


Language policies, languages, and internationalization: an analysis of Public Higher Education Institutions in the North Region of Brazil/

Políticas linguísticas, línguas e internacionalização: uma análise em Instituições de Ensino Superior Públicas da Região Norte do Brasil


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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the language policies of public higher education institutions in the Northern Region of Brazil, adopting a qualitative and exploratory approach based on the works of Spolsky (2004; 2009), Dearden (2014), and Lo Bianco (2008) to understand how language and internationalization issues are addressed in these policies. The methodology employed consisted of a document analysis (Gil, 2008), conducted using information available on the

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websites of the institutions. Of the 22 public universities and institutes in the region, 7 provided specific documents related to language policies, highlighting the lack of uniformity in the adoption of these guidelines. The analysis was structured around key themes such as linguistic diversity, the use of indigenous languages, internationalization, and EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction). The results revealed considerable variation in language policy implementation across institutions, with some showing more progress in adopting practices focused on English and internationalization, while others do not explicitly showcase their proposals. The study concludes that the strengthening of language policies depends on the formulation of clearer guidelines, as well as continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, to effectively respond to regional and global academic demands.

KEYWORDS: Language Policies; Northern Region of Brazil; Higher Education.

RESUMO

Este estudo tem por objetivo analisar as políticas linguísticas das instituições públicas de ensino superior na Região Norte do Brasil, adotando uma abordagem qualitativa e exploratória baseada nos estudos de Spolsky (2004; 2009), Dearden (2014) e Lo Bianco (2008), para compreender de que forma as questões de linguagem e internacionalização são apresentadas nas políticas linguísticas. A metodologia empregada consistiu em uma análise documental (Gil, 2008), realizada a partir das informações disponíveis nos sites das instituições. Dos 22 (vinte e dois) institutos e universidades públicos da região, 7 (sete) apresentaram documentos específicos sobre políticas linguísticas, evidenciando a falta de uniformidade na adoção dessas diretrizes. A análise foi estruturada em torno de temas centrais, como a diversidade linguística, o uso de línguas indígenas, a internacionalização e o EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction). Os resultados revelaram variações consideráveis na aplicação das políticas entre as instituições, com algumas avançando mais na implementação de práticas voltadas para o inglês e a internacionalização, enquanto outras não apresentam de forma explícita as suas propostas. O estudo conclui que o fortalecimento das políticas linguísticas depende da formulação de diretrizes mais claras, além de mecanismos de monitoramento e avaliação contínuos, a fim de garantir uma resposta eficaz às demandas acadêmicas regionais e globais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Políticas Linguísticas; Região Norte do Brasil; Ensino Superior.

1 Introduction

Language, as one of the primary instruments of communication and identity construction, permeates all spheres of society, including the academic environment. In this context, language policies comprise a set of norms, guidelines, and actions that regulate the use of languages in different social contexts (Spolsky, 2004). Language policy is recognized as one of the most relevant among the various policies developed in sectors such as economy, health, education, environment, and social security (Kumar, 2020 apud Zhang, Zhao, Huang, 2022). Gaining increasing importance on the global stage, especially in times of globalization and internationalization, these policies guide the use, teaching, and preservation of languages in the educational context, particularly in higher education institutions (Spolsky, 2009). Internationalization refers to actions undertaken by universities to prepare their students for an international context, promoting the development of intercultural and linguistic competencies, the expansion of academic mobility, and their insertion

into global research networks, with the aim of making institutions more competitive on the global stage (Dearden, 2014).

In the educational field, language policies play a crucial role in defining the parameters for teaching, learning, and valuing languages. In higher education, these policies directly shape pedagogical practices, curriculum structure, and interpersonal relationships within institutions (Lo Bianco, 2008). By determining which languages are prioritized in classes, teaching materials, and assessment processes, language policies impact access to knowledge, inclusion, and student formation, promoting—or not—a more equitable education (Galloway; Rose, 2015).

This article focuses on the language policies documented by public higher education institutions in the North region of Brazil. It is important to emphasize that this analysis aims to foster discussions on the proposals contained in the documents rather than to compare them. Our intent is to highlight positive and feasible pathways based on a critical reading of institutional texts, presenting the findings through key sub-themes considered pertinent for analysis, such as Linguistic Diversity, Use of Indigenous Languages, Internationalization, and EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction).

As mentioned, the geographic scope of this article is the Northern region of Brazil, which comprises the states of Amazonas, Acre, Rondônia, Roraima, Amapá, Pará, Tocantins, and part of Maranhão. This region is notable for its vast territorial extension and cultural diversity. While rich in natural resources, the region faces significant socioeconomic challenges. In this context, the North region of Brazil, characterized by its rich linguistic diversity, presents a unique scenario regarding the implementation of language policies. Beyond Portuguese, the official language, the region is home to indigenous, African, immigrant, and sign languages. The coexistence of these languages challenges higher education institutions to address this cultural and linguistic complexity (Cavalcanti; Maher, 1993). In this scenario, language policies can serve as tools for inclusion, enabling both the preservation and teaching of minority languages while fostering the integration of these communities into the academic environment.

In the following sections, we aim to understand how these policies are formulated and implemented, with the goal of identifying potential pathways for linguistic development in institutions based on the reported and regulated experiences/proposals. The main research questions include: Which languages are valued in the language policies of these institutions, and what are the possible impacts of such valorization? How do the documents address linguistic diversity? How is internationalization reflected in the texts? What are the challenges and opportunities for developing more inclusive language policies in higher education institutions in the region?

The analysis of these policies is essential to understand how linguistic diversity is addressed in the academic environment and its implications for student formation in the context of higher education internationalization. To facilitate the presentation of this work, this article is structured as follows: a section dedicated to the concepts and approaches related to language policy; an overview of language policies in higher education; followed by the methodology, results and discussion, and final considerations.

2 Language policy: concepts and approaches

Language policy can be defined as the set of practices, decisions, and guidelines aimed at regulating and managing the use of languages in different social and institutional contexts (Spolsky, 2004). This multifaceted field encompasses not only the promotion of an official language but also the recognition and preservation of minority languages. Additionally, it involves decisions regarding the teaching and use of languages at various educational levels.

Spolsky (2004) identifies three main components of language policy: language beliefs, language practices, and explicit language planning. Language beliefs refer to the ideologies people hold about languages, which often influence decisions on which languages should be taught, learned, or promoted. Language practices involve the actual use of languages in various contexts, while language planning represents the explicit formulation of policies to guide language use in a given context, whether national, regional, or institutional. These three dimensions interact in complex ways, shaping the social and cultural dynamics related to languages.

At the national level, language practices reflect the linguistic diversity of a country, influenced by factors such as demographics, politics, and history. The use of official and minority languages serves as a clear example of this diversity. In many countries, the coexistence of multiple

languages creates a dynamic where some languages are more valued or socially prestigious than others. This phenomenon can be observed in multilingual nations like Brazil, where Portuguese is the official language, but various indigenous and other minority languages are spoken in specific communities (Hornberger, 2006). National-level language planning seeks to manage this diversity, implementing policies to strengthen the official language, promote bilingualism, or protect endangered languages (Spolsky, 2004). Decisions regarding the language of instruction in schools, the language of the media, and the language used in government documents are examples of language planning actions at the national level. In Brazil, for instance, initiatives have been adopted to preserve and value indigenous languages while reinforcing Portuguese as the language of national unity (Silva, 2017).

At the regional level, language practices can differ substantially from the national scenario, reflecting local cultural, historical, and social particularities. Regions with a high concentration of speakers of a minority or indigenous language often exhibit language practices that challenge or complement the use of the official language (Fishman, 2001). In Brazil, for example, language practices in the North and Northeast regions—where there is a significant presence of indigenous languages and *quilombola* communities—diverge from those in the South and Southeast regions, which are heavily influenced by immigrant languages (Cavalcanti, 1999; Iphan, 2016). These regions, home to the country's greatest linguistic diversity, offer a rich context for understanding Brazil's sociolinguistic dynamics, which include efforts to preserve endangered languages and the impact of internationalization on the educational landscape. Regional language planning, therefore, may focus on promoting and preserving local languages, ensuring that these communities have access to education and public services in their mother tongues. In many cases, regional language policies aim to protect the cultural and linguistic identity of minorities by promoting multilingual education that values both local and national languages.

At the institutional level, particularly within educational institutions and governmental organizations, language practices are closely tied to the role of language as a formal means of communication and a learning tool. In universities, for example, language practices may include the use of foreign languages, such as English, in teaching and research as part of internationalization strategies (Phillipson, 2016). Simultaneously, these institutions must address the linguistic diversity of their students and staff, promoting the respect and appreciation of minority or regional languages. Thus, institutional language planning focuses on creating policies that guide

language use across various domains, from internal communication to teaching (Spolsky, 2004). One example is the implementation of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) programs, which reflect not only the demands of globalization but also the challenge of balancing the promotion of English with the appreciation of national and regional languages (Dearden, 2014). Institutional language policies, in this sense, must address both the inclusion of local languages and the preparation of students for a globalized job market, where proficiency in foreign languages is increasingly valued.

3 Language Policies in Higher Education: An Overview

Language policy in higher education is characterized by complexities arising from its interaction with issues of identity, power, and globalization. Universities, as central spaces for the production and dissemination of knowledge, play a crucial role in shaping linguistic norms that influence both pedagogical practices and cultural and social identities. In this context, language is not merely a communication tool but also a powerful instrument of inclusion and exclusion, capable of structuring power relations within institutions (Bourdieu, 1991).

The choice of language of instruction in higher education carries profound implications for students' access and retention. When a single language is established as the standard—whether it is the national language or English (which has solidified its position as the global *lingua franca*)—language policy can act as a mechanism of exclusion, creating barriers for those who do not fully master that language. Consequently, the exclusive use of a dominant language can reinforce pre-existing social and cultural inequalities, marginalizing minority linguistic groups and exacerbating social exclusion (Phillipson, 2016). In contrast, language policies that value diversity and promote the use of multiple languages can foster a more inclusive academic environment. By adopting plurilingual approaches that recognize and integrate the diverse languages spoken by students, not only is access to knowledge facilitated, but pedagogical practices and the cultural environment of institutions are also enriched (Hornberger, 2006).

The impact of language in higher education extends beyond inclusion or exclusion; it profoundly influences the construction of knowledge. Language is the medium through which knowledge is constructed and mediated, and the choice of language of instruction is not a neutral decision. This choice reflects epistemological and ideological considerations that deeply shape how

concepts are understood, disseminated, and reproduced (Bourdieu, 1991). The increasing use of English in higher education, particularly in graduate programs and scientific research, clearly exemplifies this dynamic. English has become the lingua franca of global academia, facilitating the international dissemination of knowledge and promoting academic exchange, thereby strengthening the internationalization process in universities. However, this predominance also presents limitations. For those who are not fluent in English, access to knowledge becomes restricted. Simultaneously, this linguistic hegemony may lead to cultural and epistemological homogenization, limiting the diversity of perspectives (Altbach; Knight, 2007).

The internationalization of higher education has been one of the main drivers behind the increasing prominence of English in universities' language policies. With globalization and the growing demand for bilingual or multilingual professionals, many institutions have adopted programs and courses taught in English to attract international students and strengthen their global academic collaboration networks (De Wit, 2011). However, internationalization should not be viewed merely as the imposition of a foreign language. Studies suggest that internationalization should be a process of cultural and linguistic enrichment that values linguistic diversity and global perspectives (Knight, 2011). Language policies that promote multilingualism, rather than simply replacing local languages with English, can lead to a more inclusive and balanced form of internationalization, preserving the linguistic and cultural heritage of various regions (Phillipson, 2016).

Nevertheless, the implementation of fair and inclusive language policies in higher education faces several challenges. These challenges include resistance to change, limited financial and human resources, and inadequate teacher training to address linguistic diversity. In many contexts, the pressure to adopt English as the dominant language is associated with a decline in the prestige of local and minority languages, potentially deepening social and cultural inequalities (Phillipson, 2016). However, significant opportunities also exist for developing more equitable language policies. Promoting plurilingualism in universities can not only facilitate access and inclusion for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds but also contribute to the formation of global citizens who are more aware of and sensitive to cultural diversity (García; Lin, 2016). Additionally, policies that encourage the use of multiple languages in teaching and research can strengthen the internationalization of universities without compromising the preservation of local languages.

Thus, language policy in higher education emerges as a complex and multifaceted field of study that requires a careful analysis of the relationships between language, power, knowledge, and identity. By acknowledging the challenges and opportunities inherent in this context, it is possible to develop language policies that promote inclusion, equity, and quality in higher education. By valuing linguistic and cultural diversity, educational institutions can not only democratize access to knowledge but also play a fundamental role in building a more just and inclusive society (Hornberger, 2006).

Having addressed the theoretical foundation relevant to the study, the next section will focus on the methodology employed to obtain and analyze the results.

4 Methodology

This section is dedicated to presenting the methodological procedures adopted to achieve the objectives outlined in the previous sections. As a qualitative and exploratory study, this research is based on Documentary Analysis (Gil, 2008) conducted on the websites of public higher education institutions in the Northern region of Brazil. To better structure the methodological approach, this section is divided into two components: Research Area and Methodological Procedures.

4.1 Research Area: Northern Region of Brazil

The Northern Region of Brazil, with a territorial area of approximately 3,853,677 km², is the largest region in the country in terms of land area. It encompasses 450 municipalities distributed across seven states—Amazonas (AM), Pará (PA), Acre (AC), Roraima (RR), Rondônia (RO), Amapá (AP), and Tocantins (TO). The region is notable for its vast geographic and cultural diversity. Although it is the least populous region in Brazil, with an estimated population of about 17.3 million people, the North is home to rich biodiversity, predominantly covered by the Amazon Rainforest and traversed by major rivers like the Amazon and the Rio Negro. It is also home to numerous Indigenous, riverside, and traditional communities that play an essential role in preserving local ecosystems and maintaining millennia-old cultural traditions. The population density is low, reflecting both the logistical challenges posed by the geography and the dispersed settlement patterns.

The Northern Region of Brazil hosts a significant number of public higher education institutions, comprising eleven federal universities, five state universities, and seven federal institutes (private, community, and/or non-public institutions were not considered in this study). These institutions play a fundamental role in promoting education, research, and regional development, contributing to the formation of a highly skilled workforce and the generation of scientific and technological knowledge. Beyond their importance in strengthening local capacities, these entities are essential agents in fostering socioeconomic development and preserving the cultural and environmental wealth that characterizes the region. These institutions are:

Table 01: List of Federal Public Institutions by State in the Northern Region.

State	Institution
Acre	Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Acre (IFAC) Federal University of Acre (UFAC)
Amapá	Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Amapá (IFAP) Federal University of Amapá (UNIFAP) State University of Amapá (UEAP)
Amazonas	Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Amazonas (IFAM) Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM) Rural Federal University of Amazonia (UFRA) University of the State of Amazonas (UEA)
Pará	Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Pará (IFPA) Federal University of Pará (UFPA) Federal University of Western Pará (UFOPA) Federal University of South and Southeast Pará (UNIFESSPA) University of the State of Pará (UEPA)
Rondônia	Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Rondônia (IFRO) Federal University of Rondônia (UNIR)
Roraima	Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Roraima (IFRR) Federal University of Roraima (UFRR) State University of Roraima (UERR)
Tocantins	Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Tocantins (IFTO) Federal University of Tocantins (UFT) University of Tocantins (UNITINS)

Source: Made by the authors of this article.

Although the Northern Region has the largest number of states, it remains the region with the lowest number of students enrolled in higher education, whether in public or private institutions, with an estimated 408,458 students enrolled in 2022. These figures highlight a significant regional

disparity in access to higher education in Brazil, emphasizing the need to address this inequality when formulating new goals and development strategies for the sector.

After presenting the research area, the next subsection will discuss the methodological procedures adopted in this study.

4.2 Methodological Procedures

Considering the objectives of understanding how these policies are formulated and implemented, with the aim of identifying possible pathways for linguistic development within institutions based on the experiences/proposals reported or regulated, the research method employed is based on Documentary Analysis (Gil, 2008). Documentary analysis, also known as document research, is a methodology widely used in academic and scientific studies. It involves the systematic collection, examination, and interpretation of various types of documents, whether textual, visual, or digital. These documents may include articles, reports, historical archives, laws, institutional records, among others relevant to the research problem (Lima; Oliveira; Santos; Schnekenberg, 2021; Gil, 2008).

The strategy employed was grounded in searching the official websites of Public Higher Education Institutions for the Language Policies of each institution. Initially, a specific section dedicated to Language Policy was sought. In its absence, the search bar on the institutions' websites was used, employing the term "language policy". If the section was still not located, the Google search engine was utilized with the following query: "language policy + institution acronym".

After characterizing the study area and describing the methods employed, the results obtained from the documentary analysis will be presented in the following tables, along with the discussion, which is divided into the following topics: Linguistic Diversity and Policies for the Promotion of Indigenous Languages, Internationalization Policies and the Role of EMI, Implementation and Evaluation of Language Policies, and Academic Formation and Pedagogical Practices.

5 Results and discussion

Of the 22 Public Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) in the Northern region of Brazil, seven have formal documents related to Language Policy available on their official websites. These

institutions include the Federal Institute of Acre (IFAC), with a resolution published on December 22, 2021; the Federal Institute of Amapá (IFAP), published on April 22, 2019; the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM), published in 2018; the Federal Rural University of the Amazon (UFRA), with a resolution published on August 28, 2018; the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), published on October 26, 2018; the Federal University of Rondônia (UNIR), published on March 27, 2020; and the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), with a resolution published on August 30, 2018. The mentioned language policies show a notable similarity in terms of their publication years, with a time frame of only four years. This may suggest that the development of these policies was driven by the Science Without Borders program, initiated by the Federal Government. The program aimed to select, support, and fund students for international exchange programs, promoting academic mobility. To participate in this initiative, universities were required to formulate language policies aligned with the demands and practices of international academic mobility at the time, ensuring that their students could meet the linguistic criteria required by host countries and partner institutions. This movement likely not only encouraged the creation of such policies but also contributed to integrating internationalization as a central element in institutional strategies.

To provide a concise overview of the Language Policies identified, a summary of each will be presented in the following tables, specifying their respective institution and year of publication.

Chart 01: Language Policy of the Federal Institute of Acre (IFAC)

Resolution CONSU/IFAC n 50
Publication: December 22, 2021
The Language Policy of the Federal Institute of Acre (IFAC) focuses on guiding teaching, research, and extension activities related to languages, encompassing not only the teaching of Portuguese and Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) but also foreign, Afro-Brazilian, and Indigenous languages. Grounded in a socio-interactionist perspective, the policy acknowledges social and political interaction as central to the construction of meaning. Among its main objectives are providing additional language instruction for staff, students, and the external community to foster international cooperation and academic mobility, as well as aligning language teaching with existing public policies. The policy also aims to promote opportunities for intercultural and multilingual learning, in addition to developing transcultural and global competencies, assessed through international proficiency exams. Spanish is incorporated into high school curricula as part of a political initiative for integration with Latin American countries. The implementation of actions is carried out by the Coordination of Linguistic Studies (Coeli) in collaboration with campuses, ensuring adequate resources and specialized teaching staff..

Source: Made by the authors of the article.

Chart 02: Language Policy of the Federal Institute of Amapá (IFAP)

Resolution N 39/2019/CONSUP/IFAP

Publication: April 22, 2019

The Language Policy of the Federal Institute of Amapá (IFAP) was established to support the internationalization of teaching, research, and extension, with an emphasis on intercultural relations and social inclusion. Its main objectives include the promotion of additional language teaching for staff, students, and the external community, aiming at academic mobility and international cooperation. The policy also seeks to foster plurilingual and multicultural environments within the internal community of IFAP and stimulate interaction with international partners. Additionally, the policy values cooperation with the public and private sectors as a way to ensure the sustainability of linguistic actions. It also highlights the teaching of Portuguese as an additional language for foreigners, as well as the appreciation of local indigenous languages in the learning process. Among the guiding principles are equity, inclusion, respect for diversity, and the autonomy of those involved in the pedagogical process. Language teaching is integrated with transversal actions in teaching, research, extension, and management, aiming to promote intercultural experiences across all the institution's campuses.

Source: Made by the authors of the article.

Chart 03: Language Policy of the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM)

Resolution N 028/2018 CONSEPE

Publication: December 14, 2018

The Language Policy of the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM) was established with the goal of promoting the teaching of additional languages within the university, aligning with the process of internationalization in teaching, research, and extension. The policy emphasizes the value of linguistic and cultural diversity, aiming to include both Portuguese and other foreign languages in the institution's curriculum. Among the main objectives of the policy are the promotion of multilingual and multicultural environments, social inclusion through the offering of language learning opportunities, and the appreciation of local indigenous languages. UFAM also seeks to foster the development of inter-institutional international cooperation projects, aiming at the training of students, faculty, and administrative staff to work in global contexts. The structure of the policy involves offering language courses, with an emphasis on teaching Portuguese as an additional language (PLA) for foreigners, as well as courses and workshops aimed at the training and development of teachers and students, thus ensuring the promotion of an inclusive and intercultural educational environment.

Source: Made by the authors of the article.

Chart 04: Language Policy of the Federal Rural University of Amazon (UFRA)

Resolution N 206/2018 CONSUN

Publication: August 28, 2018

The language policy of the Universidade Federal Rural da Amazônia (UFRA) is aligned with the valorization of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Amazon region, where the presence of indigenous and riverside communities is significant. However, the university also seeks to promote internationalization and the use of foreign languages, such as English, through academic mobility initiatives and international partnerships. It stands out for maintaining a balance between the preservation of local languages, particularly indigenous ones, and encouraging the learning of foreign languages, aiming to broaden the academic and professional opportunities for students. UFRA promotes extension and research projects that address bilingual education and language teaching for traditional communities, reflecting its commitment to inclusion and linguistic diversity. Additionally, the university presents initiatives focused on internationalization at home. UFRA's focus is on creating policies that allow for dialogue between local and global knowledge, promoting inclusive education that is grounded in the Amazonian reality, while not losing sight of the demands of the international academic scene.

Source: Made by the authors of the article.

Chart 05: Language Policy of the Federal University of Pará (UFPA)

Resolution N 5.110/2018
Publication: October 26, 2018
The language policies of the Federal University of Pará (UFPA) are guided by a series of principles that emphasize Brazil's linguistic and cultural diversity, the democratization of access to language learning, and international cooperation. Resolution No. 5,110, dated October 26, 2018, establishes the Language Policy of UFPA, focusing on promoting linguistic diversity, supporting the internationalization process, valuing cultural exchanges, and fostering social inclusion. UFPA aims to create a multilingual and multicultural environment with actions that encourage language learning for the entire academic community, including students, faculty, and staff. These policies also promote inter-institutional cooperation, academic mobility, and the appreciation of Portuguese as the language of education and science. In addition, they support activities that encourage communication in foreign languages, indigenous languages, and sign languages, and promote initiatives aimed at including diverse linguistic communities.

Source: Made by the authors of the article.

Chart 06: Language Policy of the Federal University of Rondônia (UNIR)

Resolution N 190/2020
Publication: March 27, 2020
The Language Policy of the Federal University of Rondônia (UNIR), established by Resolution No. 190 of 2020, aims to promote the linguistic and cultural diversity of the region, valuing multilingualism and integrating populations in the Amazonian borders. The policy focuses on internationalization, encouraging exchanges with institutions in the Amazon, Latin America, and the Caribbean, in addition to ensuring universal access to language education and the valorization of indigenous languages. It also seeks to support immigrants and refugees through the teaching of Portuguese as an additional language, while considering linguistic diversity in teaching, research, and extension processes. A permanent committee was created to oversee its implementation.

Source: Made by the authors of the article.

Chart 07: Language Policy of the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT)

Resolution N 26/2018
Publication: August 30, 2018
The Language Policy of the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), established by Resolution No. 26 of 2018, aims to integrate language learning into academic curricula and promote internationalization. It encourages the teaching of foreign languages, with a focus on English, to enhance academic mobility and international cooperation. Additionally, UFT values the offering of proficiency exams and the teaching of Portuguese as an additional language for foreigners. The policy also seeks to foster multilingualism and multiculturalism, support the teaching of indigenous languages and Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), as well as create infrastructures for language learning and train faculty to teach courses in foreign languages.

Source: Made by the authors of the article.

The language policies of these institutions demonstrate significant variability in terms of the appreciation of linguistic diversity and internationalization strategies. In this section, the language policies of these seven higher education institutions are analyzed, organized into key subthemes that encompass linguistic diversity, the use of indigenous languages, internationalization, and EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction).

It is emphasized that the focus of the analysis of these Language Policies is not to criticize or favor any institutions, but rather to reflect on them, aiming for the overall development of language policies in the North region of Brazil.

5.1 Linguistic diversity and policies for the valuation of indigenous languages

Linguistic diversity, especially in the context of indigenous languages, plays a prominent role in some of the institutions analyzed, as it is based on the idea of an inseparable relationship between language and culture, making each language a cultural phenomenon for its speakers, representing its uniqueness, importance, and identity representation (IPHAN, 2016). This concept encompasses both predominant and minority languages, as well as their different forms and dialects, highlighting the complexity and richness of linguistic communities.

Of the 7 (seven) language policies analyzed, 2 (two) explicitly addressed linguistic diversity, while five did so partially and/or implicitly. UFAM, located in Amazonas, is a remarkable example of this commitment, presenting a language policy that actively promotes the preservation and use of Indigenous languages. It integrates courses and research projects focused on these languages, with the aim of incorporating them into both the academic curriculum and outreach initiatives.

The objectives of UFAM's Policy include: [...] Promoting teaching, research, outreach, and technological innovation activities focused on the Portuguese language, LIBRAS (Brazilian Sign Language), Spanish for border areas, modern foreign languages, classical languages, and Indigenous languages [...] (UFAM, 2018, p. 03, translated by the authors).²

This stance reflects an intention to value Indigenous languages, presenting them as an integral part of academic formation and the institution's commitment to local communities.

² São objetivos da Política da UFAM: (...) Fomentar ações de ensino, pesquisa, extensão e inovação tecnológicas voltados para a Língua Portuguesa, LIBRAS - Língua Brasileira de Sinais, Espanhol para as áreas de fronteira, línguas estrangeiras modernas, línguas clássicas e línguas indígenas (...)

UFRA also demonstrates recognition of Indigenous languages, albeit in a more limited way. Its policies include some isolated initiatives, such as offering courses related to these languages and specific research projects on the region's linguistic diversity.

It is the responsibility of the Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Studies (PROEN) to: encourage the inclusion of mother tongue, sign language, Indigenous languages, and foreign languages as mandatory or elective components in UFRA's undergraduate curricula and student qualification; (...) (UFRA, 2018, p. 09, translated by the authors)³.

On the other hand, other institutions mention regional languages in their language policy documents, but effective actions are limited to isolated extension initiatives. There are no clear indications of a well-developed integration of these languages into curricula or pedagogical practices. The absence of a more comprehensive language policy may be attributed to the challenges of integrating Indigenous languages into technical institutions, whose primary focus is on vocational education. Such integration must go beyond the formal inclusion of Indigenous languages, also considering respect for traditional knowledge, the linguistic particularities of each community, and their specific learning processes. It is essential that this integration is collaboratively articulated, involving Indigenous communities in the construction of the political-pedagogical project, ensuring it reflects their cultural and educational perspectives. This approach strengthens not only the preservation of Indigenous languages and cultures but also promotes technical education that is genuinely inclusive and aligned with the needs and values of these communities (PROEJA, 2007). This challenge can be exacerbated by the predominant emphasis on technical and vocational curricula, which often prioritize majority languages and sector-specific terminologies. This approach directly reflects the notion of "domain" presented by Spolsky (2004) in his reflections on language policies. According to Spolsky, domains represent specific social contexts in which linguistic practices are shaped by the norms and expectations of participants. In the academic domain, this prioritization tends to marginalize minority languages, such as Indigenous languages, limiting their presence and recognition in the educational environment. However, incorporating Indigenous languages into this domain not only challenges these prevailing norms but also fosters inclusive and transformative actions. By considering the role of Indigenous

³ à Pró-Reitoria de Ensino (PROEN) compete: incentivar que envolvam língua materna, língua de sinais, línguas indígenas e línguas estrangeiras, como componentes obrigatórios ou eletivos dos currículos de graduação e qualificação do estudante da UFRA; (...)

languages in the academic context, space is created for their appreciation and preservation. This inclusion can generate significant benefits, such as promoting a more inclusive education that respects and integrates the cultural and linguistic diversity of communities while contributing to the formation of professionals who are more aware and sensitive to cultural and social issues.

This approach not only enriches the educational experience but also contributes to the formation of more culturally aware and sensitive professionals.

5.2 Internationalization Policies and the Role of EMI

Another relevant aspect of language policies concerns internationalization and the use of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). Of the 7 (seven) language policies analyzed, 2 (two) explicitly addressed internationalization policies, one did so partially and/or implicitly, and four did not address it. The role of EMI followed the same pattern as the internationalization policies.

Internationalization refers to the process of integrating international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the purpose, function, and provision of higher education (Knight, 2003). EMI, on the other hand, is an educational practice where English is used as the primary language of instruction and academic interaction, not as a subject being taught, but as the medium through which content is delivered (British Council, 2015; Galloway, Numajiri & Ree, 2020).

Institutions such as UFPA and UFT present clear proposals for the implementation of EMI in their post-graduate programs.

The Language Policy of the Federal University of Tocantins includes the following guidelines: [...] training and encouraging faculty to teach courses in foreign languages, particularly in English, as a medium of instruction, primarily in *stricto sensu* programs, in order to attract foreign students as well as promote internationalization within the UFT academic community [...] (UFT, 2018, p. 03, translated by the authors⁴).

At UFPA, the language policy indicates an effort to integrate English into academic practices through courses aimed at internationalization and partnerships with foreign institutions:

⁴ A Política Linguística da Universidade Federal do Tocantins tem como diretrizes: (...) capacitação e incentivo a docentes para ministrarem disciplinas em língua estrangeira, em especial, em língua inglesa, como meio de instrução, principalmente em programas *stricto sensu*, a fim de fomentar a atração de alunos estrangeiros bem como impulsionar a internacionalização à comunidade acadêmica UFT (...)

“it is the responsibility of the Office of International Relations (PROINTER) to: [...] seek national and international partners for agreements and cooperation terms” (UFPA, 2018, p. 04, translated by the authors)⁵.

This strategy is accompanied by initiatives aimed at preparing students for international academic mobility, creating an environment where English plays an important role in the curriculum, even if still in an incipient manner in undergraduate programs. In this context, language planning geared toward the internationalization of education can be interpreted in light of Spolsky's (2004) theory, which defines domains as specific social spaces where linguistic practices are guided by norms and expectations established by participants. In the academic domain, the introduction of English reflects both institutional norms and external pressures related to globalization and the need to adapt to the demands of international mobility. Thus, the inclusion of English in the curriculum represents a form of micro-management within the academic domain, promoting alignment with the strategic objectives of internationalization and contributing to transforming the university environment into a more globalized and inclusive space.

However, the absence of clear and structured institutional policies that promote the use of English in pedagogical practices presents significant challenges, while also opening up opportunities for the development and strengthening of EMI in these universities, as demonstrated by: “it is the responsibility of the CPL/UFAM to [...] propose, together with PROEG, PROPESP, PROTEC, and PROGESP, actions taught and/or carried out in foreign languages aimed at strengthening internationalization at UFAM” (UFAM, 2018, p. 04, translated by the authors)⁶. Although there is a growing recognition of the importance of English, its use remains limited to specific events or isolated courses in areas such as technology and exact sciences.

Regarding technical education institutions, there are coordinated actions, such as the National Council of Federal Institutes of Vocational, Scientific, and Technological Education (Conif), which considers and addresses the internationalization of Federal Institutes of Technical Education.

Despite EMI, which has not yet been implemented – and the real possibility of this happening in Brazil is currently being questioned (Gimenez, *et al.*, 2021) – there is a growing emphasis on the importance of strengthening foreign language proficiency, especially in English

⁵ à Pró-Reitoria de Relações Internacionais (PROINTER) compete: (...) prospectar parceiros nacionais e internacionais para convênios e termos de cooperação

⁶ ao CPL/UFAM compete (...) propor junto ao PROEG, PROPESP, PROTEC e PROGESP, ações ministradas e/ou realizadas em línguas estrangeiras que visem o fortalecimento da internacionalização na UFAM

and Spanish, through programs aimed at both students and staff, highlighting the potential of these actions to promote internationalization in the future.

5.3 Implementation and evaluation of language policies

The implementation and evaluation of language policies also vary across the institutions analyzed. Of the seven language policies examined, two explicitly addressed this topic, one presented it partially and/or implicitly, and four did not address it.

UFPA and UFT have well-established mechanisms to monitor and evaluate their language policies. According to the analyzed documents, these institutions publish periodic reports on internationalization and invest in continuing education programs for faculty and students. In this context, UFT plans to “to collaborate, through joint actions, with the continued language training of professionals working in the foreign language teaching field of basic education, thus promoting dialogue and closer ties between the university and schools (2018, p. 07, translated by the authors)⁷. These practices aim to ensure a more cohesive and systematic application of language policies, aiming for their effectiveness.

The language policies of some institutions lack formal evaluation processes, resulting in fragmented and poorly structured implementation. The absence of continuous monitoring mechanisms undermines the effectiveness of these policies and prevents the creation of a continuous improvement cycle. From Spolsky's (2004) theoretical perspective, this scenario reflects deficiencies in the three central dimensions of language policy: practices, beliefs, and management. The lack of systematic evaluation hampers the articulation between linguistic practices, that is, the actual language use choices in the academic daily life, and linguistic beliefs, which are the perceptions and values attributed to languages and their functions in the institutional context. Furthermore, linguistic management, which includes the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of language policies, is weakened by the lack of formal evaluation mechanisms.

Even in institutions that value linguistic diversity, such as indigenous languages, the lack of systematic evaluation of the implementation and impact of these policies hinders progress.

⁷ Colaborar, por meio de ações conjuntas, com a formação linguística continuada de profissionais que atuam na área de ensino de idiomas da educação básica, promovendo, assim, o diálogo e a aproximação entre a universidade e as escolas

Additionally, the absence of formalized language policies in certain institutions leads to the predominance of isolated actions, often driven by individual initiatives, without broader institutional alignment.

5.4 Academic formation and pedagogical practices

The valorization of both regional and foreign languages directly influences pedagogical practices and academic formation in the institutions analyzed. According to Tardif (2014), academic formation consists of an intellectual socialization process that integrates the acquisition of specialized knowledge with the development of a critical and reflective attitude toward the field of study itself. Pedagogical practices, on the other hand, "refer to social practices carried out with the aim of implementing pedagogical processes" (Franco, 2016, p. 536, translated by the authors⁸).

Of the seven language policies analyzed, three explicitly addressed this topic, three partially and/or implicitly addressed it, and one did not address it. UFPA and UFT present efforts in their documents to integrate foreign language teaching into curricula, primarily in graduate programs. These initiatives aim to prepare students for the global market and facilitate access to international academic opportunities.

The actions under the responsibility of the Coordination of the Idiomas Sem Fronteiras Program include: "proposing actions, together with the Undergraduate Office (PROGRAD), the Research Office (PROPESQ), and the Extension and Community Affairs Office (PROEX), that promote academic literacy and language learning in undergraduate, graduate, and extension programs at UFT" (UFT, 2018, p. 06, translated by the authors)⁹.

Some higher education institutions have focused more on including indigenous languages in their curricula, promoting the formation of professionals sensitive to regional linguistic diversity. On the other hand, institutions with a technical focus have shown interest in expanding their actions to include foreign language training, aligning with what Spolsky (2004) describes as linguistic beliefs. These beliefs reflect the perception that the use of foreign languages can offer significant

⁸ se referem a práticas sociais que são exercidas com a finalidade de concretizar processos pedagógicos

⁹ Constituem ações de competência da Coordenação do Programa Idiomas sem Fronteiras: (...) propor ações, juntamente com a Pró-reitoria de Graduação (PROGRAD), Pró-reitoria de Pesquisa (PROPESQ) e Pró-reitoria de Extensão e Assuntos Comunitários (PROEX), que valorizem o letramento acadêmico e a aprendizagem de línguas na graduação, na pós-graduação e na extensão da UFT

social, economic, and academic benefits, especially in the academic domain, where these practices are manifested in a structured manner and guided by institutional norms. In this context, the inclusion of foreign languages in academic curricula is seen as a strategy not only to meet internationalization demands but also to prepare students for global interactions and to face the dynamics of an increasingly globalized job market. Therefore, the absence of a structured language policy may limit the reach of these initiatives, highlighting the need for more comprehensive strategies to integrate linguistic diversity and strengthen foreign language competencies.

Final considerations

The analysis of the Language Policies of Public Higher Education Institutions in the Northern Region of Brazil revealed that, while there are notable efforts to include linguistic diversity and promote internationalization in these institutions, the implementation of these policies still varies significantly between institutions. EMI, in particular, faces significant barriers, with universities showing some progress in including English in their curricula, although still at an early stage. Strengthening these policies will depend on the formulation of clearer guidelines, as well as their continuous implementation and evaluation, to ensure that they meet regional and international demands.

Finally, the development and implementation of effective language policies in Higher Education Institutions in the Northern Region of Brazil require an integrated approach that considers both regional and global specificities. The formulation of more specific guidelines, combined with the creation of continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, will be crucial to ensure that these policies meet regional, national, and international academic demands, promoting a high-quality, inclusive higher education connected to the globalized world.

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