Original Paper

Internationalization and Language Assessment in Brazil: Exploring the Interface between Language Proficiency and Rankings at UFES

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Abstract

The study is based on the assumption that knowledge of English is an important factor in the internationalization of higher education and that the English without Borders program has positively affected the overall level of proficiency in English as well as internationalization levels in Brazil. So as to verify this hypothesis, the study analyzed the interface between English proficiency levels measured with the TOEFL ITP test and internationalization scores measured in terms of rankings in a federal university in Brazil. Results of the study suggest that during the period analyzed these two variables remained stable, thus confirming the hypothesis raised.

Keywords

English, Internationalization, TOEFL ITP

1. Introduction

As discussed in Finardi and Guimarães (2017) and elsewhere (Archanjo, 2016, Finardi, Santos, & Guimarães, 2016; Jenkins, 2013) globalization has affected and been affected by migration, academic mobility and is sometimes viewed as a synonym to internationalization of higher education (Shin & Teichler, 2014), defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension in the mission, function or product of higher education (Knight, 2008).

In the multilingual scenario stimulated by academic mobility, globalization and internationalization of higher education, the teaching of foreign languages (L2) in general and of English in particular play an important role in the 1) maintenance of national cohesion and international peace (e.g., Finardi &

Csillagh, 2016), 2) access to online information (e.g., Finardi, Prebianca, & Momm, 2013) and education (e.g., Finardi & Tyler, 2015), 3) social inclusion of immigrants and refugees (e.g., Ortiz & Finardi, 2015), 4) resistance against the commodification of education (Porcino & Finardi, 2014), 5) circulation of academic production (Finardi & França, 2016) and 6) of internationalization of education (Amorim & Finardi, 2017; Finardi, Santos, & Guimarães, 2016).

Finardi, Santos and Guimarães (2016) claim that the improvement in proficiency levels in English in Brazil faces several challenges among which is the role of English in Brazilian language policies (e.g., Finardi & Prebianca, 2014; Pinheiro & Finardi, 2014; Porcino & Finardi, 2014; Finardi, 2016). Language policies can be analyzed through governmental actions and programs such as the Brazilian government-funded Science without Borders (SwB) and Languages without Borders (LwB) internationalization programs (Finardi & Archanjo, 2015; Finardi, Leão, & Pinheiro, 2016). Indeed, one of the theses that this study aims to advance is that the English without Borders (EwB) program, part of the LwB, is perhaps one of the most important language policies proposed in Brazil having affected the overall level of proficiency in English as well as internationalization levels in that country. So as to verify this hypothesis, the present study analyzed the interface between one of the most important actions of the EwB, namely, the TOEFL ITP test, in relation to internationalization scores in a federal university in Brazil.

Though the context of this study is very particular (a federal university in Brazil), it is possible to see how results and reflections made in this paper relate to other contexts such as Turkey, according to Taquini, Finardi and Amorim (2017). Considering the fact that many countries are facing the pressure to internationalize their higher education institutions, we think that the discussion offered here regarding the interface between foreign languages in general and English in particular in the process of internationalization of higher education may serve other contexts where English is not the official language.

2. Review of Literature

The federal university where the present study was carried out (Note 1) was selected for this study because of results of previous studies carried out there and which concluded that one of the main challenges for its internationalization was the lack of overall English proficiency of its academic community (Amorim & Finardi, 2017; Finardi & Ortiz, 2015; Finardi, Santos, & Guimarães, 2016, Kawachi, Amorim, & Finardi, 2017).

Still regarding the role of English in the internationalization process, but not specifically in the same university, Finardi and França (2016) examined the production and circulation of the Brazilian academic publication in the area of Letters in English and in Portuguese. According to these authors, although Brazil had the 13th largest academic production in the world, it had little international impact because its publications were made mainly in Portuguese.

In Brazil and as reported by Finardi and Guimarães (2017) and according to Gama and Klagsbrunn

(2014), many educational agents and policy makers claim that it is possible to measure an institution by quality and quantity indicators, including rankings. These authors also claim that it is by no chance that the Brazilian Law of Education (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação*, LDB) determines the minimum standard of quality of education offered by the State (BRAZIL, 1996). This standard also applies to higher education where the main indicator of quality is the GIC—General Index of Courses (INEP, 2011), which considers the quality of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Another index of undergraduate quality measure is the Preliminary Courses Concepts (PCC) used to assess the performance of students in the National Student Performance Exam (ENADE). The Higher Education Personnel Improvement Coordination—CAPES—is responsible for assessing (with a score that goes from 3 to 7) the quality of graduate courses for each area. Another institutional evaluation measure that has gained popularity with the increasing internationalization of higher education and which has provoked much discussion and controversy regarding its use is university rankings, also reviewed in Finardi and Guimarães (2017) and partially reported here.

Lourenço (2014) claims that rankings are embedded in public evaluation policies, especially regarding large scale assessments as, for example, the former National Course Examination (ENC) and even the National Student Performance Examination (ENADE) though the author warns against a number of criticisms that have been raised against rankings claiming that they are not good quality indicators and that their assessment may be unfair since it may be based on erroneous data.

Yet, Lourenço (2014) recognizes other authors who are in favor of rankings because they understand that they may confer rights and provide useful information as such they may constitute powerful tools to strengthen the rights of consumers. Laus and Magro (2013) suggest that university rankings have been used as benchmarking for self-development of institutions, providing quality certification and exchange of good practice for the internationalization of Higher Education Institutions (HEI). Another effect of rankings is the international visibility and competition between HEIs to be recognized as world-class universities.

Among the most respected international rankings are the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) (Note 2) promoted by the University of Shanghai, also known as the Shanghai ranking published since 2003, and its European counterpart, the Times Higher Education Supplement (TEHS) (Note 3) published annually since 2004. Both rankings assess HEIs based on research, productivity, impact and excellence. The ARWU has been much criticized in Europe, especially in France, because of its focus on research at the expense of education.

In the 2009, 2010 and 2012 ARWU there were five Brazilian HEIs among the 500 best in the world (USP, UNICAMP, UFMG, UFRJ, UNESP and UFRGS). Among the top 200 of the THES there was only one Brazilian university, USP, in 175th position in 2007, 196th position in 2008 and no Brazilian university in 2009 or 2010 and USP again in 158th position in 2012.

According to the 2014 Latin American ARWU, USP lost the first place in the region for the Catholic University of Chile whose scientific production in collaboration with foreign scientists was greater than

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that of USP. According to Gama and Klagsbrunn (2014) one of the reasons why USP is not in the list of the top 200 universities is the lack of English Medium Instruction (EMI) there. Regarding the use of EMI in Brazil, Martinez (2016) states that very little evidence can be found for it before 2010.

According to the same survey reported in Finardi and Guimarães (2017) and in Gama and Klagsbrunn (2014), Brazilian universities have ten universities among the top twenty in Latin America: USP, UNICAMP, UFRJ, UNESP, UFMG, UFRGS, PUC-RJ, UNIFESP, UNB, UFSCAR and of these, only USP, UNESP and PUC-RJ offer EMI courses at undergraduate level. Still in relation to the role of English and regarding the ARWU assessment of Brazilian universities, Gama and Klagsbrunn (2014) claim that Brazilian universities have good results in number of papers per faculty member, but not in citations which shows that Brazilians are doing better in terms of quantity than on quality and as suggested by Finardi and França (2016), the quality assessment may be affected by the language of publication since the Brazilian academic production is still published mainly in Portuguese.

Regarding Brazilian rankings and still as reported in Finardi and Guimarães (2017), one of the best-known measures is the university ranking Folha de São Paulo-RUF (Note 4), published by the newspaper Folha de São Paulo comparing 192 Brazilian universities and thirty undergraduate courses in the country in five dimensions of evaluation: teaching, integration into the labor market, research, internationalization and innovation. The internationalization assessment considers international publications per professor indexed in the Web of Science as well as the proportion of foreign professors in Brazilian HEIs. The 2013 RUF differs from the ARWU ranking by giving more weight to teaching than the latter and in that year the RUF had five Brazilian universities in the list: 1) USP, 2) UFRJ, 3) UFMG, 4) UFRGS, 5) UNICAMP.

According to Laus and Magro (2013), the growing importance given to rankings coupled with the numerous debates they have created led the European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) and the Institute for Policy in Higher Education in Washington to create in 2004 a group of experts in international rankings—the International Ranking Expert Group (IREG) (Note 5). In the second meeting held by the group in 2006 in Berlin, the IREG agreed to consider sixteen principles for the analysis of rankings in relation to: a) the purposes and objectives of the classification systems, b) the methodology: the design and weight of indicators, c) the collection and processing of data and d) the presentation of results. Regarding the purposes and objectives of the classification systems, the IREG suggests that rankings should not be the only way in which HEIs are evaluated. International rankings should also take into account regional characteristics of HEIs recognizing that quality concepts may not be shared by different institutions. Regarding methodology, the IREG recommends the use of audited and verifiable data whenever possible, including those collected in accordance with recognized procedures for data collection, enhancing the credibility of classification, such as using advisory boards. Regarding the presentation of results, the IREG recommends the provision of clear information regarding all the factors used to develop a classification table by allowing users to choose how the ranking is displayed. The rankings should be compiled in order to eliminate or reduce errors in the

original data being organized or published in a format that allows the compiler to make corrections, if needed, so that users are aware of it. The principles of Berlin, as they came to be known, have been adopted in a multi-dimensional classification model, which considers the roles that universities play in the society and in the education system in which they operate. We can conclude that rankings require a substantial investment of resources from HEIs and as suggested by Finardi, Santos and Guimarães (2016) and by Finardi and Guimarães (2017), they seem to have been designed by and for English-speaking universities or by those that adopted English medium instruction (EMI) curricula.

Regarding the role of English in EMI and in the internationalization process, Taquini, Finardi and Amorim (2017) compared the offer of EMI courses in Turkey and in Brazil, two countries that were strategically attempting to increase the number of courses offered in English, especially in graduate courses, so as to be accepted in the European Community (in the case of Turkey) and so as to internationalize Brazilian institutions, in the case of Brazil. The study concluded that the offer of EMI course in those countries is still timid and subject to a number of challenges, among which the greatest is the lack of proficiency in English of university students and faculty.

As suggested by Laus and Magro (2013) and Finardi and Guimarães (2017), comparing Brazilian universities with American and European universities does not benefit Brazilian HEIs, which is why Laus and Magro (2013) chose instead the Scimago Institutions Ranking (SIR) (Note 6) which measures the number of publications and shows Brazil in the 14th position among the countries with the highest scientific production with 34,145 publications in 2008 in Scopus, the largest scientific data base. This ranking also puts Brazil behind developed countries like the US (1st), England (3rd), Germany (4th) and Japan (5th), but also among major developing countries such as China in second position and India (10th) both in the BRICS group with Russia in 15th position. Still according to Laus and Magro (2013) and as reported in Finardi and Guimarães (2017), these figures give us a very different assessment dimension of Brazilian HEIs in relation to the rankings because it shows that despite the fact that Brazil has only about 650 researchers per million inhabitants, the number of scientific papers published by Brazilians represents 54% of the total published in Latin America and 2.63% worldwide.

Similarly to the ARWU and the THES, the Scimago also has regional rankings such as the Ibero-American Ranking of International Scientific Production whose indicators include the scientific production, measured by number of publications, international collaboration, as measured by joint publications with other countries, the average scientific quality, measured by the scientific impact of an institution, and the percentage of papers published in the most influential journals in the world, measured by the amount and origin of the citations they receive. According to this ranking, Spain and Brazil lead the scientific production in Latin America and Spanish and Brazilian universities appear among the ten most productive ones, with five Spanish, four Brazilian and one Mexican institution in the list.

With regards to international cooperation and still as reported in Finardi and Guimarães (2017), Spanish and Portuguese universities stand out, and in Brazil, UFRJ is the most internationalized of the

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first three positions in this ranking. In terms of quality of publications, Spanish and Portuguese prevail and Brazil, despite prominent in Latin America, where 89% of the institutions have citation values below the world average, appears with only five of its 109 institutions with an average of scientific quality above the world average.

Another variable that this study aims to analyze in relation to the assessment of internationalization of higher education is related to language. According to Gimenez (2013), Brazilians want to speak English fluently but only about 5% of them do so. Assuming that English expands access to information (Finardi, Prebianca, & Momm, 2013) and education online (Finardi & Tyler, 2015), and given the fact that very few Brazilians speak English fluently, Finardi (2014) suggests that English should be taught as an international language in Brazilian schools so as to fight against the social gap created by the offer of private language courses available to only a small (and privileged) part of the population. Finardi (2014) suggests the mandatory teaching of English in Brazil so as to make room for the teaching of other foreign languages in the curriculum, the choice of which would continue to be made by each school community as pursuant to the Brazilian Law of Education (LDB).

Finardi (2017) adds that a possibility to guarantee the inclusion of other foreign languages in the curricula of Brazilian schools is the adoption of the Intercomprehension Approach to language teaching, especially in the case of Spanish, French and Italian, the three foreign languages most frequently taught (after English) in Brazilian schools. These three languages share the same root and many similar characteristics which are explored, rather than avoided, in the Intercomprehension Approach.

The English without Borders (EwB) program was created to fill in the gap left by Brazilian language policies that could not guarantee satisfactory levels of English proficiency in that country until 2017 when the law changed making the teaching of English mandatory in schools. Initially targeted to university students who were potential candidates to academic mobility plans, the EwB was later expanded to include all the university community through the offer of three main actions, namely: 1) face-to-face English classes in NucLis (*Núcleo de Línguas*), 2) an online English course (MEO) and the TOEFL ITP tests, all of which are offered free of charge to all the academic community of the universities which applied for the call in 2013.

The present study focuses on one of the three main actions offered by the EwB, namely, the TOEFL ITP test insomuch as it offers an x-ray of the language proficiency level of a given institution. So as to review the context in which the test was thought of by the program, the next section reviews a study carried out by the EwB's president and vice-president in relation to the TOEFL ITP test.

2.1 TOEFL ITP

According to Abreu-e-Lima and Moraes Filho (2016) also reviewed in Kawachi-Furlan, Amorim and Finardi (2017), one of the reasons why the English without Borders Program (EwB) planned the administration of language tests nationwide in Brazil was to evaluate and map the proficiency level of potential candidates to international academic mobility programs. Most foreign universities require English tests to guarantee that candidates can attend classes in English speaking universities or in

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universities which adopted EMI courses.

Still according to Abreu-e-Lima and Moraes Filho (2016), another reason for the administration of English tests in Brazil was to have a diagnostic evaluation of the overall level of proficiency in English of Brazilian students in public universities. The authors go on to explain that so as to guarantee that the diagnosis was internationally endorsed, it was crucial that a verified and recognized evaluation instrument was used, that is, a proficiency exam which was well accepted in the international community. The EwB board concluded that for a test to be administered across regions in Brazil it was necessary to consider regional and specific characteristics of universities in Brazil and so paper-based exams were selected because the only infrastructure required for their administration are classrooms, trained proctors and audio resources. Another factor taken into consideration was that the test selected had to be academic oriented and of easy correction, without involving production skills, which would complicate logistics and add additional costs to the correction of exams. Also, the exam had to be an internationally recognized exam so as to be accepted by most foreign universities. Given all these considerations, the EwB board decided to adopt the TOEFL ITP exam and hence the Brazilian government acquired 500 thousand exams, equivalent to about 25% of the total number of students enrolled in federal universities in 2013. The diagnosis resulting from this action is presented in Abreu-e-Lima and Moraes Filho (2016) and reviewed here according to the proficiency levels as categorized in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Note 7). According to results in Abreu-e-Lima and Moraes Filho (2016), the EwB had 184 test centers spread around the country in April 2016. In the date of the report (May 2016) 1,127.255 test seats were made available, with 516,434 students registered and 328,766 tests corrected. Still according to Abreu-e-Lima and Moraes Filho (2016), these figures indicate a massive involvement of Brazil in the program but also reflect a high absenteeism rate, possibly due to a combination of factors. Among the factors used by Abreu-e-Lima and Moraes Filho (2016) to explain the absenteeism rate are: 1) lack of confidence to take the test (many potential candidates may feel they are not prepared to take the test), 2) lack of academic objectives, 3) the fact that the test is offered free of charge and is not mandatory so that some candidates may feel they have no obligation to take the test, 4) the fact that tests are usually offered during weekends. In the case of the university where the present study was carried out (UFES) and by way of example, the TOEFL ITP tests are offered on Friday and Saturday afternoons only.

The TOEFL ITP tests scores are accepted by most institutions in Brazil as credit of complementary (extracurricular) activities in undergraduate programs; as proof of proficiency in applications for graduate programs; as a criterion to take part in academic mobility programs and as an internal institutional criterion to award grants and scholarships. At UFES, where the present study was carried out, the TOEFL ITP is accepted in all these cases.

Still according to Abreu-e-Lima and Moraes Filho (2016), the Ministry of Education, through SESu, publishes calls on a biannual basis, indicating test centers, number of seats available and criteria for registration. It also articulates with governmental agencies (CAPES and CNPq) to include and accept

the TOEFL ITP results as proof of proficiency to be presented by candidates in mobility programs. The local test centers feed their seat offers into the EwB management system, the EwB local coordinator evaluates and confirms the number of seats and articulates the shipping of the exams from the certified agency of TOEFL ITP in Brazil (Mastertest) (Note 8) to the institutions, according to their plan. After the administration of tests, the local coordinator at the test center sends the exam answer sheets back to Mastertest for correction. The scores of the test are made available to the candidates in the EwB site and the official paper score is sent to the institutions so that they can be picked up by the candidates.

Abreu-e-Lima and Moraes Filho (2016) report that, so far, the results of the TOEFL ITP test indicate the following proficiency level of Brazilian university students: of the 324,576 registered scores, 44% of the test takers fall at level A2, 33% at B1, 19% at B2 and 3% at C1. Considering the high sample of over 300,000 test takers and the fact that resulting levels have been rather stable and consistent, it is possible to say that most Brazilian university students are at the intermediate level. Abreu-e-Lima and Moraes Filho (2016) suggest that many local coordinators estimate there is a large percentage of students in A1 level, but those students have not registered to take the test because they may feel they do not have the minimal requirements to "pass" the test. As it is, Abreu-e-Lima and Moraes Filho (2016) believe that the tests were taken by those who believed to have some knowledge of English.

3. Method

So as to verify whether the English without Borders (EwB) program in general and the TOEFL ITP test in particular have positively affected the overall level of proficiency in English as well as internationalization levels at a given institution, a study was carried out at a federal university (UFES) where previous studies had suggested that the level of English proficiency of its academic community impacted its internationalization levels (Amorim & Finardi, 2017, Finardi & Ortiz, 2015; Finardi, Santos, & Guimarães, 2016, Kawachi, Amorim, & Finardi, 2017). With that aim, the internationalization levels of that institution, assessed in terms of rankings, as well as the English proficiency levels, assessed in terms of the TOEFL ITP scores, were analyzed. In what follows, the context where the data were collected will be described.

3.1 Context for Data Collection

Data was collected at the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES). The university was founded in 1954, has three campuses and offers academic and research activities in all areas of knowledge in 105 undergraduate courses and 84 graduate courses (58 Master and 26 Doctorate). The university has a languages center that offers Portuguese as a foreign language courses for foreigners as well as English, Spanish, Mandarin, French, German and Italian courses for the academic community.

Regarding academic mobility cooperation agreements, UFES participates in the PEC-G program with countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and in the BRAFITEC program in the areas of Engineering with other countries, especially France. Regarding graduate mobility programs, UFES participates in the ECAP-OAS program launched by the Organization of American States (OAS) and

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the Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities (GCUB).

UFES also participated in the Science without Borders program until its extinction and in the English Without Borders program since 2013. The EwB at UFES offers 540 seats for face-to-face English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses for the academic community at UFES. According to Kennedy (2012), projects related to teaching ESP have been expanded because of globalization, language policies and the need to use English as an international language.

4. Results and Discussion

Regarding UFES evaluation in terms of rakings, it appears in only four of them, namely: 1) the Intelligence Unit (Note 9), 2) the Folha (Note 10), 3) the Top Universities (Note 11) and 4) the Scimago (Note 12). A search in these databases for the position of UFES since 2013 (when the TOEFL Test started to be administered nationwide in Brazil and at UFES) in these rankings shows that it varies depending on the ranking used. Table 3 shows the ranking position of UFES between 2013 and 2016:

Table 1. Ranking UFES between 2013-2016

Ranking UFES	2016	2015	2014	2013
Intelligence Unit	130	150		
Folha		30	31	34
Top Universities	129	150	142	121
Scimago			87	93

As we can see in Table 1, UFES' ranking is somewhat variable depending on the ranking analyzed. It is important to mention that the rankings for 2016 must be taken as speculative since the year had not finished (as of the date of writing this manuscript) and thus the assessment may be partial and incomplete. If we look at the Top Universities ranking, the only one whose ranking for UFES was available between 2013 and 2016, we can see that the evaluation of this university has somewhat improved over the years and so it is expected that the final ranking for UFES in 2016 is better than the one reported in Table 1 (129). In what follows the results of the TOEFL ITP results for UFES will be analyzed so as to see whether it is possible to see a pattern of improvement of scores of this test, once according to Finardi and Ortiz (2015), Amorim and Finardi (2017), Kawachi, Amorim and Finardi (2017) and Finardi, Santos and Guimarães (2016), the overall (low) level of proficiency in English of the academic community at UFES is one of the obstacles for its internationalization.

When it comes to the results of the TOEFL ITP at UFES in the period between 2013 and 2016 and as reported by the UFES EwB coordinator (personal communication), we have the following numbers as calculated by raw scores displayed in Tables 2-8: In 2013, 55% of candidates were in the A2 range;

32% in B1; 11% in B2; and 1% in C1. In 2014, 41% of candidates were in the A2 range; 36% in B1; 20% in B2; and 3% in C1. In 2015, 48% of candidates were in the A2 range; 31% in B1; 18% in B2; and 2% in C. In 2016, 2% of candidates were in the A1 range; 58% in A2; 23% in B1; 14% in B2; and 2% in C1. While the national averages of proficiency levels as measured by the TOEFL ITP test range between 44% in A2, 33% in B1 and 19% in B2 (as reported by Abreu-e-Lima and Moraes Filho, 2016), the average proficiency levels at UFES are 46% in A2, 33% in B1, 18% in B2 and 2% in C1, that is, the average levels at UFES are overall worse than the national levels.

Table 2. TOEFL at UFES December 2013

A2	83
B1	48
B2	17
C1	1
No grade	1
Total	150

Table 3. TOEFL at UFES in 2014 Part 1

A1	9
A2	887
B1	804
B2	479
C1	76
No grade	6
Total	2261

Table 4. TOEFL at UFES in 2014 Part 2

A2	2
B1	1
Total	3

Table 5. TOEFL at UFES in 2014 Part 3

A1	1
A2	376
B1	294
B2	137
C1	17

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No grade	2
Total	827

Table 6. TOEFL at UFES in 2015 Part 1

A1	
A2	829
B1	555
B2	271
C1	31
No grade	7
Total	1696

Table 7. TOEFL at UFES in 2015 Part 2

A1	7
A2	404
B1	231
B2	182
C1	21
No grade	16
Total	861

Table 8. TOEFL at UFES in 2016

A1	9
A2	277
B1	110
B2	67
C1	10
No grade	4
Total	477

As we can see from the TOEFL ITP results at UFES between 2013 and 2016, it is safe to say that the overall level of English proficiency there has not improved but rather maintained an average of 50% level A2, 30% of level B1, 15% of level B2 and 2% of level C1 as can be seen in Tables 9 and 10 and in Figure 1 below.

Table 9. Proficiency Levels per Year at UFES

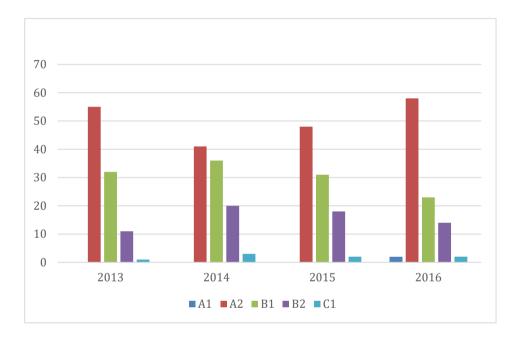| Level	2013	%	01/2014	02/2014	03/2014	%	01/2015	02/2015	%	01/2016	%
A1	0		9	0	1		3	7		9	2%
A2	83	55%	887	2	376	41%	829	404	48%	277	58%
B1	48	32%	804	1	294	36%	555	231	31%	110	23%
B2	17	11%	479	0	137	20%	271	182	18%	67	14%
C1	1	0,5%	76	0	17	3%	31	21	2%	10	2%
No Grade	1		6	0	2		7	16		4	
Total	150		2261	3	827		1696	861		477	

Figure 1. Proficiency Levels at UFES between 2013 and 2016

Table 10. Summary of Percentage of Proficiency Levels at UFES

Proficiency Level	Tests taken	Percentage
A1	29	4%
A2	2858	46%
B1	2043	33%
B2	1153	18%
C1	156	2%
No score	36	6%
Total	6275	100%

If we triangulate the levels of English proficiency and internationalization levels at UFES, we can say that these levels have remained stable in the period analyzed, which might corroborate the hypothesis raised in this study, namely, that internationalization levels should increase as the overall English proficiency level of the academic community of UFES increases. Amorim and Finardi (2017) seem to agree with this interpretation when they analyzed the level of engagement of the academic community in the referred university, concluding that despite their enthusiasm towards internationalization actions, the academic community of UFES still lacks engagement with the TOEFL ITP test and other internationalization actions offered by the EwB program at UFES.

5. Conclusion

The present study analyzed the interface between English proficiency levels measured in terms of the TOEFL ITP test and internationalization scores measured in terms of rankings in a federal university in Brazil. The results of the study confirm that during the period analyzed these two variables, namely, the English proficiency levels and internationalization rankings at UFES, remained stable, therefore confirming the hypothesis raised.

It is possible to notice that, although the university community recognizes the importance of the English language (as reported by Amorim & Finardi, 2017), their proficiency level is still below expected. As it was verified in Kawachi, Amorim and Finardi's (2017) study, proficiency levels remained stable despite the efforts of promoting courses and workshops designed to meet the community's needs. One possible explanation for this unexpected result is the low level of engagement of the academic community investigated with the internationalization actions (Amorim & Finardi, 2017) and the short period of time of this investigation (2013-2016) which perhaps was not sufficient to show considerable results in proficiency levels at UFES. Regardless of the reason for these results, the study calls the attention to the fact that it is fundamental to raise the awareness of the importance of assessment variables such as proficiency levels and internationalization rankings in HEs though we must be very careful to design and select these variables, as suggested by Finardi and Guimarães (2017). Moreover, the study concludes with the suggestion that these variables should be discussed with the academic community and integrated in curricula design in order to guarantee more positive, effective and long-lasting results.

Acknowledgement

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Notes

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