

# A comparative research program on multilingualism in the scientific output of the Southern Cone

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Academic writing in English is a complex operation for researchers socialized in different native languages because it is not merely the application of skills learned in primary socialization or a capacity strictly dependent on social origin and inherited cultural capital. Other factors intervene, such as academic training, the support of editors or native collaborators who correct or translate (whose accessibility depends on the academic and social capital of individuals, their research teams and international networks), all this comes together in the mastery of this knowledge. The accumulation of these resources and the viability of acquiring writing skills in English explain the unequal circulation among academics from the same country or among researchers from non-hegemonic countries, as well gender asymmetries (Lillis and Curris, 2010; Chardenet, 2012; Beigel, 2017).

Tenure and promotion policies by research agencies and universities tend to elaborate their evaluation indicators considering journal rankings and Impact factor. This has favoured the hyper-centralization of English, pushing many disciplines to monolingualism, under the assumption that this language is the “lingua franca” of science. Another direct effect is related to the devaluation of national journals, which have lost community and institutional support, or even have shifted their language of publication to English. The harmful effects of this trend, which impoverishes

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interculturality in science and distances it from the local needs, have been widely pointed out by international initiatives such as Folec, the Latin American Forum for the Evaluation of Science (Folec, 2019), the Helsinki Initiative (Helsinki Initiative, 2019) and Unesco's Open Science Recommendation (Unesco, 2021).

This situation is evident in a region like Latin America, which has its own infrastructure for academic communication and scientific development driven mainly by public resources. Why, then, do our researchers prefer to publish their articles in English, in journals indexed in *Scopus* or *WOS*? Is there an endogenous flaw that does not allow us to improve once and for all the visibility of our journals and books in our languages? What will happen with academic Portuguese if the transition from journals to English continues to be promoted? The linguistic segmentation of knowledge circulation has already been documented for the Arab world (Hanafi and Arvanitis, 2014). There is a causal relationship in this state of affairs, which can be summarized in a kind of alienation between the potential for producing knowledge, the available public infrastructure and the reward system that our own institutions and countries develop. For this reason, the key to boost multilingualism and bibliodiversity remains in the academic assessment systems that are currently under scrutiny globally.

Indeed, languages that are marginalized by the mainstream publishing circuit, (*Scopus* or *Web of Science*), but they have not disappeared as languages of production, nor do they cease to be used in the sphere of knowledge circulation (Engels et al. 2018; Mounier and Dacos, 2010; Curry and Lillis, 2022). The fact is that the multilingualism that exists in scientific production and publishing in national languages is rendered invisible by the hierarchy granted in the evaluation systems to those traditional databases. Also operating in this direction, we should mention the limitations of the Latin American indexing services to produce regional indicators, without overlaps, because the existing platforms are not interoperable with each other. Therefore, it is critical to undertake other empirical surveys to observe the diversity of publishing circuits. Especially in Latin America, there is a very dynamical regional circuit of scientific communication, which publishes thousands of quality academic journals, indexed in the region, which offer dissemination spaces in Spanish, Portuguese and, increasingly, in a multilingual format, as shown in the recent PKP report (Khanna, Ball, Alperin and Willinsky, 2022).

This dossier offers research results that aim precisely to shed light on these diverse circuits of scientific production in Spanish and Portuguese, on the relevance of English in the self-perceptions of researchers and on the value of national publication in the academic elites accustomed to being evaluated by their levels of internationalization. The articles presented are based on studies carried out by a team composed of

researchers from different countries who worked together in three research projects. On the one hand, the Survey of Language Skills and Internationalization (Ecapin), which was executed over three populations of researchers (Brazil, Chile and Argentina) and was funded by the Neies Mercosur Program (SPU-Capes) Project 3/2015. Secondly, the comparative study between the output of the CNPq (Brazil) and Conicet (Argentina) on the basis of the *Lattes* and *Sigeva* curriculum systems that was funded by the University Dauphine-PSL and the Fondation L'Oréal. Finally, the Oliva project, which developed a statistical database of all the journals indexed in *SciELO* and *Redalyc* at the document level. These studies were also supported by two Argentine research funds (Pict 2017-2647 and PIP 2014-0157) and currently the team continues to develop new comparative studies on multilingualism in the framework of the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie's Prisa Program (2021-2023).

The results of the Ecapin trinational survey are presented in four articles that are part of this dossier. First, "Linguistic capital and international circulation: a comparative study between Argentina, Brazil and Chile" by Beigel, Almeida and Piovani. It deals with the general description of the survey, its methodology and main results. The survey was addressed to the internationalized academic elites selected for the three countries, who are expected to be highly integrated into the English-dominated global academic system. These researchers are generally subjected to strong pressures to publish abroad and in English, thus the heterogeneity observed in terms of post-graduate training abroad and its incidence – less relevant than expected – is critical to understand the construction of language skills for writing in English.

Secondly, the article "Social origin, language skills and scientific publication patterns in Argentina, Brazil and Chile" by Piovani, Almeida and Baranger is presented. This paper focuses on the part of Ecapin devoted to the modalities of acquisition of English skills, either early or later in the life course, and their development for family reasons or academic profession requirements. Regarding the patterns of scientific publication and social origin, it is suggested that, regardless of the level of competence in English, the vast majority of the researchers in the sample have published in this language. In the case of Argentina, there is no clear relationship between social origin and the fact of having published at least once in English, while among Brazilian and Chilean researchers, the proportion of those who have published at least once in English is somewhat higher among those who come from households with higher educational capital. In other words, what is verified is that academic writing in English is associated with other ways of resolving the skills needed to publish in that language: those who are more proficient publish more texts written autonomously, without sending them for translation and even with less need to seek the review of a native English speaker or a colleague with greater knowledge

of the language. But the vast majority highlight the importance of participating in international projects and account the collaboration of researchers who contribute decisively to making these publications viable.

Thirdly, an article by Gallardo entitled “Linguistic capital at stake in the academic field. Profiles of acquisition, valuation, and use of English by Argentine scientific researchers”. This article analyses in more detail this national case in Ecapin and the relationship between the volume of linguistic capital and discipline, and shows that among the social sciences and humanities (SSH) there are people who master three or more languages, while the rest of the disciplinary areas tend to concentrate only in English. The former, moreover, tend to have a more “legitimate” social origin and a cosmopolitan profile that favours linguistic capital. However, these SSH researchers publish less in English and to a lesser extent value it as a determinant factor for their academic career. Gallardo argues that the centrality of English in the Argentinian’s circulation strategies seems to be much more influenced by variants of evaluative culture than by the social origin or skills acquired in primary socialization, before entering the field.

Next, the article by Beigel and Bringel, entitled “Situated circulation and publication languages of Southern Cone academic elites” reflects on the multi-scale positioning of researchers from the three surveyed populations in order to “situate” their global facets and their localization. The paper takes the findings observed in the Ecapin survey and relates them to an empirical analysis of these national communities, analysing the complete *curricula vitae* of sample of selected researchers from the populations surveyed. This study shows that seen as a whole, the complete production trajectories include greater bibliodiversity and multilingualism than expected, with a significant portion publishing in national journals and in the native language, in all scientific areas. Beyond this general finding, differentiated profiles are observed for each country. In Chile there is a greater introjection of English in the structuring of its own scientific community, while in Argentina there is a greater concern to value the Latin American circuit. Brazil shows a stronger orientation towards publication within its borders, but this does not necessarily mean that they publish regularly in Portuguese.

In direct connection with this problem, the article by Beigel and Digiampietri entitled “The battle of languages in national publication” delves in another source, examining two national curricular data systems, *Sigeva* (Argentina) and *Lattes* (Brazil), and comparing the complete output self-loaded by the Conicet and CNPq researchers. This comparison reveals important differences between the two populations studied, since Argentine researchers publish very little in their country, but maintain a percentage of their publications in Spanish in all areas. They have quality national journals,

but the evaluative culture of Conicet seems to indicate them that they will not be rewarded for promotion in the academic career. However, the orientation towards Latin American journals and books in the SSH explains the weight of Spanish in the trajectories studied. In contrast, the article shows that Brazilian researchers publish frequently in Brazilian journals, but many of these documents are published exclusively in English. This tendency to publish nationally is not only strong in the SSH, but in all disciplines, a phenomenon that the paper explains by the weight of journals in the health sciences and agricultural sciences in the *SciELO* collection.

Finally, the article by Salatino entitled “The linguistic circuits of Latin American scientific publishing” undertakes the observation of journals, with another source: the data collected in the framework of the Oliva project, i.e. a database of 1720 journals indexed in *SciELO* and *Redalyc*. First, it relates this corpus of production published in Latin American journals to the language of production found in Scopus and Web of Science, demonstrating the scarce representation of languages other than English in these mainstream databases. It then provides an overview of Latin American journals based on a classification into four linguistic circuits: three separated entirely by language (Spanish, Portuguese and English) and a fourth multilingual. Of particular interest in this article is the evidence it provides on the growth of this multilingual space, composed of more than 1000 journals publishing partly in English, Portuguese and Spanish, and, in many cases, in French, German and Italian.

Finally, we would like to point out that in the aim to push multilingualism and translation policies that are so important for our regional circuit, we offer this dossier in two languages, Spanish and English, as well as this introduction additionally in Portuguese. We are deeply grateful to Tempo Social for having hosted this proposal and for the editorial efforts that the multilingual publishing demands.

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