



## What can Brazil learn from multilingual Switzerland and its use of English as a multilingua franca

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**ABSTRACT.** The paper describes results of a study whose main aim was to analyze the role of English in the internationalization process of the University of Geneva in particular and in Switzerland in general, drawing some considerations regarding possible lessons for the Brazilian scenario in regards to the development of multilingualism. The theoretical background includes the review of the role of languages in general and of English in particular in the globalized scenario and the review of a language teaching approach, the intercomprehension approach, with some implications for the teaching of foreign languages in Brazil. The study concludes with some considerations regarding the role of English in Brazil and some suggestions to boost multilingualism there through the review of language policies and the use of the intercomprehension approach.

**Keywords:** Multilingualism, the role of English, internationalization.

### O que o Brasil pode aprender da Suíça multilíngue e de seu uso do inglês como multilíngua franca

**RESUMO.** O artigo descreve os resultados de um estudo que teve como objetivo principal analisar o papel do inglês no processo de internacionalização da Universidade de Genebra, em particular, e na Suíça, em geral, tecendo algumas considerações sobre possíveis lições para o cenário brasileiro no tocante ao desenvolvimento do multilinguismo. O arcabouço teórico inclui a revisão do papel das línguas, em geral, e do inglês, em particular, no cenário globalizado e a revisão de uma abordagem de ensino de línguas, a abordagem de intercompreensão, com algumas implicações para o ensino de línguas estrangeiras no Brasil. O estudo conclui com algumas considerações sobre o papel do inglês no Brasil e algumas sugestões para impulsionar o multilinguismo neste país por meio da revisão de políticas linguísticas e da abordagem de intercompreensão.

**Palavras-chave:** Multilinguismo, o papel do inglês, internacionalização.

#### Introduction

This study draws on results of previous studies carried out to analyze the role of English in the internationalization process of Brazilian universities (for example Finardi & Archanjo, 2015; Finardi & França, 2016; Finardi & Ortiz, 2015; Finardi & Tyler, 2015), and which was extended to include the role of English in the internationalization process of Swiss universities (Finardi & Csillagh, 2016), to propose a review of language policies for the teaching of foreign languages and the use of a language teaching approach to boost multilingualism in Brazil.

One motivation to pursue the study was related to a finding of some of the aforementioned studies that most of the top ranked world class universities<sup>1</sup>

were either in English speaking countries or in countries that had adopted English as the medium of instruction (EMI), as a strategy to boost internationalization. By way of example and according to the QS World University Rankings<sup>2</sup> in 2014, only 40 out of the 100 best universities were in non-English speaking countries and only 14 non-English speaking universities were within the top 50. What was even more striking was the observation that most of these non-English speaking universities had adopted English as the language of instruction, one exception being the University of Geneva (Unige), ranked in 85<sup>th</sup> position.

Unige was one of the four Swiss Universities<sup>3</sup> ranked within the top 100 best universities but it was

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings>.

<sup>3</sup> The other three universities were the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), ranked in 12<sup>th</sup> position, the Federal Polytechnic School of Lausanne (EPFL), ranked in 17<sup>th</sup> position and the University of Zurich, ranked in 57<sup>th</sup> position.

<sup>1</sup> A discussion on what is involved in these rankings is outside the scope of this paper.

the 'only' Swiss University in the rank which did not adopt English as the language of instruction and had a strong francophone policy. Because of the challenges of adopting English as an academic language in Brazilian universities, this study aimed at investigating the role of English in the internationalization process of Swiss universities in general and of Unige in particular to see whether it was possible to discuss some lessons for Brazilian universities. The rationale for the study was that if Unige could be well ranked and internationalized without adopting English as the academic language, perhaps there was something that Brazilian universities could learn from Unige. So as to provide some answers to what Brazilians could learn from the Swiss, some issues related to languages are discussed in the study and relate to the role of languages in national cohesion, in social inclusion and in international peacemaking.

So as to present some of the answers that stemmed from this research endeavor, this paper will be divided in six parts. The first part sets the scene and contextualizes languages in relation to globalization. The second part describes the Swiss linguistic panorama in relation to national and foreign languages as well as in relation to multilingualism. The third part addresses the role of English in Switzerland and the fourth part describes a foreign language teaching approach (the Intercomprehension Approach) supported by the International Francophone movement and used to promote multilingualism in Switzerland and in Europe. The fifth part reanalyzes results in Finardi and Csillagh (2016) in light of Jenkins' (2015) notion of *multilingua franca* and the sixth and last part discusses some implications concerning the lessons that Brazilians can learn from the Swiss.

### Setting the scene

Globalization, defined as the creation of world relations based on the operations of free markets is sometimes seen as a synonym for internationalization, defined as the strategy by which universities respond to globalization by integrating an intercultural dimension in their tripartite mission of teaching, research and service (Jenkins, 2013). According to Vavrus and Pekol (2015), internationalization of higher education coincides with neoliberal policies and the decline of funding for this sector. As stated in Finardi, Santos, and Guimarães (2016), Vavrus and Pekol (2015) suggest that universities in the North benefit more from globalization and internationalization than universities in the South.

Similarly, and still as indicated in Finardi, Santos and Guimarães (2016), it can be seen that these two processes (globalization and internationalization) benefit more Anglo speaking countries because of a bias towards English speaking countries, as shown by Hamel (2013), who cites the production of the Arts & Humanities Citation Index in 2006 to show that there is a bias to publish articles from English-speaking countries, as can be seen in Table 1, adapted from Hamel (2013) and reported in Finardi, Santos, and Guimarães (2016), where we see that Scotland appears with 792 entries and ranks ahead of Germany with only 590 entries and Wales, with only two recognized universities, ranks right after France.

**Table 1.** Distribution of 62,513 publications in English in 'Arts & Humanities Index' 2006 per country

Position	Country	Number of productions	Position	Country	Number of productions
1	United States	18,617	8	France	356
2	England	5,776	9	Wales	335
3	Canada	1,788	10	Italy	322
4	Australia	970	11	Israel	276
5	Scotland	792	12	New Zealand	251
6	Germany	590	13	Ireland	209
7	Netherlands	408	14	Spain	191

Source: Adapted from Hamel (2013, p. 55).

Still according to Finardi, Santos, and Guimarães (2016) and drawing on Hamel (2013), this bias remains even when the language is not English, as in the case of the international academic production in Spanish of the same journal and in the same period, as shown in Table 2, where it can be seen that Anglo speaking countries, such as the United States are still ahead of Spanish speaking countries such as Spain, Chile and Mexico.

**Table 2.** Distribution of 1,384 productions in Spanish in 'Arts & Humanities Index' 2006 per country.

Position	Country	Number of productions	Position	Country	Number of productions
1	United States	245	6	France	22
2	Spain	205	7	Canada	7
3	Chile	45	8	England	6
4	Argentina	28	9	Italy	6
5	Mexico	27	10	Peru	5

Source: Adapted from Hamel (2013, p. 56).

In this scenario, multilingualism, plurilingualism (Edwards, 1994) and the teaching of foreign/additional languages (L2) in general and of English in particular, play an important role in the 1) maintenance of national cohesion (e.g. Finardi & Csillagh, 2016), 2) access to information (e.g. Finardi, Prebianca, & Momm, 2013; Graddol, 2006) and online education (e.g. Finardi & Tyler, 2015), 3) social inclusion (e.g. Ortiz & Finardi, 2015; Warschauer, 2004) and in the fight against the

commodification of education as seen in the abundant offer of private English courses in Brazil (Finardi, 2014).

### Linguistic panorama in Switzerland

Multilingualism refers to a context where multiple languages coexist whereas plurilingualism refers to a person who speaks more than one language. Switzerland is a multilingual country with many plurilingual citizens and three official languages (German, French and Italian), four national languages (the official ones plus Romansh) besides the presence of many foreign languages. English and Spanish are taught as foreign languages together with other national languages in school.

One suggestion that this paper aims to advance is that English is not only a foreign language in Switzerland but also a *multilingua franca*, defined by Jenkins (2015) as a contact language among speakers of different native languages (L1), or any use of English among speakers of different L1s for whom English is the communicative medium of choice. This view of English has serious implications in that context as will become evident in the description that follows.

Switzerland can be described as the personification of linguistic diversity and multilingualism in Europe. Swiss census results show that 63.7% of Swiss residents are German L1 speakers, while 20.4% are French, 6.5% Italian and 0.5% Romansh. Most of the of German-speaking residents 90.8% speak the German dialect - Swiss German - which has made many French-speaking residents question the learning of Standard German as a national language in schools (Lüdi & Werlen, 2005). Foreigners in Switzerland represent about 25% of the population, and most of them (85%) come from Italy, Germany, Portugal and France. Spanish and Portuguese speakers concentrate in the French-speaking region, whereas Turkish and Slavic languages concentrate in the German-speaking region. According to Bewes (2012), based on data from Statistik Schweiz 2012 for population, religion and languages, Geneva is probably the most multilingual city in Switzerland and the only one where English appears among the languages spoken in the canton. Geneva is also the city with the highest percentage of foreigners (38.7%) and not by chance, the city chosen for this study.

Regarding the organization of foreign language education in Switzerland, though compulsory education is regulated by each canton, there is a general agreement that the two majority national languages (German and French), should be included first as foreign languages in the curriculum, before

other foreign languages such as English and Spanish and as a way to guarantee national cohesion. Yet, the role of English as a foreign language in Switzerland seems to be threatening this agreement as shown by the inclusion of English as the first foreign language (before French) in elementary school in the cantons of Zurich, Obwalden, Nidwalden, Lucerne, Zug, Schaffhausen, Thurgau, St. Gallen, Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Schwyz and Glarus.

Opinions seem to be divided in relation to the role of English in Switzerland. Some claim that if English were used as a *multilingua franca* in Switzerland it would threaten national cohesion once the increasing use of English downplays the use of national languages. As shown in two publications by Unige professor Laurent Gajo (2013a, b), there seems to be reasons for concern and discussion in Switzerland and in the francophone world regarding the role of English in the scientific production too. According to these discussions (for example Hamel, 2013), and as previously mentioned, there seems to be a bias towards English as a scientific language, which may jeopardize the scientific production as a whole and the role of the French language in it in particular.

On the other hand, there are those who feel that the use of English as a *lingua franca* in Switzerland could help, instead of hinder, national cohesion (Heller, 2003). Hoffmann (2000) claims that English has been used as a *multilingua franca* in multilingual countries such as Belgium, where a certain amount of tension exists between the country's main two languages, or between countries with similar languages such as Denmark, Sweden and Norway, or Belgium and the Netherlands, for speakers who want to avoid encountering negative linguistic attitudes as in Catalonia and in the Basque Country.

The role of English in Switzerland may be related to the view of the two most important national languages, German and French, when they are learned as foreign languages in school. The German speaking Swiss who learn French can usually use that language to communicate with the French speaking Swiss whereas the French speaking Swiss who learn Standard German at school cannot really communicate with the German speaking Swiss in German once, as previously mentioned, most German speaking Swiss speak the Swiss dialect and not the Standard German taught in schools. Some German speaking Swiss may feel that it is easier to speak English to French speaking Swiss who learned Standard German. Of course that causes a number of reasons for resentment, especially on the French side who not only have to invest more years to learn Standard German when

compared to the number of years to learn English or French but also who feel that the learning of Standard German may not be very useful to communicate with German speaking Swiss who speak the Swiss dialect. Another reason for resentment lies in the fact that the French speaking Swiss feel that the German speaking Swiss who proposed the teaching of English as a first foreign language (before the teaching of French) breached the contract implied in the policy to teach German or French first as foreign languages.

While the debate of which language to teach first as a foreign language in schools goes on in Switzerland, the role of English in the academic field is undeniably growing, as evidenced by the increase in publications and courses offered in that language and much to the distress of the francophone and plurilingual movement (for example Gajo & Pamula-Behrens, 2013). Indeed, the proposal of an L2 teaching approach known as the Intercomprehension Approach (for example Araujo & Sá, 2014; Carrasco Perea, 2010; Tost, 2005), described in the next section and which was offered in a MOOC<sup>4</sup> for foreign language teachers by the International Francophone Movement<sup>5</sup> is proof of this attempt to guarantee the teaching of Romance languages as foreign languages and as a way to readdress the role of English as the major foreign language taught, learned and spoken in Europe (Kramsch, 2014).

### The Intercomprehension Approach

The Intercomprehension Approach (hereafter IC) (for example Araujo & Sá, 2014; Carrasco Perea, 2010; Tost, 2005) aims to develop mutual understanding between different languages when people communicate in their own language. The IC is not an alternative to learn all language skills, it is a multilingual approach to teach additional languages (L2). The IC allows the concrete achievement of a European multilingual and multicultural context, defending diversity as an alternative to a single language of communication (or to a view of English as the only *lingua franca*). From the point of view of language skills, the IC implies the awareness of linguistic proximity, exploring the transparency and proximity of linguistic elements (lexical, phonological, morphological, syntactic) to help comprehension. These elements are often underutilized in most L2 teaching approaches because of the tendency to consider linguistic

proximity more as a problem to L2 learning than as a resource that may aid L2 acquisition. One of the main objectives of the IC is to highlight the proximity between languages so as to increase the intercomprehension between languages that share common traits in some of these elements. The intercomprehension approach can be used to promote multilingualism in all levels of education and because no multilingual approach can do without a consideration for the role of English in the world today (Finardi & Csillagh, 2016), the next section will explore the role of English in the University of Geneva where the study of Finardi and Csillagh (2016) was carried out.

### The role of English at Unige

Unige is one of Europe's leading universities, and according to some rankings and despite the caveat made earlier about the implications of citing rankings, it is also one of the three best French speaking universities in the world and one of the 100 best universities in the world. With around 18,000 students of more than 150 nationalities, Unige is the Switzerland's second largest university and in 2014 it had 40% of international students, 52% of international teaching staff, 65% of international doctoral students and 153 nationalities represented by 797 incoming students, 431 outgoing students and 733 exchange agreements. As we can see from these figures, Unige has a strong tradition of receiving international students with diverse linguistic backgrounds. These figures also show that the number of incoming students is almost twice as large as the number of outgoing students.

Some interviews were carried out with Unige professors and with the Director of the Office of International Relations (OIR) of Unige in 2015 as part of the present study and in order to find out what was the role of English at Unige. The Director of the OIR (Pierre Willa, personal communication) suggested that the imbalance between the number of incoming and outgoing students could be explained by: 1) the economic situation of Switzerland in relation to other countries in Europe, 2) the fact that Unige was an interesting option for French speaking students, 3) the fact that Unige offered a multilingual education whereby other languages were represented and supported, 4) the quality of life in Geneva, which did not motivate Swiss students to go abroad. The Unige professors interviewed corroborated the speech of the OIR director and claimed that Unige's biggest asset and attraction was the quality of its multilingual education, offered in a very multilingual city.

<sup>4</sup> The name of the course is 'Enseigner l'intercompréhension en langues romanes à un jeune public', retrieved from <http://clom-ic.francophonie.org>

<sup>5</sup> International Organization for the Francophonie, retrieved from <http://www.francophonie.org>

Indeed, when we look at the seventeen languages offered in many courses and different levels by the Faculty of Letters there, we can see that Unige is a truly multilingual university. As regards to the use of languages at Unige in general, and as reported in Finardi and Csillagh (2016), the most spoken languages per course in a decreasing order are, not surprisingly, French, in all courses (especially in the Medicine area), English (specially in Economics and Social Sciences), German (especially in Law) and Italian (specially in Science). The highest number of L2 speakers in a decreasing order are English, German, French and Italian and the highest number of L1 speakers in a decreasing order are French, followed by German and Italian with the same proportion and finally by English. The fact that English is the second most spoken language at Unige (even before German, the most spoken official/national language in Switzerland), suggests that English has the role of a *multilingua franca* (Jenkins, 2015) in that context and despite Unige's francophone orientation, embodied in its language policy described in what follows.

The language policy at Unige<sup>6</sup> addresses six aspects of academic life: 1) Admission, 2) Language teaching, 3) Language of instruction, 4) Language of research, 5) Language of administration and 6) Language of external communication. In what concerns admissions, non-French speakers must take a French proficiency test prepared by the university for bachelor's level whereas faculties are free to impose admission test for master's level students.

Regarding the teaching of languages, the following policies apply: 1) Non-francophone students have access to French as a foreign language classes, 2) External financial sources are sought to guarantee the offer of French as a foreign language courses to non-francophone students through international agreements with Unige, 3) Credits can be given for language studies and each faculty/course can decide how much credit to assign, 4) In all cases the credit must be given to students who have a language certificate, language certificate with course title or who completed a mobility program in a university whose language of instruction is not French, 5) the university supports alternative models of language learning such as the tandem, 6) when the language of instruction is English or German (in some Masters and Doctorate courses), students can benefit from a linguistic support from the university to follow these courses, 7) when courses are taught in English or German students

can have linguistic support from the university to write papers and make oral presentations, 8) the university can propose a service of linguistic assistance to non-francophone professors or students for the preparation for the French proficiency tests. Such service can also be offered if the language of instruction is considered weak by the professor or the faculty. Regarding the language of instruction, bilingual courses (those which are at least 25% taught in another language) are encouraged. Exceptionally and when justified, a bachelor level course can be taught in another language. The bilingual courses are certified with a diploma with a special mention to the language certificate.

In regards to the language of research, Unige offers linguistic support to write scientific papers in French, English and German. In what concerns the administrative language, the policy is that the language of the university (used for all communications with students, faculty and personnel) is French but English can be used with the non-francophone public. Important information regarding ethics or health is translated at least into English, again showing the role of English as a *lingua franca* in this francophone university.

Finally, considering the language of external communication, the official relations of Unige are made in the Swiss national languages and other languages can be used with international universities, the choice of which is made on a case by case basis. The language of promotion and recruitment is French but the university supports the translation of papers and presentations in other languages. Documents aimed at mobility and employability may be translated into English, which is also the only language (besides French), in which the site of the university<sup>7</sup> is available, once more suggesting the role of English as a *multilingua franca* (Jenkins, 2015) there.

Jenkins (2013) studied the role of English as an academic *lingua franca* in international universities and following Fosket (2010, cited in Jenkins, 2013), categorized universities into five groups: 1) Domestic universities, which focus on their own local context; 2) Imperialist universities, which have a strong international recruitment to draw students from overseas, but have done relatively little to change their organization, facilities and services at home; 3) Internationally aware universities, which are changing their organization and culture to have a profile that is international but have not yet engaged with overseas; 4) Internationally engaged

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.unige.ch/rectorat/static/politique\\_langues.pdf](http://www.unige.ch/rectorat/static/politique_langues.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.unige.ch/international/index\\_en.html](http://www.unige.ch/international/index_en.html)

universities, which are driving an internationalization agenda at home, which typically includes curriculum review to make teaching programs global; and 5) Internationally focused universities whose level of internationalization is strong in many dimensions, and where the cultural change within the university has been transformational.

Given the number of international partnerships<sup>8</sup> and the role of the Global Studies Institute<sup>9</sup> of Unige, it is possible to suggest that the University of Geneva falls within the category of an internationally engaged university. Moreover, given results of Finardi and Csillagh (2016), discussed in what follows, it is possible to suggest that Unige is not only an internationally engaged university but also a multilingual one with many plurilingual students.

Finardi and Csillagh (2016) investigated the linguistic diversity at Unige. Quantitative results were provided by Csillagh, collected in her PhD study (under completion) using a questionnaire survey administered to four faculties at Unige. The online questionnaire was entirely in French and consisted of a total of 102 items, most of which belonged to eleven multi-item scales focusing on students' attitudes towards English. In these items, respondents were asked to signal their agreement or disagreement with a set of statements or indicate the regularity with which they practiced certain activities in English.

The 368 participants in Finardi and Csillagh (2016) came from four faculties at Unige, as shown in Table 3: Law, Medicine, Science and Social and Economic Sciences (SES).

**Table 3.** Participants.

Gender	Law	Medicine	Science	SES	Total
Male	27	19	51	50	147
Female	64	42	95	20	221
Total	91	61	146	70	368

Source: Finardi & Csillagh (2016).

As reported in Finardi and Csillagh (2016), participants represented all levels of university education and age groups. Their age ranged from 16 to 65, with an average of 23. Most (256) of them had completed their secondary education in Switzerland, 187 in the canton of Geneva. An important number, 119 came from other countries, mostly (69) from France. Regarding participants' L1, most of them were French speakers, with around the same number of German, Italian and English speakers and

a large number of speakers of other languages. On average, there was a high level of plurilingualism with students speaking as much as three L1s and two L2s.

Language practices differed greatly, with the only exception being French, which was used 'very often' at the university by students of all four faculties. German was used most (between 'rarely' and 'sometimes') at the faculty of Law and Italian at the faculty of Medicine, though its occurrence was still below 'rare'. Science students used English most frequently (toward 'often'), with medical students running a close second. All in all, English was used more often than 'sometimes' by students of three faculties, with Law students using it considerably less often during their studies but still 'sometimes'.

There were important differences in students' L2 skills. For a clearer interpretation of the results, students with no proficiency were included in the analysis, whereas native speakers were excluded and proficiency in a given language was self-assessed. Medical students excelled in French, while their peers at the faculty of Science came in last in this category. Yet, even the lowest levels of self-assessed proficiency in French reached C1 in the Common European Framework of Reference. The case of German was radically different, although again Science students were the ones who achieved the lowest scores with an overall level of A2.

As for English, Law students and SES students reported the highest proficiency level in English, but even low-scoring Science students' skills were close to B2. As for the third official language of the country, average proficiency levels in Italian were low. Considering overall levels of proficiency in L2s in Unige students, as expected, French came in first (with an average of C1), followed by English (B2), and German (A2) but surprisingly, the other Swiss national language, Italian, was not represented in the pool. Considering that Unige is a French speaking university, high levels of proficiency in French were to be expected as students are immersed in French speaking activities and life. If we consider that English is not an official language at Unige or in Switzerland, we can say that comparatively, English is the most spoken foreign language and with the best proficiency level at Unige and perhaps in Switzerland, according to a ranking of 70 countries which places Switzerland in 19<sup>th</sup> position for proficiency in English<sup>10</sup>.

### Swiss Lessons for Brazil

As stated in Finardi (2016), despite the common belief that Brazil is a monolingual country, it is in

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.unige.ch/international/collaborationspartenariats\\_en.html](http://www.unige.ch/international/collaborationspartenariats_en.html)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unige.ch/gsi/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.efswiss.ch/fr/epi/>

fact a multilingual country with dozens of immigrant and indigenous languages spread in many communities where Portuguese is not the mother tongue. And the resemblances between Brazil and Switzerland stop there, at the realization that both are multilingual countries with otherwise very different realities, not the least of which is affected by their population and percentage of foreigners. With a population of a little more than 8 million people, 2 million of whom are foreigners, Switzerland has borders by at least three different languages. Brazil has more than twenty times the population of Switzerland, is surrounded by the sea on one side and by Spanish speakers on the other and unlike Switzerland, sends more nationals abroad than receives foreigners<sup>11</sup>.

As pointed out by Leffa (2013), Brazilians must recognize and preserve its multilingualism by fighting against the omission and discrimination towards linguistic minorities through the reflection on and elaboration of language policies that promote understanding and tolerance among cultures, languages and identities. Language policies are defined by Rajagopalan (2013, p. 21, my translation) as “[...] the art of leading the discussions around specific languages, in order to drive concrete actions of public interest to languages that matter to the people of a nation, a state or even larger transnational bodies”. Grin (2003) reminds us that linguistic diversity entails some sort of conflict, which, in turn, calls for some kind of intervention in the form of language policies. Moreover, it is possible to suggest that the teaching of foreign languages is clearly a political issue and the very decision of which foreign language to teach (first, as in the case of Switzerland) in schools is one such example.

This study was partially motivated by the belief that Brazil has much to learn from the Swiss multilingual example. Leffa (2013) warns Brazilians against the danger of linguistic isolation in a country where the ‘only’ national language is Portuguese and where Brazilians face many challenges to learn foreign languages, be them the language of their parents (heritage languages), the language of their neighbors (Spanish), the international language (English) or even appropriations of English such as Brazilian English, whatever that may be (Finardi, 2014; Finardi & Ferrari, 2008).

As a *de facto* multilingual country (with only one recognized official language), Brazilians must learn the language of their neighbors, but also heritage languages in immigrant and indigenous communities, fighting against ideological obstacles to learn English as an international language (Finardi, 2014). Because Jenkins (2015) proposal of English as a *multilingua franca* refers to multilingual contexts where English is known by everyone and as such, is always potentially in the mix, I will use Finardi’s (2014) notion of English as an international language, since most people in Brazil do not know English, as the study will show. In a country with over 200 million people, with many languages but not many English speakers, the development of multilingualism and the view of English as a *multilingua franca* (Jenkins, 2015) there represents a huge challenge for educational policies in Brazil. But perhaps there is hope.

In 2015, Brazil came in the 41<sup>st</sup> position (out of 70 countries ranked<sup>12</sup>) in proficiency in English. Gimenez (2013) reports news in the media that claim that only about 5% of Brazilians speak English fluently, though this is beginning to change with the Program English without Borders, launched in 2012 to correct this lack of proficiency in English in the country. Brazilians want to learn English (Finardi, 2014) for they perceive this language as being necessary to participate in the globalized world where it plays the role of a *multilingua franca*. The problem to achieve this goal is that the teaching of English as an international language is not guaranteed by language policies in Brazil.

If, on the one hand, we accept that Brazilians want to learn English, and on the other, we recognize the statistics for the number of Brazilians who speak that language fluently, we will see that there is a mismatch between wants-reality which might be explained by the role of English in Brazilian language policies. Before this role is addressed, however, a caveat must be made. It is important to note that the lack of policies aligned with the claims of the population can have serious social consequences as we have witnessed in the various protests that started in Brazil in 2013 over the Free Pass Movement and that spread to other social claims related to education, politics and representation. One of the consequences in the case of the absence of language policies to guarantee the teaching of English is the abundant offer of English courses in the private sector, which, as suggested by Finardi (2014), increases social inequality by creating a social gap between those who can afford to learn English in private institutes and those who cannot.

<sup>11</sup> According to an organization called The Foreigner ([www.oestrangero.org](http://www.oestrangero.org)), there were 940,000 foreigners in Brazil in 2013 (less than 1% of the population of more than 200,000,000) and more than 3 million Brazilians abroad (around 1.5% of the Brazilian population) according to a report retrieved from <http://www.brasileirosnomundo.itamaraty.gov.br/a-comunidade/estimativas-populacionais-das-comunidades/estimativas-populacionais-brasileiras-mundo-2014/Estimativas-RCN2014.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.efswiss.ch/fr/epi/>

Finardi and Archanjo (2015) suggest that the review of language policies in Brazil is very important now, when the country implements internationalization programs, such as the Science without Borders (SwB), the Language without Borders (LwB) and the English without Borders (EwB) programs, all of which are targeted to higher education.

In an analysis of the role of English in language policies in Brazil, Finardi and Archanjo (2015) claim that it is threefold and divergent, depending on the level of education analyzed: in basic education, English has the same status of any other foreign language and can be taught (or not) depending on the choice of the community. In secondary education, the panorama changes and there is an explicit suggestion to include Spanish in the curricula of secondary schools. Finally, in higher education, and as can be seen in the prominence of the EwB program in relation to the investment in other languages and even in other internationalization programs such as the LwB, English is seen as the most important foreign language and perhaps as an international language.

Thus and as can be seen in the analysis of the role of English in Brazilian language policies and internationalization programs (Finardi & Archanjo, 2015), it is possible to conclude that there is more than one language policy regarding the teaching of English in Brazil: one for basic education, one for secondary education and yet another for higher education and internationalization. What is more, the analysis of the role of English in Brazil suggests a mismatch between people's aims and language policies, once the teaching of English as an international language is not guaranteed in compulsory education.

So as to offer a solution for 1) the social gap created by the offer of English courses in the private sector, 2) the overall development of English proficiency, 3) the inclusion of other foreign languages (besides English) in the curricula and the 4) boosting of multilingualism in Brazil, Finardi (2014) proposes a change of language policy there. According to her proposal, English would be seen as an international language and it would be taught as such, that is, it would be a mandatory language in compulsory school and it would be offered together with other foreign languages, the choice of which would continue to be made by each school community, depending on their context and needs.

Given the proximity between Portuguese and the most frequently taught foreign languages in Brazil after English, that is, Spanish, French and Italian, in that order, this paper extends the proposal set forth

by Finardi (2014) adding that perhaps one way to guarantee the development of multilingualism in Brazil would be to use the Swiss multilingualism example and the intercomprehension approach to achieve it. This proposal could be put into practice in the following way: English would be taught as a mandatory foreign language in school (so as to reach, in the future, the status of a *multilingua franca* in Brazil) following Finardi's (2014) suggestion, and Spanish, French and Italian would be taught as foreign languages with the IC, thus guaranteeing the development of multilingualism and the use of English as a *multilingua franca* in Brazil following the Swiss example.

## Conclusion

Regarding the Swiss lessons that Brazilians can learn in the way towards internationalization of higher education, and based on results of Finardi and Csillagh (2016) reanalyzed here in light of Jenkins (2013; 2015), it is possible to suggest that English has the status of a *multilingua franca* at Unige (and possibly in Switzerland) and it can only reach the status of a *multilingua franca* in Brazil if language policies are revised so as to guarantee that English is available as a contact language for all Brazilians first. When translated into the Brazilian context of higher education, it is possible to say that Brazilian universities would have to struggle to become more multilingual while fostering the use of English as a *lingua franca* (and perhaps even as an academic *lingua franca* as suggested by Jenkins, 2013) at the same time. The analysis of internationalization programs in Finardi and Archanjo (2015) shows that Brazilian language policies and programs for higher education are already moving into that direction but unfortunately, because these policies and programs do not incorporate basic compulsory education, there is only so much that can be done in higher education. If Brazil wants to be a truly multilingual country and be able to use English as a *lingua franca*, language policies and actions must start earlier and include all levels of education. Perhaps this is the most important lesson that multilingual Switzerland and International Unige can teach Brazilians.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Federal University of Espirito Santo, Brazil (UFES) for my post-doctoral leave, Capes for the post-doctoral scholarship and the University of Geneva for the post-doctoral fellowship which enabled this research endeavor. I am also indebted to the following people who either



provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted this study, or that provided suggestions and corrections to the manuscript: Claire Forel, François Grin, Virag Csillagh and Telma Gimenez. I would also like to state that they may not agree with all of the interpretations/conclusions of this paper and that I take full responsibility for the contents and any flaws the paper may continue to have.

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Received on January 11, 2016.

Accepted on August 17, 2016.

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