ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN BRAZIL

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DIAGNOSTICS AND HISTORY

- Knowledge of English is very limited in Brazil
- Teaching of English is very bad in Brazil
- Brazilians are mostly monolingual, although there are more than 200 native and imported languages currently spoken
- 1940: 1 million (out of 50) had German, Italian or Japanese as first language
- 1942
  - Law forbids the use of any language but Portuguese
  - Blumenau, SC: 1.5% of the population in jail for *linguistic crime*

RECENT CONTEXT

- Brazil as an emerging country: BRICS
- 1960s
  - Military dictatorship supported by US administration
  - Anti American feeling in academia, especially in humanities that persists to date
- Isolation of Brazilian Higher Education
  - Rare foreign faculty members
  - Whole departments where no faculty member speaks English
  - Almost total absence of foreign undergraduate students

MYTHS

- Teaching in English violates the Constitution
- Teaching in English violates the Civil Code
- Brazilian students do not want to learn English
- Portuguese is an international language
- Teaching in English undermines national sovereignty: better to handle “them” the keys to the country!
- Prospective students must show interest and learn Portuguese before they come, as is the case of English
- We have excellent courses of Portuguese for foreigners in our institution

CURRENT SITUATION

- Few institutions offer a few regular (graduate) courses in English
- Even fewer (private) institutions offer graduate programs in English
- Brazil does not have an effective public policy to teach English at the basic level
  - English proficciency is an excellent proxy for social status
- Science without Borders
  - English knowledge is the real barrier for the mobility of talented students
  - Remedial attempt: “English without borders” program

WHERE SHOULD WE GO?

- Brazil may (will, I hope) go from emergent to emerged
- There is no hope Portuguese will become academic *lingua franca* or be widely used in international communication
- To be economically and politically influential, relevant in R&D and attract foreign students Brazilians must be able to communicate in English
- To fulfill their role our universities must speak English!