

English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education Institutions in Northern Brazil: A Pilot Single Case Study

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ABSTRACT

English-medium instruction (EMI) is instrumental in the process of internationalisation of higher education in non-English-speaking countries. Still in its infancy in Brazil, this medium of instruction is gaining momentum in the country, but less so in the Brazilian Amazon. As an attempt to understand the practice of EMI in higher education institutions in this region, a pilot single case study was designed to explore the perceptions of a professor from an Amazonian university on this issue. Data were collected with an electronic self-completion questionnaire. Adopting a phenomenological approach, data were analysed following the Ladder of Analytical Abstraction of T. F. Carney. Results indicate that the respondent perceives EMI as an opportunity for language development and for advancing the Brazilian government's agenda on internationalisation of higher education. The respondent also believes that among the major issues preventing faster and adequate implementation of EMI programmes in Brazil is the lack of comprehensive and continuing EMI preparation courses extensive to all five regions of the country.

Keywords: English-medium instruction. Internationalisation. Higher Education. Northern Brazil.

1. Introduction

This article comprises the results of a pilot study which is part of an ongoing, long-term piece of research conducted by members of the CELEPI Research Group¹ as an attempt to understand the development of English-medium instruction (EMI) in Brazil. Some of the research questions being pursued by the team of researchers are:

- (1) *What are the attitudes of Brazilian academic staff towards the implementation of EMI in higher education (HE) institutions in Brazil?*
- (2) *What are the impressions of Brazilian academic staff about their Brazilian students' attitudes towards the use of EMI in Brazilian HE institutions?*
- (3) *To what extent do Brazilian academic staff's discourses encourage accommodation or resistance to EMI in HE institutions in Brazil?*
- (4) *What are Brazilian academic staff perceptions of benefits and / or liabilities of EMI programmes to potential Brazilian stakeholders?*

Five recent studies explore some dimensions of English-medium instruction across Brazil: a "survey" (Gimenez et al., 2018, p. 13), an essay (Baumvol & Sarmiento, 2019), a "bibliographic review" (Guimarães & Kremer, 2020,

¹Centre for Research in Applied Linguistics and EFL Teacher Education (<https://www.celepi.com/> / https://www.youtube.com/c/CELEPIResearchGroup_Ufopa)

p. 227), a “qualitative meta-synthesis” (Gimenez et al., 2021, p. 520, the translation from Portuguese is ours²), and a “search on Google”, and “Google Scholar” (Gimenez & Marson, 2022, p. 160). While making important contributions to further discussions and knowledge in EMI education, these studies do not comprehensively address some of the research questions posed by the CELEPI research team, others are not addressed in them. Moreover, in none of these studies the main HE institutions located in the north of the country are considered.

As an initial and provisional step towards understanding the development of EMI in tertiary education in Brazil, the team of CELEPI researchers carried out a pilot study focusing on the northern region, which encompasses the bulk of the Brazilian Amazon. The results of this study, although limited in scope, may add to the body of knowledge in the field of EMI in general and, in particular, to the discussions on the implementation of EMI in Brazilian HE institutions in a more inclusive manner, since it brings to the fore the region that appears to be less visible in these discussions. In the subsequent sections, there will be a brief discussion about EMI in the context of globalisation and internationalisation of HE institutions abroad and in Brazil, a presentation of the methodology for the conduction of the pilot study followed by a synthesis and discussion of the results of the study, and some concluding remarks.

2. English-medium instruction: globalisation and internationalisation

English-medium instruction can be defined as the practice of teaching academic subjects through English where the national language is a different one (Dearden, 2014; Richards & Pun, 2022). Some EMI specialists, like Macaro (2018), for instance, do not associate EMI with the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL). Presumably, the reason for this dissociation lies in the fact that when one teaches EFL through English, this is normally called a direct approach, which is nothing new – in the 19th century Sauveur (1875), the creator of the Direct Method, used to teach French through French, perhaps inspired by Michel de Montaigne’s *essai* on the education of children³. Another reason might be simply that it is expected that English should be the language of interaction when it is the object of study – this truism would dispense with the need to evoke the expression in this teaching context. Yet another reason might be the fact that some of these EMI specialists do not regard the topics covered in an EFL lesson as *content* – referring to EFL teaching, Macaro (2018, p. 43) asks: “What is the ‘content’ in this type of classroom?”. One last hypothesis would be that EFL might not be treated as a subject despite the fact that it does count as a subject in school curriculums around the world as it is the case in Brazil. In some TEFL licensure programmes of many universities in this country, for instance, EFL is materialised in a series of academic subjects (e.g., Communication in English I, II, III and IV, or under other nomenclatures). Whatever the reason behind these specialists’ decision not to associate EMI with EFL teaching, the authors of this article adopt the view that if any subject (including English) is taught through English, *English* is the medium of instruction.

With the advent of globalisation and internationalisation, EMI seems to have gained momentum in HE institutions located in places where the language of instruction in educational settings is normally a national language other than English. According to Dafouz and Smit (2020), EMI programmes are offered in many of the 1000 top ranked HE institutions in the world. Publications on EMI are also on the rise as suggested by Wilkinson’s (2017) Google Scholar search – more than 500 publications (books and papers) in the 2010-2015 quinquennium, roughly an average of 100 works per year. This burgeoning of EMI appears to be on par with the increasing numbers in international student mobility.

The report on global education titled *Education at a Glance 2021*, produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), shows that in 2019 alone 6.1 million HE students left their home countries to study abroad, which represents more than 50 per cent of those who mobilised in 2007.

² “*metassíntese qualitativa*” (Gimenez et al., 2021, p. 520)

³ Montaigne (1958, p. 81) himself was taught Latin as an additional language through a direct method: “while I was at nurse and before the first loosing of my tongue, [my father] put me in charge of a German, totally ignorant of our language and very well versed in Latin. ... This man ..., carried me around constantly; and with him he had two others less learned, to look after me and relieve him. None of them spoke to me in any language but Latin.”

Although OECD countries host most of these students, there has also been an increase in enrolment of international students in HE institutions outside the OECD area. The growth is estimated on an average of 7 per cent per year as compared to 4.9 per cent of international student enrolment in OECD countries (OECD, 2021).

The phenomenon of globalisation has favoured the spread of English internationally and its use in commercial transactions, online communication, and collaboration amongst students and professionals from different fields. All these elements have also contributed to the burgeoning of EMI, which in turn has become an important asset in the internationalisation process of HE institutions across the world, which is considered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as highly beneficial.

Amongst the oft-mentioned benefits of internationalisation for HE institutions are the enhancement of research capacity of their academic staff, acquisition of knowledge, and the improvement of teaching quality. For students, internationalisation is also said to be beneficial not only in terms of acquisition of knowledge related with their fields of study, but also regarding different ways of conceiving the world (Block & Khan, 2021).

The dialogue with a *foreign* culture seems to help individuals not only to become familiarised with it, but also to have a more comprehensive understanding about themselves as members of a different culture. Although not implying unproblematic relationships (Hitotuzi, 2016), these intercultural encounters can potentially make students joining international mobility programmes more inclusive and respectful of other cultures.

Having said that, it is important to point out that a major catalyst of the *Englishisation*⁴ of countries belonging to the *expanding circle*⁵ through EMI programmes is the marketisation of education (Molesworth et al., 2011; Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019; Cabral-Cardoso, 2021). Considered a commodity, education is being sold everywhere in the world, and this is made possible presumably because, *embarking the train of history*, HE institutions began to offer programmes in the language that is most spoken in the world by number of different nationalities to potential students from across the world. EMI, then, became a pivotal instrument of income generation for HE institutions in many parts of the world (Macaro, 2018; Barnard, 2018; Dafouz & Smit, 2020; Block & Khan, 2021).

3. English-medium instruction in Brazil

Differently from what happens in many other expanding-circle countries, in Brazil, the implementation of EMI programmes in government-funded HE institutions does not seem to be driven by their economic interest, since neither Brazilian nor foreign students are required to pay tuition fees to join undergraduate or postgraduate programmes in these institutions. In Article 206 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988, it is stated that public education is free of charge in official teaching institutions in this country (Brasil, n. d.). What would be the major propelling forces behind the urge for the use of EMI in Brazil then? This is basically a line of inquiry proposed by Dr Ronald Barry Martinez (Ron Martinez), professor at the Federal University of Paraná, Brazil, in an interview with Pramod K. Sah, a Ph.D. student at the University of British Columbia, Canada (Sah, 2022). When asked to share his stance about what should be next on the EMI research agenda, Ron Martinez included this suggestion regarding EMI in Brazil:

Another research agenda can be in terms of language use in EMI classrooms. In Brazil, there will be a Brazilian lecturer teaching through English to a cohort of Brazilians, who have the shared first language. So, everybody is doing a kind of similar EMI wherein they all speak the same language, but they choose to do it through English for a number of reasons. **Those reasons should be explored more through research.** (Sah, 2022, p. 129, emphasis in bold is ours).

⁴ Citing Hultgren (2014) and Koo (2009), Cabral-Cardoso (2021, p. 1227) defines Englishisation as “the spread of English as the foreign language of communication between individuals who share neither a common native language nor a common (national) culture at universities of nation states where English is not the official language.”

⁵ This is a geographical region where English is spoken as a foreign language. It includes countries like China, Indonesia, Brazil, Japan, and Korea, where English is neither an official language nor the mother tongue of the majority of the population. It is one of the labels that Kachru (1985) uses to represent the diffusion of English across the world.

Nevertheless, at least one of the reasons why EMI is pursued in Brazilian HE institutions, even though Portuguese is predominantly the only other common language in the classroom, can be surmised from the *World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action* by UNESCO:

Quality also requires that higher education should be characterized by its international dimension: **exchange of knowledge, interactive networking, mobility of teachers and students, and international research projects**, while taking into account the national cultural values and circumstances. (UNESCO, 1998, p. 8, emphasis in bold is ours).

Notice that all these elements within the *international dimension* of higher education that are considered pivotal for the enhancement of its quality require a language of communication so that this dimension can be materialised. Moreover, considering the role of the English language as *the lingua franca* of global communication today (Crystal, 2003), a logical conclusion that one can reach is that the promotion of EMI in Brazilian HE institutions is driven by its instrumentality for the advancement of the internationalisation agenda in this country because of the weight that is given to it by UNESCO. This organisation assumes that internationalisation can help sociocultural and economic development through cooperation, and the appropriation of various kinds of knowledge, including new technologies, which, in turn, would help diminish gaps in the education sector between develop, developing, and underdeveloped countries (UNESCO, 1998). This assumption is also echoed in some of the objectives of the Capes-PrInt Programme⁶ launched by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES)⁷ in 2017 to support the internationalisation of higher education in Brazil:

- II – Support the establishment of international research networks with a view to improving the quality of academic production linked to postgraduate programmes;
- III - Expand actions to support internationalisation in the postgraduate programmes of participating institutions, including collaborative research projects;
- IV - To promote the mobility of academic staff and students from Brazil to abroad and from abroad to Brazil prioritising doctoral students, post-doctoral researchers, and academic staff involved in *stricto sensu* postgraduate programmes;
- V - Foster the transformation of participating institutions in an international environment. (Brasil, 2017, p. 20, the translation from Portuguese is ours)⁸.

There may be, however, other reasons why EMI is part of the agenda of internationalisation of HE institutions in Brazil, perhaps even more than one can anticipate, which, as Ron Martinez suggests, should be part of the research agenda of scholars and academics interested in EMI in this country. This might be a fertile line of research if it is conducted against the background of the dichotomy involving discourses of accommodation and discourses of resistance.

The absence of clear explanations for the reasons behind the implementation of EMI programmes in Brazil, though still at an embryonic stage (Sah, 2022; Gimenez et al., 2021), has not stopped EMI from gradually burgeoning in different regions of the country.

The results of a survey on EMI in higher education in Brazil, published by the British Council in collaboration with the Brazilian Association for International Education (Gimenez et al., 2018), indicate an increase of more

⁶ Institutional Programme for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions and Research Institutes in Brazil.

⁷ CAPES is a federal agency under the Brazilian Ministry of Education that provides support to enhance the quality of research and education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the country.

⁸ “II - Estimular a formação de redes de pesquisas internacionais com vistas a aprimorar a qualidade da produção acadêmica vinculadas à pós-graduação;

III - Ampliar as ações de apoio à internacionalização na pós-graduação das instituições contempladas, inclusive projetos de pesquisa em cooperação;

IV - Promover a mobilidade de docentes e de discentes, com ênfase em doutorandos, pós-doutorandos e docentes, do Brasil para o exterior e do exterior para o Brasil, vinculados a Programas de Pós-Graduação *stricto sensu*;

V - Fomentar a transformação das instituições participantes em um ambiente internacional” (Brasil, 2017, p. 20).

than 50 per cent in the number of courses offered in English in 2017-2018.⁹ (an average of 1,011 courses) as compared to those offered in 2016 (671 courses). Moreover, the 2017-2019 survey reveals two predominant areas in which courses are taught in English at undergraduate level – Education and Humanities¹⁰ and Applied Social Sciences – and another two at postgraduate level – Biomedical Sciences and Science and Technology (Gimenez et al., 2018). These figures evince that more attention to this phenomenon is required from Brazilian scholars, researchers, academic staff, and students bringing to the fore the dichotomy between accommodation and resistance.

4. Methodology

The research was characterised as a pilot single case study. This research design was considered appropriate since the study consisted of chronicling an individual's point of view about a given phenomenon (Yin, 2018). The participant was a self-declared Latino male in his fifties, holding an academic position at a government-funded HE institution in the Amazon region. He has a PhD in Letters and Linguistics and has been and EFL teacher for over thirty years. Also, for over twenty years, he has been teaching courses in undergraduate EFL initial teacher education programmes in northern Brazil. Adopting the convenience sampling method (Waterfield, 2018), the basic criteria for selecting the participant were his qualifications, his experience of using EMI, and his willingness to share his views on the matter. Essentially, the team of CELEPI researchers wanted to understand the respondent's stance on the use of EMI in HE institutions in northern Brazil as a way of gathering data to try and make sense of this phenomenon at a national level.

Data were gathered by means of an electronic self-completion questionnaire (Bourque & Fielder, 2003; Brace, 2008; Beatty, et al., 2020) containing closed questions – most of which were asked for the purpose of building the demographic profile of the participant – and open-ended questions focusing on his experience of EMI in northern Brazil (henceforth, *content questions*). The questionnaire was emailed to the participant together with a term of permission in the form of a cover letter.

These are the content questions posed to the participant: (i) How prepared to use EMI are academic staff from universities in northern Brazil? (ii) How do the students in your institution respond to EMI? (iii) How adequate are HE institution facilities in northern Brazil for optimizing EMI? (iv) What government policies have been implemented in support of continuing professional development of teachers involved in EMI in the region? (v) How do you respond to the argument that students learn best when they are taught in their mother tongue? (vi) Why use EMI in institutions where English is taught as a foreign language? (vii) What are your impressions on other members of staff's attitudes towards EMI in the institution you work for (or have worked for) in northern Brazil?

The participant's answers were analysed from a phenomenological perspective following the three levels of Carney's (1990 in Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 92) Ladder of Analytical Abstraction: (i) "Summarizing and packaging the data"; (ii) "Repackaging and aggregating"; and (iii) "Developing propositions to construct an explanatory framework" (Figure 1).

The adoption of a phenomenological stance is essentially an attempt at seeing things the way they present themselves to the observer (Husserl, 2006). An effort researchers make to suspend their preconceptions about the phenomena that they investigate – in Husserlian terms, this exercise is called *epoché*. According to Hitotuzi (2015, p. 48, the translation from Portuguese is ours)¹¹, "*epoché* is an intellectual operation that consists of putting the surrounding natural world as well as natural attitudes in brackets."

In this single case study, the challenge was to understand the respondent's answers to the open-ended questions from *his* standpoint. It appears that, despite efforts to suspend their preconceptions, phenomenologists cannot avoid including their own impressions when trying to describe a phenomenon as it presents itself to them (Jones

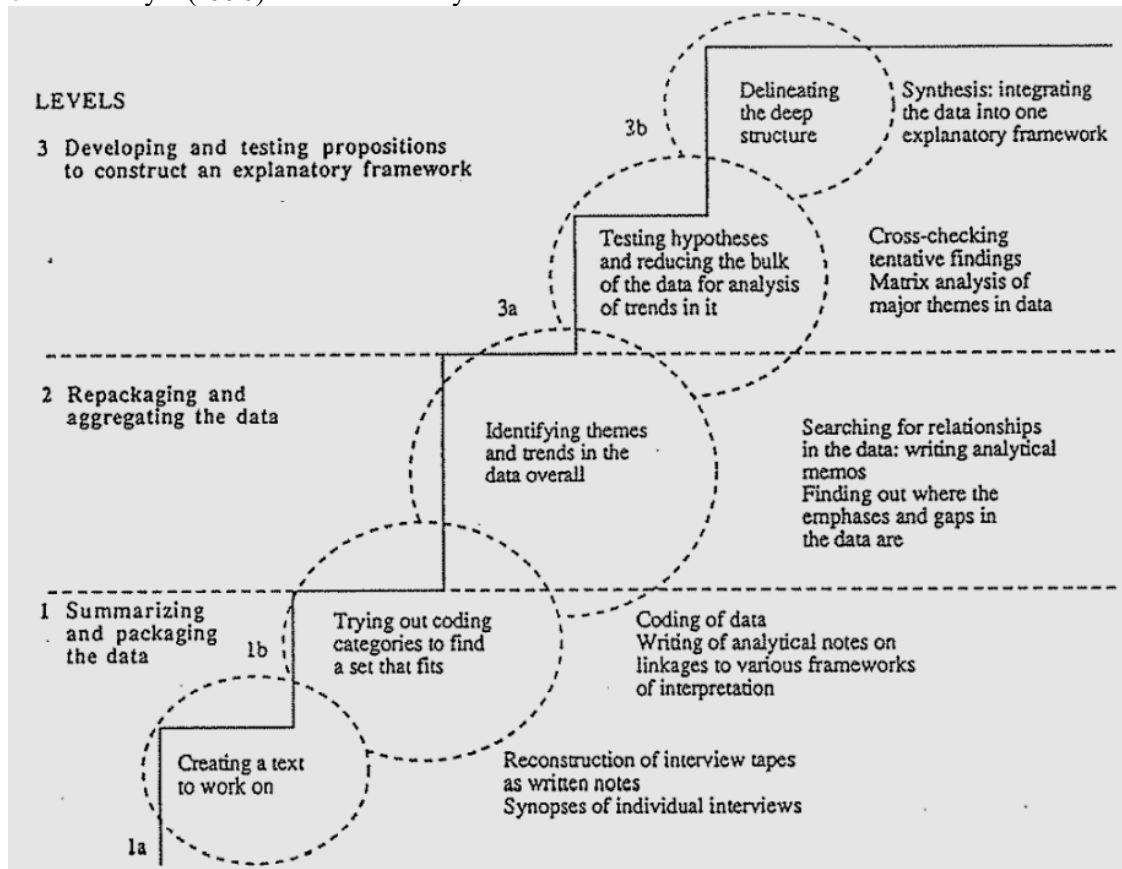
⁹ First semester of 2018.

¹⁰ Mostly Language Teaching and Translation programmes.

¹¹ "*A epoché é uma operação intelectual que consiste em colocar o mundo natural circunstante, bem como as atitudes naturais entre parênteses*" (Hitotuzi, 2015, p. 48).

et al., 2013). Therefore, the following synthesis of the respondent's views on EMI in the context of northern Brazil is at best a tentative or aspiring depiction.

Figure 1 – Carney's (1990) Ladder of Analytical Abstraction



Source: Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 92).

5. Synthesis and discussion of the respondent's views

For the sake of clarity, this synthesis will be divided into four major categories upon which the respondent expresses his views based on his experience of using EMI in HE institutions in northern Brazil: students, members of the academic staff, higher education institutions, and government policies. But before sharing and discussing the respondent's views, it is important to point out that his conception of EMI is more in line with the definition proposed by Dearden (2014), and Richards and Pun (2022) than the one proposed by Macaro (2018). It seems thus that, in his view (a view also embraced by the authors of this study), teaching courses to TEFL undergraduate students, including communication in English, adopting an English-only approach is also within the context of EMI. Additionally, the respondent's views on EMI in HE institutions in northern Brazil are based mostly on his experience of teaching courses in TEFL undergraduate programmes.

5.1 Northern students' attitudes towards EMI

Concerning the students, because not a few students taking TEFL undergraduate courses display an elementary level of English proficiency, initially, they tend to become confused and demotivated. Thus, members of the academic staff are compelled to use the students' mother tongue as a comprehension aid in the classroom. In his own experience, students tend to rely so much on their first language that with some groups it can be a constant struggle to adopt an EMI-only approach.

In contrast, those students who are more proficient in the target language, find the approach highly motivating, and even become disappointed when EFL teachers use their first language in the classroom.

It seems clear that the respondent senses the EMI classroom as an arena where two antagonistic views on the use of EMI live side by side (for a discussion on the role of student mother tongue in the additional language classroom, see Hitotuzi, 2006). The resolution of this problem might imply discriminatory measures to many educationalists in Brazil: the establishment of regulations on students' English proficiency before they are allowed to join EMI courses, as suggested by Xu (2017, in Zhao & Dixon, 2017) based on the results of a study conducted in China. In fact, the institutionalised requirement of a minimum level of proficiency in English for admission to EMI programmes is already a common practice in countries like Finland, the Netherlands, China, Taiwan, Japan and Vietnam (Dimova, 2020). Probably, this measure helps attenuate "detrimental effects", to put it in Cabral-Cardoso's (2021, p. 1230) terms, vis-à-vis content learning and interaction in the EMI classroom, if and only if one takes for granted the advanced level of proficiency of academic staff involved in EMI programmes, which – more often than not – does not seem to be the case in some parts of the world (Cabral-Cardoso, 2021; Galloway & Ruegg, in press).

At a deeper level of analysis, one would have to take into consideration the socioeconomic and cultural context of northern students before offering EMI courses in northern Brazil. Summarising the stances of several authors (Colares & Souza, 2015; Setton, 2015; Vasconcelos, 2016; Sousa et al., 2016; Corrêa, 2018; Nascimento et al., 2018; Fernandes, 2018; Daniel-Júnior, 2018; Vieira, 2019) on certain disadvantages of the Brazilian Amazon region vis-à-vis other regions of the country mostly in the economic and educational dimensions, Silva and Hitotuzi (2020, p. 28) argue that, whatever educational innovation researchers plan to implement in this region, it is necessary to acknowledge the existence of these gaps and "the ethos, values and worldviews of the Amazonian peoples."

5.2 Members of the academic staff at northern universities and EMI

While recognising that most members of academic staff who teach courses in EFL teacher education programmes in northern universities have advanced proficiency in all four basic communicative skills in English (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing), the respondent is reticent about the aural/oral English proficiency of those who are part of other programmes in these institutions. Moreover, he argues that, in this region, it is not impossible to find even EFL university teachers who are proficient writers and readers but have serious problems when trying to verbalise concepts in English – this, too, might be a major barrier for them to use EMI in their classrooms.

This stance resonates with the results of the 2021 EF English Proficiency Index report published by Education First (2021). Two million adults from 112 countries took Education First's Standard English Test in 2020, and Brazil was ranked 60th, which suggests a low level of English proficiency in the entire country, which in turn might be an implication of the current situation of EFL teacher education in the country. A document dubbed *Policy Paper*, published by the British Council, reveals that more than 70 per cent of the more than 985 thousand primary and secondary education English language classes throughout the country are taught by teachers without the qualifications required by the Brazilian Ministry of Education. The document also reveals that more than 97 per cent of English language schoolteachers in Brazil do not have a master's or doctorate degree (Observatório para o ensino da língua inglesa, 2022).

Lack of proficiency in English has been pointed out as a major issue amongst academic staff involved in EMI programmes in many parts of the globe. Not a few EMI instructors and analysts believe that English proficiency is a necessary component of teacher preparation to cope with the challenges of using English as medium of instruction (Bowels & Murphy, 2020; Pusey, 2020; Orduna-Nocito & Sánchez-García, 2021; Muslim et al., 2021).

The respondent believes, nevertheless, that most members of academic staff who he has worked with in three different northern HE institutions are pedagogically well prepared to work with undergraduate students. The respondent also thinks that, even when university tutors are highly proficient in English, they still need training before they begin using EMI in their classrooms, and to his knowledge, no member of staff at his university has ever been trained to use EMI. Moreover, although he uses the word *training* when referring to the preparation of

EMI instructors, the participant is not entirely comfortable with this expression, and he believes that a more progressive approach should be adopted in EMI preparation courses:

But I think the word “training” doesn’t really express what needs to be done in terms of our preparation for the EMI classroom. This preparation has to be comprehensive. The aim should be on the creation of an EMI educator, not an EMI instructor. EMI educators will adopt a more inclusive, more student-centered approach in their classrooms; [they will be] more interested in how and if their students are learning, more focused on giving voice to their students, on helping them become agents of transformation. In a nutshell, the preparation of [the] EMI educator I have in mind, not dispensing with technicalities, would adopt a Freirean¹² approach to teacher education.

His response to the question eliciting his stance on the aptness of members of staff at northern HE institutions to join EMI programmes brings to the fore his belief in the *global* education of teachers, the sort of holistic teacher education whose absence in American teacher education programmes is lamented by Pushkin (2001) in his teacher training reference handbook¹³. At the same time, it reveals his acknowledgment of EMI as an art in itself, which requires specific training to be mastered. This is in line with Cots’s (2013) suggestion that EMI classrooms need to be more learner-centred and aided by scaffolding and resources. Such a methodological shift does require *training* and *education*. Perhaps, conceiving the preparation of EMI teachers in this way makes EMI support courses potentially more apt to aid the participants not only to be familiarised with the mechanics of the process, but also to adopt an approach in their EMI classrooms that, to put in Hitotuzi’s (2014, p. 17, cited in Hitotuzi & Araújo, 2021, p. 2) words,

leads the student to acquire and develop a critical sense; to get used to reflective practice on local and planetary issues; to learn by the interdisciplinarity of the contents; to include themselves socially through the schooling process; and [to prepare themselves] for the challenges of the contemporary world.

Combining training with education might be an effective way of unburdening EMI preparation courses from the weight of the expression *training*, which is also a concern raised by Gimenez and Marson (2022).

Considering that preparation for EMI classrooms entails far more than simply working on members of academic staff’s proficiency in English, more attention should be given to what Sah (2022, p. 134) calls the “foundations for professional development,” which include aspects such as “anxiety, and identity negotiation and (re)construction of teachers.” Additionally, learning how to collaborate with peers seems to be another necessary step towards becoming fully equipped to join EMI programmes (Galloway & Ruegg, in press).

5.3 The implementation of EMI in higher education institutions in northern Brazil

While he cannot speak for all HE institutions in the region, the respondent argues that two of the three HE institutions with which he is familiarised offer some necessary basic facilities for adequate implementation of EMI in TEFL programmes, such as language laboratories and internet access. The institutions also have qualified academic staff displaying a high level of proficiency in English, which may not be enough in programmes not related to English language teaching (Galloway & Ruegg, in press).

¹²This is a reference to the thinking of the Brazilian educationalist and philosopher Paulo Reglus Neves Freire (1921-1997), who made significant contributions to the international tradition known as critical pedagogy.

¹³Focusing on the educational system of the United States, Pushkin (2001, p. 16) expresses pessimism about teacher education at higher education institutions in that country: “it may be naïve wishfulness to hope that new teachers will come from higher education with any meaningful perspective or insights regarding pedagogical practice, curricula, and learning. They may simply perpetuate the status quo and never dare to be transformative. They may come from higher education with virtually zero appreciation for knowledge and the process of knowledge acquisition. They may come from higher education with the belief that knowledge is merely a commodity for accountability and assessment. They may consider curricular materials, pedagogical practices, learning activities, and modes of assessment to be completely noninfluential with regards to teaching and learning. If this is the perspective they bring from their higher-education experiences, we must sadly presume new teachers will perpetuate the ills we already observe in schools.”

Yet, he also points out that, particularly in his institution, there is insufficiency of printed material resources at the libraries, inadequacy of teaching materials and lack of appropriate rooms for supervising students. That being said, the respondent admits of his limited notion of what can be considered *adequate facilities* for the optimisation of EMI.

Perhaps the respondent's recognition of his limitations to elaborate on aspects related to the adequacy of facilities for implementing EMI programmes might signal his lack of familiarity with EMI education. This is hardly surprising considering the embryonic stage of the implementation of EMI programmes in Brazilian HE institutions. One of the reasons for this slow-paced development might be the fact that the motivation to implement EMI programmes in this country is not the same as that in most parts of the world which is essentially triggered by economic benefits in the form of fees paid by international students. As it was said before, like education at primary school and secondary school levels, higher education in Brazil is funded by the government (Baumvol & Sarmiento, 2019; Guimarães & Kremer, 2020; Brasil, n. d.; Sah, 2022).

It is possible that in the northern Brazilian context the interest in EMI is motivated by language development opportunities to equip students and academic staff linguistically to further their qualifications either through international mobility or domestically in response to the Brazilian government's effort to internationalise HE education institutions across the country (CAPES, 2017), which in turn is part of UNESCO's (1998, see also Rollin, 1995) agenda regarding the internationalisation of higher education in a global scale as stated in the *World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action*.

As a result of these national and international efforts towards internationalisation of higher education in Brazil, EMI, a cornerstone of this process, is gradually gaining momentum in this country (Gimenez et al., 2018). But it appears that, contrary to the trend of predominant areas in which EMI is used as identified by Gimenez et al. (2018), in northern Brazil, this medium of instruction is mostly associated with EFL, TEFL undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of government-funded institutions.

The use of EMI in EFL teacher education programmes is much appreciated by the respondent. In his view, considering the status of English in the world today, irrespective of the effects of this hegemony, EMI is a unique opportunity for students as well as for academic staff themselves to develop communicative competence in this language. This appears to be a natural consequence of massive exposure to English (Willis, 1996) that the EMI classroom provides; it becomes a micro world wherein English can be the only medium of communication. Through this medium, the students have the opportunity to use the target language meaningfully and develop communicative skills in an integrated manner (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), for real communicative purposes at high levels of frequency. This seems to emulate, at least partially, the real world where English is used as an official or a first language.

From the perspective of the respondent, the very nature of some of the problems involved in the use of EMI, points to EMI itself as a possibility of overcoming them and helping both academic tutors and students to improve their proficiency in English while going through the process of teaching and learning academic content, which in his view constitutes a remarkable advantage of this approach. This argument echoes the idea that, additionally to content learning, EMI can help students and academic staff to improve their fluency and proficiency in English (Walkinshaw et al., 2017; Baumvol & Sarmiento, 2019).

5.4 Government policies and continuing professional development of teachers involved in EMI in northern Brazil

Concerning government policies, the respondent mentions that the Brazilian government offer doctoral and postdoctoral research grants for academic staff both at home and abroad. Recently, for instance, CAPES has announced doctoral scholarships for studies in the United States of America over the 2023-2029 period under the CAPES-Fulbright Full Doctoral Program (Brasil, 2022). It is important to point out, however, that academic staff and schoolteachers from the north apply for these grants under conditions of strong competition from other regions of the country. In his view, considering the priorities in these programmes, *i.e.*, doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers (Brasil, 2017), the large number of academic staff holding degrees below master's level in the Amazon region are excluded when it comes to international mobility opportunities offered by the government. Additionally, the respondent demonstrates awareness of the existence of actions financed by the Brazilian

government focusing on the preparation of academic staff to teach EMI courses mostly through *Idiomas sem Fronteiras* (Languages without Borders)¹⁴.

With the creation of the programme Languages without Borders by the Brazilian Ministry of Education in 2014 (Brasil, 2014), some localised EMI support short courses, workshops, and seminars started to be organised in some regions of Brazil (DRI, n. d.; Marie, 2018; Höfling & Freitas, 2019; Rodrigues & Rocha, 2019; UFMS, 2019; Botelho, 2020; Coordenação de Comunicação Social, 2021, DRI, 2021; Moraes, 2021 – for more detailed comments on this question, see also Gimenez & Marson, 2022). The sporadic nature of these initiatives reiterates the fact that EMI is still in its infancy in this country. Much more comprehensive, inclusive of all regions of Brazil, and continuing EMI teacher preparation programmes would be necessary for proper understanding and development of this medium of instruction in this part of the world. Currently, as Pusey (2020, p. 9) makes the point, there are many unanswered questions on the matter of EMI teacher education:

we really do not know how effective teacher education programs are; we don't know what aspects of pedagogy, communication, or language use change (or improve) as a result of participating in EMI teacher training; and we don't know what activities, tasks, and assessments are most useful for EMI teachers' professional development.

6. Concluding Remarks

The pilot single case study discussed in this article was an attempt to understand the participant's views on the use of EMI in northern Brazilian HE institutions as part of a project by the team of CELEPI researchers investigating the development of EMI in higher education across Brazil. The phenomenological analysis of the participant's answers to the seven content questions posed to him is a reminder of the vast amount of *work that still needs to be done* in order to address the challenges that are currently facing EMI programmes in HE institutions in this and in other parts of the world where this medium of instruction has yet to reach *adulthood*. Evidently, the assessment by this single member of academic staff is not enough for the establishment of a diagnostic map of the real situation of EMI in the Amazon region let alone in other parts of the country. Nevertheless, it does reveal some barriers that need to be overcome if EMI is to succeed in HE institutions in this region and elsewhere in Brazil. Some of the issues pointed out by the respondent are: (i) linguistic unpreparedness of students for EMI classrooms; (ii) some academic staff limitations in terms of oral communication in English; (iii) almost exclusive focus of EMI on EFL and TEFL teacher education programmes in northern Brazilian HE institutions; (iv) lack of a comprehensive and continuing EMI support programme equally inclusive of academic staff from all five regions of Brazil.

Concerning the four questions being pursued by the team of CELEPI researchers, it seems the respondent has offered some contributions towards addressing them. For one thing, despite being sceptical about the ability of many academic staff from programmes other than TEFL licensures to cope with the linguistic demands of EMI classrooms, he appears to have a favourable attitude towards the implementation of this medium of instruction in HE institutions in Brazil, especially in TEFL programmes, because of its congeniality to them. For another thing, the respondent senses a great divide amongst students on the use of EMI mostly due to the imbalance existing in the classroom in terms of English proficiency displayed by them. While the more proficient students are comfortable with and interested in having lessons in English, the less proficient ones are against it. Yet for another thing, the respondent appears to recognise that a critical stance should be taken in the EMI classroom.

Having said that, he does not seem to be disturbed by the fact that English is the current lingua franca of the world – it appears he sees English much more as a tool than anything else (Perhaps, those who have a Chinese-like¹⁵ attitude towards the English language would agree with him).

¹⁴Ordinance No. 973 of 14th November 2014 established the aim of Language without Borders, which was basically to provide training in different languages to students, academic and administrative staff from state and private higher education institutions, and to language teachers from state schools, as well as Portuguese language training to foreigners (Brasil, 2014).

¹⁵ The Chinese people do not seem to feel threatened by the hegemony of the English language in the world. On the contrary, it appears that they see this as an opportunity for them to establish economic and diplomatic relations with non-*Putonghua*-speaking countries. As Liu (2022, p. 11) suggests, English is the means through which the “most recent” Chinese “story of ‘Community of Common Destiny’” continues being disseminated throughout the world.

Also, concerning the last question, the respondent seems to believe that, in the Brazilian context, EMI would be most beneficial as an opportunity for both educatees and educators to being immersed in English with the purpose of improving their linguistic communicative skills, even more so in EFL teacher education programmes.

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