Central-West, with six, whereas the Northeast offers the most programs, 36. Although the Southeast region is the most densely populated, there are only 17 English undergraduate teacher education programs, whereas the South region offers 22 and the North, 11 programs.

Figure 3 – Percentage of total course time devoted to English language teaching by programs and regions.



Source: The authors.

Table 5 and Figure 3 show that while the Central-West region of Brazil has more Portuguese/English teacher education programs (35) than English-only programs (6), the latter tend to dedicate a wider range of hours to teaching the English language (TEL). The high standard deviation of 9.7 indicates a lack of standardization in the amount of time allocated to TEL, which could affect proficiency levels from A1 to C1. In comparison, the percentage of class hours allocated to TEL in Portuguese/English programs ranges from 1.7% to 21.5%, also indicating a lack of standardization.

Among the English teacher education programs, there is a higher percentage of class hours devoted to TEL, with a median of 14% and a 3rd quartile of 22.1%. In contrast, the median and 3rd quartile of TEL hours in Portuguese/English programs are 13.5% and 15%, respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that English programs dedicate a higher percentage of class hours to TEL than Portuguese/English programs.

In the North, there is a smaller difference in the number of hours dedicated to TEL between the two different programs. However, the English teacher education programs still provide a higher percentage of class hours, with a median of 14.7% and the 3rd quartile of 19% compared to the percentages of the Portuguese/English programs, with a median of 9.4% and the 3rd quartile of 15.2%. As it happens in the Central-West region, we can say that, statistically speaking, the English teacher education programs in the

North offer a higher percentage of class time devoted to TEL.

The Northeast region shows a large difference between the Portuguese/English and English programs. From the 1st to the 3rd quartiles, we can observe a substantial discrepancy: the 1st quartile 15.4%, median 17.1%, and the 3rd quartile 22.1% of class time on the English teacher education programs, as opposed to 6.7% in the 1st quartile, 11.1% in the median and 12.3% in the 3rd quartile in the Portuguese/English teacher education programs.

We can also see a large difference between the Portuguese/English and English programs in the South region. In the English teacher education programs, we notice that 17% of the class hours are in the 1st quartile, 19.3% in the median and 23.2% in the 3rd quartile. The SD is high, 9.3, which means that there is a wide variation between programs that provide very low numbers of hours and those that offer very high numbers devoted to TEL. By contrast, in the Portuguese/English teacher education programs, 10% of class hours were in the 1st quartile, 14.4% in the median and 16.2% in the 3rd quartile.

Table 5 shows that the Southeast region has the lowest mean number of class hours allocated to the teaching of English, 9.2% in the English teacher education programs and 11% in the Portuguese/English teacher education programs. In the 1st quartile, the percentages of class hours for the English and Portuguese/English teacher education programs are close, 6.5% and 6.3% respectively. However, the median and the 3rd quartile are slightly higher in the English teacher education programs, 12.3% and 16.5%, compared to the Portuguese/English programs, 9.5% and 12.6% respectively. Furthermore, we compared the number of hours dedicated to TEL in the teacher education programs with the number of hours a student should be exposed to. In order to achieve B2 CEFR proficiency level, a student should be exposed to 500 to 600 hours of formal teaching¹¹.

With regard to this, Table 6 and Figure 4 show that, except for the South region, the mean and the median of the remaining four regions is below 500 hours of instruction. The programs in the Central-West, the North, the Northeast, and the South offer more than 500 hours of instruction only from the 3rd quartile onwards. The exception is the

¹¹ We have not found any study showing how many hours of instruction a Brazilian should have in order to achieve B2 proficiency level according to the CEFR. However, based on other countries' experiences reported in this article, we decided that from 500 to 600 hours of instruction would be sufficient to reach B2.

Southeast region, which offers even less with a 3rd quartile of 420 hours. This implies that the Southeast is the region with the lowest number of hours dedicated to English language instruction, and consequently, it does not provide the minimum conditions for students to attain a B2 level of proficiency.

Table 6 – Descriptive statistics of the total hour load dedicated to TEL by region.

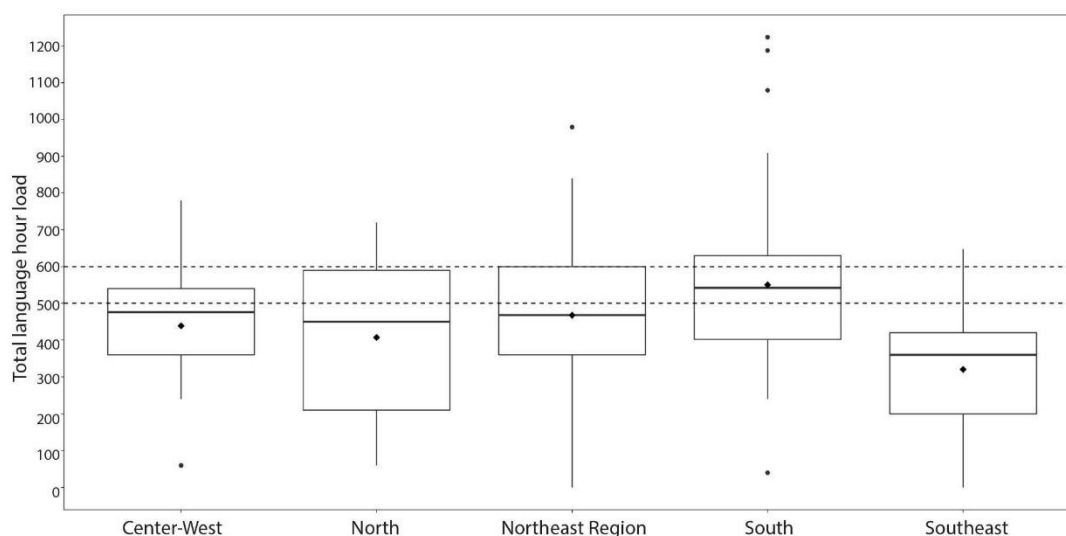
	N	Mean	SD	IQ R	Minimum	1 Quartile	Median	3 Quartile	Maximum
Central-West	41	439	154	180	60	360	476	540	780
North	18	407	223	380	60	210	450	590	720
Northeast	69	468	202	240	0	360	468	600	980
South	58	550	221	228	40	402	542	630	1224
Southeast	101	320	156	220	0	200	360	420	648

Source: The authors.

Moreover, the Southeast region has one of the smallest SDs, 156 hours, which means that there are very few programs that offer more than 500 hours of instruction, with just a few random exceptions.

The region which provides the second lowest number of hours of instruction is the Central-West, with the smallest SD, 154 hours. This means that the Central-West region also offers low numbers of class hours dedicated to TEL, with few programs providing 500 hours or more.

Figure 4 – Total English language hour load by region.



Source: The authors.

As shown in Table 7 and Figure 5, we can see that in the North region there is a wide range in class hours between the 1st quartile and the median: 210 to 450 hours, with a SD of 223 hours, the largest among all the regions. However, between the median and the 3rd quartile, there are more programs that offer up to 500 hours of instruction. The Northeast, on the other hand, shows a small range in class hours between the 1st quartile and the median: 360 to 468 hours, with a SD of 202 hours. Only in the 3rd quartile can we see that the programs provide 600 hours of instruction. The South is by far the region that provides the most class hours, over 500, although with a large SD of 221 hours. This means that not all programs offer at least 500 hours or more. The median is 542 hours and the 3rd quartile shows 630 hours.

We also examined the total number of hours dedicated to teaching English up to B2 level, which ranges from 500 to 600 hours, in the two types of teacher education programs: Portuguese/English and English. Table 7 presents a comparison of the two programs by region, showing the differences between them.

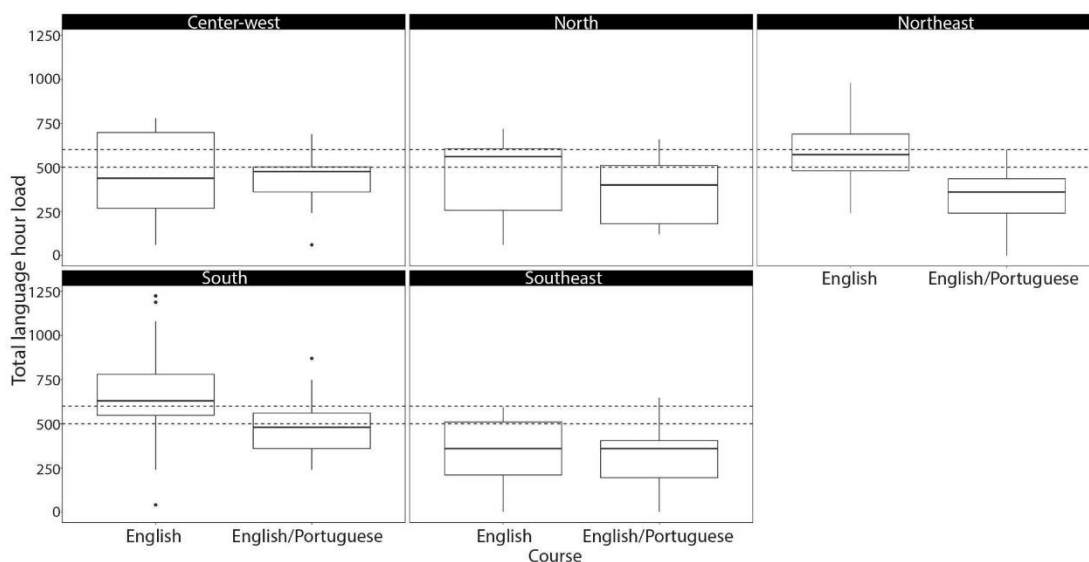
Table 7 – Descriptive statistics of the total number of class hours dedicated to TEL by the Portuguese/English and English programs by region.

	N	Mean	SD	IQR	Minimum	1 Quartile	Median	3 Quartile	Maximum
Central-West English	6	452	290	432	60	267	438	699	780
Central-West English/Portuguese	35	436	124	142	60	360	476	502	690
North English	11	434	237	350	60	256	560	606	720
North English/Portuguese	7	366	209	330	120	180	400	510	660
Northeast English	36	586	173	210	240	480	572	690	980
Northeast English/Portuguese	33	338	144	195	0	240	360	435	600
South English	22	649	287	232.5	40	547.5	630	780	1224
South English/Portuguese	35	485	142	200.5	240	360	480	560.5	870
Southeast English	17	341	187	300	0	210	360	510	594
Southeast English/Portuguese	84	316	150	210	0	195	360	405	648

Source: The authors.

As shown in Table 7 and Figure 5, most of the Portuguese/English programs in the Central-West offer less than 500 hours of instruction, with a median of 476 hours. The English programs offer less than 500 hours, with a median of 438 hours.

Figure 5 – Total class time dedicated to the teaching of English by the two different programs and regions.



Source: The authors.

As we can see from Table 7 and Figure 5, most of the Portuguese/English programs in the North region do not offer more than 500 hours of instruction either. There is a wider range of class time between the 1st quartile and the median - 180 hours and 400 hours. The English programs also provide a wide range of class time between the 1st quartile and the median, 256 hours and 560 hours. However, the region has English teacher education programs that offer more than 500 class hours, as can be seen with a median of 560 hours and a 3rd quartile of 606 hours.

In the Northeast, the Portuguese/English programs provide very low hour loads of instruction, as shown in Table 7, with a median of 360 hours and a 3rd quartile of 435 hours. We may assume that if these students were real beginners of the English language when accepted on these programs, none of them would be able to achieve a minimum B2 proficiency level. In general, these students have a very large educational deficiency compared to non-quota students who come from private schools with higher education standards (Schwartzman, 2004). The same rationale applies to the Portuguese/English programs in the Central-West, North and Southeast. The English programs in the Northeast, however, offer higher hour loads of instruction, with a median of 572 hours and a 3rd quartile of 690 hours. Unlike those on the Portuguese/English programs, students who are real beginners in the English language may achieve B2 proficiency level provided

that all the courses are actually taught in English¹². The Portuguese/English programs in the South have slightly more hours of instruction than the other regions. There are 480 hours in the median and 560 hours in the 3rd quartile which shows that 50% of the programs offer more than 500 hours of instruction. The Southeast, on the contrary, is the region that offers the lowest hour loads of instruction on both the Portuguese/English and English programs. On the Portuguese/English programs, the median is 360 hours and the 3rd quartile 405 hours, while on the English programs the numbers are slightly higher: with a median of 360 hours and a 3rd quartile of 510 hours.

As with the results for the Portuguese/English programs in the Central-West, North and Northeast, the Southeast does not offer enough hours of instruction for a real beginner in English to reach B2 level. To make matters worse, not even the English programs in the Southeast offer enough hours of instructions for real beginners to reach a B2 level.

The data from this study offer some important findings regarding the formal teaching of the English language in programs in Brazil. Many of the programs that do not offer at least 600 hours of English language teaching contribute to the lack of development of English language proficiency in the country. These results align with other research findings (Gimenez, 2011; Busnardi; Fernandes, 2011; Borges, 2015; Gallardo; Kobayashi, 2019; Kobayashi; Gallardo, 2021) that had already addressed the precariousness of English language teaching as well as the low proficiency in language in teacher education programs. Another drawback is that the English language classes in these programs are spread over the four years of the course, which does not allow students to become fluent enough to take subjects given in English such as literature, methodology and English language teaching practice. Quota students should therefore have a larger amount of English language classes allocated in the first two years of the undergraduate programs so that they can be proficient enough to cope with the subsequent disciplines given in the English language. We now present the conclusion of this study as well as suggestions for actions that should be taken into consideration in order to raise the proficiency level of future English teachers in Brazil.

¹² We are aware that further research is necessary to verify how many subjects on the Portuguese/English and English programs are actually taught in English, since it is well known that many are not taught in the target language.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The analysis we have presented in this paper confirms that *English/Portuguese or English language teacher* education programs do not, in general, prepare students sufficiently well for them to become proficient (at least to CEFR B2 level) in English. This study aims to raise awareness about the allocation of time for English language study in undergraduate courses offered by both public and private institutions in Brazil. It reinforces findings from previous studies (Gimenez, 2011; Busnardi; Fernandes, 2011; Borges, 2015; Gallardo; Kobayashi, 2019; Kobayashi; Gallardo, 2021) that have identified the challenges in English language teaching within these programs.

The South region exhibits the most promising indicators of programs that provide the highest number of TEL hours, closely followed by the Northeast region. The Southeast, on the other hand, is the region that provides the lowest number of hours devoted to English, which comes as a surprise since, as we said above, this region contains well-known universities and is the most developed economically.

Another interesting finding was the difference in class hours between the two different programs that are offered in Brazil: English and Portuguese/English. The South region, once more, offers the highest number of hours of English instruction in the English programs in comparison with the Portuguese/English programs. The Northeast region shows a wider range between programs. The Southeast region offers the lowest number of hours of English on both Portuguese/English and English programs.

Supporting and highlighting the findings of Gimenez (2011) as well as Busnardi and Fernandes (2011), this study also draws our attention to the domino effect that the precarious teaching of the English language on undergraduate teacher education programs may cause in junior and high schools, since teachers with low proficiency levels will probably not be able to ensure that their students reach a good standard of proficiency.

This scenario alerts teachers, educators and policy makers to take action as previously highlighted by Gimenez (2011) as well as Busnardi and Fernandes (2011). We observe that an immediate and necessary reform of language curricula in undergraduate teacher education programs nationwide is crucial to improve teachers' proficiency levels in English, echoing the arguments put forth by Busnardi and Fernandes (2011), Borges (2015), and Gallardo and Kobayashi (2019). One possibility for curriculum reform would

be what the Federal University of Paraná has done to solve their problems in their Industrial Mathematics and Statistics programs. Students with little basic knowledge of mathematics are offered a Basic Cycle which begins with a revision of basic high school content with pre-calculus and linear pre-algebra subjects (functions, analytical geometry, matrices and linear systems), aimed at reinforcing the foundations of elementary mathematics. After six months, these students take examinations to see if they have reached a sufficient level to be able to follow the official disciplines of their programs. Likewise, students with a low proficiency level of English could spend a semester or two with intensive English classes for them to reach the minimum level of fluency to be able to follow the main course. Therefore, this study may also serve as an incentive for the development of a local framework to guide our educational systems, especially with regard to the teaching of foreign and/or national languages.

Another possibility to reverse this scenario is to do what many countries around the world, such as Italy (Cinganotto, 2016), Japan (Nagai; O'Dwyer, 2011), Malaysia (Uri; Aziz, 2018), and Colombia (Roux, 2012) have been doing for decades, which is to use the proficiency levels of the CEFR (2001) (or, if applicable, any other language framework) to accredit English teachers. We are aware that we need a lot more research done in Brazil in order to understand how many hours of language instruction are needed for Brazilians to achieve B1, B2 and C1 as we are located on a different continent, a long way from English-speaking countries.

We recognize that language policy encompasses more than just the number of hours of English instruction. However, to address the issue effectively, we must first focus on the broader picture, that is, the overall desired outcome. Only then can we address specific aspects such as the amount of time allocated for English instruction in undergraduate programs. Thus, in order to evolve in this sense, we need investment and more research in Latin America to build our own Common Latin American Framework of Reference for Languages, and thus develop accreditation programs, including institutionalization of final undergraduate exams such as EPPLÉ - Proficiency Exam for Foreign Language Teachers¹³ - (Consolo et al., 2009; Busnardi; Fernandes, 2011; Consolo; Teixeira da Silva, 2014, 2016; Silva, 2017; Consolo; Agüena, 2017; Consolo,

¹³ Exame de Proficiência para Professores de Língua Estrangeira (EPPLÉ).

2018) which has been under discussion for more than two decades in Brazil.

We are aware of the great social, cultural and economic diversities in Brazil and understand that standardized patterns of proficiency levels are ineffective, undesirable and not achievable throughout this vast country. Nonetheless, it is important to avoid a deterministic perspective of this situation, as our study reveals a significant disparity among regions regarding the amount of time allocated to TEL.

We are in favor of all students in the country having equal opportunities to learn English, taking into account their cultural-socio-economic conditions, without jeopardizing their own languages and cultures¹⁴ (INEP, 2022), which will depend solely on how the language is taught and for what reason. It is high time the authorities included language policy actions in the three spheres of education, fundamental, high school and higher education, which will enable Brazilians to learn English more effectively, thereby opening doors for them to take part in academic, work and cultural groups throughout the world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Professor Michael Alan Watkins for his exceptional contributions to reviewing and providing suggestions for our text. This study is dedicated to him as he has consistently served as an inspiration to his students and research colleagues. Additionally, we extend special thanks to Alencar Guth for his assistance in collecting and organizing data into spreadsheets. We greatly appreciate his valuable insights, collaborative spirit, and unwavering support throughout the project.

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¹⁴ Despite Brazil having two official languages: Portuguese and Libras (Brazilian sign language), the 2022 census counted 896,900 indigenous people, from 305 ethnic groups and speakers of 274 indigenous languages. (INEP, 2022).

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Recebido em: Fev. 2024.
Aceito em: Abr. 2024.