

Original Paper

English, Scientific Capital and Internationalization: A Study of Academic Production in Latin America and the Caribbean (2008–2023)

Claudio Franca¹ & Kyria Rebeca Finardi^{1*}

^{1*} Department of Languages, Culture and Education, Federal University of Espírito Santo, Vitória, Brazil

Abstract

This study analyzes the role of language choice in the internationalization of higher education research in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) from 2008 to 2023. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and scientific capital, the research explores how language practices reflect broader dynamics of power, prestige, and market logic within the global academic field. Through bibliometric analysis of articles indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) and Lens databases, the study identifies a growing trend toward publishing in English, despite the predominance of Spanish and Portuguese in the region. English-language publications consistently achieved greater citation impact, illustrating how the pursuit of international visibility aligns with strategies to accumulate scientific capital. The findings reveal that language choice is not merely individual but shaped by structural pressures that reinforce linguistic hierarchies and global asymmetries. The study highlights the need for critical reflection on internationalization practices and calls for strategies that value linguistic diversity to foster a more equitable and plural academic environment.

Keywords

internationalization of higher education, scientific capital, language choice, Latin America and the Caribbean, bibliometric analysis, linguistic hierarchies

1. Introduction

The process internationalization of higher education is usually defined as the intentional integration of international, intercultural, or global dimensions into the purpose, functions, and delivery of higher education (Knight, 2004) and can be related to Global Citizenship Education (e.g. Finardi et al., 2024b). Within the realm of academic production, internationalization is closely intertwined with the pursuit of visibility, recognition, and participation in the global knowledge economy. To analyze these dynamics, this study draws on Bourdieu's (1975, 1980) concepts of habitus and scientific capital in relation to the role of language choice in that process.

Broadly speaking, habitus can be understood as a system of durable and transposable dispositions that guide practices and perceptions within specific social fields, including academia. In turn, scientific capital refers to the accumulated prestige, recognition, and credibility that scholars acquire through their contributions to scientific production, measured by factors such as publication record, citation impact, and affiliations. These notions provide a critical lens through which to examine how language choice operates not simply as an individual preference, but as a socially and structurally conditioned strategy within the global academic field.

In the context of internationalization of higher education and scientific publications, language constitutes a central strategic resource (e.g. Finardi et al., 2024a), simultaneously enabling the dissemination of knowledge beyond national borders and fostering collaborations among researchers and institutions. The ability to engage a global audience through scientific communication practices is closely tied to the choice of language for publication, highlighting the need to understand the implications of this choice within an increasingly globalized academic landscape.

In an environment characterized by the coexistence and interaction of multiple languages in the process of knowledge production, the dilemma between promoting linguistic diversity or adhering to monolingualism—particularly through the dominance of English—emerges as a critical issue. The adoption of English is often perceived as a strategy to increase visibility, foster international partnerships, and achieve academic recognition. However, while potentially beneficial, this choice also generates tensions. It risks reinforcing global asymmetries, marginalizing local knowledge, and overlooking translanguaging practices that are integral to the everyday work of researchers (Navarro et al., 2022). These risks have been studied to some extent in relation to publications in Latin America (Finardi et al., 2022, 2023) and more specifically in relation to the process of internationalization in Brazil (Taquini & Finardi, 2021, Finardi et al., 2018).

The tensions that permeate the search for academic visibility are not merely the result of individual decisions but are deeply shaped by structural pressures of the field involved in the distribution of scientific capital in a globalized world. The geopolitical landscape of academic production is marked by the reproduction of unequal relations and the persistence of colonial (e.g. Piccin & Finardi, 2021, França & Finardi, in press) and postcolonial logics (Guzmán-Valenzuela et al., 2022). Evaluation agencies, publishing conglomerates, and other stakeholders and gatekeepers within the international scientific ecosystem exert influence over the consolidation of English as the hegemonic lingua franca of science (Finardi, 2022). Publishing in English and in mainstream journals is increasingly becoming naturalized in the habitus of researchers (Bourdieu, 1980) who seek to convert visibility and prestige into scientific capital.

Although these practices are more deeply entrenched in fields such as the natural and biomedical sciences, they pose particular challenges for the humanities, social sciences, and arts, where academic production is more context-dependent and thus usually employs native languages, encountering barriers both to internationalize its production and to access dominant channels of scientific circulation.

In the realm of higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), recent studies (e.g. Finardi et al., 2022, 2023) reveal a significant gap in studies from the region (e.g. Pessin & Finardi, 2025) and growth in scientific output indexed in international reference databases such as the Web of Science (WoS) between 2000 and 2015, reflecting deliberate efforts to disseminate research through globally circulated journals (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Gómez, 2019). Within this context, Spanish remains the dominant language of publication in Spanish-speaking countries, particularly in the humanities and social sciences (Beigel, 2014; Beigel & Digiampietri, 2022; Céspedes, 2021). Nevertheless, a notable increase in English-language academic production has been observed over the past two decades pointing to a sustained movement toward greater internationalization (Finardi et al., 2022, 2023). Yet, the trend to publish in English is even more pronounced in Brazil, as highlighted by data from the Institute for Scientific Information (Adams et al., 2021).

However, the privileging of English as the primary medium of instruction (e.g. Taquini & Finardi, 2021) or for scientific dissemination remains ambivalent. While it facilitates international engagement, it also reinforces the notion that high-quality science must necessarily be published in English, thereby perpetuating colonial hierarchies that exacerbate inequalities in access to and visibility of knowledge (Knight, 2020; Laranjeira & Paris, 2020). Researchers and readers with limited proficiency in English encounter barriers that restrict their access to scientific literature, contradicting the ideals of democratization and reciprocity often associated with the process of internationalization of higher education and aspired for global scientific production and advancement.

Moreover, editorial practices and language policies, when capitulating to pressures towards monolingualism in English reinforce linguistic hierarchies (e.g. França & Finardi, in press). Echoing Wallerstein's World-System Theory, a symbolic division among central, semi-peripheral, and peripheral languages emerges (Jesus, 2018), consolidating English as the dominant language validated by publishers, reviewers, and funding agencies.

As a result, the limited representation of local languages in international databases reduces the visibility and impact of publications in languages other than English (Beigel & Jackson, 2022). Although the publication in English is not a formal requirement for indexing, an increasing number of Latin American and Caribbean journals are adopting English to enhance their global scientific projection which means more circulation and visibility.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to analyze the scientific communication practices translated into publication patterns adopted by authors from LAC within the broader process of higher education internationalization. It specifically examines the role of language choice in shaping the visibility and recognition of academic production. In particular, this study investigates the extent to which the adoption of English as a language of publication has become consolidated as a strategy to amplify the international impact of scholarly work from the region in the period between 2008 and 2023.

2. Methodological Procedures

This descriptive study aims to map academic production on the internationalization of higher education in LAC. With that aim, the study analyzes the scientific communication practices adopted by local authors, with a particular focus on their choice of language for disseminating their research, in terms of publications. To achieve this, bibliometric techniques were employed to construct a detailed overview of academic production on the topic.

The corpus was composed based on bibliographic records of journal articles indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) and Lens databases. The choice of this document typology is justified by the fact that journal articles are the most consistently recorded by bibliographic aggregation tools. The selection of the period between 2008 and 2023 can be justified by two scenarios: the need to standardize the common coverage period for both bases, which began in 2008; and, above all, due to the development of policies to support science and technology by governments in the region, observed in the first two decades of the 21st century and which directly affected actions to promote internationalization in higher education. Furthermore, extending the analysis beyond 2020 aimed to examine the post-pandemic period that had both positive and negative effects on internationalization of higher education in region (e.g. Finardi & Guimarães, 2020). Therefore, considering post-pandemic production proved to be essential.

Although both databases (WoS and Lens) aim to provide extensive coverage of scientific production, they present distinct characteristics, particularly in terms of content scope. WoS is more restrictive, prioritizing research disseminated through internationally circulated journals published by commercial publishers from core countries. In contrast, Lens, while also indexing internationally circulated content, offers broader and more inclusive coverage by incorporating publications from local and regional circuits, especially from regions such as LAC, which encompass peripheral and semi-peripheral countries.

The intentional selection of tools and databases with different characteristics was aimed at enabling a comparative analysis of their content from multiple perspectives, including examining potential biases that hinder access to knowledge produced in the region or that influence the adoption of scientific communication practices designed to maximize the visibility and impact of research outputs, such as the choice of language for publication.

The records comprising the corpus were retrieved through searches carried out in both databases using a combination of descriptors related to internationalization and higher education in Portuguese, along with their translations in Spanish and English. The search string applied was: *internacionalização* OR *internacionalización* OR *internationalization* OR *internationalisation* AND “*educação superior*” OR “*educación superior*” OR “*higher education*” OR “*tertiary education*”.

After the removal of duplicate records across the two databases and the exclusion of documents unrelated to the research topic—particularly those that were not related to higher education—the search, carried out in March 2024, resulted in a final corpus of 641 records: 193 from WoS and 448 from Lens.

Following the corpus compilation, the records were analyzed using the bibliometric tool Biblioshiny (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017), aiming to characterize LAC scholarly production regarding the choice of

language for publication so as to assess the impact achieved within the field of higher education.

3. Results

The documentation of knowledge production on the internationalization of higher education by LAC authors, or by foreign authors affiliated with institutions in this region, is relatively recent and became more pronounced starting in the early 2000s. As previously stated, although this study delineates the analysis period between 2008 and 2023, it is worth noting, by way of illustration, that there was a limited presence of related publications in earlier years, with the first recorded document dating back to the late 1960s. During the 1990s, a modest increase in the number of studies investigating the phenomenon of internationalization was observed, with six published articles recorded. In summary, between the 1960s and 2007, a total of eight articles were published and indexed in the Lens database, while none were recorded in the WoS.

It is important to emphasize that the absence of records in the selected databases does not necessarily reflect the entirety of knowledge production on the topic within the Americas and the Caribbean. No database can claim exhaustive coverage of all knowledge produced within a specific field. However, the scarcity of indexed publications prior to the second decade of the 21st century supports the hypothesis that practices of internationalization within higher education—when documented as academic research—significantly intensified after that period.

In what concerns the period under scrutiny in the present study (2008–2023), the data illustrated in Figure 1 show that although there was overall growth throughout the timeframe, it did not occur in a continuous, steadily ascending pattern year after year. Nevertheless, there is a clear upward trend in the number of publications from the second half of the 2010s onward.

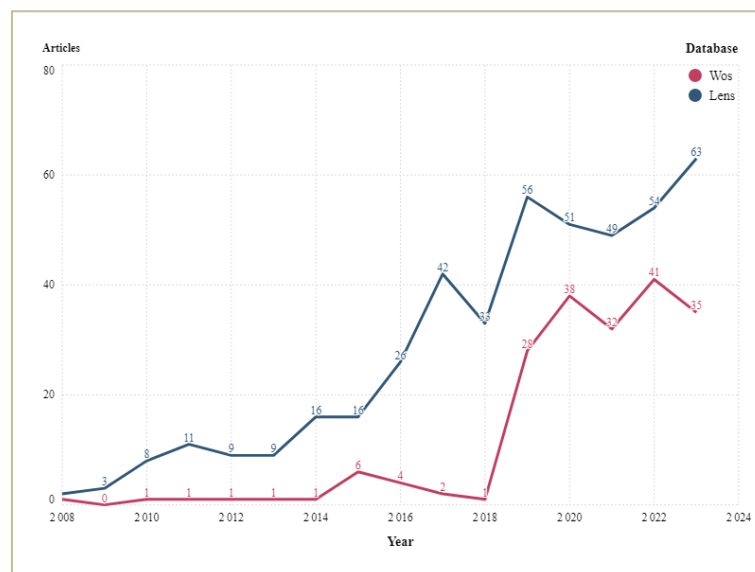


Figure 1. Production on the Internationalization of Higher Education in LAC 2008-2023 – WoS and Lens Databases

This scenario, as discussed by Santin (2019), is associated with the "enhancement of scientific policies in the countries of the region, the increase in investments and human resources in STI [science, technology, and innovation], as well as the expansion of WoS coverage [...]" (p. 74). Similarly, this trend is even more evident in the Lens database. Being less restrictive than others regarding the indexing process, Lens captures metadata from a wide range of sources, thus more faithfully representing the growth of Latin American and Caribbean production on higher education and internationalization.

3.1 Languages of Dissemination of Academic Production on Higher Education Internationalization in LAC

Although criteria for quantifying speakers of a given language may vary, it is widely recognized that Spanish and Portuguese are among the most spoken languages globally, either as a first language (L1) or as a second/additional language (L2) (De Swaan, 2002; Fernández-Vítores, 2024). According to data from the Instituto Cervantes (2024), corroborated by Ethnologue, Spanish is the second most spoken native language in the world, second only to Mandarin. When considering the total number of speakers (L1 + L2), Spanish ranks fourth, following English, Mandarin, and Hindi.

Portuguese, like Spanish, also demonstrates significant geographical dispersion, being the official language of ten countries across various continents. Combining native and non-native speakers, approximately 260 million people speak Portuguese, making it the eighth most spoken language worldwide (Instituto Camões, 2022).

When analyzing the most prevalent languages in the production and dissemination of knowledge, both Spanish and Portuguese stand out as important means of academic expression, ranking among the most used languages for communicating research results. According to Gradim and Piñeiro-Naval (2019), in a study investigating the Science Citation Index and Social Science Citation Index databases of the WoS, it was concluded that from 2009 onwards, Spanish and Portuguese showed substantial growth. When considered together as Iberian languages, they surpassed traditional academic languages such as German and French in publication volume.

This phenomenon, on the one hand, demonstrates the expansion of scientific production in LAC, with greater inclusion in regional databases such as SciELO and Redalyc. However, alongside the growth of publications in local languages such as Spanish and Portuguese, the expansion of English as the language of scientific communication in a region which does not have English as L1 is also evident and merits further analysis.

This dual phenomenon—the increase in the academic production in local languages, as highlighted by Gradim and Piñeiro-Naval (2019), and the simultaneous growth of English-language production—can be understood in light of several factors. Among these are the increase in science investments in the region, resulting in a greater volume of publications (Santin, 2019); the growth of collaborations between researchers from different regions, particularly from core countries where English is the official language (Adams et al., 2021); and the aspiration to internationalize local research outputs, given that publishing in English enhances visibility, reach, and impact, often measured by citation counts (e.g. Finardi & França,

2016).

In the field of research on higher education internationalization in LAC, this trend is also observed, as illustrated in Figure 2 consolidating data from both the Web of Science and Lens databases regarding the languages chosen for publication. Although the region is predominantly Spanish-speaking, both in terms of the number of countries and population, and Portuguese-speaking, in terms of the largest single-language group (Brazil), publications in English hold a significant share of the production on higher education internationalization during the analyzed period.

This cannot be attributed to the English-speaking countries in the region alone. Although they account for 36% of the countries in LAC (Note 1), their combined population is significantly smaller than that of other nations, such as Brazil, which, while being the only Portuguese-speaking country in the region, has the largest population in LAC.

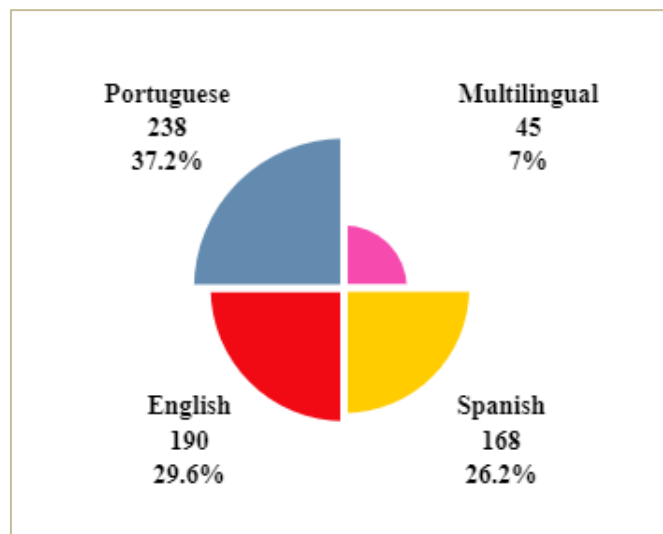


Figure 2. Language of Articles on Internationalization of Higher Education Published by LAC Authors (2008-2023)

Still based on consolidated data from both databases, the prominence of English in quantitative terms—currently occupying the second position among the publication languages—is a recent phenomenon. This can be seen more clearly in Table 1, which shows the number of articles published by language and their percentage representation across the four-year period.

Table 1. Articles and Languages of Publication per Four-year Period

Language	P1 (2008-2011)		P2 (2012-2015)		P3 (2016-2019)		P4 (2020-2023)	
	Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
Spanish	8	29,60%	21	35,60%	44	22,90%	95	26,20%
Portuguese	12	44,50%	20	33,90%	86	44,80%	120	33%
English	5	18,50%	18	30,50%	48	25%	119	32,80%
Multilingual	2	7,40%	0	0%	14	7,30%	29	8%
Total	27	100%	59	100%	192	100%	363	100%

Such evidence shows that, in parallel with the increase in the number of works published by LAC authors on the internationalization of higher education and indexed in databases, there has also been a noticeable increase in the use of English as a language for disseminating research results. This movement reflects a tendency to adapt to the demands of international visibility, reinforcing the role of English as the lingua franca of science.

This trend became even more evident in the last four years, when the number of articles published in English surpassed those in Spanish and came significantly closer to the number of articles in Portuguese. Considering the percentage growth between intervals 3 and 4, the dissemination of articles in English increased by 147%, in contrast to 115% for Spanish and 39% for Portuguese.

Multilingual publications, published in more than one language simultaneously, also showed an increase in LAC production on the internationalization of higher education, especially in intervals 3 and 4, with a percentage growth of 107%. It is important to mention that, even though there are three major languages in the region, in all the 45 articles published, English was one of the languages chosen.

Although still in its infancy, multilingualism in the context of scientific publishing has been consolidating itself as an alternative and effective way of communicating scientific work. The option of disseminating in an additional language enhances visibility and promotes the internationalization of productions, without refraining from reaching the local public (Note 2).

In order to verify whether the same panorama of choice of languages to disseminate LAC production on the internationalization of higher education was observed individually in the databases, we proceeded to analyze the articles indexed in each of them. The results obtained demonstrate that there is no predominance of a common language in all of them, as shown in Figure 3.

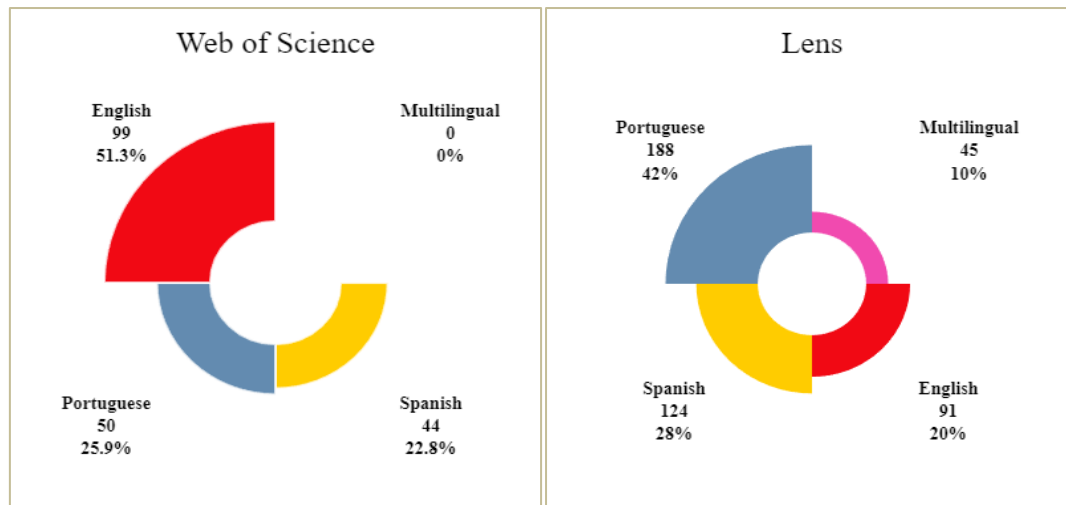
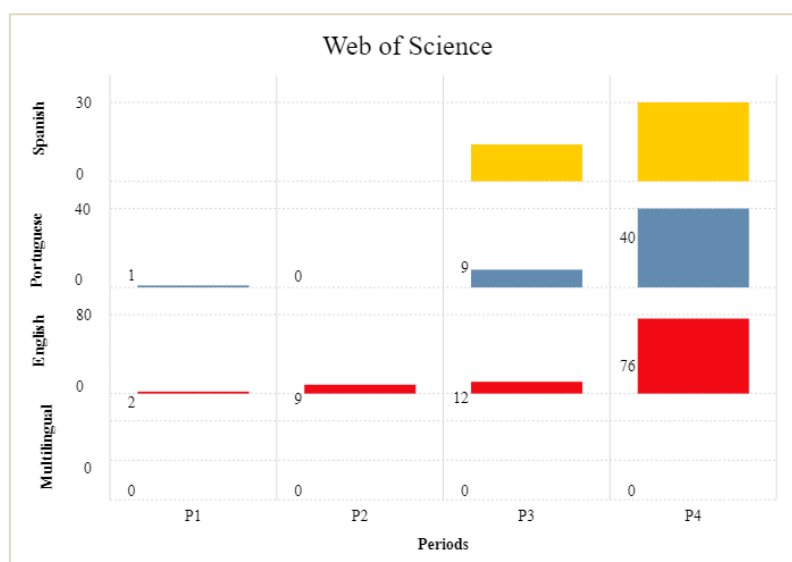


Figure 3. Language of Papers on Internationalization of Higher Education Published by LAC Authors Sorted by Database (2008-2023)

In WoS, English predominates, with Portuguese being the second most prevalent language. In Lens, Portuguese and Spanish are predominant among the indexed works, respectively. This fact is explained by the comprehensive indexing policy adopted by the database, which captures metadata from various databases, libraries and repositories. In fact, in addition to gathering the largest number of articles on the internationalization of higher education, it also has the largest number of works published in Portuguese and Spanish, the predominant languages in LAC.

After identifying the predominant languages in the works retrieved from each database, we analyzed the chronological variables (in four-year intervals) and the language of publication. The examination, summarized in Figure 4, aims to observe whether there was a change in the behavior of researchers regarding the choice of language of publication over the years of the adopted time frame.



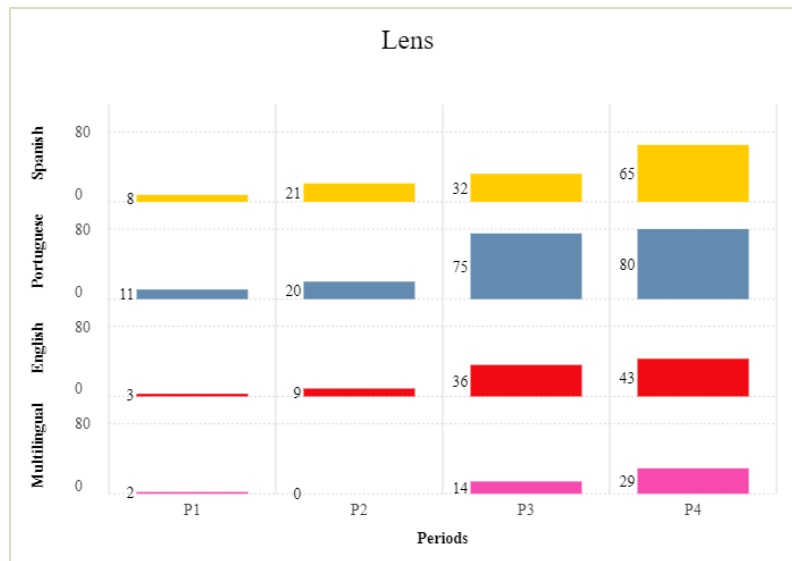


Figure 4. Language of Publications on Internationalization of Higher Education by LAC Authors Sorted by Database and Four-year Period (2008-2023)

Although it is not possible to state that English is the preferred language of the works, except in the WoS database (see Figure 4), the documents in Portuguese are the ones that showed the highest percentage increase, with 300% between the consolidated intervals and interval 4. This is a phenomenon that is associated, initially, with the integration of the collection of Brazilian journals in the SciELO Citation Index and, later, the inclusion of some titles in the main collection of WoS.

At Lens, adopting the same perspective, we observed a significant percentage increase in works published in the multilingual modality (81%), which, in a way, also confirms the trend of adopting English as the language of dissemination of scientific works, considering that all articles published in this modality adopted English as the additional language.

By focusing the analysis on intervals 3 and 4, which present the largest number of documents indexed in the databases, we observed a notable phenomenon: English presented the most expressive percentage growth compared to the other languages, registering an increase of 533% in WoS and 19% in Lens which, despite the more modest growth (19%), is worthy of note, since the greatest increase occurred among works in the multilingual modality, in which English appears as an alternative option for language of publication.

3.2 Language, Citation and Impact

Choosing the language for the dissemination of scientific research is an important strategy that can significantly increase the visibility of the work, especially when the aim is to reach an international audience. This choice not only broadens the reach of the research, but can also facilitate the formation of partnerships between researchers from different countries and language backgrounds. Often, an intermediary language such as English is chosen, even if it is not the mother tongue, or the most widely

spoken language in the region (as is the case with Spanish in LAC) with the aim of expanding and facilitating scientific communication to achieve greater visibility.

In this sense, when analyzing the corpus of articles that have received three or more citations since publication, the data revealed a predominance of works published in English, as illustrated in Figure 5. It is interesting to note that this is a pattern that remains consistent, regardless of the indexing policies adopted by the different databases. This trend can be observed in both types of databases, the most selective ones such as WoS which prioritizes journals with international circulation, and the most inclusive ones, such as Lens, which covers a broader spectrum of journals with regional and local reach.

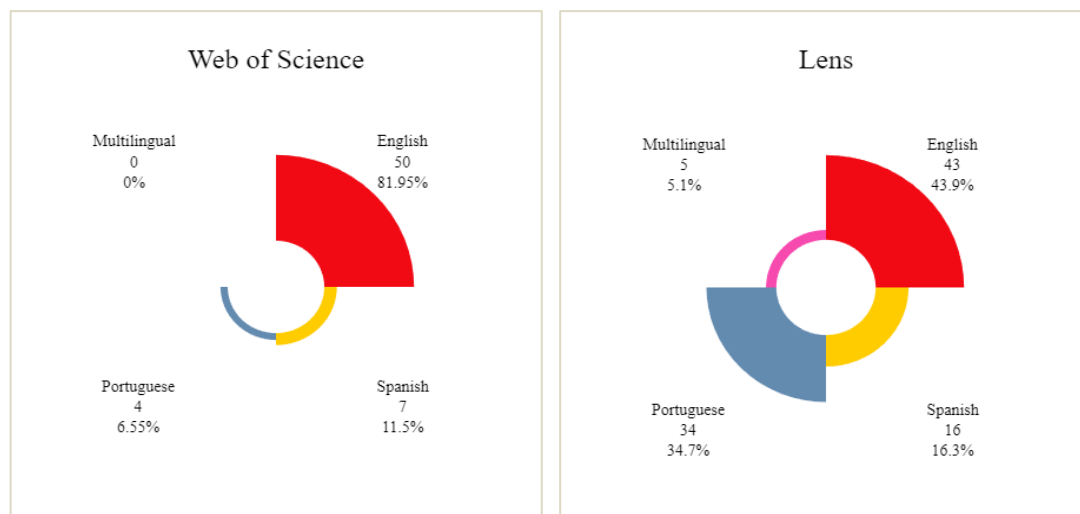


Figure 5. Languages of Publication and Number of Articles with Citations ≥ 3

When comparing the data presented in Figure 3, which shows the languages in which the articles in the study were published, and the data on the most cited articles, we see an interesting trend. Although a citation cutoff of three or more was established, it is clear that, even in Lens, where English is not the language most frequently used for publishing articles, the works published in English received the highest number of citations when we analyzed those that had the greatest impact.

3.3 Relationship between Language, most Cited Articles and Dissemination Channel

After analyzing the relationships between language and citation, we now explore the three-way interaction between language, journal origin, and impact measured by citations. To conduct this analysis, we selected the 15 most cited articles in both databases as a sample. The objective was to examine, based on the production with the greatest impact, whether there is convergence between these variables, seeking to verify the hypothesis that publishing in English and in international circulation channels edited in central countries significantly influences the repercussion of the work, resulting in a greater number of citations.

The dominance of English as the language of publication in the most cited articles was verified in WoS. On this platform, English stood out as the only language used in this set of most relevant publications,

which were published in journals from Europe and the United States.

As shown in Table 2, it is notable that 12 of these articles were published in journals from the UK. This highlights the importance of this region both in higher education studies – a significant proportion of the journals address this topic – and in the British tradition of journal publishing and its connection to large publishing groups.

Table 2. Language, Citations and Origin of the most Cited Articles in the WoS Database

LANGUAGE	ARTICLE TITLTE	CITATION	POSITION	ORIGIN OF JOURNAL
English	Understanding internationalization at home: perspectives from the global north and south	35	1st	United Kingdom
	International collaborations between research universities: experiences and best practices	35	2nd	United Kingdom
	Comprehensive internationalisation in Latin America	29	3rd	United Kingdom
	Internationalization of higher education institutions: the underestimated role of faculty	24	4th	United Kingdom
	An artificial intelligence educational strategy for the digital transformation	21	5th	France
	Producing global citizens for the future: space, discourse and curricular reform	20	6th	United Kingdom
	Universities and Covid-19 in Argentina: from community engagement to regulation	20	7th	United Kingdom
	Bilingual university science courses: a questionnaire on professors' practices and espoused beliefs	18	8th	United Kingdom
	Determinants of successful internationalisation processes in business schools	18	9th	United Kingdom

International mobility of academics: brain drain and brain gain	16	10th	United Kingdon
Internationalization in higher education: faculty tradeoffs under the social exchange theory	16	11th	United Kingdon
Global citizenship education (GCE) in internationalisation: COIL as alternative thirdspace	15	12th	United Kingdon
A model for stakeholders' influence on internationalization: a contribution from the Portuguese, Brazilian, and Dutch cases	15	13th	United States
Fostering bilingual written scientific argumentation (BWSA) through collaborative learning (CL): evidence from a university bilingual science course	13	14th	United Kingdon
Knowing, being, relating and expressing through third space global south-north COIL: digital inclusion and equity in international higher education	12	15th	United States

The evidence previously presented regarding the Lens database, with regard to the greater representation of journals published in LAC and the diversity of languages used in the published articles, was not confirmed when the observation was carried out taking as a sample the 15 most cited articles. This situation, similar to the other databases, confirmed English as the language used in the works that achieved the greatest number of citations, with the nine most cited ones published in that language, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Language, citations and origin of the most cited articles in the Lens database

LANGUAGE	ARTICLE TITLTE	CITATION	POSITION	ORIGIN OF JOURNAL
English	Growth patterns of the network of international collaboration in science	72	1st	Hungary

	Determinants of early internationalization of new firms: the case of Chile	59	2nd	United States
	The role of policy in constructing the peripheral scientist in the era of globalization	50	3rd	Netherlands
	Science in Mexico: a bibliometric analysis	42	4th	Hungary
	International collaboration in Brazilian science: financing and impact.	35	5th	Hungary
	Funding research in Brazil	32	6th	Hungary
	Institutional Expansion and Scientific Development in the Periphery: The Structural Heterogeneity of Argentina's Academic Field	32	7th	Netherlands
	Advancing a knowledge ecology: changing patterns of higher education studies in Latin America	31	8th	Netherlands
	Is EMI enough? Perceptions from university professors and students	29	9th	Colombia
	Diversity and multilingual challenges in academic settings	23	12th	United Kingdom
	Educational innovation and digital competencies: the case of OER in a private Venezuelan university	22	13th	Colombia
	The affective economy of internationalisation: migrant academics in and out of Japanese higher education	17	15th	United Kingdom
Portuguese	Internacionalização, rankings e publicações em inglês: a situação	25	11th	Brazil

	do Brasil na atualidade			
Multilingual	Les noves tecnologies en el context universitari: sobre l'ús de blogs per a desenvolupar les habilitats de lectoescriptura dels estudiants	25	10th	Spain
	Internacionalização da pós-graduação no Brasil: lógica e mecanismos	18	14th	Brazil

For the dataset under analysis, we observed a peculiarity in Lens but not in the WoS database regarding the origin of the journals that published in English. Of the 12 articles in English, only three were published in journals published in English-speaking countries. The remainder were distributed among journals from Hungary (4), the Netherlands (3) and Colombia (2). The justification for the adoption of English by the Dutch and Hungarian journals is that the content published by both is aggregated by the publisher Springer, a member of the Elsevier group which adopts English as the standard in publications. Regarding Colombian journals, it is important to highlight that only one of them, the *Latin American Journal of Content & Language Integrated Learning*, is entirely published in the LAC region. The other journal, the *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, despite having the Universidad de Los Andes (Colombia) as one of its publishing institutions, is published jointly with the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain) and the publisher Springer, based in the Netherlands. This configuration indicates that, although there is participation by a Colombian institution, the journal is not entirely managed and published within the LAC region itself, which tends to influence the choice of English as the language of publication of the work.

Regarding the articles published in the multilingual format, present in Lens, we noted that, in addition to the original version, they also have an English translation. These works were published in a Brazilian and in a Spanish journal, respectively. It is worth mentioning that, in the case of the Spanish journal, the original publication was in Catalan, demonstrating an effort towards linguistic diversity, especially in languages with a significant number of speakers but restricted to specific territories. The multilingual strategy adopted by some journals suggests an attempt to expand the reach and visibility of works produced in languages that are less widely spoken internationally, in parallel with the publication in English.

4. Analysis and Discussion

In what concerns the scientific communication, it has become increasingly understood that the adoption of English as the language of scientific dissemination in non-English-speaking countries constitutes a

strategy to promote the internationalization of academic production. This choice is seen as a way to maximize symbolic profits, increasing visibility, impact and collaborations with foreign researchers.

This evidence is elucidated by the identification of the most prevalent languages among the works that make up the corpus. Although Spanish and Portuguese are the languages most used in publications in the LAC region, which is fully understandable given that they are the mother tongues of a considerable portion of the LAC peoples, the analysis of the historical series attests to the growing use of the English language in this context, especially in the last two four-year periods (2016-2019 and 2020-2023).

The alternative used by different actors in the scientific communication ecosystem, particularly publishers, regarding the alternative model of simultaneous publication in more than one language, which, as already mentioned, predominantly has English as the translation language, corroborates the change in the way research results are communicated in the region. Despite the costs involved in translating texts – it should be noted that LAC journals are not linked to commercial publishers – it is therefore a way of reconciling the local audience while seeking greater international visibility by publishing in English.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory, the practice of “internalizing exteriority” (Bourdieu, 2002), evidenced by the adoption of English as a means of communication in science, is interpreted through market logic. In this context, the researcher, acting as an investor, analyzes his/her position in the scientific field, considers the linguistic resources available in his/her repertoire and, based on this assessment, chooses a communication format that maximizes his/her gains and/or visibility, contributing to the increase of his/her scientific capital (Ortiz, 2009).

Similarly, it is possible to understand the issue of capital based on the concept of Q-value proposed by De Swaan (2001). The Q-value is an index to measure the communication potential of a language. Languages that allow greater direct communication between speakers of the same linguistic constellation, such as English, have a higher Q-value. From the perspectives of both Bourdieu and De Swaan, it is possible to see symbolic capital linked to English both in the increase in the researcher's scientific capital and in the motivation to choose the English language, which currently holds the greatest communication potential and symbolic capital in the field, in the context investigated.

In a nutshell, the linguistic choice for English reflects the search for symbolic capital and social gains. In the scientific field, mastering a language with a high Q-value, such as English, also translates into advantages related to the increase in scientific capital, contributing to greater visibility, impact and relevance in the academic field.

Another issue involved in the symbolic capital of publications is scientific impact, which depends on variables such as originality, methodological quality, dissemination channel, origin of researchers, accessibility of the work, and scientific impact which is often measured by citations. Our research shows that the choice of language plays a decisive role in obtaining symbolic capital, which is reflected in the citations received. In fact, in both databases analyzed, including Lens which has a greater representation of works in Spanish and Portuguese, the most cited articles were published in English.

It is essential to analyze how this influences the formation of a *habitus* among researchers highlighting

the importance of these results in the context of knowledge production and circulation in peripheral countries where English is neither a native nor a local language. This behavior, oriented towards the search for greater capital and scientific authority in the academic field and among their peers, reflects a process that reinforces the centrality of certain languages and cultures in the production of knowledge. The aforementioned scenario establishes hierarchies that, similar to geopolitical stratifications and divisions between rich and poor, north and south, center and periphery, reveal a new phase of stratification: the linguistic one. This hierarchy manifests itself between those who use English to disseminate their research and those who use other languages.

5. Final Considerations

This study examined the role of language choice in the internationalization of higher education research in LAC between 2008 and 2023. Using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and scientific capital as a theoretical framework, the analysis demonstrated how language practices are deeply embedded in broader dynamics of power, prestige, and market logic within the global academic field. Bibliometric analysis of articles indexed in the WoS and Lens databases revealed a clear trend toward publishing in English, despite the local and historical predominance of Spanish and Portuguese in the region. English-language publications consistently achieved greater citation impact, underscoring how the pursuit of international visibility aligns with strategies for accumulating scientific capital. These findings show that language choice is shaped not merely by individual preference, but by structural pressures that perpetuate linguistic hierarchies and global asymmetries. Ultimately, the study underscores the need for critical reflection on prevailing internationalization practices and advocates for strategies that recognize linguistic diversity and promote a more equitable and pluralistic academic environment.

In other words, the results presented and discussed here confirm the panorama that the production of knowledge on the internationalization of higher education in LAC has gradually and under the influence of various factors, adopted a *habitus* related to the language chosen for publications. The strategy to publish in English is supported by the justification of obtaining greater visibility, impact and, ultimately, promoting the internationalization of local productions.

We emphasize that such practice should be understood as an instrumental strategy, a means, and not an end in itself. Furthermore, even as a strategy, its adoption is not free from negative effects and does not guarantee the desired success, since it is influenced by the complexity of the geopolitical, cultural and scientific communication ecosystem dynamics that permeate the international academic field.

In effect, the results presented here reaffirm the importance of a critical analysis of the assumptions and practices that guide the *habitus* and the field of internationalization of academic production in the region. To this end, we exemplify the need to adopt strategies that promote greater regional integration, encouraging supportive academic cooperation and valuing local languages, which can contribute significantly to the development of a more diverse, representative and autonomous academic environment for knowledge production.

Recognizing these issues not only expands analytical possibilities in the field, but also points to paths that favor the strengthening of practices capable of questioning existing epistemic hierarchies. Furthermore, such practices reinforce the commitment to the plurality of voices, languages and epistemologies in science, promoting greater diversity and a more inclusive and equitable production of knowledge.

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Notes

Note 1. The LAC countries that have English as their official language are: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Note 2. In recent years, in addition to the recommendations of the literature (Curry & Lillis, 2022; Navarro et al., 2022), there has also been an effort to encourage multilingualism on the part of international organizations supporting culture, education and science. Examples of this include the European Charter for Researchers (European Commission), the Helsinki Initiative on Multilingualism in Scientific Communication (European Network for the Evaluation of Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities and others), the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science (Unesco), the Declaration of the Latin American Forum for Scientific Evaluation (Folec), and the Declaration on regional collaboration for the visibility of Ibero-American science (Ibero-American General Secretariat).