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THE JOURNEY TO UNIVERSITY:

experiences and practices of students from migrant backgrounds in higher education

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Tese apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Linguísticos da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Doutor em Estudos Linguísticos.

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The journey to university: experiences and practices of students from migrant backgrounds in higher education

ELISA MATTOS DE SÁ

Tese submetida à Banca Examinadora designada pelo Colegiado do Programa de Pós-Graduação em ESTUDOS LINGUÍSTICOS, como requisito para obtenção do grau de Doutor em ESTUDOS LINGUÍSTICOS, área de concentração LINGUÍSTICA APLICADA, linha de pesquisa ENSINO/APRENDIZAGEM DE LÍNGUAS ESTRANGEIRAS.

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Belo Horizonte, 27 de fevereiro de 2024.

A todos os estudantes migrantes,
em especial às participantes
e ao participante desta pesquisa.

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And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud
was more painful than the risk it took to blossom

Anaïs Nin

ABSTRACT

This dissertation primarily aims is to analyze and discuss the academic literacy practices and the experiences of four students of/from migrant backgrounds at a federal public university in Brazil, following the theoretical and methodological principles of Critical Applied Linguistics (Pennycook, 1997, 2017, 2021; Moita Lopes, 2006), literacy (New London Group, 1996), as well as Academic Literacies (Barton; Hamilton, 2000; Lea; Street, 1998, 2006; Lea, 2004), in dialog with decolonial studies (Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2000, 2007), with investigations about internationalization and the insertion of migrant students in higher education (e.g., Arar *et al*.., 2020, 2022) and migration and colonialism (Vergara-Figueroa, 2018; Mayblin; Turner, 2020). With crisis migration seen as a complex process, involving both the countries of origin and destination (Baeninger; Peres, 2017), and taking into account initiatives addressed to migrant students in Brazil, we analyzed Public Call 064/2020 and entries 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024, considering public data on applicant participation, to understand the scenario where this group is situated at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). Based on the narratives of the participants, we analyzed their academic experiences and academic literacy practices, situating them as international students. Our data analysis shows that the participants' academic literacy practices are highly connected to digital technologies, and that the demands and challenges the participants face refer more to specific issues of appropriation of knowledge developed at the university and cultural differences from the university/academic settings, rather than language difficulties. The practical recommendations included in this research can be incorporated at UFMG and other higher education institutions.

Keywords: academic literacy; higher education; students of migrant background.

RESUMO

Esta tese tem como principal objetivo analisar e discutir as práticas de letramento acadêmico e as experiências de quatro estudantes migrantes de crise em uma universidade pública federal, com base nos princípios teórico-metodológicos da Linguística Aplicada Crítica (Pennycook, 1997, 2017, 2021; Moita Lopes, 2006), dos estudos dos Novos Letramentos (New London Group, 1996) e dos Letramentos Acadêmicos (Barton; Hamilton, 2000; Lea; Street, 1998, 2006; Lea, 2004), em diálogo com os estudos decoloniais (Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2000; 2007), as investigações sobre internacionalização e inserção de estudantes migrantes de crise no ensino superior (e.g., Arar *et al*., 2020, 2022) e os estudos sobre migração e colonialismo (Vergara-Figueroa, 2018; Mayblin; Turner, 2020). Considerando a migração de crise como um processo complexo, relacionado com os países de origem de destino (Baeninger; Peres, 2017), e tendo em vista as iniciativas de acesso ao ensino superior para estudantes migrantes de crise no Brasil, analisamos o Edital 064/2020 e as entradas 2021, 2022, 2023 e 2024, considerando os dados públicos de participação dos candidatos, para entender o cenário de inserção desse grupo na Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG). Com base nos relatos dos quatro participantes desta pesquisa, analisamos suas experiências acadêmicas e práticas de letramento acadêmico, situando-os como estudantes migrantes internacionais. Nossa análise evidencia que as práticas de letramento acadêmico dos quatro participantes estão permeadas pelas tecnologias digitais, e indica que suas demandas e desafios referem-se mais a questões específicas de apropriação de conhecimentos desenvolvidos na universidade e a diferenças culturais no espaço acadêmico, do que a dificuldades linguísticas. Os apontamentos da pesquisa, feitos por meio de recomendações práticas, podem ser incorporados na UFMG e em outras instituições de ensino superior.

Palavras-chave: letramento acadêmico; ensino superior; estudantes migrantes de crise.

REZIME

Objektif prensipal tèz sa a se analize ak diskite sou pratik alfabetizasyon akademik ak eksperyans kat etidyan imigran nan kriz nan yon inivèsite piblik federal nan Brezil, ki baze sou prensip teyorik-metodolojik nan Lengwistik Aplike Kritik (Pennycook, 1997, 2017, 2021; Moita). Lopes, 2006), New Literacies studies (New London Group, 1996) and Academic Literacies (Barton; Hamilton, 2000; Lea; Street, 1998, 2006; Lea, 2004), an dyalòg ak etid dekolonyal (Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2000; 2007), envestigasyon sou entènasyonalizasyon ak ensèsyon etidyan imigran kriz yo nan edikasyon siperyè (pa egzanp, Arar *et al*., 2020, 2022) ak etid sou migrasyon ak kolonyalis (Vergara-Figueroa, 2018; Mayblin; Turner, 2020). Lè nou konsidere migrasyon kriz kòm yon pwosesis konplèks, an relasyon ak tou de peyi orijin ak destinasyon (Baeninger; Peres, 2017), epi pran an kont inisyativ yo jwenn aksè nan edikasyon siperyè pa etidyan imigran kriz nan Brezil, Nou analize Avi 064/2020 ak antre. 2021, 2022, 2023 ak 2024, konsidere done piblik yo sou patisipasyon kandida, yo konprann senaryo a nan ensèsyon gwoup sa a nan Inivèsite Federal Minas Gerais (UFMG). Dapre rapò patisipan yo nan rechèch sa a, nou te analize eksperyans akademik ak pratik alfabetizasyon akademik etidyan sa yo, nou te sitye eksperyans yo kòm etidyan imigran entènasyonal yo. Analiz nou an montre ke teknoloji dijital yo gaye nan pratik alfabetizasyon akademik elèv yo, epi li endike ke demand ak defi elèv sa yo gen plis referans sou pwoblèm espesifik apwopsyon konesans yo devlope nan inivèsite a ak diferans kiltirèl ki genyen nan espas akademik-inivèsitè a. pase difikilte lengwistik. Nòt rechèch yo, ki fèt atravè rekòmandasyon pratik, ka enkòpore nan UFMG ak lòt enstitisyon edikasyon siperyè.

Mo kle: alfabetizasyon akademik; edikasyon inivèsite; etidyan imigran kriz yo.

خلاصة

هذا هو الهدف الرئيسي لتحليل ومناقشة ممارسات التعليم الأكاديمي وخبرات أربعة طلاب مهاجرين من الأزمات في جامعة Pennycook, 1997, 2017) عامة فيدرالية في البرازيل ,مع قاعدة المبادئ النظرية للمنهجية اللغوية التطبيقية النقدية والرسائل الأكاديمية دراستين (New London Group, 1996) رسائل جديدة ,(Moita Lopes, 2006 ;2021 في حوار مع الدراسات الاستعمارية ,(Barton; Hamilton, 2000; Lea; Street, 1998, 2006; Lea, 2004) Arar) كما أن التحقيقات حول التدويل وإدماج الطلاب المهاجرين من ,(Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2000, 2007) et al., 2020, 2022) ودراسات حول الهجرة والاستعمار (Vergara-Figueroa, 2018; Mayblin; Turner, واستنادًا (Baeninger; Peres, 2017) تعتبر الهجرة أثناء الأزمات عملية معقدة لكل من بلدان المنشأ والمقصد. (2020 إلى مبادرات الوصول إلى الجامعة للطلاب المهاجرين بسبب الأزمات في البرازيل ,قمنا بتحليل الإشعار رقم 064/2020 ,والتطبيقات المقدمة من 2021 و2022 و2023 و2024، مع الأخذ في الاعتبار البيانات العامة المتعلقة بمشاركة المرشحين لغرض الانضمام إلى فصل دراسي في جامعة ميناس جيرايس الفيدرالية .بناءً على تقارير المشاركين في هذا البحث، قمنا بتحليل الخبرات الأكاديمية وممارسات المعرفة الأكاديمية لهؤلاء الطلاب، ووضعنا تجاربهم كطلاب مهاجرين دوليين. يوضح تحليلنا أن ممارسات المعرفة الأكاديمية للطلاب تتخللها التقنيات الرقمية .ويشير تحليلنا أيضًا إلى أن مطالب وتحديات هؤلاء الطلاب، تشير إلى قضايا محددة تتعلق بتملك المعرفة التي تم تطويرها في الجامعة والاختلافات الثقافية في الفضاء الجامعي UFMG وليس إلى الصعوبات اللغوية .يمكن دمج الملاحظات البحثية، التي تم تقديمها من خلال التوصيات العملية، في .والجامعات الأخرى

.الكلمات المفتاحية :محو الأمية الأكاديمية؛ جامعة؛ الطلاب المهاجرين

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAC	Atividades Acadêmicas Complementares – Complementary Academic Activities
ABNT	Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas – Brazilian National Standards Organization
AL	Applied Linguistics
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BNCC	Base Nacional Comum Curricular – Brazilian National Common Core Curriculum
CAD	Centro de Atividades Didáticas – Center for Pedagogical Activities
CALx	Critical Applied Linguistics
CAPES	Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – Coordinating Agency for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel
CCR	Canadian Council for Refugees
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEAM	Centro de Estudos Avançados Multidisciplinares – Center of Advanced Multidisciplinary Studies
Ceasa	Centrais de Abastecimento de Minas Gerais – Minas Gerais Supply Centers
CEFET-MG	Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica de Minas Gerais – Federal Center for Technological Education of Minas Gerais
CEP	Comitê de Ética – Brazilian Ethics Review Board
CEPE	Conselho de Ensino, Pesquisa e Extensão – Council of Education, Research, and Extension
CLT	Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho – Consolidation of Labor Laws
CMP	Colonial Matrix of Power
CNE	Conselho Nacional de Educação – Brazilian National Council of Education
CNIg	Conselho Nacional de Imigração – National Immigration Council
CNJ	Conselho Nacional de Justiça – National Council of Justice
CNPq	Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico – National Council for Scientific and Technological Development
CONARE	Comitê Nacional para os Refugiados – National Committee for Refugees
Copeve	Comissão Permanente do Vestibular – Standing Committee of Vestibular
CRT	Critical Race Theory
CSF	Ciências sem Fronteiras – Science without Borders

CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CST	Critical Social Theory
CSVM	Cátedra Sérgio Vieira de Mello – Sergio Vieira de Mello Chair
CT	Critical Theory
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DACA	Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
DCN	Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais da Educação Básica – Brazilian National Curriculum Guidelines
DR	Dominican Republic
DRCA	Departamento de Registro e Controle Acadêmico – Office of Academic Records and Registration
DRI	Diretoria de Relações Internacionais – International Relations Office
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ELT	English Language Teaching
ENEM	Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio – National Secondary Education Examination
ERT	Emergency Remote Teaching
EUREDIE	European Researcher Development and Engagement for Interculturality and Equity
Fale	Faculdade de Letras – Faculty of Letters
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FAUBAI	Associação Brasileira de Educação Internacional – Brazilian Association for International Education
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent Form
Fump	Fundação Universitária Mendes Pimentel – Mendes Pimentel University Foundation
HDI	Human Development Index
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IaH	Internationalization at Home
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally displaced people
IMF	International Monetary Fund

INDL	National Inventory of Linguistic Diversity
INEP	Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira – National Institute for Educational Studies and Research
IoC	Internationalization of the Curriculum
IPHAN	Instituto do Património Histórico e Artístico Nacional – National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute
L1	First language
L2	Second/additional language
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning,
LGPD	Lei Geral de Proteção de Dados Pessoais – General Data Protection Law
LHR	Linguistic Human Rights
LR	Linguistic Rights
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
NELFA	Núcleo de Estudos de Línguas para Fins Acadêmicos – Center of Language Studies for Academic Purposes
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAL	Portuguese as an Additional Language
PEC-G	Undergraduate Student Agreement Program
Poslin	Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Linguísticos – Graduate Program in Linguistic Studies
Prograd	Pró-Reitoria de Graduação – Pro-Rectorate of Undergraduate Studies
PROEX	Programa de Excelência Acadêmica – Academic Excellence Program
PUC Minas	Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais – Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais
PWL/PLAc	Portuguese as a Welcoming Language
REUNI	Programa de Apoio a Planos de Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais – Program for the Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities
RMBH	Região Metropolitana de Belo Horizonte – Greater Belo Horizonte Region
SD	Standard Deviation
SJMR	Jesuit Service for Migrants and Refugees
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SoTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
SSBS	UFMG Summer School on Brazilian Studies
STF	Supremo Tribunal Federal – Federal Supreme Court

UAB	Universidade Aberta – Open University of Brazil
UFMG	Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais – Federal University of Minas Gerais
UN	United Nations
UnB	Universidade de Brasília – University of Brasilia
UNESP	Universidade Estadual Paulista – State University of São Paulo
Unicamp	Universidade de Campinas – State University of Campinas
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
US	United States
USR	University Student Roadmap

CONTENTS

Sumário

[PREAMBLE]

Personal note 1:
meeting the researcher

This dissertation does not start here. It did not start in 2020 either, when I joined the Graduate Program in Linguistic Studies (Poslin) as a PhD student, at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). This dissertation probably started in 2004, when I was in my senior year of undergraduate studies, majoring in Portuguese and English, at the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PUC Minas), while working as an academic intern in academic reading and writing workshops in this university. This dissertation, in idea and practice, then continued when I was approved (later dropping out) in the Graduate Program in Languages at PUC Minas in 2005-2006, hopping around for the following 10 years, as I worked, traveled, and studied independently, which included a diploma in English Language Teaching (ELT) at UFMG, several 'short' stays abroad in all five continents, and two summer schools, the first at the University of Leipzig, with a full scholarship, and the second at the University of Basel.

At a certain point, this dissertation quietly landed in the NOVA University of Lisbon, where I entered a master's degree in ELT in 2017. It then quickly flew over to UFMG, where I found a temporary academic home as a master's degree student in Applied Linguistics at Poslin as well as a teaching assistant of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) from 2018 to 2023. During this time, this dissertation kept flirting with the ideas of my previous experiences and teaching practice. At NOVA, my primary focus was on *Interculturality and Critical Cultural Awareness* (Byram, 1997, 2012) and *Language Policy, Multilingualism, and Interculturality*, yielding studies (i.e., Sá, 2017; Mattos, 2018, 2021a) and new conversations through Cultnet – an international network created by Byram, connecting researchers and educators interested in interculturality.

This intercultural outlook blossomed beyond my imagination in 2018, when I started teaching Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PWL) for students of migrant backgrounds at the Federal Center for Technological Education of Minas Gerais (CEFET-MG). The work with this particular group added an important new layer to my teaching and research practice through

Critical Interculturality (Walsh, 2009). I have since engaged with Celpe-Bras as an instructor and examiner. I have also been involved in reception projects at a local level, in Belo Horizonte.

Since 2018 at UFMG, my research interests have been geared toward understanding the specificities, incongruities, opaqueness, power plays, and 'hidden features' of academia and the university. Looking at academic literacy practices through a more critical and decolonial lens has become central in my practice, particularly in reference to knowledge-making and research socialization through disciplinary academic writing and in academic conferences. This critical outlook has been equally driven by concerns garnered in over 20 years of teaching experience, during which time I have taught English and Portuguese to audiences as varied as high school and university students, business people, immigrants, and social workers.

Specifically, the concerns arising from these experiences involved a constant search for: (i) pedagogical resources to meet my students' language learning needs, (ii) a greater and more realistic understanding of the teaching-learning processes (in regard to additional languages), and (iii) a 'reconciliation' or better understanding of the often-conflicting relationship between theory and practice, an ongoing exercise that requires a critical analysis of reality (Fairclough, 2019) and a critique of my own pedagogical practice (cf. Dewey, 1933), through reflection and dialog. I believe these concerns can be seen stitched, interwoven throughout this dissertation.

Sources of Support

In institutional terms, this dissertation is situated within the Applied Linguistics area at Poslin, in the Foreign Languages Teaching/Learning research line. It is also affiliated with the following research groups – which have been invaluable sources of support throughout my PhD journey: AFECTO: Faircloughian Approaches to Textually Oriented Body/Discourse/Gender Studies, based at the Center of Advanced Multidisciplinary Studies (CEAM), at the University of Brasilia (UnB), IndisciPLAr: Portuguese as an Additional Language from an Indisciplinary Perspective, at the University of Campinas (Unicamp) and UFMG, and NALET: The Language Learning and Technological Teaching Center (CEFET-MG), all of which are certified by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). Finally, NELFA: The Center of Language Studies for Academic Purposes, at UFMG, was central in my academic development. These groups have been fundamental in helping me find my way in the sometimes lonely journey of my doctorate studies. Most importantly, **the research groups have provided me with a space for challenging long-standing views of knowledge and science**.

This dissertation and my research were also supported through a PhD scholarship from the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES)[1], from 2021 to early 2024, without which I would not have been able to conclude my graduate studies. I have also been supported by a co-op grant via the CAPES Academic Excellence Program (PROEX) for research dissemination internationally. Additional support came from the 2023 EUREDIE project: the European Researcher Development and Engagement for Interculturality and Equity, with a full scholarship for the EUREDIE Virtual Summer School organized in 2023 by İstanbul Üniversitesi-Cerrahpaşa, Évora University, and the Ludwig Maximilian University, and Girift EdTech, held throughout the second half of 2023.

In this process of research socialization, I have come to see clearly the role of the English language in disseminating ideas and creating dialog in academia and beyond, which is also[2] why I chose to write this dissertation in English: because I wanted to reach as many readers as possible *[you never know whose research you will be able to access online, and from where]*. Hence, my purpose was to reach readers who may not understand Portuguese, but can navigate in English, and readers in Brazil and in countries that have Portuguese as their primary or official language. Based on the belief that research socialized *also* (but not only) in English can facilitate the dissemination of knowledge, the choice for writing in this language was equally guided by the central themes of this dissertation: 'academic literacy', 'internationalization', and 'crisis migration', and the fact that the actionable recommendations made can be implemented beyond UFMG and the institutional contexts of higher education (HE) in Brazil.

Lastly (not finally!), this PhD dissertation and my research-turned-practice and practice-turned-research have been informed (and informally) supported by the several undergraduate and graduate students with whom I worked teaching EAP at UFMG, the high school students I had the pleasure of working with at CEFET-MG (such a transformative teaching experience for me), and my private EAP students who are Management professors in Rio de Janeiro. São Paulo and Natal, with whom I have had countless conversations about academic literacy miles beyond our disciplinary borders. Socialization of all kinds has been key to my academic and personal development.

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[2] I should add that, personally, writing in English comes more easily to me than writing in Portuguese. Hence, choosing to produce this dissertation in English has also been a matter of language preference.

Positionality Statement

Following Coburn *et al*. (2013, p. 332) in their acknowledging the need to go "Against scholarly traditions that erase place, belonging and identity", I also begin this PhD dissertation by locating myself. I am a ciswoman racialized as White in Brazil and perhaps in most of Latin America, and racialized as Brown in most of the Global North. I am not, nor have been in a situation of having to seek refuge or asylum. I am not, nor have been stateless. I have been an immigrant for short periods of time, and I have assisted immigrants abroad. But I cannot say I have known the need to flee my country or home, or the urgency to seek better living conditions abroad, of being separated from family.

As a mixed-race Brazilian whose European ascendancy is marked in my surname, traced back to Portugal and Spain, and whose African and Indigenous ascendancy has been erased from records and formally whitened under the banner of racial democracy – my father being '*moreno*' (per his birth certificate) and my grandfather 'Indigenous-looking' ('*mas seu avô era um índio!*'), I am also equally aware that my visuality places me in a zone of comfort in my country, and I cannot (re)claim any lost rights and perceived/lived injustices in Brazil, as I have not experienced them at this level. The oppressions or injustices I have experienced stem mostly from gender inequalities and for having chosen an occupation so undervalued these days.

All of this is to say that **I write this dissertation from the many layers of my privilege**. I have always known about university and graduate school. I knew I was supposed to go to college; it was never *not* an option (obtaining a degree), and I was afforded the *material and symbolic* conditions to pursue a higher education. I have had the opportunity to choose where, when, and what to study, as well as what to do for a living. Have my choices been influenced and impacted by problems of various kinds along the way? Absolutely. But even when material conditions went away, I still reaped the benefits of a privileged upbringing, as certain doors had already been opened, and I had already been socialized into 'intellectual work'.

It took much effort and restlessness before I could finally say '*oh, wow, so this is how the world works!*'. And then, it was another uphill battle from within, coming to terms with my profession, my privileges, whatever little power I have, and some oppression, yes. But it was through teaching and research that I found a place where my voice resonates, where my passion embraces others and challenges injustices; even if I have not experienced them myself. It is from these spaces, which I have made my territory, that I write this dissertation.

White privilege is like
an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions,
maps, passports, codebooks, visas,
clothes, tools, and blank checks.

Peggy McIntosh (1989)

1. Introduction

This introductory chapter lays the groundwork for our doctoral research, providing an overview of the research scenario, with initial considerations about higher education (HE) in Brazil and access to HE by individuals of international migrant backgrounds in Brazilian higher education institutions (HEIs). These considerations are followed by the research questions and purpose and a contextualization of the research within **Applied Linguistics**, situating it more specifically in the subarea of **Critical Applied Linguistics**, in dialog with a range of theoretical frameworks from the **Social Sciences**. The research scope and relevance are presented shortly after, followed by an overview of this dissertation.

1.1 Research Scenario

With around 1.5 million immigrants, of which 650 thousand have refugee legal status (Canuto, 2023), **Brazil is the country receiving most migrants in Latin America**, possibly due to several advancements made in its migration laws since the country's redemocratization, in 1988. The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 guarantees fundamental rights and protections for all citizens, regardless of nationality or immigration status, laying the groundwork for the country's migration laws (Brasil, 1988), which have been updated with the enactment of the Refugee Law in 1997 (Brasil, 1997) and the Migration Law in 2017 (Brasil, 2017). These laws are a benchmark in Brazil's migration legislation, providing a comprehensive legal framework aimed at promoting the rights and social inclusion of migrants and refugees.

Despite these strides, which have placed the South American country at the forefront of migration laws and resettlement initiatives, **Brazil still lacks an overarching migration policy to effectively welcome international migrants** in its territory, and not just provide them with access to the country. Hence, partially in response to the absence of the State in developing a policy of migration and resettlement, and based on a democratic and inclusive view of HE, Brazilian HEIs have implemented selection and admission processes explicitly addressed at international migrant students, often in partnership with local or regional chapters of the Sergio Vieira de Mello Chair (CSVM) (Rocha; Azevedo; Mendes, 2022, for a review). UFMG's Public Call 624/2020 is one such example, and the starting point of our research, as will be explained in this chapter.

HE scenario in Brazil

The development of HE in Brazil has been remarkable in the last decades, driven by many factors, such as government and/or institutional policies focused on promoting equitable and democratized access to HE, **affirmative actions** that reserve a percentage of university places for **low-income and historically minoritized students**, and the expansion of the private HE sector (Feres, 2019)[3]. Many of these policies have been created to increase diversity, reduce historical inequalities, and foster inclusivity. Public HE in Brazil has played an important role in this scenario, particularly for low-income, remotely-located, and minoritized students, with the creation of higher education institutions in remote and/or underserved areas.

Specifically, 18 federal public universities were created between 2003 and 2016, which increased the total number of federal universities to 68 (Brasil, 2016). These new universities, along with new federal public institutes[4], have promoted access to HE, with 67% of the 302 public HEIs in Brazil located in the interior of the country (INEP, 2020), and have also helped to reduce the concentration of HEIs in the southeast and south regions of the country (Feres, 2019). Democratization and interiorization policies have been developed and implemented by government initiatives such as UAB: the Open University of Brazil (Brasil, 2006) and REUNI: the Program for the Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities (Brasil, 2007), as marked attempts to reduce the asymmetries in public HE (Simas *et al*., 2022), which has been primarily occupied by the Brazilian elites, as Camargo and Araújo (2018) explain.

In recent years, HE in Brazil has been significantly impacted by internationalization policies. Largely driven by **the neoliberal agendas of academic capitalism** (cf. Jessop, 2018; Somers *et al*., 2018) and the 'need' to improve the quality of education, HEIs have invested in academic mobility programs and partnerships for inbound and outbound faculty and students to prepare them for the demands of a rapidly changing and **increasingly globalized world**, and to enhance university competitiveness. In this regard, de Wit and van der Wende (2015) note that internationalization is believed to provide students, faculty, and staff with opportunities to engage with diverse cultures and develop the skills and knowledge required to succeed in a global, **knowledge-based society** – we agree, but also challenge this belief, as will be shown.

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[3] The number of private HEIs in Brazil increased from 1,579 in 2003 to 2,306 in 2017. The number of students enrolled in these institutions increased from 1.7 million to 6.3 million in the same period (ABMES, 2018).

[4] In late December of 2023, the federal government announced that it plans to open another 100 campuses of federal institutes in the country by 2026 (Tokarnia, 2023, for Agência Brasil).

As Brazil seeks to strengthen its position as a leader in HE in Latin America, public and private HEIs in the country have looked to increase their engagement with international partners by promoting **academic mobility** actions for students and scholars (de Wit; van der Wande, 2015). This is reflected in the growing number of partnerships and/or agreements between Brazilian and international HEIs (Curi, 2019), with **significant investments in collaborations for outbound education** via study abroad scholarships granted or sponsored by the CAPES[5] Foundation (the Coordinating Agency for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) and CNPq[6].

Locally, initiatives have been implemented for on-campus students, faculty, and staff as **Internationalization at Home (IaH)**, also resulting in the promotion of **Brazilian culture and language** to incoming students and scholars, and the need to create and/or consolidate official language policies, such as the one at UFMG[7]. These language policies provide guidelines and frameworks for language instruction, usage, and support services at the HEI, therefore ensuring consistency, coherence, and inclusivity in language-related practices. By formalizing language policies, UFMG aims to address linguistic diversity, promote multilingualism, and support the academic and professional development of its community members.

More recently, IaH policies in Brazilian HEIs have also been impacted by the influx of migrants, refugees, and other conflict-induced displaced persons residing in the country, with many HEIs responding to the situation by creating agreements to facilitate the validation of HE degrees obtained abroad and to promote access to HE (DRI, 2022). Specifically, between 2022 and 2023, 22 Brazilian HEIs implemented policies aimed to facilitate the admission of migrant-background students, 17 of which were developed via public calls addressed explicitly to this population (UNHCR, 2023). Our research is centered around one of these calls, which has been in place at UFMG since 2020 and is addressed to refugees, stateless persons, political asylum

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[5] As the Foundation's internationalization program, CAPES PrInt implemented 3,850 scholarships/grants from January 2019 to July 2020, sending 2,947 Brazilians abroad and enabling 903 foreigners to come to Brazil (RNP, 2020). As of 2023, CAPES had 48 international cooperation agreements with 45 partner countries, and over five thousand scholarship/grant holders: https://www.gov.br/capes/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/painel-debate-programa-de-internacionalizacao-da-capes. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

[6] One example is the now defunct *Ciências sem Fronteiras* (CsF) – or Science without Borders, an academic mobility program focused on developing Brazilian undergraduate students abroad (Nery, 2017; Brasil, 2022). Another example is PEC-G: the Undergraduate Student Agreement Program. Officially launched in 1965, the program aims at enabling international students from the Global South to undertake their undergraduate studies in Brazil (Leal; Moraes, 2018).

[7] https://ufmg.br/storage/e/a/f/f/eaffac094935e138be4b6ffccda87a13_1685990623237_2135592528.pdf. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

seekers, and holders of temporary humanitarian visas and residence permits for humanitarian reasons.

1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

The main purpose of this PhD research is to **uncover the academic experiences and academic literacy practices of four students of migrant backgrounds enrolled at UFMG via Public Call 624/2020**, mapping their academic demands and challenges while revealing their intercultural potential, based on a critical outlook of interculturality and IaH. Because this doctoral research involves more than one source of data, gradually moving from the broader context of Public Call 624/2020 to the literacy practices of the migrant-background students, our research questions have been grouped into two bundles listed in the following.

About Public Call 624/2020, understood as a humanitarian initiative situated within the UFMG's IaH actions, our research has been guided by three questions pertaining to the public call, the call's entries, and the applicants' participation in each entry. They are:

→ **What are the call's main provisions for access to HE?**

    o   What are the entry requirements?

→ **What specificities can be identified in each entry?**

    o   What do these specificities entail? Have there been changes?

→ **What is the overall profile of the applicants in each entry?**

    o   What conclusions can be drawn from their participation?

Regarding the students of migrant backgrounds enrolled at UFMG via Call 624/2020, more specifically **the four research participants**, and based on an amplified lens of academic literacy as well as a critical view of internationalization and interculturality, our research has been guided by four questions related to the participants and the academic space in which they are situated. Here are the questions:

→ **What 'routes' have they taken in their journeys to university?**

    o   Who and/or what has influenced this process?

→ **What are their academic literacy practices like at UFMG?**

    o   With what academic genres and situations do the participants engage?

→ **What are their academic demands and challenges at UFMG?**

    o   What is the nature of these demands and challenges?

→ **What is their intercultural potential at UFMG?**

    o What actions can be proposed to develop this potential?

Answering these questions thus requires us to:

- ✓ Analyze Public Call 624/2020 and related legislation;
- ✓ Analyze the entries and the applicants' participation;
- ✓ Unearth the participants' journeys to university;
- ✓ Gain insight into the participants' academic literacy practices;
- ✓ Offer actionable recommendations centered on interculturality.

To answer these above questions and achieve these goals, a methodological framework was designed to carefully address **the complexities and specificities of the research context**, employing a mixed-method approach across interconnected stages and drawing on diverse data sources. This strategy aims to provide a thorough and well-rounded exploration of the research questions and purposes, in agreement with the theoretical frameworks that guided the research and inspired by the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), which will be reviewed in Chapter 3.

This research employs a mixed-method approach, therefore integrating qualitative and quantitative methods aimed to ensure a triangulated and more comprehensive understanding of the research topic, as the research data is sourced from multiple channels. Our initial plan was to design an open access material with non-normative academic literacy guidelines for students of migrant backgrounds at UFMG, to be made freely available online. However, key changes required over the course of the research meant we had to forgo this material – instead focusing on providing **actionable recommendations** based on the research findings, as will be presented in Chapter 7.

1.3 Situating the Research

As a critical and applied investigation, this research is grounded on a view of language as the materialization of discourse (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 2019) in a wide range of semiotic modes (Kress, 1995; Hodge, Kress, 1998; Van Leeuwen, 2005, 2017), deeply rooted in social and cultural contexts, where human interaction takes place. **Meaning emerges contextually** in dialogical relationships co-constructed and situated socio-historically (cf. Bakhtin/Voloshinov, 1986 [1929]) and shaped by the broader cultural, historical, and social environments. Based on

the basic tenets of **Critical Applied Linguistics** (CALx) (cf. Grabe, 2010; Moita Lopes, 2006; Pennycook, 1997, 2001, 2006, 2010, 2017, 2021; Rajagopalan, 2003), I[8] assume that **no theory is neutral**, Applied Linguistics (AL) still less (Kleiman; Viana; de Grande, 2019; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Rampton, 1997).

In close dialogue with CALx, our PhD research follows a socio-critical and historicized understanding of academic literacy, acknowledging the asymmetries and inequalities within literacy practices (Gutiérrez, 2008; Hernández-Zamora 2019). This view is associated to the New Literacies studies (New London Group, 1996; Zavala; Niño-Murcia; Ames, 2004) and the Academic Literacies model advocated for by Lea and Street (1998, 2006), Lillis (1999), Barton and Hamilton (2000), Lea (2004), Zavala (2010, 2011), and Street (2013, 2017), among several others. Academic literacy is hence understood primarily as a set of **culturally situated social practices**, in which the knowledge and experiences of students and teachers/academics must be considered, and power relations inherent to these practices must be recognized, in particular for novice learners (Street; Lefstein, 2007), as is the case of our research participants.

Our concept of language therefore stems from a more comprehensive understanding that places it as a culturally situated social practice from which matters of identity and power cannot be separated (Moita Lopes, 2006; Zavala, 2018). This is important because issues of identity and power are recurrent in the four research participants' experiences and practices. In addition, within this socio-critical and historicized view of language and literacy, we also make room for **a decolonial view of academic literacy**. This is very important because, as Gee (2001) notes, participation in HE practices heavily depends on one's familiarization with the conventions and specificities of these activities and settings – a rather daunting task for incoming students and novice academics, seeing that many conventions, singularities, and expectations are opaque and often 'hidden' (cf. Street, 2010; Fischer, 2012).

Because we have grounded the research on CALx, we also draw from studies in other areas, particularly the current research on the HE internationalization and IaH (Arar *et al.*, 2020, 2022, de Wit, 2019), as associated with **migration, displacement, and colonialism** (Mayblin; Turner, 2020; Vergara-Figueroa, 2018), specifically **crisis migration** (Baeninger; Peres, 2017; Martin; Weerasinghe; Taylor, 2014; McAdam, 2014), and based on **decolonial studies** (e.g., Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Mignolo, 2000, 2007a, 2007b, 2011; Quijano, 2000, 2007). In this

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[8] Like Miranda (2017), based on Bizon (2013) and Ruano (2019), I alternate between the pronouns I and we in this research, in order to better signal my own positions and/or experiences ("I") as well as shared positions and knowledge ("we": other authors and myself, the thesis advisor and myself etc.).

backdrop, we also find inspiration from selected readings in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly Fairclough (1989, 1992), Fairclough and Wodak (1997), and Wodak (2001), and, at a more personal level, this research is equally informed by **feminist intellectuals** (Adichie, 2009; Cade Bambara, 1970; hooks, 1984; 2014; and Nin, 1972, among others).

Effectively, this means that the present research recognizes and appreciates the several **intersections** (cf. Crenshaw, 1989; 2002, 2017; Collins, 1998, 2019, 2022 [1991]; Akotirene, 2019) of the research participants and the contexts in which their academic experiences and literacy practices take place, casting light on the participants' singularities, multiplicities, and positionalities (Alcoff, 1988, 1991). The same applies to my practice and my positionality, not only as an experienced language teacher and an early career researcher (ECR), but especially as someone whose identities inform her academic pursuits as a researcher 'in the making'.

1.4 Scope and Relevance

Of note, the relevance of implementing selection processes and public calls specifically addressed to individuals of (international) migrant backgrounds in Brazil is underscored by various social, economic, and humanitarian considerations. The 'novelty' of these specific calls and selection process, which have only been launched more recently, means that HE in Brazil, as experienced by this population, has yet to be explored more deeply and thoroughly. That is also why, when discussing the data and findings, we offer suggestions for future research. We now turn to other relevant variables that have motivated the present research.

Firstly, **access to free basic education is a human right provisioned for in the 1988 Constitution** (Brasil, 1988). While HE may not be under the purview of basic education rights in Brazil, it is certainly connected to it[9], particularly when citizenship and work are concerned[10]. Providing individuals of international migrant backgrounds with **access to quality HE** in their host country can uphold these persons' dignity, recognizing their right to develop academically, intellectually, professionally, and (inter)personally. At its core, HE may serve to safeguard their

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[9] As discussed in Rangel (2012), item V of article 208 of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution specifically determines that the Brazilian State has the duty to provide HE by guaranteeing "access to the highest levels of teaching, research and artistic creation, according to the capacity of each one" ("acesso aos níveis mais elevados do ensino, da pesquisa e da criação artística, segundo a capacidade de cada um", Brasil, 1988).

[10] This connection is stated in article 205 of the Brazilian Constitution of 1988: "Education, a right for all and a duty of the State and the family, will be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the person, their preparation for the exercise of citizenship and their qualification for work" (original: "A educação, direito de todos e dever do Estado e da família, será promovida e incentivada com a colaboração da sociedade, visando ao pleno desenvolvimento da pessoa, seu preparo para o exercício da cidadania e sua qualificação para o trabalho", Brasil, 1988).

dignity and acknowledge their intrinsic worth as human beings, regardless of their migratory or displacement status.

This is also aligned with the **principles of equality and non-discrimination** adopted by various international human rights treaties; for instance, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – UDHR (United Nations, 1948), the Refugee Convention (United Nations, 1951), as well as the ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (United Nations, 1966). In Brazil, in addition to the 1988 Constitution, broad initiatives such as the National Education Plan (PNE), emphasize **the importance of inclusive education policies** aimed at reducing social and economic disparities (Brazil, 2014); policies which are in dialog with the aforementioned international instruments and cover migrant-background students in Brazil.

It has also been argued that quality HE can "provide displaced persons with the skills and knowledge to live independent[ly] and enjoy professional prosperity", potentially reducing "their economic vulnerability and risk of marginalization" (Arar *et al*., 2022, p. xiv). Hence, quality HE may offer displaced individuals the opportunity **to build knowledge and expertise**, and to gain practical skills that are essential for navigating globalized job markets – in the host country or elsewhere. HE can also foster social networks that may facilitate employment and career advancement for displaced individuals. Quality education functions as a protective factor against exploitation, discrimination, and social exclusion, thus offering displaced individuals a pathway to resilience (Dryden-Peterson, 2015).

Importantly, qualified and educated individuals may be better positioned to contribute to economic development by participating in the workforce and contributing to social security. Studies (e.g., Belfield; Levin, 2007; Oreopoulos; Salvanes, 2011) consistently show that higher levels of education are associated with higher wages and lower unemployment rates, and greater job stability. This means that the economic contributions of educated individuals often extend beyond their individual achievements to broader macroeconomic outcomes via tax revenues, which fund essential public services and infrastructure projects. Consumption patterns stimulate demand for goods and services, which can impact the host country's economy in quite a positive way, despite misleading objections to the contrary, oftentimes made by pundits from politically conservative arenas[11].

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[11] Contrary to misconceptions often propagated by conservative commentators, the economic benefits of educated migration far outweigh any perceived costs (Card, 2009; Peri, 2016). Instead, immigration, particularly of highly skilled individuals, is associated with positive economic outcomes, including higher productivity, technological

It could be argued that all of these reasons also apply to Brazilian students. However, the specific circumstances of conflict-induced international migration may render individuals of migrant background vulnerable in different ways. In education, they may present specificities not shared with Brazilian students, which can impact their admission and permanence to HE. For instance, they may have had limited experience with the Brazilian school system, meaning not being entirely familiarized with the selection processes or the content required in admission examinations. They may also not be eligible to apply for HE via the affirmative policies in place at present, meant primarily to address historical inequalities Brazilian students may face, further justifying the need for specific selection processes/calls for individuals of international migrant backgrounds, as we will show in this dissertation. This is another key motivating factor that has driven our research.

Moreover, within the context of internationalization and IaH, HE is meant to 'drive' the development of global citizens and **increase diversity and inclusivity** in academic settings (de Wit, 2019). Providing access to students of (international) migrant backgrounds in HE can thus contribute to the development of individuals who are not only knowledgeable in their fields but are also culturally aware, fostering a sense of global responsibility, a benefit that equally applies to domestic students. This signals the HEI's committed to humanitarian values and social justice toward the international community in addressing the challenges faced by displaced populations who have resettled in Brazil. Notably, the cultural and intellectual enrichment HEIs can provide is not found exclusively in classrooms, lectures, and laboratories. It is also co-constructed in the diversity of experiences and perspectives, thus elevating the educational experience for all students.

In this landscape of increased access to university and IaH, there has been a growing interest in academic literacy practices, rendering several studies that deal with the specificities of academic literacy and the world of university education, whether in **Brazil** (Marinho, 2010; Mattos; Diniz, 2024; Motta-Roth, 2012; Ferreira; Lousada, 2016; Simões; Juchum, 2017; Paris; Laranjeira, 2019; Amaral; Pereira; Coscarelli, 2020), or in Latin America (Trejo; Martinell; González, 2014; Sito; Kleiman, 2017; Hernandez; Rodríguez; Franco, 2021), Africa (Ibe *et al*., 2020), Asia (Solikhah; 2015; Tso; Chung, 2016), or in the Global North (Wingate, 2012). In our research, academic literacy is analyzed through an amplified lens to include situations not

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innovation, and overall economic growth (Hunt; Gauthier-Loiselle, 2010; Kerr; Kerr, 2020). It would seem that providing individuals of migrant backgrounds with access to quality HE is not counterproductive to the host country's economy, as that such individuals may employ their gained expertise in the host country's workforce.

consistently addressed in the literature, as will be discussed, in agreement with Wargo and De Costa (2017). Our research deals with the academic experiences and academic literacy practices of students of international migrant backgrounds.

1.5 Overview

This dissertation is organized into an 'overture', seven chapters (this introduction as the first chapter), and a 'coda'. Chapter 2 reviews the literature that guided the research, Chapter 3 is concerned with the methodology, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are focused on discussing the findings, Chapter 7 discusses emerging issues and themes based on the data generated and discussed, and offers a set of related actionable recommendations that can be implemented in diverse contexts of HE; the 'coda' recaps our research, finalizing the text of this dissertation.

In keeping with a somewhat unconventional style, as done so far, I added comments and questions in square brackets in specific parts of the text, displayed in a different font and color, as in: *[like this]*. All excerpts and long direct citations are also displayed in a different font. The main idea was to underscore these elements of the dissertation/text, hence drawing the readers' attention to the voices of the participants and the researchers cited herein.

Not all speed is movement.
Toni Cade Bambara (1970)

In the same way, the people whom I most abhor,
I abhor them for elements that I abhor in myself.
Shirley Geok-lin Lim (2014)

2. Literature Review

This chapter reviews the main areas and theoretical assumptions of the present research, namely: Critical Applied Linguistics, decolonial studies, crisis migration, internationalization of HE and IaH, and academic literacy. While these areas and their respective studies may seem distance from one another, they are indeed related. The purpose of this literature review is not to exhaustively evaluate the theoretical assumptions of the aforementioned areas but rather to create **a theoretical 'mosaic'** connecting them, underscoring the importance of contextualizing the phenomena under investigation.

In what may seem unusual for the conventional content of scientific writing, illustrations have been included in this chapter in an attempt to visually highlight aspects of the events and phenomena under review. This is based on the power of visuality in scientific communication (cf. Ma *et al*., 2011; Balm, 2014), particularly those images of the graphic type (Mitchell, 1986). This is also associated with the increasingly recurrent deployment of other semiotic modes in scientific communication and academic literacy practices, as will be made evident in other moments of our research.

2.1 Critical Applied Linguistics

Critical Applied Linguistics (CALx) combines insights from Applied Linguistics and Critical Social Theory[12] to examine language and communication in relation to issues such as power, ideology, and social justice (cf. Pennycook, 1997, 2001, 2006, 2017, 2021). The critical orientation of CALx requires language to be examined in its social, cultural, and historical contexts, recognizing the ways in which **it reflects and shapes social reality**, for CALx is grounded in the belief that **language is not neutral**, and neither is what we do with it. Hence, in contrast with mainstream Applied Linguistics[13] (AL), CALx is taken as **a politicized field**:

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[12] Critical Social Theory (CST) and Critical Theory (CT) are correlated multidisciplinary frameworks concerned with the pursuit of emancipatory knowledge and the "dialectical tensions in modernity" (Leonardo, 2004, p. 11). Both are associated with reflections stemming from the Frankfurt School, including the works of Dewey (1916, 1938) and Habermas (1984, 1987), but Critical Social Theory tends to go beyond and include discussions associated with social theories and cultural studies, resulting in important connections, such as those between race, gender, and critical and social thinking in Patricia Hill Collin's work (1998, 2019, 2022 [1991]). For more comprehensive accounts of Critical Theory, see Bronner (1994), How (2017), and Bohman (2021). For Critical Social Theory, see Calhoun (1995), Crossley, (2004), and Leonardo (2004).

[13] My decision to address the main features of CALx in this dissertation comes as a result of the realization that most CALx theses and dissertations tend to gloss over the area, neither providing readers with key differences in relation to general AL, nor situating it within the scope of the discipline. This deliberate choice also aims to facilitate comprehension, as I hope this research finds its way into diversified audiences and communities.

its advocates recognize that, as part of **a social system**, **AL is not a neutral discipline**[14]. This means that, ultimately, the knowledge constructed within/in this discipline may be employed for either liberation or oppression.

Unlike AL, which often treats language as a neutral object of study, CALx recognizes the inherently political nature of language and linguistic practices. With language understood as a site of struggle where power relations are negotiated and contested, CALx interrogates how language use is implicated in perpetuating or challenging existing power structures, ideologies, and inequalities. By examining language practices within their socio-political contexts, CALx seeks to uncover hidden forms of domination and advocate for social change and justice. CALx does not shy away from tackling difficult and challenging issues.

The significance of CALx lies in its ontological commitment to uncover and expose the hidden agendas of language use and its 'pledge' to *critically equip* individuals – as opposed to 'empowering' them[15] – to resist domination and promote social change. This singularizes CALx as *socially constructed applied linguistics*, a term I use as inspired by Hymes's (2020 [1972]) *socially constituted linguistics*. Hymes's stance from the early 1970s places *socially oriented linguistics* as concerned with both theory and practice:

> *If linguistic research is to help as it could in transcending the many inequalities in language and competence in the world today, it must be able to analyze inequalities. In particular, a practical linguistics so motivated would have to go beyond means of speech and types of speech community to a concern with persons and social structure.*
>
> (Hymes, 2020 [1972], p. 74)

CALx draws upon a wide range of theoretical frameworks and appraches, establishing ongoing dialogues with other disciplines, particularly with the Social Sciences (Schmitz, 2008), thus recognizing the ideological and dialogic nature of language (Bakhtin/Voloshinov, 1986 [1929]). This includes studies in Marxism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, feminism, and Critical Race Theory (CRT), among others, to examine more deeply the relationship(s) between

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[14] Santos (2010 [1987], 2014) situates the question of knowledge in the Social Sciences and the Humanities in a more comprehensive way by theorizing about the Epistemologies of the South, proposing a fairer paradigm of scientific practice and knowledge, based on the recognition and appreciation of different forms of knowledge, especially those emerging from the Global South. As Santos, Araújo, and Baumgarten (2016, p. 18) note, these epistemologies "emerge as a subaltern, insurgent, resistant, alternative epistemological proposal against a project of capitalist, colonialist and patriarchal domination, which continues to be today a hegemonic paradigm". I see CALx as affiliated with this new paradigm.

[15] We discuss the complicated idea of 'empowerment' in Chapter 7 when addressing power and privilege.

language and power. These dialogues help to uncover the ways in which language can reinforce or challenge dominant power structures in contemporary societies (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

This means that, methodologically speaking, **CALx research relies on a range of tools, prioritizing qualitative methods**. As Talmy (2015, p. 155) observes, "critical researchers are not content to simply 'describe' what they see; they attempt to promote change of inequality through sustained critique and direct action, or praxis", which is what we have attempted in this dissertation. CALx scholars critically analyze language practices, policies, and discourses, in an ongoing and self-reflective attempt to uncover and challenge hegemonic structures of power, inequality, and discrimination (Pennycook, 2021).

Figure 2.1 A: CALx and mainstream AL.

Critical applied linguistic (CALx) concerns	Centered on the following:	In opposition to mainstream applied linguistics (ALx):
A strong view of applied linguistics (ALx)	Breadth of coverage, interdisciplinarity, and autonomy	The weak version of ALx as linguistic theory applied to language teaching
A view of praxis	Thought, desire, and action integrated as praxis	A hierarchy of theory and its application to different contexts
Being critical	Critical work engaged with social change	Critical thinking as an apolitical set of skills
Micro and macro relations	Relating aspects of applied linguistics to broader social, cultural, and political domains	Viewing classrooms, texts, and so on as isolated and autonomous
Critical social inquiry	Questions of access, power, disparity, desire, difference, and resistance	Mapping language onto a static model of society
Critical theory	Questions of inequality, injustice, rights, wrongs, and compassion	A view of social relations as largely equitable
Problematizing givens	The restive problematization of the given	Acceptance of the canon of received norms and ideas
Self-reflexivity	Constant questioning of itself	Lack of awareness of its own assumptions
Preferred futures	Grounded ethical arguments for alternatives	View that applied linguistics should not aim for change
Heterosis	The sum is greater than the parts and creates new schemas of politicization	The notion that: Politics + ALx = CALx

Source: Pennycook (2001, p. 2).

In Figure 2.2 A, Pennycook (2001) distinguishes between the strong and mainstream views of AL. The strong view is more focused on **critical analysis**, language-power dynamics, social justice, and diversity. It challenges power structures and established norms. It has a more overtly **political and transformative agenda**. In contrast, the mainstream view emphasizes language learning and teaching methodologies within existing frameworks, thus aiming to improve language learning and teaching practices and address practical challenges and issues in language-related domains. While both perspectives are concerned with the study of language and its application in real-world contexts, CALx is decidedly more committed to social change.

Of note in Pennycook's (2001) comparison is the idea of *heterosis*, a concept originally developed in biology, which in CALx refers to the transformative potential that emerges when different linguistic and cultural elements come into contact, interact, and influence one another. The notion of heterosis serves as a way to address the criticism CALx often receives mostly from more conservative mainstream applied linguists: that CALx is merely a 'mix' of politics and applied linguistics. Pennycook's view of heterosis stresses the advantages of engaging with **diverse linguistic and cultural resources and repertoires**, as opposed to adhering to a mostly monolingual and monocultural perspective. A visual representation of CALx's concerns and domains is presented in Figure 2.1 B (Pennycook, 2001, p. 3)

For example, in language education, CALx challenges traditional approaches that focus almost exclusively on linguistic competence, prioritizing it while dismissing the relevance of being critically aware about the social-political implications of language use (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). CALx does not ignore the linguistic aspect of language teaching; rather, it emphasizes the importance of **equipping language learners to critically analyze and challenge dominant discourses and power structures**. In this regard, CALx's contribution to language education is also evident in its recognition and focus on multilingualism and diverse language repertoires, by advocating for the inclusion of students' home and heritage languages and the promotion of multilingualism as a valuable resource for learning (García; Wei, 2014).

By integrating these principles into language education, educators can **create learning environments that foster critical thinking, cultural awareness, and social justice**. In these spaces, students are encouraged to explore linguistic diversity, challenge linguistic prejudices, and engage in **meaningful dialogue about language and power dynamics** (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). This approach not only enhances language learning outcomes but also prepares students to navigate diverse linguistic and cultural contexts in an increasingly globalized world.

Figure 2.1 **B**: CALx concerns and domains.

CALx concerns	CALx Domains
A strong view of Applied Linguistics	Critical discourse analysis and critical literacy
A view of praxis	
Ways of being critical	Critical approaches to translation
Micro and macro relations	
Critical social inquiry → Critical Applied Linguistics ←	Critical approaches to Language teaching
Critical Theory	Critical approaches to Language testing
Problematizing givens	
Self-reflexivity	Critical approaches to Language planning and language rights
Preferred futures	Critical approaches to Language, literacy and workplace settings
Heterosis	

Source: Pennycook (2001, p. 3).

The connections between CALx and language education are seen in a more situated and comprehensive stance on language policy, as CALx aims to expose the ways in which language policies can reinforce social inequalities and marginalize certain groups and communities of language users (Block; Cameron, 2002). CALx can help to uncover the underlying ideologies and interests embedded in and promoted in language policies. For instance, CALx researchers have examined how language policies are used to perpetuate linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 2006), to erode linguistic and cultural diversity (Canagarajah, 2005, Lo Bianco, 2010; Heller, 2011), and to marginalize indigenous languages (Nieto, 2009; Johnson; Ricento, 2013).

In our context, CALx has also been employed in the investigation of language policies and teaching for refugee and immigrants in Brazil (Oliveira; Silva, 2017; Diniz; Neves, 2018; Lopez, 2018). Such investigations shed light on the **unequal power dynamics** surrounding the design and implementation of policies, thus providing grounds for advocating for inclusive and socially just language policies that go beyond the 'neat' and traditional, top-down/bottom-up

perspective of language policy and language planning (e.g., Cooper, 1989) to consider more implicit elements that are often not made entirely visible (Shohamy, 2006)[16].

2.2 Colonialism, Modernity, Coloniality

Very broadly speaking, **colonialism** is defined as **a system** in which a dominant nation exercises political, economic, and cultural control over a region or group of people outside its own borders. It is rooted in European expansionist and white supremacist policies from the 15th century onwards (Mignolo, 2011), as Western European colonial powers sought to establish colonies beyond the territories of Europe, primarily for economic reasons, including access to natural resources, markets, and cheap labor (Fanon, 1963). While scholars recently distinguish between four or more types of colonialism[17], in this dissertation we use the term 'colonialism' as encompassing **the colonization of non-European peoples and territories**, e.g., Indigenous Native Americans, Africans, and Asians, through "European settlement, violent dispossession and political domination" (Kohn; Reddy, 2024, n. p.).

European colonialism involved various forms of domination and control, with political control established in two different ways: either through direct rule or via indirect rule. In direct rule, European colonial power exerted full control over the administration of the colonies and sent European officials and military personnel to govern the colonies directly. Administrators retained significant political power and made decisions that directly impacted the livelihood of the colonized populations. In indirect rule, local elites were co-opted to govern the colonies on behalf of the colonial powers. The European authorities provided guidance and oversight to the local leaders, but retained ultimate political control (Albertini; Wirz, 1976; Mamdani, 2018).

Additionally, European powers often introduced their own legislation in the colonies, implementing **legal systems that facilitated the exploitation** of resources, regulated trade, and

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[16] As Shohamy (2006) posits, *de facto* language policy refers to the actual language practices of a society, reflecting implicit language policies, which can provide valuable insights into language practices and be used to assess the effectiveness of *de jure* language policies. Moreover, Shohamy (2006) argues that language policies should not be viewed as a static set of rules or regulations but as an active participant in shaping social dynamics and power relations.

[17] Mick (2014, p. 126) discusses four types of colonialism: settler, exploitation, surrogate, and internal: "In settler colonialism, large numbers of people from the centre emigrate to the colony with the intention of staying and cultivating the land. Exploitation colonialism involves the emigration of far fewer people; the goal here is to extract as many resources as possible from the colony and to transfer them to the centre. Surrogate colonialism is when the colonial centre promotes the emigration and settlement of groups which do not belong to the dominant ethnic group in the centre. Internal colonialism is a relatively new term, first used in the 1950s and 1960s. It refers to the uneven structure of power and uneven development of different regions within a single (nation) state with the centre exploiting the periphery.". Tuck and Yang (2012) also put forward the notion of external and internal colonialism, which resort to different strategies to maintain control of resources.

maintained control over the population (Anderson; Killingray, 1991). Laws were often imposed without any consideration for local customs or traditions, which were often deemed 'inferior'. As pedagogically explained in Gordon (1997, p. 421), "international law articulated these ideas by denying sovereignty to certain peoples, who were included in the international legal system only to determine the extent to which they could be dominated by Europeans". In a way, I beg the question: *is this not what many internationalization policies have been doing?* In HE and beyond? We return to this point in section 2.4.

Economic exploitation was a fundamental aspect of European colonialism, as colonizers extracted natural resources/raw materials/wealth from the colonies, exploiting and enslaving non-European peoples to benefit European economies and societies (Stoler, 1995; Quijano, 2001; Acemoglu; Robinson, 2017; Rodney, 2018 [1972]). In this highly exploitative scenario, capitalism, an economic system characterized by private ownership, profit accumulation, and market competition, played a significant role in driving the ever 'hungry' European colonial expansion, which grew exponentially in the 18th and 19th centuries. Central to this process was the colonial enterprise, providing European powers with access to new markets, raw materials, and cheap labor (Osterhammel, 2009, 2014).

As Wood observes (2002), capitalism was not just an emerging economic system, but *a social and political order shaped by the mechanisms of colonialism*, since the accumulation of capital required the subjugation of non-European peoples. This exploitation resulted in unequal trade relationships, forced labor, and the destruction of local industries (Stoler, 1995). It should be duly noted, however, that the main benefactors of European colonialism, economically, were not only European societies and individuals, but also the colonized elites who worked on behalf of the colonizing powers and effectively 'betrayed' the economic interests of their own people (Langan, 2018, p. 4). Any resemblance to the present-day political machinations of Brazil, for instance, is not purely coincidental.

Beyond the chronology of colonialism rests imperialism, and beyond imperialism there is **neocolonialism**. As the most sophisticated form of colonialism (N'krumah, 1965, Uzoigwe, 2019), given its ability to go unnoticed, neocolonialism does not require the structures of the past. We bring neocolonialism into the spotlight because it is where we are currently situated: in the age of **new colonialities** and mechanisms that officially may not be called 'colonial', but that have preserved **the tastes and textures of colonial times**, only packed and sold differently. Neocolonialism means that after the expansionist movements came to a halt with the apparent 'fall' of European empires (more of an exit, actually), former colonies and sovereign states that

were by all means officially independent, remained tied to external powers; particularly in Asia and Africa. In this scenario, political and economic dependence came more overtly through so-called multilateral *aid agreements* with so-called 'independent' organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as N'krumah (1965) notes.

Figure 2.2 A: Britain and France dividing the world for themselves.

In the socio-cultural sphere, 'soft power', often through **the entertainment industry**[18], has played a central role in **reinforcing neocolonialism in more subtle ways**, with the purpose of preserving Western 'superiority' and "the West's self-image as a civilized" (thereby a more advanced race), aimed at maintaining "colonial attitudes that are considered racist, bigoted, and

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[18] For instance, through the white savior trope, which is broadly understood as a key element in the constru ction and maintenance of white identity and privileges acquired since colonial times (Kherbaoui; Aronson, 2022). In the Hollywoodian film industry, non-white characters are often presented as dysfunctional, in contrast to white 'civility' (Sium, 2021). The non-white character is shown on-screen as always in need of some form of salvation, invariably through "the colonialist, religious, and capitalist intervention of a white do-gooder", as noted in Sium (2021, p. 3). White savior films and narratives often operate as overt "manifestations of racial cooperation and egalitarianism with latent expressions of white normativity and antiblack stereotypes" (Hughey, 2009, p. 543).

condescending, especially in attitudes about education and religion" (Uzoigwe, 2019, p. 82). In science, colonialism remained strong (and very much alive!) with the promotion of an outward look at scientific and academic development. On this, Thésée (2006, p. 30), argues that many Global South countries such as Brazil "have generally accepted the scientific tradition as it was imposed from outside, and have generally lost the opportunity to develop their own indigenous tradition".

Figure 2.2 B: Carving up Africa during the Berlin Conference of 1884-85.
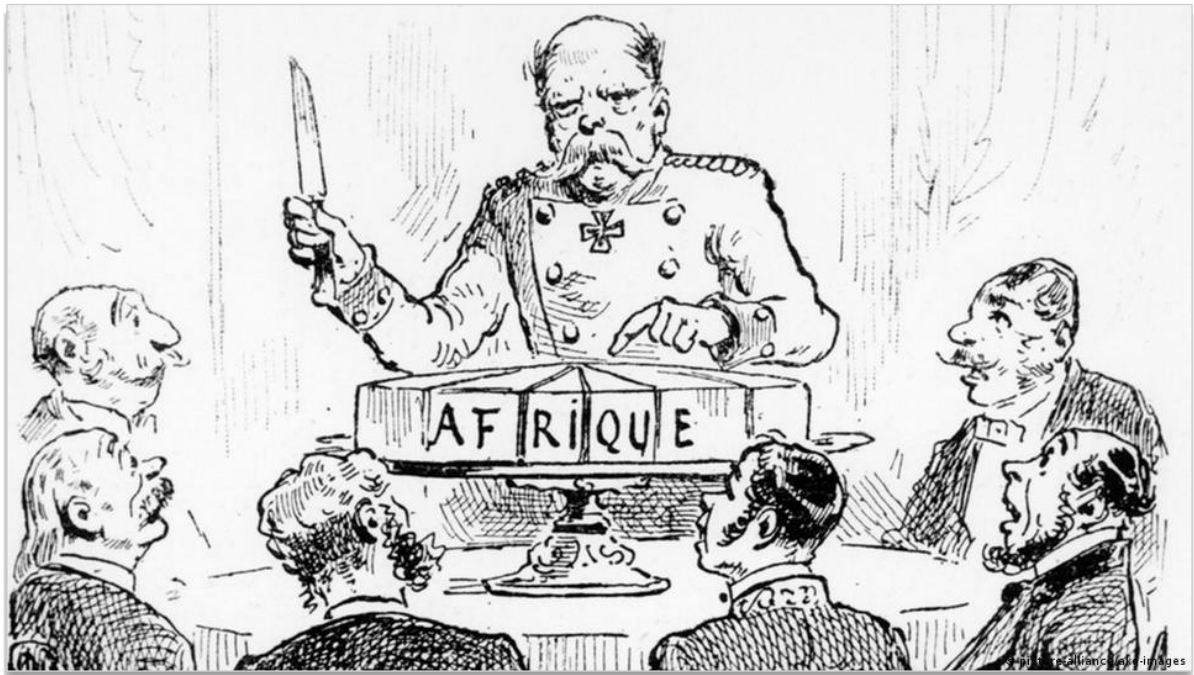
Source: Public domain, retrieved from: https://www.dw.com/en/130-years-ago-carving-up-africa-in-berlin/a-18278894

Coloniality: The Burning Ashes of Colonialism

Colonialism also exerted a profound influence on the cultural and social fabric of the colonized societies. Because colonialism was justified by European intellectuals as a means of 'civilizing' non-European peoples, who were seen as primitive, inferior, and in urgent need of 'saving'[19], many systems of knowing and being were either erased or co-opted and reframed

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[19] August Comte was quite possibly the most ferocious promoter of colonialism among European thinkers and European society, arguing that the purpose of colonialism was to bring 'order and progress' to the world, and to help non-European societies 'advance' towards a more civilized state (Varouxakis, 2017). This supremacist view was shared by other European intellectuals and policymakers, who believed that European civilization was superior to all others and that it was their duty to spread it to the rest of the world.

as European inventions[20], with European languages, religions, legal and education systems and institutions imposed top-down. This aimed at eradicating indigenous cultures while replacing them with European values (Said, 1978), which were seen as more advanced and progressive. This process resulted in the marginalization and erasure of knowledge systems, languages, and traditions of Indigenous, African, and Asian populations (Said, 1978; Quijano, 2007)

[With HE as the prime locus of knowledge and intellectuality, I often ask myself: is this erasure still in effect in our universities? How? And to what extent? Am I taking part in this somehow, however unintentionally?]

Socially, European colonialism **introduced and reinforced racial hierarchies**, which led to social inequalities and conflicts that still shape so-called postcolonial societies (Mbembe, 2001). This is also because colonialism is deeply intertwined with racism and white supremacy. The very concept of race and the differentiation of races based on skin color and phenotypic traits is a fabrication of European colonization and colonialism (Cox, 1948; Fanon, 1952, 1963; Montagu, 1962, 1997 [1942]). As Wolfe (2015, p. 387) observes, colonialism has "typically employed the organizing grammar of race". This means **the notion of 'race' was concocted and fabricated by (white) Europeans as a mechanism to justify the exploitative practices of colonialism** in its several aspects (Cox, 1948; Fredrickson, 2002). Economically speaking, this meant that many now 'former' European colonies were left in a state of complete economic dependency, with limited industrialization and persistent poverty (Amin, 1976). Politically, the arbitrary borders drawn by colonial powers have often led to ethnic tensions and conflicts that persist to this day (Mamdani, 2001). This is a critical point if we are to examine crisis migration more deeply and in the global context, in an attempt to unearth its root causes.

Further, we stress that colonialism was not only a matter of political control or economic exploitation; it *is* an ongoing matter of **epistemological and ontological violence**, resulting in the imposition of ways of seeing and existing in the world, ways of knowing centered around

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[20] Fashion, for instance, has been historically promoted as a prime European invention. Belfanti's (2008) highly thorough investigation shows that it was not, with its origins traced back to India, China, and Japan. However, it was in Europe that fashion "fully developed as a social institution" (p. 443): "In the nineteenth century, there was no other fashion than that established in Western society, which was then imposed on the rest of the world, relegating the other clothing traditions to particular niches. This may signify that fashion contributed to the process of globalization. Certainly, it could be numbered fully among those 'seeds of civilisation' that, according to Niall Ferguson, were planted throughout the world by British domination and that opened the way to 'modernity' in lands beyond the West" (*idem*). Another example is Sir Richard Arkwright: considered the 'father' of the factory system and textile industry (Science Industry Museum, 2019), the Englishman had in fact stolen improvement ideas from an unnamed man "in humble life, whose poverty and want of patronage prevented him from either reaping the pecuniary benefit, or establishing his claims to that fame to which his ingenuity entitled him" (Guest, 1823, pp. 4-5).

the alleged superiority of European cultures. This is where the concept of coloniality is central. While colonialism is indeed related to coloniality, the two concepts are not interchangeable. Following Quijano (2001), Maldonado-Torres (2007) differentiates the two, with colonialism referring to "a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire", and coloniality seen as the "long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism", patterns that have consistently defined "culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations" (p. 243).

As argued in a robust body of invaluable episteme and practice on decoloniality (e.g., Adébísí, 2006; 2019; Bernardino-Costa; Maldonado-Torres; Grosfoguel, 2018; Dei, 2006; Imoka, 2019, 2023; Gwaravanda, 2020; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 1995, 2003, 2023, Quijano, 2000, 2001, 2007, and Tuhiwai-Smith, 2021, among others[21]), the world as we know it is anchored in colonialism via numerous **colonialities hidden under the gaze of 'modernity' and the banner of 'globalization' as ultimate forms of progress and advancement**, as will be reiterated throughout this PhD dissertation. Despite some very important improvements on existing technologies that have certainly facilitated the extension of human life (ironically, it is what might as well extinct it), the many costs of 'modernity' have become increasingly difficult to bear.

In this respect, the coloniality of power is relevant for understanding the ongoing impact and influence of colonialism, emphasizing that colonialism is not simply a historical event from a distant past but a process still shaping relations in contemporary societies. By underscoring the continuing effects of colonialism, the notion of coloniality of power, specifically through the 'colonial matrix of power' (CMP), encourages **a critical examination of the ways in which power operates in society** and the ways in which social hierarchies are constructed in the social world. As Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 243) states, "the coloniality of power is a call to examine **the ways in which power operates in society, to uncover the ways in which hierarchies are constructed and maintained, and to work towards dismantling these structures of power and domination**" (emphasis added).

The consequences of European colonialism are long-lasting and still visible in the form of economic and social inequalities, cultural imperialism, the marginalization of non-European viewpoints and ways of being and knowing… The trauma of centuries of physical, cultural, and

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[21] Escobar (2007) provides an invaluable summary of the Modernity/Coloniality group or system, recapping its main ideas and influential intellectuals.

symbolic subjugation and violence has only more recently been addressed (e.g., Duran; Duran; Brave Heart, 1998; Gagné, 1998; Krenak, 1999; Kilomba, 2010; Brave Heart *et al*., 2011; Ifowodo, 2013; Mariska; Habibi; Farisi, 2019; Simon, 2023, to name a few), and the violence that accompanied colonialism has had devastating consequences, with impacts presently felt in the form of **poverty**, **political instability**, **and social dislocation/displacement** in many parts of the world.

Figure 2.2 C: Destruction of Mexican Codices.

Source: Muñoz Camargo (ca. 1585).

The Fallacy of 'Modernity': Broken Promises of the Enlightenment

From a Eurocentric perspective, the so-called modern era began in the 18th century with the Enlightenment[22] and the Industrial Revolution, bringing about significant changes driven by the many advances in rational thought, science, and technology. Enlightenment ideals, such as reason, individualism, and progress, played an central role in shaping modernity, leading to the emergence of **new political and economic systems** (namely capitalism) and the rise of the nation-state (Wallerstein, 2011a [1974]), altering social structures and economic relations, as 'modernity' promoted a shift from agrarian-based to industrialized societies first in Europe and later in the colonies, accompanied by dramatic changes in labor patterns, class formations, and urban lifestyles (Fields, 1999; Hunt *et al.*, 2016).

Regarding the social structure, the Enlightenment ideals spread across new capitalism-dominated societies, as a result of Western European economic expansion in close association with the quest for rationality and development of science, leading to greater social stratification in Europe and its colonies. As an intellectual movement feeding from economic gains made on the backs of colonial conquests, the Enlightenment was fundamental in forming the European middle class[23], offering "an intellectual and cultural route to social improvement" (Hunt *et al.*, 2016, p. 587) and flourishing in key urban centers "where an educated middle class provided an eager audience for ideas of constitutionalism and reform" (p. 582, emphasis added).

Modernity emerged as a response to the social, cultural, and intellectual transformations brought about by centuries of colonial encounters (Giddens, 1990), with European colonialism and capitalism as its central constitutive elements (Quijano, 2000), as former colonies became integrated into the global economy as suppliers of raw materials and markets for manufactured goods. While modernity gained momentum with the spread of the Enlightenment ideals, the

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[22] While the Enlightenment had initially intended to challenge the dogmatic and authoritarian scholasticism of pre-modern European epistemologies, which were essentially based on religious understandings, in contexts outside Europe the movement was used to support colonialism, as Alcoff (2007) explains. It should also be noted that the Enlightenment, as several other movements in history, was not uniform across Europe (cf. Hunt *et al.*, 2016), showing particularities in Great Britain, France, and the German states, in comparison with other European territories, such as Spain and Russia, whose governments harshly and more immediately suppressed Enlightenment ideas.

[23] Hunt *et al.* (2016, p. 587) pedagogically explains that "The term middle class referred to the middle position on the social ladder; middle-class families did not have legal titles like the nobility above them, but neither did they work with their hands like the peasants, artisans, or laborers below them. Most middle-class people lived in towns or cities and earned their living in the professions – as doctors, lawyers, or lower-level officials – or through investment in land, trade, or manufacturing." We can still see this legacy in the hierarchy between high-value (intellectual, science-based) jobs and low-value (manual) work in effect in contemporary Westernized societies.

modern world-system[24], as Wallerstein (2004) aptly argues, is in fact a capitalist system that dates back to the 13th century, expanding from parts of Europe to the Americas and then from the Americas to the entire world, through imperialist actions and plans deployed in articulation (e.g., the Scramble for Africa).

Figure 2.2 D: The house modernity built and its hidden costs.
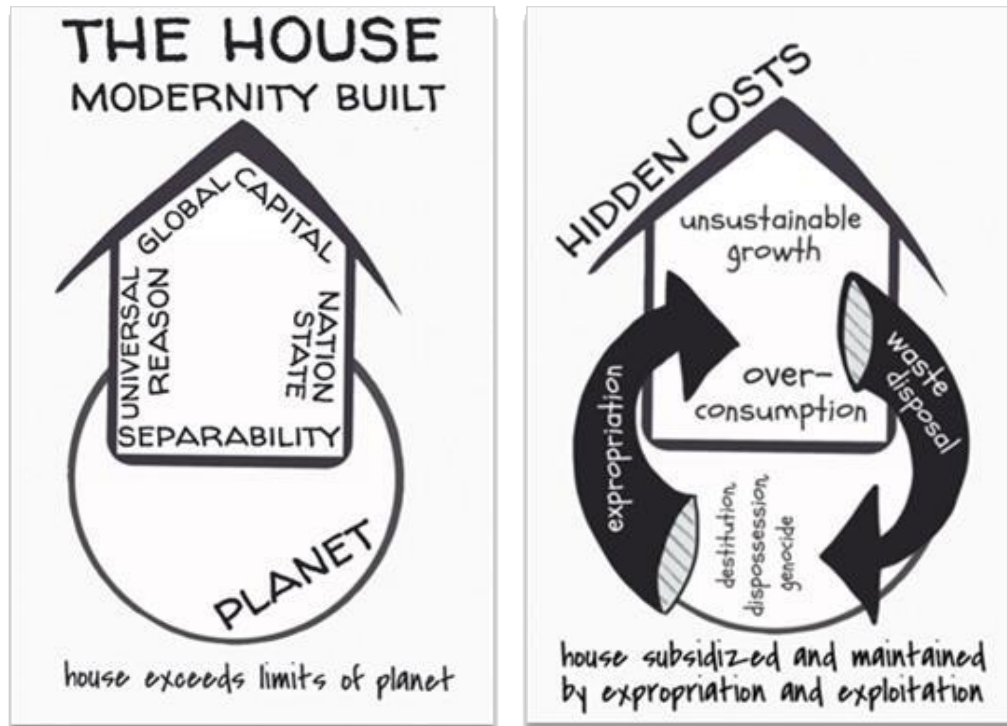
Source: Stein *et al*. (2020, p. 50).

The **colonialism-capitalism nexus** cemented the pathway to globalization, which has also been instrumental in the fabrication of the notion of modernity. Globalization is part of the CMP: an intricate network of multiple hierarchies and powers operating on global, regional, and local contexts and cultivating domination and exploitation in a variety of ways (Grosfoguel, 2006). According to Mignolo (2023):

> *Coloniality is the will to power (the technique) hidden under the promises of modernity. The instrument of coloniality is the CMP (the technology) (…) an*

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[24] Wallerstein views the world-system as a single unit of analysis, consisting of multiple states and other actors interconnected through economic, political, and social relations. He argues that the world-system is organized in a hierarchical manner, with core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral regions or countries. The core countries, which are typically economically advanced and technologically developed, dominate the world-system. They control and benefit the most from the global economic activities, such as trade, finance, and production. The semi-peripheral countries occupy an intermediate position, having some degree of economic development but still dependent on the core countries. The peripheral countries, on the other hand, being economically less developed, often serve as suppliers of raw materials and cheap labor for the core countries (Wallerstein, 2011a [1974], 2011b [1980], 2011c [1989]).

> *abstract mechanism, like the unconscious in psychoanalysis. The CMP is in a nutshell the unconscious of Western civilization that discloses that double-bind of modernity/coloniality. The foundational assumption is that there is no modernity without coloniality.*
>
> (Mignolo, 2023, p. 2)

Quijano (2000, p. 533) explains that "What is termed globalization is the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of America and colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism as a new global power". The **legacy of colonialism continues to shape 'modern' globalization** and the so-called modernity from under which we seem unable to escape, with a myriad of inequalities, such as naturalized poverty, race and gender violence, and political instability and conflicts, especially in the Global South (Chakrabarty, 2000), made normalized.

Coloniality: Strolling Freely in Academia

In Mignolo (2000, 2011), colonialities are elements of modernity, with modernity used as a tool for legitimizing and perpetuating the colonial project, providing a framework for the extraction of resources, the imposition of Western standards and norms, and the suppression of local knowledge and epistemologies. Westernization was integral to the spread of modernity ideas across colonial territories. Cementing the notion of (Western) Europe being the 'center of the world', its civilization(s) 'superior' to all others, and 'History' only starting when European colonizers set foot in new lands, is a product of European modernity itself (Chakrabarty, 2000) – a view that remains unchallenged in various societies, particularly in the circles of political, economic, and intellectual elites.

The overt and covert reinforcement of Western superiority places the 'modern' Western 'knowledge systems' (Euro-American epistemologies, institutional frameworks, and cultural understandings) as 'aspirational' norms. From modernity came modern institutions, practices and symbolic representations fabricated from **essentialist and dichotomous rationalizations**, which reflected a way of being and knowing deemed 'superior', 'progressive', 'advanced'. The binary of modernity came to be seen via the stark contrast between **'modern' and 'savage'**, constructed on the basis of dichotomous understandings that take political aspects into account (Maldonado-Torres, 2018), in the creation of social stratifications, and in the duality between subjectivity and reason. **It is in this scenario that European universities flourished**, propelled by ideals of the Enlightenment movement.

In general, the **association between academia and coloniality** is seen in the many ways in which academic systems, models, norms, and knowledge production have been historically intertwined with colonialism and imperialism, clearly visible in **the legacy of Eurocentrism within academic disciplines**. Eurocentric perspectives, theories, methodologies, and scholars have been privileged in academic circles and taken as the standard against which other forms of knowledge should be measured. This Eurocentric bias has historically marginalized and devalued knowledges from non-European cultures, reinforcing colonial hierarchies of power and therefore perpetuating a global imbalance of knowledge production (Stoler, 1997; Mignolo, 2007; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2021).

Colonialism was not merely a political or economic endeavor but also an epistemic one, in which **the colonizers imposed their systems of knowledge, values, and beliefs** onto the colonized societies. Educational institutions, particularly universities, played a significant role in this process. They became instruments for disseminating colonial ideologies and legitimizing the domination of European powers. This historical intertwining can be seen in the way most academic disciplines were structured, the subjects that were/are considered worthy of study, and the methodologies that were and still are deemed appropriate. Academic institutions often adopt policies and practices that favor Western modes of knowledge production, including peer review processes, citation norms and referencing, and the structure of academic conferences. In addition, academic curricula still emphasize European thinkers and scholars as foundational figures, while contributions from non-European intellectuals are either overlooked or presented as secondary.

The structures and patterns of knowledge production born from the colonial era still shape the making, dissemination, and validation of knowledge. **The coloniality of knowledge in academia, both in the Global South and the Global North**, encompasses the institutions, methodologies, epistemologies, languages, and curricula through which knowledge is created and authenticated, practices that have been historically centered around Western theories and perspectives, invariably neglecting the invaluable contributions of non-Western societies and communities (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2021). The colonial hierarchies and ranks of knowledge remain in research methodologies that dismiss alternative knowledge systems and indigenous ways of knowing as 'unscientific', illogical, lowly. As Dei (2006) explains, colonialism:

> *as imposition and domination, did not end with the return of political sovereignty to colonized peoples or nation states. Colonialism is not dead. Indeed, colonialism and re-colonizing projects today manifest themselves in variegated ways (e. g. the different ways knowledges get produced and receive validation within schools, the*

particular experiences of students that get counted as [in]valid and the identities that receive recognition and response from school authorities.

(Dei, 2006, p. 2)

The concept of coloniality of knowledge, as popularized by Latin-American decolonial scholars, challenges this highly Eurocentric notion of knowledge as a discrete entity, as an 'immutable' product of our rationality, objective and universal. Understanding the coloniality of knowledge invites us to see not only that **knowledge is shaped by cultural biases**, power dynamics, and (neo)colonial hierarchies, but also **to question this status quo**. This has critical implications for academic literacy, and understanding the association between academia and coloniality is crucial for addressing the persistent biases and inequalities in academic systems. It calls for a critical examination of how knowledge is produced, disseminated, and validated, underscoring the need to decolonize academic institutions by recognizing and valuing diverse epistemologies.

Figure 2.2 E: The impact of coloniality in academic and professional practices.

HOW DOES COLONIALITY AFFECT PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE?

Scientific-Biomedical epistemic community: predominantly white, male, global north, hegemonic, neoliberal mindsets/institutions

PERPETUATES COLONIALITY

How? Perpetuates coloniality through the generation of ethnocentric knowledge, mandating research agendas, technocracies, and epistemic injustice.

REINFORCE COLONIALITY

Professional fields: represented by professionals, academic institutions, funders, scientific journals

REINFORCES

How? Recreates and maintain coloniality through lack of diversity, underrepresentation, restrictive licensing practices, gender and race stereotyping, unequal opportunities for advancement, exclusionary hiring, white silence/white fragility.

How? Reifies coloniality through human rights violations, stereotyping, tokenism, mistrust, white savior complex, deficit-based narratives.

PERPETUATES COLONIALITY

Communities: Communities of color, marginalized, and minoritized communities.

RESIST COLONIALITY

Source: Faerron Guzmán and Rowthorn (2022, p. 2)

As explained in Faerron Guzmán and Rowthorn (2022, p. 2), the grey boxes refer to the main agents in the coloniality of professional practices specific (though not exclusive) to the

biomedical area; the blue boxes are "the means by which coloniality is enacted" (*idem*), and the red and orange arrows "represent the directionality of the colonial process". This representation refers to professional practices in the biomedical and health sciences domains, "as part of the growing movement and effort to decolonize global health", but we feel that, given the structural character of coloniality, the representation also accurately applies to other professional areas and practices and much of academia.

2.3 Crisis Migration

As a reflection of 'late modernity' (Chouliaraki; Fairclough, 1999), crisis migration is a complex and situated process, with **a plethora of migratory flows** and strategic (im)migration routes, indicating migratory heterogeneity. Yet, despite numerous specificities, different crisis migration processes have a common denominator: a crisis at the origin of the need to migrate (Baeninger; Peres, 2017), temporarily or not. As Betts (2014, p. 76-77) notes, *crisis migration* is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of areas, the "**cross-border displacement caused by serious human rights** deprivations that fall outside the dominant interpretation of persecution" (emphasis added), in what the author has also named 'survival migration' (Betts, 2013).

Although the term *crisis migration* has been used to describe the displacement of large numbers of people in response to severe crises that require immediate action, such as the war in Syria or the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, crisis migration does not always occur in an immediate fashion (Martin; Weerasinghe; Taylor, 2014). *Crisis migration* also refers to a response to latent situations or perceived threat. McAdam (2014, p. 10) defines crisis migration as "a response to a complex combination of social, political, economic and environmental factors, which may be triggered by an extreme event but not caused by it". McAdam emphasizes that **crisis migration is deeply intertwined with humanitarian crises**, often referring to the immediate movement/transit of people who feel forced to flee their countries due to sudden or unforeseen circumstances, such as natural and environmental disasters, political persecution, wars, armed conflicts, and other forms of violence.

The term 'conflict-induced migration' is also recurrent in the literature, often coupled with a related noun: displacement – it is not entirely different from crisis migration; however, conflict-induced migration and displacement may present certain undertones that need to be observed. Lischer (2014, p. 318) explains that "The term crisis often indicates the necessity for decision making in the face of impending danger", with 'crisis' viewed as "an unsustainable

situation which will rapidly degenerate without countervailing action.". Under this light, crisis and conflict can signal "the many types of political violence that cause displacement" and "the varying levels of intensity in violence" (Lischer, 2014, p. 318); the implication being that crises tend to be more urgent and severe.

Notably, opting to use the term *crisis migration*, as opposed to *migration crisis*, reframes the phenomenon, shifting the focus from 'migration' as the issue to 'crisis' as the reason for migration, thus possibly signaling a more comprehensive way of approaching migration, forced or otherwise. **Migration crisis is different from crisis migration**: the former is **constructed at the destination**, involving power relations between different agents of the social structure as well as disputes over economic, symbolic, social, and human capital (Baeninger; Peres, 2017). The latter is **socially constructed at the 'origin'**, reflecting economic, political, civil, religious, ideological, and humanitarian issues and violations in a particular context, propelling displacement (Simon, 1995; Clochard, 2007).

Notably, this is **an instrumental shift in how migration is conceptualized**, **regulated**, **and communicated**[25], as it can reveal "the **systemic inequities** which render particular groups more vulnerable to displacement" (McAdam, 2013, p. 13, emphasis added). It should be noted, however, that the nature of migration is always entirely forced. Based on Van Hear, Brubaker, and Bessa (2009), Martin, Weerasinghe, and Taylor (2013) explain that:

> *Almost all migration involves a degree of compulsion, just as almost all migration involves choices. Economic migrants make choices, but they do so within constraints and may have few alternatives to migration. Equally, forced migrants are compelled to move, but they also make choices, albeit within a limited range of possibilities, particularly as to where they will move. Even in the direst circumstances, there is still an element of choice, since some may choose to stay and risk their lives rather than leave their homes.*
>
> (Martin; Weerasinghe; Taylor, 2013, p. 125)

(Root) Causes

The causes of crisis migration are diverse and complex, with conflict seen as one of the primary drivers. Other factors that contribute to crisis migration include natural disasters such as hurricanes and typhoons, earthquakes, floods, and draughts, which may or may not be caused

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[25] In reference to the European press, Chouliaraki *et al*. (2017) report the shifts in media narratives about the 'migration crisis', from less to more sympathetic, from less to more visibility, showing that migrants are often placed in a contradictory position as both "threat and sufferer" (p. 6), thus underscoring "the hybrid regime of the European border (…) a regime of openness and closure" (*idem*). Moreira and Borba (2021) list several other examples of this, in Brazil and Europe.

by climate change and overuse of natural resources, as the effects of climate change have led to an increase in the frequency and severity of natural disasters, such as floods and wildfires, in various parts of the world. These disasters often result in displacement, with people forced to flee their homes in search of safety, particularly in vulnerable regions such as coastal areas and small island states, as stated in Halliday and Carr (2019).

An examination of the root causes of crisis migration is crucial for finding long-term solutions. This includes addressing economic disparities, promoting peace and stability, and taking action on climate change. As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh *et al*. (2018) argue, responses to crisis migration must **move beyond the short-term aid and emergency relief to the structural inequalities that drive forced migration and/or displacement**. Betts (2013) also sustains that international cooperation and collaboration are essential, given **the global nature of crisis migration**, which requires an equally global response.

When viewed as a 'social field' (cf. Bourdieu, 2003), crisis migration underscores the social actors involved in this process (Baeninger, 2015). Globalization has contributed to the rise of crisis migration and conflict-induced displacement in many ways, the most significant being economic-related globalization, which created unequal distribution of wealth, resources, and opportunities between 'developed' and 'developing' countries. Specifically, Amin (2019) argues that **globalization has further entangled the connections between the countries of the world**, often by polarizing countries as either 'rich' or 'poor'. In such polarization, the latter are often unable to compete on fairer, more equal terms in the global marketplace (of which academia is part). Invariably, these so-called poor, underdeveloped and developing countries (Brazil being one example of 'emerging' market) are officially former European colonies that have yet to gain full autonomy.

This scenario has led to economic hardships in several parts of the world, pushing people to seek better social and economic opportunities away from their places of 'origin', whether or not as a result of immediate threats to their livelihoods. In this regard, political globalization has played a critical role, fed by advances in digital technology, as the ease of communication and transportation has made it easier for conflicts and instability in one part of the world to spill over others, leading large numbers of people to flee their homes due to political persecution.

An Overview of Brazilian Responses to Crisis Migration

The Brazilian responses to international crisis migration in the 21st century have been multifaceted, influenced by historical factors, legal frameworks, political considerations, and

the country's economic capacity. Brazil has consistently adhered to international agreements (e.g., the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol); however, the Brazilian legislation dated back to the military dictatorship era and became outdated over time. For example, Law 6815/1980, commonly known as the Foreigner Statute, had been drafted and enacted during the military period, aimed primarily at safeguarding national sovereignty and protecting Brazilian interests in response to perceived potential threats from foreigners (Claro, 2020). In this context, immigrants were not seen under a positive light: quite the contrary, they were often viewed as **adversaries** or a **potential threat** to the country and its population (Mendes; Brasil, 2020).

The political circumstances in which the Foreigner Statute was created reflected the political and **security concerns** prevalent during the military regime. The legislation had the overarching objective of maintaining control over the entry, stay, and activities of foreigners in Brazil, with an emphasis on **national security** considerations (Claro, 2020; Mendes; Brasil, 2020). The advent of the Federal Constitution of 1988 (Brasil, 1988) and subsequent shifts in migratory dynamics in the 1990s brought forth fundamental changes in the legal landscape of migration and refuge, emphasizing human rights, individual freedoms, and equal treatment for all individuals in the country, regardless of nationality (Claro, 2020). The obsolete nature of the Foreigner Statute was made evident as Brazil experienced changes in both inward and outward migration patterns. The legal framework needed to adapt to the evolving realities, with legal categories reflecting these changes (Mendes; Brasil, 2020).

One crucial piece of legislation that has had a key role in regulating migration in Brazil is Law 13445/2017, known as the Migration Law ('*Lei de Migração*'). Enacted on May 24, 2017, the Migration Law repealed the Foreigner Statute, introducing a more modern and rights-based approach to migration, **grounded in the principles of human rights, dignity, and non-discrimination** (Brasil, 2017). This is evident by the language used in the document. Whereas the Foreigner Statute viewed migrants as the *other*, the *stranger* or the *alien*, the Migration Law of 2017 opted for the more inclusive term *migrants* (Claro, 2020), signaling an important shift in conceptualization, in which *migrant* encompasses **a broader range of persons** that include non-nationals, stateless people (those without nationality), and internal migrants (those moving within a country), as stated in Claro (2020).

Before the Migration Law of 2017, a key piece of legislation related to refugees in Brazil was passed: Law 9474 of July 22, 1997, more commonly known as the Brazilian Refugee Act ('*Lei do Refúgio*'). The Refugee Act outlines the procedures for the recognition of refugee status and the rights and responsibilities of refugees in Brazil. The law aligns with the commitment to

international refugee conventions and protocols, per Brazilian standards, and brought about crucial changes and innovations in this area. For example, it established the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) as being responsible for assessing and recognizing refugee status. The law specified **the rights and obligations of refugees**: access education, work, healthcare, and other services on an equal footing with Brazilian citizens, among others (Brasil, 1997).

These two pieces of legislation have become fundamental to the study of migration and the management of crisis migration impacts in Brazil, as the country developed frameworks to grant refugee status and protection to those fleeing persecution and violence, and expanded the legal categories of *migrant*, contributing to a formalized response to crisis migration. This is at the foundation of Call 624/2020, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, as top-down legislation often paves the way for changes in HE in Brazil. Despite the autonomy principle of Brazilian HEIs, universities are still subjected to the overarching State and must therefore comply with its rules and regulations.

In response to crises affecting its neighboring countries, Brazil has engaged in regional cooperation initiatives/actions in collaboration with international organizations and other Latin American nations. For instance, to cope with the significant influx of Venezuelan immigrants in the mid-2010s, the Brazilian government responded by implementing special mechanisms to handle the situation, such as issuing temporary residence permits and establishing shelters. While **these responses are far from ideal**, and much of the aid in crisis migration is supported by non-state agencies, official mechanisms such as Law 13684/2018 (Brasil, 2018) signal an attempt at **humanitarian reception** and at management of migration at the 'endpoint', with the purpose of **avoiding migration crises**. Similar legal responses have been made for immigrants coming from Haiti and refugees coming from Syria[26].

2.4 HE Internationalization and IaH

The internationalization of HE is understood as the process of integrating **international dimensions** into the core activities of universities, such as teaching, research, community, and curricula (Knight, 2004, 2012). The conventional literature on HE internationalization enlists academic, economic, and social reasons for internationalizing HE, mostly based on experiences in the Global North. From the academic perspective, HE internationalization is said to enhance the quality of teaching and research by exposing students, staff, and faculty to diverse cultures

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[26] The specificities of Haitian and Syrian immigration to Brazil are addressed in Chapter 5 when we narrate and discuss the research participants' migration journeys.

(Knight, 2012). From the economic angle, in capitalist terms, internationalization can increase the competitiveness of universities by attracting (paying) international students and high-skilled faculty, creating partnerships, and expanding funding opportunities (de Wit, 2011). From the social dimension, HE internationalization is meant to promote cross-cultural understanding by fostering a more inclusive and diverse campus community.

Conventionally speaking, Internationalization at Home (IaH) refers to the promotion of internationalization in the university campus through a wide range of activities, such as offering language courses, promoting intercultural exchange programs, hosting international students and scholars, and organizing international conferences (Knight, 2004). Designed to enhance the quality of HE on-campus and foster more inclusive environments, IaH initiatives[27] supposedly add international and intercultural dimensions to the HE experience (Knight, 2006). Crowther *et al*. (2001, p. 8) broadly defined IaH as "Any internationally related activity with the exception of outbound student and staff mobility". Knight (2004, p. 11) then redefined it as "The process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education". This is the widespread definition in the current literature (Beelen; Jones, 2015; 2018).

Recent discussions (Brandenburg; de Wit, 2010; De Wit; Beelen, 2014; de Wit, 2019) have rendered **a more comprehensive definition** that places more emphasis on the different shapes learning environments and experiences may have at the university, from more formal settings (e.g., the traditional classroom) to more informal ones (e.g., gatherings off-campus, in which students interact with the local community). Under this light, Beelen and Jones (2015, p. 69) redefined IaH, restating it as "the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments.". This definition is better aligned with our research, since it neither ignores nor undermines the somewhat unconventional spaces in which learning and academic literacy can take place.

In some aspects, it could be argued that, albeit fragmentarily, public HE in Brazil has always experienced some level of internationalization. As Stallivieri (2007) notes, from the first universities founded in the country (the University of Rio de Janeiro in 1920 and the University of São Paulo in 1934), Brazilian HEIs have consistently opted for European and/or Anglophone

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[27] IaH is frequently associated with the concept of Internationalization of the Curriculum (IoC), with the two concepts sometimes employed interchangeably (Beelen; Jones, 2015). However, IoC includes academic mobility actions such as study abroad programs, while IaH does not, as explained in Beelen and Jones (2015).

models of education and research, frequently sending faculty abroad for further qualification and advanced training while also promoting joint research initiatives and bilateral agreements (Laus; Morosini, 2005), a tendency held thus far, particularly at the graduate level.

According to Gacel-Avila (2007, 2012), in the beginning of the years 2000, few Latin American HEIs were involved in internationalization, with IaH reported as the least frequent HE internationalization strategy in Latin American universities (IAU, 2010). To address these 'issues', multiple initiatives were implemented in the form of national policies and initiatives aimed at developing internationalization and IaH in Latin America. For instance, the Brazilian Association for International Education (FAUBAI) was founded, offering IaH workshops from 2013 onwards. More localized actions included partnerships mostly with (Western) European and US researchers.

To support these initiatives, HEIs established internationalization offices dedicated to coordinating international activities, promoting intercultural dialog, and providing orientation services to international students and scholars. These offices serve as a hub for on-campus international activities and projects, developing HE internationalization and IaH policies and strategies that align with the goals and values of the institution.

Some IaH Initiatives at UFMG

To develop the **interculturality of at home students**, while also including international students, public universities in Brazil have invested in **outreach programs**, such as *The World at UFMG: Internationalization at Home*, by UFMG, which offered a wide a range of extension activities designed to **promote interculturality on campus**, from gatherings aimed at fostering cultural and linguistic exchanges between local and international students[28] (on-site or online), to academic writing workshops[29] designed to provide local Portuguese-speaking students with discussions and practice in more foundational academic writing skills.

Language education is another way Brazilian public universities have developed IaH, with several HEIs throughout the country offering accessible in-person and/or online additional language courses, typically in association with extension programs that cater to university staff, students, and the local community. Generally, such language courses focus on modern Western

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[28] https://www.ufmg.br/dri/noticia/o-projeto-de-extensao-o-mundo-na-ufmg-internacionalizacao-em-casa-promove-ultima-edicao-do-luau-multicultural-do-semestre/.

[29] https://www.ufmg.br/dri/noticia/minicurso-sobre-escrita-academica-na-extensao-oferecido-pelo-projeto-de-extensao-o-mundo-na-ufmg/.

European languages, for instance, English, Spanish[30], and French for Academic Purposes. More recent initiatives include non-European languages, such as Mandarin[31], which is a hegemonic language. **Periphery languages** are very rarely – if at all – included.

In addition to these more 'traditional' language classes, conversation and culture clubs are promoted to help students improve their communication and intercultural skills by creating spaces in which international and domestic students discuss pre-defined topics and exchange experiences on the topic. One example is *The English Conversation Club*, at UFMG, which consists of regular in-person or online meetings carried out in English, organized and conducted either by international Fullbright exchange students from the US or by Brazilian EAP teaching assistants, with topics as varied as cultural appropriation and linguistic diversity (Mattos, 2022).

Brazilian HEIs have also been working toward increasing the number of international students and scholars[32] in their campuses. Consequently, this has increased the need to promote **Brazilian culture and language to incoming students and scholars**. Culture-wise, the UFMG Summer School on Brazilian Studies (SSBS) is one example, a course offered to international students/scholars, held on-site or online, aimed at providing a comprehensive "understanding of key aspects of Brazil from distinct perspectives." (DRI, 2023, n. p.), with a syllabus covering 12 aspects of Brazilian culture, from politics and history, to art, and race. The SSBS is entirely taught in English, and students/scholars are required to provide proof of language proficiency.

As can be seen in the aforementioned IaH actions, standard English is the lingua franca of HE internationalization and IaH in Brazil, for its global reach and *unofficial* status as the language of publications and academic socialization (Finardi, 2014). However, English is not the only language to play a crucial role in HE internationalization actions and policies in Brazil.

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[30] For example, the accessible language courses developed by in-house language centers at UFMG and CEFET-MG: https://idiomas.letras.ufmg.br/cursos/ and https://fundacaocefetminas.org.br/idiomas/.

[31] Mandarin courses at UFMG have been offered in partnership with the Confucius Institute since 2013: As explained in Paulino (2019), the Confucius Institutes are the first overt initiative by the Chinese government in promoting the Chinese language and culture abroad. Brazil is the country with the highest number of Confucius Institutes in Latin America – the first of which began activities as early as 2008 at the State University of São Paulo (UNESP) and the University of Brasília (UnB). Similar to other cultural institutes in Brazil and elsewhere (e.g., the British Council, the Goethe Institut, and the Alliançe Française), the Confucius Institutes are seen as an important tool for cultural diplomacy around the world (Bernardi, 2015; Schmidt, 2021). For more about the Confucius Institute at UFMG, see: https://www.institutoconfucio.ufmg.br/.

[32] To attract international students, universities offer scholarships and grants and provide support services such as housing and health insurance. They also promote their programs via international fairs and online platforms. Data from the Brazilian Ministry of Education (Brasil, 2021) shows that the number of international students enrolled in Brazilian HEIs has increased from 13,000 in 2012 to 46,000 in 2019, a significant rise that reflects the success of these initiatives.

Portuguese as an Additional Language (PAL) has also been in demand[33], with many Brazilian HEIs developing programs to support international students, providing language instruction to non-native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese and offering academic orientation to help students to navigate the Brazilian university system (Miranda; Belo, 2017)[34]. At UFMG, PAL has also been consolidated through institutional and pedagogic initiatives since 2013, as Diniz and Dell'isola (2020) observe. These actions are closely associated with the implementation of the institution's official Language Policy, seen as a hallmark in inclusivity[35].

A Critical Look at Internationalization and IaH

As discussed so far, the internationalization of HE in Brazil has been a critical aspect of modern academic life, supposedly increasing the quality of HE and offering students, staff, and scholars the opportunity to broaden their horizons and experiences beyond national borders, as Almeida *et al*. (2019) explain. However, both HE internationalization and IaH have often been entangled in **the historical legacies of colonialism**, reproducing the power dynamics of a not-so-distant colonial past. In this vein, several scholars argue that internationalization and IaH agendas for HE have often translated into **Euro-American interests** (e.g., Leite, 2010; Jowi, 2012; Majee; Ress, 2020), intensifying **the still very concrete echoes of colonialism**. This is because HE internationalization and IaH have been treated via a similar universalist lens as that of globalization – primarily based on economic processes and interests while often ignoring sociocultural and political ones (Rizvi, 2007), as if internationalization and globalization were an inevitable outcome of modern life, manifested in 'rarified' fashion (Majee; Ress, 2020).

In this respect, concerns have been raised as to the purpose of internationalizing HE in Brazil, a process usually "overshadowed by instrumental and economic goals" (Almeida *et al*., 2019, p. 203). The authors also highlight the many "tensions between the adoption of a global,

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[33] PAL has gained space particularly in regard to teaching and learning, as evidenced by the growing number of publications and research about teaching and language policies (Alencar, 2018; Frazzato, 2020), the elaboration of teaching materials (Killner; Furtoso; 2016; Ruano; Cursino, 2020), the design and evaluation of PAL courses for academic purposes (Andrighetti, 2020; Gabas; Frazatto; Deus, 2021), teaching experiences with the PEC-G (Miranda, 2016; Carilo, 2018, 2021) and the need for an overhaul (Diniz; Bizon, 2021), critical intercultural teaching (Perna; Delgado, 2021).

[34] The 2019 Higher Education Census reports a total of 17,539 international students from 177 countries enrolled in undergraduate courses in Brazilian HEIs. While this may seem like a large number for the country, it amounts to just 0.2% of all students enrolled in universities in Brazil, at the undergraduate level (Brasil, 2020). As argued in Marques and Schoffen (2021) and in Baumvol and Sarmento (2016), this rather low number may be explained by the asymmetry between less and more developed countries, with less economically developed countries such as Brazil sending more students abroad than it receives, particularly to the Global North.

[35] https://ufmg.br/storage/e/a/f/f/eaffac094935e138be4b6ffccda87a13_1685990623237_2135592528.pdf. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

regional and local stance" in the internationalization of Brazilian universities, revealing a lack of articulation between internationalization actions, most of which are "often guided by western educational models and dismissing the epistemic roots of the Brazilian context" (p. 202). We cannot help but ask: **What exactly is being internationalized? And to what purpose?**

It seems that what the conventional scholarship on HE internationalization fails to grasp is that the relationship between education, internationalization, and globalization goes beyond the need of 'going global'. As sustained in Rizvi (2007, p. 262), education is very much "linked to the imperialist origins of globalization", also impacting internationalization. Hence, a critical look at internationalization needs **to situate this process in a more comprehensive *historical context***, not just a presently global one. This entails **a historicized approach**, as proposed in Vergara-Figueroa (2018), with HE internationalization seen in the context of centuries-long **practices that more directly or not stem from colonial epistemics and power** (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2000; 2007).

Following Mignolo (2011) and Tuhiwai-Smith (2021), among others, we understand the **internationalization of HE is deeply marked by colonial legacies**, with Western universities 'exporting' their models of education and knowledge to other parts of the world, rather than engaging in genuine mutual learning and exchange that values non-Western ways of thinking and knowing. This 'coloniality of internationalization' (Stein; Silva, 2020) reflects the fact that **academic practices in western- and euro-centric universities have traditionally privileged Western systems of knowledge**, usually by excluding non-Western(ized) forms of knowledge, such as Indigenous knowledge systems and Afro-centric philosophies.

To address this issue, a growing movement toward decolonizing HE internationalization has emerged, with a fundamental shift in the way internationalization and IaH are approached and developed. Rather than viewing HE internationalization and IaH as a one-way process of 'exporting' Western knowledge, **decolonizing the internationalization of HE seeks to create opportunities for dialog, collaboration, and mutual learning** between universities in/from different parts of the world, between universities and the local communities, recognizing and **appreciating many diverse forms of knowledge and expertise**, particularly those historically marginalized or erased through colonialism (Harding, 2015; Batz, 2016). As will be made more evident in this dissertation, this is not exactly 'decolonization'; however, it is an important step toward equity in HE.

2.5 Literacy and Academic Literacy

This section addresses literacy and academic literacy, reviewing the concept of literacy as *letramento* and its pedagogical implications. Following our conceptualization of academic literacy, we spotlight the heightened multimodality and the coloniality of academic literacy, bringing to the fore the need for a **decolonial view of academic literacy** (Mattos; Diniz, 2014). This decolonial understanding of academic literacy has guided this research and our interactions with the research participants. Our purpose is not to exhaust these concepts and phenomena in this brief review but to evaluate them critically and make associations with related issues, phenomena, and concepts that seemed relevant to further the discussion on academic literacy, more generally, and in this dissertation, in particular.

Conceptualizing Literacy

In Brazil, the scholarship on literacy has advanced significantly since the 1980s, with research from Education and AL leading the way. Marked by debates on the notions of literacy ('*letramento*') and learning how to read and write ('*alfabetização*'), and their implications for language acquisition and instruction, the decades-long research of applied linguists/educators such as Soares (1998, 2004), Castanheira (1991), and Kleiman (1995), among many others, has effectively changed the way reading and writing practices are conceptualized in the country. Based on these works, the concept of *literacy*, as introduced in Street (1984), has been translated into Brazilian Portuguese as *letramento*[36], and incorporated in education guidelines and other official documents in Brazil ever since.

Literacy as letramento is thus conceptualized as a dynamic process emerging from and constructed by the shared expectations, tasks, and social roles collectively negotiated in social interaction (Castanheira; Green; Dixon, 2007). It is as multiple as the interactions from and by which it is built and in which it is grounded, and it is **constantly changing**, not because it is context-sensitive, but mainly because **reading and writing are meaning-making 'tools'** with which human beings make sense of the world in societies where reading and writing practices

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[36] In the Brazilian literature, there seems to be a consensus that *literacy as letramento* goes beyond just knowing how to read and write, with the process of *alfabetização* embedded in *letramento* (Soares, 1998, 2004; Kleiman, 1995; Silva, 2019). More specifically, this means that *literacy as letramento* does not rest solely on individual skills, nor is it exclusively concerned with the cognitive process of reading and writing. Rather, it encompasses the repertoire individuals have cultivated in daily life from engaging with a wide range of social practices long before learning how to read and write in school (Kleiman, 1995).

shape everyday life, as noted in Kress and Rowsell (2018). *Literacy as letramento* is therefore neither static nor monolithic, as argued in Bloome, Kalman, and Seymour (2018).

Literacy as letramento entails an acknowledgement of the social and ideological nature of reading and writing practices (Tfouni, 1988, 2010), circling back to **the dialogic**, **ideological nature of *language*** (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978 [1928]; Bakhtin/Voloshinov, 1986 [1929]). In other words, conceptualizing *literacy as letramento* implies 'fashioning' language as social, as Bloome, Kalman, and Seymour (2018) explain, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and reflecting upon the social, cultural, and ideological variables at play whenever language is used. This means recognizing reading and writing as culturally situated social practices shaped by power dynamics (Street, 1984, 2003), intrinsically connected to the time-space in which they are developed – not because texts 'belong' to or language reflects certain periods of time, but because human interaction – as organized in as many genres as our world allows us to create (Bakhtin, 1981), only exists within the realm of *language*.

The Pedagogical Implications of Literacy

What this effectively entails is that *literacy as letramento* is not simply concerned with the mental, individual act of decoding and manipulating written signs in reading instruction. It is also not equivalent to formal education and schooling, neither should it be equated to school success. Deeply rooted in the western idea of academic achievement, this *autonomous* view of literacy (Street, 1984) holds an ideal language user in mind (Kleiman, 1995), with language variety often seen as a deviation from this norm. This model of literacy is still favored in school settings – and at university! – in Brazil and elsewhere, whether in teaching/learning one's first or an additional language. Based on a narrow of literacy, failure and success take center stage, often translated into 'bad' or 'good' grades (Signorini, 1995), and become goals: the former to be avoided at all costs, the latter to be tirelessly pursued.

Several issues arise from viewing literacy under such limited lens. As Kleiman (1995) and Signorini (1995) assert, school/academic underachievement and lack of formal education are often considered 'badges' of ignorance in the Brazilian society. A narrow view of literacy stigmatizes that, marginalizing those who have been denied the right to education or have not adjusted well to this constrained and perhaps elitist understanding of being literate, according to which the higher one's level of education, the higher one's intelligence must be. Importantly,

such a perspective also negates alternative strategies of *doing* literacy, dismissing non-standard ways of using and engaging with language[37].

This is because the autonomous model views knowledge as detached from the socio-historical and cultural processes in which reading and writing are situated, undermining the knowledge and experiences garnered before and/or beyond formal education (Signorini, 1995). The autonomous model fails to acknowledge reading and writing practices that are not socially and academically prestigious. In this sense, literacy is viewed as neutral, uniform (Street, 1984, 2003), reduced to a set of formally acquired skills necessary for one's 'effective' participation in society (Cervetti; Pardales; Damico, 2001). This is not what *literacy as letramento* implies.

When introduced to formal schooling, learners are not blank slates to whom reading and writing 'skills' are one-directionally 'taught'. Quite differently, whether in early childhood or adult education, learners have amassed **universes of tacit knowledge** built on diverse social practices **beyond the school/academic settings** and the schooling process. Despite not having formally learned how to connect sounds and letters, or even when struggling to make sense of written signs and information, literacy is indeed present: *literacy as letramento* **does not refer exclusively to reading and writing and written culture**. Once again, such binaries and the high place given to (formal, standard) writing, to the detriment of other ways of communicating, is an aftertaste of colonialism[38].

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[37] Here I am thinking specifically about the rich and highly elaborate hip-hop and rap lyrics and melodies, which combine a sophisticated use of rhyming, wordplay, and rhythm, all while simultaneously addressing social issues and criticizing inequalities and the state of things. Naturally, not all hip-hop and rap deals with topical issues or aims to challenge the status quo, and this applies to nearly all types of contemporary music (and literature).

[38] Education in Brazil was initially restricted to the clergy and the elites. Used for acculturation purposes, it was extended to Indigenous peoples, with the Jesuits in the 16th century (Hemming, 1972), eventually extended to enslaved Africans and their descendants if there was an economic use for it, from the 18th century (Souza, 2023). For the Indigenous, this meant moving away from an oral, skills-based education emphasizing communal values such as cooperation and respect for nature (Darcy, 1948; Hemming, 1972). For the enslaved Africans, access to written culture came via the religious readings performed out loud at church, in outdoor ceremonies, and in processions (Jouve-Martín, 2005; Souza, 2023). In colonial Brazil, education was a means to 'civilize' the native peoples, preparing them for fixed routines in agriculture. This meant promoting an individualistic stance on education based on strict discipline and the teachings of high moral Christian values, as some Indigenous tribes (e.g., the Guaicuru) were 'too' casual in their interactions and social hierarchies (Hemming, 1972, pp. 393-394). Children, particularly young boys, were the focus, mostly due to their innocence and impressibility (Hemming, 1972, p. 111). For enslaved and freed Africans, education served mostly utilitarian purposes. Albeit rudimentary (cf. Paiva, 2006), knowing how to read and write was a means to improve the then 'employability' skills of this population (Souza, 2023). Despite several changes in Brazilian education in the following centuries, we can still see the underpinnings of colonial education in contemporary practices, more specifically in literacy standards and practices, with (formal) writing highly/over-valued as *the* way to foster intellectuality, given its association with analytic competence (Glatthorn, 1985) and higher order thinking skills (Elser, 2008). In present times, the privileged position of writing in Westernized cultures such as Brazil is visible in the prominent role of written culture in education, schooling, and work, and in the high(er) social status granted to those who have mastered the written word (Bortoni-Ricardo, 2004). Standardized tests that heavily rely on extensive, formal reading and writing are also exemplary of the association between writing and intellect.

Accordingly, *literacy as letramento* means educators, who themselves are social beings whose reading and writing practices inform their teaching practices, must take into account the reading and writing knowledge(s) and the literacy experiences with which their learners are equipped prior to commencing their formal schooling journey. For example, the many 'pieces' of language one encounters on their way to work/school, in the form of traffic signs, billboards, and advertisements, the stories and tales with which children interact in daycare centers, or the ones their families orally pass on from generation to generation, as well as the tiny-lettered and sometimes confusing labels and price tags one reads while grocery shopping. These are also **everyday instances that inform one's literacy**.

Literacy as letramento is hence associated with the *ideological* model of literacy (Street, 2003), emphasizing its focus on **the variability of literacy across different situations** and its dependence on beliefs and cultural contexts (Baker; Street, 1991; Barton, 1994). This means that literacy is neither a fixed nor universal concept. Instead, the *ideological* model recognizes that literacy practices vary from situation to situation suggesting that the way people read and write is influenced by the specific contexts in which these activities take place, as reading and writing are embedded within the particularities of a given space and moment. The sociocultural nature of literacy means that the way individuals approach and interpret language is influenced by cultural norms, values, and practices.

As explained by Cabral and Martin-Jones (2008), the *ideological* understanding argues **against generalizing the use of literacy** and numeracy **across cultures**, therefore challenging the notion that literacy practices can be treated as universally applicable and/or as neutral and technical skills, as favored in the autonomous model. Moreover, the *ideological* model suggests that there are many different types of literacy. This could include recognizing various literacies within diverse cultural settings, each with its own set of practices, meanings, and implications. While such typification may be problematic at times (Horner, 2013), literacy remains context-bound in the *ideological* perspective.

Literacy as letramento is **a different way of approaching reading and writing** when compared to the more traditional view of associating literacy with being *literate*. It not only embraces the sociocultural background and experiences of those who participate in reading and writing practices (Costa, 2012), but also recognizes that the acts of reading and writing involve **other semiotic modes**[39] **beyond written signs** (see Kress, 1995; van Leeuwen, 2005; Kress,

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[39] Based on Social Semiotics (Halliday, 1978; Hodge; Kress, 1988) and influenced by Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 1999), semiotic modes are understood as "a socially organized set of semiotic resources for

Selander, 2012; Danielsson; Selander, 2021). This may be especially important for reading and writing acquisition and/or instruction in societies that have become heavily reliant on making meaning by associating words with other semiotic modes, **particularly images and speech**, as will be discussed further in this section.

Methodologically, the scholarship on *literacy* has favored **qualitative methodologies**, particularly ethnography, with the notion of *literacy event* enlisted to facilitate the examination of literacy practices, given its more tangible nature (Barton; Hamilton, 2012 [1998]). Literacy events are defined as "occasions in which written language is an integral part of the nature of participants' interactions" (Heath, 1982, p. 50). Hence, it is via these situated instances of more comprehensive social practices (Street, 2003) that one can observe literacy in practice (Barton; Hamilton, 2000). When referring to the participants' academic literacy practices, we are basing our discussion on literacy events.

At this point in our review, it is worth mentioning the work of Paulo Freire as a key reference in the scholarship on *literacy as letramento*. Specifically, Kleiman (1995) references Freire (1991) when discussing the concept of literacy and the social impact of knowing how to read and write, particularly in highly disparate social contexts such as those in Brazil. As Freire (1970) argues, literacy can be emancipatory, as long as knowing how to read and write is also accompanied by the ability to read the world in a critical way, to understand its inequalities and injustices, to question reality, and to propose changes that can better one's often marginalized life.

On this note, one of Freire's most important contributions to the scholarship on literacy and social transformation may be that access to education and reading and writing practices needs to be accompanied by a critical understanding of one's place in the world, and how such practices contribute to either maintain or transform one's reality. Ultimately, what Freire (1970, 1975, 1980, 1991) advocates for is associated with the notion of **literacy as social practice**: a way of including historically marginalized groups who have long been excluded from social practices driven by a narrow view of literacy, as Castanheira (2018) sustains.

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making meaning", according to Jewitt, Bazerman and O'Halloran (2016, p. 177), and seen as systematic and conventional forms of communication (Kress, 1995). As Fairclough (2003) notes, the social world is structured by various forms of semiosis and each instance of social practices has a semiotic dimension.

Understanding Academic Literacy

Conventionally, academic literacy is defined as a set of skills and/or practices necessary for engaging with and producing academic texts, a process in which advanced language development plays a key role (Shanahan; Shanahan, 2008). Following an outlook of literacy as a *skill* – that is, transferrable and mostly individually-oriented, such definition can be associated with the writing movements undertaken in anglophone university spaces (Marinkovich *et al*., 2016). This rather narrow view of academic literacy, identified by Lea and Street (1998) as the *academic skills* model, places great emphasis on the idea that once students have mastered the knowledge about reading and writing, they can seamlessly transfer such knowledge from one context to the next (Lea; Street, 1998, 2006).

A more dynamic understanding of academic literacy is the *academic socialization* model (cf. Lea; Street, 1998, 2006; Marinkovich *et al*. 2016). Heavily focused on genres and disciplinary knowledge, this model places academic literacy as **a culturally situated process** in which university students gradually appropriate and act upon "shared cultural values and communicative repertoires within the disciplines" (Li, 2022, p. 2). As an improvement from the *skills* model, *academic socialization* aims to equip students with the knowledge(s) required to navigate within disciplinary discourse practices (Marinkovich *et al*., 2016), via explicit teaching to address the hidden features of a given discipline (Street, 2010, Fischer, 2012).

The *academic socialization* model also assumes that each discipline has its own distinct and ritualized ways of approaching and socializing research, and that these ways change over time and from place to place (Lillis; Scott, 2007). **As disciplines change, so do the language practices by which their knowledge is communicated**. In line with Lillis and Scott (2007), academic literacy is seen as intertwined with the social and cultural practices of the community in which it occurs, which means that the particular tasks and expectations of academic literacy practices are shaped by the **specific disciplinary and institutional contexts**, in a given space-time.

Expanding on the *academic socialization* model, the *academic literacies* framework is concerned with the situated nature of literacy as well as the **ideological aspects** of academic interaction, such as **power and identity**, and what counts as 'knowledge' (Lea; Street, 2006). As Zavala (2010) notes, this view creates more space for researchers, teachers, and educators to better understand literacy practices at university, considering other modes of communication. This model therefore goes beyond the study of disciplinary specificities to probe how power relations and/or institutional practices influence literacy and knowledge production (Lea; Street,

2006; Zavala, 2010), placing more emphasis on agency (Zavala, 2010) and acknowledging that academic literacy encompasses academic experiences built prior to entering university.

Effectively, this model challenges the 'deficit' view of literacy (Lea; Street, 2006). This is crucial for our research and for the more critically sourced academic literacy practices, particularly when dealing with HE students from marginalized and minoritized backgrounds or in vulnerable situations, seeing that these students become more prone to stigmatization for being constantly viewed under an essentialist and reductionist lens, which Neves and Diniz (2018, p. 100-101) understand as 'discourse of lack', in which certain individuals and groups of individuals tend to be seen "by what they supposedly 'are not', 'do not do', 'do not know', consequently erasing their experiences, their agencies, their knowledge"[40]. Yet, despite creating room for amplified discussions on written culture, social identities, power dynamics, and "the relationship of epistemology and writing" (Lea; Street, 2006, p. 228), the *academic literacies* model does not quite provide a historicized approach to academic literacy, which, as we sustain, is key for a more critical and decolonial view of literacy.

Relatedly, it is important to recognize that academic literacy is not an individual pursuit, but **a collective endeavor**. The very act of conducting research and socializing it in academic journals and conferences is meant to be collaborative. At the end of each of these activities is at least one individual with whom the researcher must interact, in the role of advisor, reviewer, instructor, and peer. As with other social practices, research is built on previous collective work. Academic literacy is therefore not just about producing written or spoken texts to be circulated in academic settings. Perhaps more importantly so, academic literacy is about **engaging with the texts of others**, as students read and interpret texts to understand the ongoing conversations and debates within their field (Carlino, 2017) – not only to gain more insight into theoretical frameworks and previous scholarship, but also to develop their own stance and criticality on such matters.

Heightened Multimodality in Academic Literacy

The changes brought about by the advent of the Internet and the digital revolution, the so-called Web 2.0, reflect social and cultural transformations in the ways we interact and in the process by which we construct and disseminate knowledge. In academic practices, such changes can be seen in the use of digital social networks for the socialization of academic research and

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[40] Translated from: "por aquilo que supostamente 'não são', 'não fazem', 'não sabem', 'não conhecem', apagando suas vivências, suas agências, seus saberes e seus conhecimentos".

the 'multimodalization' of academic genres, in which different semiotic elements are employed to meet varied discursive demands (cf. Elias; Silva, 2018; Franco; Castanheira, 2019; Lupton, 2010). Yet, most studies on academic literacy deal with academic literacy practices mediated almost exclusively by written texts, focusing on reading and writing and neglecting other modes – or combinations of modes.

Figure 2.5 A: UFMG research dissemination post in @ufmgpesquisa.

Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/B5tRu2ep0GY/. Accessed on: 20 Oct. 2021.
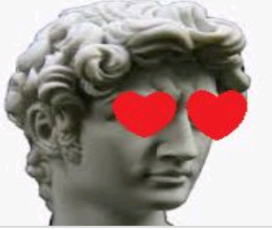
Figure 2.5 B: Visual abstract from the New England Journal of Medicine.
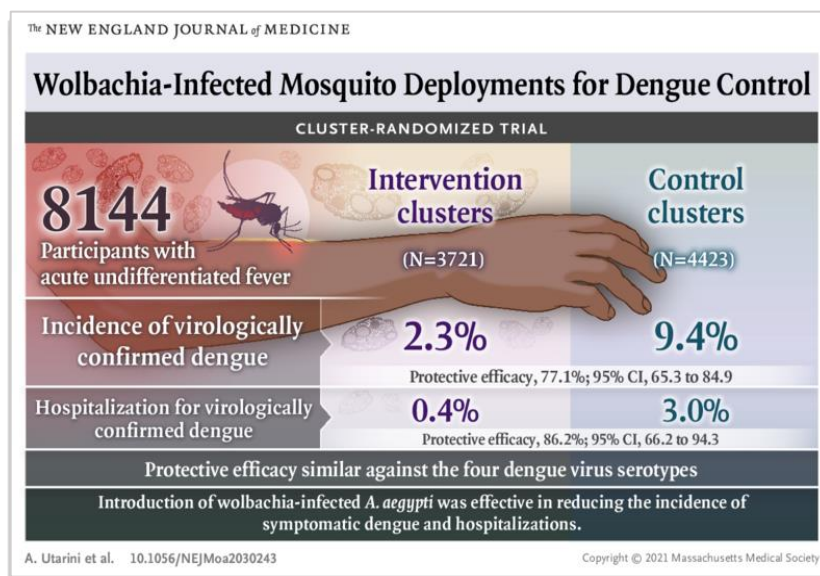
Source: https://www.nejm.org/do/10.1056/NEJMdo006094/full/. Accessed on: 20 Oct. 2021.

Figure 2.5 C: Presentation slides produced by one of my students at UFMG.

Source: Shared by a student, from the author's collection.

Figure 2.5 D: UFMG reel for incoming students, at @ufmg.
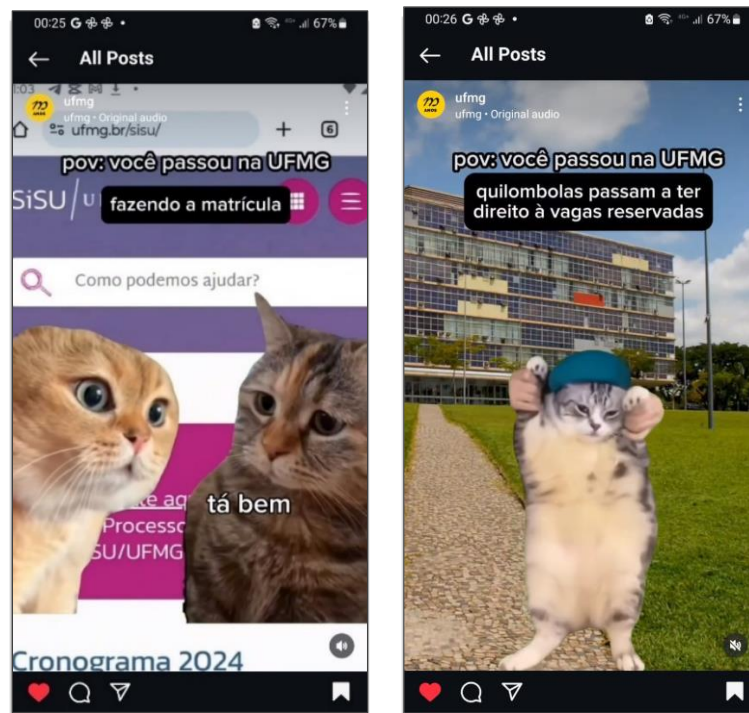
Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/C2z0XjmuPAH/. Access: Feb. 03, 2024.

Multimodality is not exactly new in language practices, as it is assumed that language is not monomodal (Kress, 2000). However, what is 'new' might be the greater use of semiotic resources, as a result of the social and cultural changes mentioned. Hence, because written texts are **intrinsically multimodal** (Ribeiro, 2016), when reading and writing texts, we consider not only verbal language, but also the arrangement of information, the size and type of the font, and the spacing, among others (Kress, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2005). **These semiotic elements evoke meanings** that vary depending on how they are used, by whom and to whom, for what purpose, and where the texts circulate, producing specific communicative effects.

That is one reason why multimodality should be addressed more frequently in studies about academic literacy, as these literacy practices have become **increasingly permeated by multimodality**, especially in the dissemination of academic research, as shown in Figures 2.5 A and 2.5 B, in genres supporting oral communication (Figure 2.5 C), and in interactions held online. Less formal ways of communication particularly addressed to younger generations are gaining traction in official HE communication channels on social media, with a greater focus on multimodality, as seen in Figure 2.5 D.

In regard to the increasingly imagetic character of contemporary communication, Kress and Rowsell (2018, p. 32) argue that "*image* has become, in many social domains, *a* or even *the* dominant means for making meaning", especially in more digitally-based interactions such as those undertaken on social media. The authors hence add that "*Image* is displacing *writing* in many domains of social action and interaction as the central resource for making meaning" (italics in the original). While it is true that image, static or dynamic, has always been essential in communication, playing an important role in the development of literacy, resorting to images and iconicity may have become more heightened as of the late 20th century, with visual elements used to communicate complex ideas in highly multimodal genres, such as infographics, videos, and Instagram posts (Hobbs; Jensen, 2009; Wasserman; Gray, 2011), as seen in Figure 2.5 D.

Indeed, with **scientific communication made more accessible with/on social media**, image has become central, particularly **dynamic image** (Habibi; Salim, 2021) in popular and freely available YouTube channels, and especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (cf. Pollett; Rivers, 2020). However, in academic literacy practices, multimodality may have garnered attention *also* as a result of the increase in academic events such as conferences (and webinars/lives during and after the pandemic) as fundamental elements of academic practices. In this scenario, oral presentations with slides became the 'norm'.

Oral presentations may indeed signal a shift in the way content is taught in universities, highlighting a move from lecture-based classes to **more interactive lessons** (Kaur; Ali, 2021; Waluyo; Rofiah, 2021). This more dialogical approach may be the result of **student-centered pedagogies** in HE, as Wright (2011) notes, with oral presentations serving several functions – from enhanced learning (Weimer, 2002), assessment (Gramaglia *et al*., 2023), socialization into academic communities (Duff, 2010; Zappa-Hollman, 2007), to professional and/or academic training practice (Živković, 2015), and disciplinary competence development (Morton, 2009).

The Coloniality of Academic Literacy

Traditionally, as argued, **academic literacy has been grounded in Eurocentric norms and epistemologies**, marginalizing other/different ways of knowing, learning, and researching. Academia involves possibly some of the most colonialist-based literacy practices in actuality. For instance, current academic writing conventions and much of current scientific research have remained rooted almost exclusively in Westernized epistemic, reflecting and reiterating long-living Western-based ways of knowing and being in the world, more generally, and in academic spaces, in particular (Turner, 2003; Alvares, 2011). In this scenario, challenging Western and Eurocentric approaches to knowledge (re)production has become an urgent matter, if one seeks inclusion, equity, and social change. As Mignolo (2007) suggests, this exercise can be done by attempting to de-link education, research, and academic literacy practices.

According to Tuhiwai-Smith (2021), this reflective exercise requires a fundamental shift in how knowledge is constructed and disseminated, with **a focus on recognizing and valuing diverse knowledges**, diverse 'others'. On this, it is paramount to ask the following questions, as elaborated by Tuhiwai-Smith (2021, p. 10):

- *Whose research is this?*
- *Who owns it?*
- *Whose interests does it serve?*
- *Who will benefit from it?*

- *Who has designed its questions and framed its scope?*
- *Who will carry it out?*
- *Who will write it up?*
- *How will the results be disseminated?*

Decolonizing academic literacy also involves addressing issues of **power and privilege** in academic settings. Academic writing, for example, has historically been seen as the domain of the elites, employed as a tool to maintain power and control over marginalized communities. **Decolonizing of academic literacy practices requires addressing these power dynamics** and creating spaces for diverse voices to be heard, included, and valued. In this vein, Hernández-

Zamora (2019, p. 7) argues that literacy is mostly "a cultural, political, and ideological process that implies adopting and assimilating the language, culture, and ideologies of the dominant *other*" (italics in the original), calling for a view of literacy as a situated and historicized process that goes beyond power dynamics and the heterogeneity of reading and writing practices. Such positionality may not have been required from Euro-American and Anglophone researchers such as the important and relevant work done by the New London Group; however, for the ones to whom the legacies of colonialism are still alive, a historicized stance is paramount.

We expand Hernández-Zamora's reflections on literacy to include academic literacy and academic practices. As a decolonial and historicized view of literacy "involves questioning how access to written culture changes between classes and social groups throughout social history and in individual histories" (Hernández-Zamora, 2019, p. 7), such exercise can and should be undertaken in regard to academic literacy, as it involves discussing the fact that some members of society have more opportunities for language learning and enjoy more privileged literacy practices than most individuals. On this, acknowledging that not all literacy practices are 'born equal' is essential: we know that some literacy practices are born out of resistance and strategic survival (Rockwell, 2005), while others, despite over-complying with standards, are hardly ever considered 'appropriate' – in a rather elitist, colonialist sense.

The coloniality of academic literacy practices is also seen in the overspread adoption of standard English as *the* language of science, research, and publishing (as it is quite visible in this dissertation). However, this type of 'academic coloniality' does not concern just employing formal standard English (usually the American and/or British standard varieties). Academic coloniality and the coloniality of academic practices go into an intricate valuation system not just of languages but of literacy practices, with some practices more valued while others remain barely accounted for, as Hernández-Zamora (2019) argues.

Historically, these academic valuation differences are **deeply rooted in ontological and epistemic assumptions dating back to colonialism**, as Mignolo (2000, 2007) notes. Ironically, transgressing this centuries-long tradition requires being versed in said tradition. This is why it is highly unlikely that we will ever be able to completely abolish coloniality in academia and university *[just look at this PhD dissertation, written in a hegemonic language in order to reach larger audiences, following hegemonic standards, and mostly – though not entirely – adhering to the very standards I aim my criticism at]*. We return to this point in the final chapter, but for now, it is worth reflecting on Adébísí's (2019, online) wise words: "We cannot decolonise the university using the same logics that made it a colonising force – the episteme that became a most effective

and self-sustaining war machine. **How illogical is it that the structure we are attempting to decolonise is the structure we are attempting to use to decolonise?**" (emphasis added).

Within this review, we stress the need for **a critical view of academic literacy**, looking at university students more holistically and at their practices more comprehensively. When it comes to university students, we approach them as individuals whose academic identities are intertwined with their life histories, having also been informed by previous literacy practices and more informal experiences at university. While these assumptions have been covered in the Academic Literacies model, they are still often not the focus of current research on academic literacy. Hence, looking at academic literacy practices from a decolonial lens **underscores the importance of less prototypically academic undertakings** such as administrative errands and tasks (e.g., applying for an internship, registering for classes or sending emails) and **informal socialization practices held either in academic settings** (e.g., study groups) **or outside the physical space of the university, in online environments** (e.g., social gatherings, WhatsApp groups), many of which may be highly multilingual.

We highlight that academic literacy goes beyond language organized in prototypically academic genres and academic practices such as reading and writing articles, essays, reviews, and summaries, participating in seminars and conferences, delivering academic presentations. It is also associated with processes such as registration tasks and socialization, which require engaging with a wider range of texts/genres in academic settings and/or *about* academic culture. These less 'prototypical' situations may involve reading a public call to apply for an internship, designing an academic resumé, or sharing one's experiences and expectations in what we call the 'academic grapevine': informal networks of peers, experts, and insiders. Academic literacy involves literacy events in which less and more prototypical and formal academic practices are discussed, for instance, when exchanging ideas with peers in study groups. However, academic literacy is often still seen as are not realized by these 'canonical' academic practices.

Finally, because of the highly Eurocentric and Anglo-American character of academia, *dominant* **academic practices are likely conducted in hegemonic languages**. In Brazil, this means the widespread adoption of English, which is indeed the result of globalization, as well as the use of formal Portuguese. Seeing that these academic practices mostly adhere to long-standing academically hegemonic epistemes and use of language, valuing monolingualism (also as a means of domination), *dominant* academic literacy practices tend to be monolingual, highly standardized, and formal, following strict norms of language use. This means favoring specific language varieties (e.g., standard, formal Portuguese and standard, formal American and/or

British English), leaving little to no space for periphery languages or so-called 'non-standard' expressions of language. Looking at academic literacy through a more decolonial lens should open space for multilingualism through **translanguaging** (Canagarajah, 2011; García; Wei, 2014), in addition to casting light on multisemiotic exchanges beyond the conventional genres of academia.

This is especially relevant for contemporary and decolonial academic literacy practices, given the current time of 'hyper' multimodality, particularly with social media. In this regard, looking at academic literacy from the *periphery* can accommodate emerging phenomena of the digital world, such as the *academic social media* (cf. Mohammadi *et al*., 2018. O'keeffe, 2019; Klar, 2020), in which experiences and expectations are shared, challenges, concerns are openly discussed, and knowledge is passed on, creating a sense of community and putting into question exploitative behaviors in academia deemed 'natural' within academic circles in different parts of the world.

Ultimately, this helps to demystify academia, as shown in several Twitter and Instagram accounts[41] dedicated to supporting novice academics, first-generation academics, and/or **early career researchers**. Notably, this academic socialization and socializing circles can serve as an important outlet for historically minoritized and/or marginalized populations, whose access to HE and/or research is relatively recent – at least in Brazil.

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[41] E.g., https://twitter.com/PhScribble, https://twitter.com/ThePhDPlace, https://twitter.com/PhDVoice and https://www.instagram.com/phd_comics/, https://www.instagram.com/diversityinacademia/.

Nothing about us without us.

3. Research Process and Methodology

This chapter addresses the research process and the methodology of this doctoral study. It describes and explains the research design and methodological framework developed for the investigation. All research instruments were applied with the prior authorization of the research participants, who signed a Free, Prior, and Informed Consent Form (FPIC). I start this chapter by explaining the research design, moving on to an explanation of the research stages and levels, followed by a description of the methods and tools employed in generating and analyzing the data, including notes on translation and transcription.

3.1 Designing the Research

Our research adopts a mixed-method approach developed in four interconnected stages, reflecting and reinforcing the situated character of the research and the data/data analysis, with the data coming from **multiple sources**. By opting for a **mixed-multi design**, our PhD research employs qualitative and quantitative research instruments (Paltridge, 2020), as "complex issues have to be viewed from multiple perspectives" (Grabe, 2006, p. xi). This is meant to facilitate a deeper exploration of the phenomena under investigation (Hashemi; Babaii, 2012, 2013; Hashemi, 2020). The four stages of our doctoral research are encompassed by several instances of research socialization (conference presentations in Brazil and abroad and publications), which have been paramount to the improvement of the research and this dissertation.

Combining a mixed-method approach with data from multiple sources is coherent with the phenomena under investigation: academic literacy practices and experiences and conflict-induced international migration, more generally, as lived by students of (international) migrant backgrounds at UFMG, in particular. This is in line with the interdisciplinary nature of research on crisis migration (Baeninger, 2015; Baeninger; Peres, 2017): the combination of multiple data sources and different analytical methods aims to offer **more support for the interpretation of migratory social processes**, taking into account their complexity and varied dimensions as a social phenomenon.

Detailed descriptions and explanations of the stages, including the methods and tools used, are provided to ensure methodological and **data analysis transparency**, the benefits of which are improving "the accessibility, visibility, rigour, scrutiny, reproducibility, replicability, and systematicity of [applied linguistics] research" (Marsden, 2019, p. 26), ultimately aiming at increased quality in academic research. While Table 3 provides an organized picture of the

interconnected stages, the linkages between each stage are not always 'neat'. Chronologically, most of the research was done in this order. However, specific steps required that we return to earlier stages (e.g., changes made in the public call) to better interpret the data. Just like writing, research is also recursive (cf. Miles et al., 2016; Perl, 2014).

As indicated in Table 3, Stage 1 refers to the analysis of the legislation, i.e., Public Call 064/2020 entries 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024, in association with Resolution 07/2019 by the UFMG Council of Education, Research, and Extension (CEPE), as this document is invoked in all entries of the public call. The analysis also included the guidelines of the National Secondary Education Examination (ENEM) and the university's by-laws, so we could gain insight into the educational and institutional contexts of the call. Based on Bowen (2009), I conducted a content analysis of selected passages from these documents. The ENEM guidelines mostly refer to the essay, as an official guideline booklet (*cartilha*) is launched soon after exam registrations open.

Stage 2 refers to the analysis of the data collected from publicly available information about the call applicants and students enrolled at the university, considering all entries: 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. It should be noted that Public Call 064/2020 is launched annually, always under the same name, even with changes made year to year, which is why I treat it as a single call with annual entries – four so far. In addition, the data generated in this stage does not require an FPIC, as it is public information. However, to avoid exposing the applicants and students, we decided not to divulge the websites from where this information was retrieved or the names of the applicants and enrolled students. In regard to methods and tools, Stage 2 relies more on quantitative methodology.

Stage 3 consists of two online questionnaires and two semi-structured interviews, which led to intensified WhatsApp exchanges with the research participants, primarily carried out via written texts and audio messages, shared media and links. As will be explained, the *conversas* dealt with specific questions about literacy (from us, the researches) and requests the research participants made in regard to their academic demands and challenges at UFMG, which were addressed in online tutoring sessions. **The use of WhatsApp allowed for flexible interactions**, offering insights into participants' experiences.

Stage 4 refers to actionable recommendations driven by the data generation and analysis. Drawing from our findings, this stage provides specific recommendations that can be acted and elaborated upon, considering academic literacy, a welcoming program for students of migrant backgrounds, and IaH initiatives at UFMG. The recommended actions involve several actors and relevant parties at the university, also aimed to reach the local community.

Table 3.1: Research design in stages.

Methodological Framework		
Stage 1		
Focus and Sources	**Methods and Tools**	**Goals**

• Public call 064/2020
  o Entry 2021
  o Entry 2022
  o Entry 2023
  o Entry 2024
• Resolution 07/2019
• ENEM rules/guidelines
• UFMG by-laws
	• Selective content analysis to identify any "meaningful and relevant passages of text or other data" (Bowen, 2009, p. 32)
	• Semi-structured interviews with persons responsible for changes made in the call
		→ To understand the call's scope, context, scope, and requirements
		
		→ To situate the call within the context of international crisis migration and higher education in Brazil/UFMG
		
		→ To understand the rationale behind changes in the call

Stage 2		
Focus and Sources	**Methods and Tools**	**Goals**
Applicants and enrolled students: • Majors and disciplines • ENEM scores • UFMG score • Age and generation	• Descriptive statistics • Spreadsheets graphs and charts • Thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009; Morgan, 2022)	→ To outline the profiles of the applicants and enrolled students → To situate both applicants and students within the contexts of HE in Brazil and at UFMG
Stage 3		
Focus and Sources	**Methods and Tools**	**Goals**

Research participants:
• Migration journey
• Literacy history
• Academic literacy needs
• Multiple-choice test scores
• Essay scores
• UFMG score
	• Online questionnaires
	• Semi-structured interviews
	• *Conversas* face-to-face
	• *Conversas* via WhatsApp:
	  o Written texts
	  o Audio messages
	  o Shared media and links
		→ To gain insight into the academic literacy practices and experiences of the participants
		
		→ To address their academic literacy demands and challenges
		
		→ To identify any other academic demands and challenges at UFMG

Stage 4		
Focus and Sources	**Methods and Tools**	**Goals**

University and local community:
• UFMG
  o DRI
  o CSVM
  o Pró-Imigrantes
  o GIZ
  o CENEX
  o Student body
  o Interdisciplinary faculty
	• Data-driven:
	  o Themes and issues emerging from the questionnaires, interviews, and conversas
	  o Challenges and demands addressed in the online tutoring sessions
	  o Past IaH actions successfully developed at UFMG
		→ To provide specific actionable recommendations for:
		✓ Expanding academic literacy development
		✓ Developing a welcoming program for migrant-background students
		✓ Implementing more inclusive and diverse IaH initiatives

Source: The author.

To better situate and contextualize the research and the data, I decided to adapt the **4M Framework** from **the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)**, including its guiding principles, in the research. SoTL is a research-focused approach that centers on the systematic investigation of teaching and learning practices in HE, as Simmons (2020) explains. It has been conceptualized for HE and involves **a reflective inquiry into various aspects of academic practices** to enhance and advance the quality of education, emphasizing the dissemination of research findings to contribute to the broader educational and academic communities. In this regard, HE academics are meant to share their insights and research through publications, workshops, conference presentations, and other forums (Felten, 2013; Simmons, 2020).

An important feature of SoTL is the overlapping between teaching and research, as Sipes (2017) notes, reinforcing the triad teaching, research, and service, corresponding to the pillars of public HEIs in Brazil: teaching, research, and extension/outreach ('*Ensino*, *Pesquisa*, *Extensão*'). This also caught my attention, as the role of HE in Brazil includes a commitment to positive social impact (Dantas, 2011; Lima, 2023), given the purpose of public universities in Brazil. Moreover, CAPES evaluates the social impact of the research conducted in Brazilian HEIs when assessing graduate programs, among other criteria[42]. Extension/outreach programs are likely the primary outlets for impact-research carried out in HE[43].

SoTL practice is organized into **four interconnected levels**, as will be discussed in the next section. While SoTL is not equivalent to research, they share many similarities (cf. Figure 3.1), with SoTL structured around seven steps that mimic the process of academic investigation (Francis, 2007; OALT, 2019), as listed in the following:

> *1) identify the question, or describe what it is to be learned,*
>
> *2) develop a plan to gather data,*
>
> *3) gather and analyze data,*
>
> *4) describe your results and generate a context for your results,*
>
> *5) state your conclusions,*
>
> *6) share your results with peers (make your results public with an audience),*
>
> *7) make decisions about future actions related to your question.*
>
> (Francis, 2007, p. 2)

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[42] http://portal.mec.gov.br/setec-programas-e-acoes/acordo-gratuidade/225-noticias/sistemas-1375504326/81611-novo-modelo-de-avaliacao-medira-impacto-social-e-insercao-regional-das-pesquisas.

[43] The importance of extension/outreach in HE is reinforced by CAPES SESu Joint Ordinance 1 of November 8, 2023: http://cad.capes.gov.br/ato-administrativo-detalhar?idAtoAdmElastic=13486. Access: Jan. 24, 2024.

Figure 3.1: Overlaps between academic research and SoTL.

Element	Research	SOTL
Observation/s	✔	✔
Question/s	✔	✔
Hypothesis	✔	✔
Data collection	✔	✔
Interpretation of the data & argument	✔	✔
Requires ethics approval	✔	✔
Reliability, validity or other quality design factors	✔	✔
Sample/participant sizes must be intentional	✔	✔
Can be predictive, if designed to be	✔	✔
Quantitative, qualitative or mixed designs	✔	✔
Uses a variety of methods and methodologies	✔	✔
Different from evaluation	✔	✔
Opportunity to be published in quality outlets	✔	✔
Significance, importance and prestige	✔	✔
Career benefits	✔	✔
Can involve teaching reduction / buy-out	✔	
Topic boundaries (about Learning & Teaching)		✔
Closing-the-Loop (making improvements)		✔

Source: OALT (2019, p. 31).

I sought inspiration in SoTL for three reasons: first, because I could not help but look at the research participants as I would my students. In over 20 years of teaching practice, I have come to realize that it was **more meaningful and productive** to 'feel' the context and gain a better understanding of the teaching situation and the students and work based on this evidence, rather than start from impositions. In addition, having started teaching as early as I did means that today there is a generation gap between myself and my students in high school and at the university, as most university students are much younger than me. In both cases, I had to dive into the world of my students to understand key differences between our generations; from their literacy practices and relationship with digital and analog technologies to the state of the world, more generally.

I also noticed that **my identity as a teacher and an educator was not something I had to discard during academic research** – we all wear different hats and the reality of the world under late-stage capitalism is accumulation of functions. I realized that working within post-

method (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2003a, 2003b, 2006) involves research and being a specialist in one's field and teaching context and that many of the strategies I employed in my teaching practice can be adapted to my research practice, including the **more horizontalized approach to the research participants**, which, at some level, was likely inspired by my teaching and my previous interactions with my students. Ultimately, **the research we conduct washes back on education**.

Finally, I realized that my exchanges with the four research participants were not kept only within the institutional space of the research and the university, as social media played a key role in our interactions and the research organically flowed over the boundaries of UFMG: two participants took part in a workshop I organized at a high school where I was teaching in 2022, promoting their language and culture(s). I have been involved in different projects and research groups, routinely, and have worked with varied audiences and in different capacities, constantly finding patterns, similarities, and differences in such diverse scenarios – either as a language teacher, an ECR, an applied linguist, a translator, and an editor/reviewer. I have made associations between my doctoral research in all these capacities and scenarios. As it turns out, this approach is also part of SoTL, as "those working in SoTL-focused educational development are simultaneously engaged in multiple projects, supporting and extending SoTL work in micro, meso, macro, and mega contexts within and beyond their institutions" (Frake-Mistak; Friberg; Hamilton, 2023, p. 5).

3.2 Stitching Stages and Levels

The **SoTL 4M Framework is organized into four levels of influence/impact**: micro, meso, macro, and mega. The micro-level concerns the individual researcher, and the meso-level refers to the researcher's department; the macro-level refers to the university, while the mega-level pertains to the disciplines or interdisciplinary areas (cf. Friberg, 2016; Simmons, 2020). The 4M Framework allows for the data generated to be visualized and interpreted from different viewpoints, providing a more comprehensive picture of the phenomena under investigation, in which **different individuals, groups, and processes can be made visible in their complexity** (Friberg, 2016). The challenge is to ensure **fluidity among the four levels**, which are not meant to be fixed (Frake-Mistak; Friberg; Hamilton, 2023).

As shown in Figure 3.2 A, the mega-level encompasses stakeholders associated with the HEI but not necessarily engaged in its day-to-day operations, including government bodies, alumni, parents, and other individuals who can be enlisted as partners for actions in and outside

the HEI. The macro-level involves the HEI, more specifically, assuming the role of establishing institutional direction and cultivating **a culture of academic integrity**, as this is a key element of SoTL. At this particular level, academic leaders and relevant persons at the university can also serve as advocates, shaping the overarching ethos of the HEI (Eaton, 2020). At the meso-level we find academic units and support entities, such as the library or the student affairs office, resources and educational opportunities to operationalize academic integrity.

Figure 3.2 A: The 4M Framework nested levels.
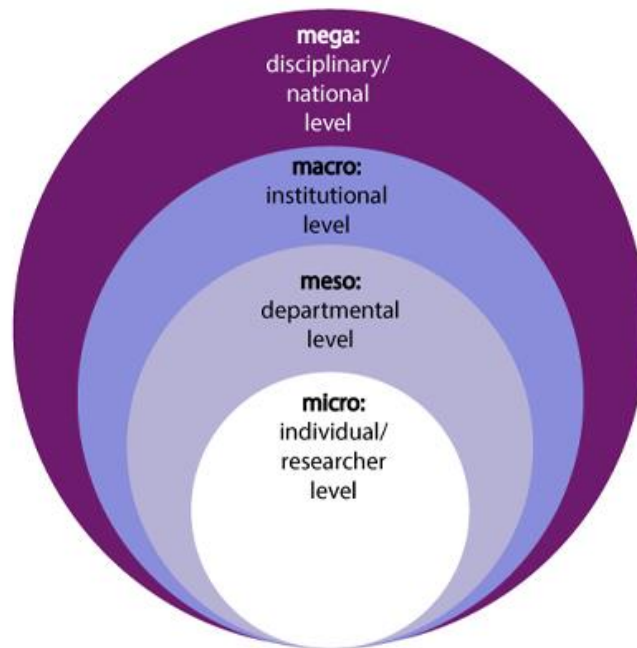
Source: Minocha (2021, online).

As Eaton (2020) explains, at this tier, academic integrity can manifest in practical ways, often involving hands-on approaches such as workshops, tutorials, and accessible resources. Finally, at the micro-level both students and educators at the university play a central role within the 4M Framework, bringing to the fore their own conceptualizations and experiences. It must be noted that the micro-level does not happen in isolation, as it is impacted by other individuals within the system, as well as the system itself.

Based on this, I decided to adapt the **SoTL 4M Framework** to our research context, as illustrated in Figure 3.2 B below, opting for an 'un-neat' visual representation of each level, highlighting their fluidity and heterogeneity, that is, the potential for cross-penetrations and inter/intra-level 'infiltrations', as these levels are composed of porous, fluid boundary layers. This deliberate choice aimed to signals that social life and social practices do not unfold as

'neatly', evenly, and smoothly as a seamless visual representation would have us think. While social organization entails varying degrees of order and hierarchy (Sterelny, 2021), that does not mean social practices are always **'neatly packed' or structured uniformly**, particularly in late modernity (Giddens, 1994, 2008). It seemed crucial to make this visible, while knowing that diagrams are two-dimensional and, as such, do not capture the nuances and details of what they represent.

Hence, when designing the 4M Framework on Canva, I opted for contrasting colors to make the connections between the four levels more visible through the different micro-shapes that 'flow' from level to level, in multiple directions, meaning that, ultimately, **whatever is in the micro level is also constitutive of the other levels**. In other words, the research participants (micro) were once applicants (meso) in a specific nationwide public call (macro) implemented as a result of the impact of conflict-induced international migration in Brazil (mega), going beyond the HEI. Hence, the research participants are situated in all four levels, simultaneously. This is made evident in Chapter 5, when their identities and migration journeys are discussed. There is a 'back-and-forth' movement to the discussion, in the attempt to constantly situate the participants both in larger and more specific scenarios, contextualizing their experiences and looking at **specificities and generalities** that compose and influence their identities, journeys, and experiences, whether referring to migration or academic literacy.

Figure 3.2 B: 4M Framework for our doctoral research.
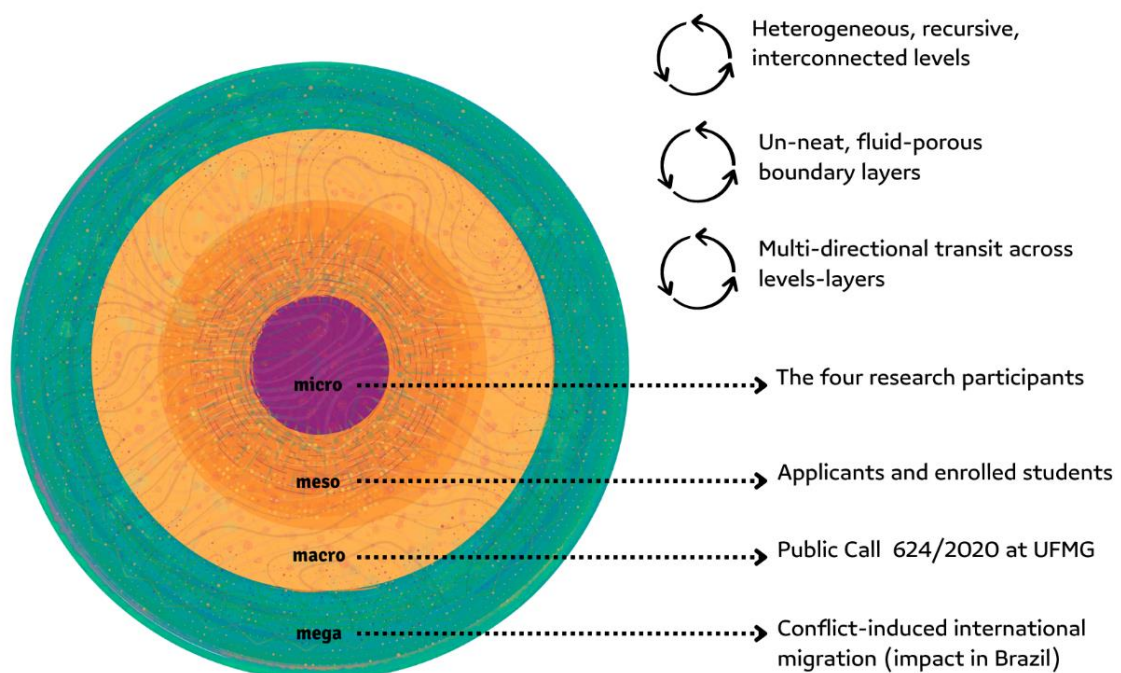
Source: The author.

The four interconnected levels are now described. The mega-level refers to the scenario of international crisis/conflict-induced migration in Brazil, the impact of which is felt in several different social areas and practices, HE being one of them, as the influx of international migrants alters the fabric of society in a number of ways – from more immediate and localized actions of solidarity and reception to the revision, expansion, and enactment of legislation. This level is closely associated with the literature review stage of our research, as it mostly pertains to **the nationwide regulatory mechanisms** that govern the entrance, permanence, exit, and/or removal of international migrants in Brazil.

The macro-level refers to Call 624/2020. While this level applies to the institutional arena, which could be understood as more 'restricted', it is in fact wide in reach: not only does the call address international crisis migrants living in any part of the Brazilian territory, but it also resorts to a national examination as one of its entry requirements – the ENEM. This level is mostly associated with Stages 1 and 2 of our research, because the call invokes nationwide legislation and procedures and yields public data that helps us to statistically outline the 'population' (the pool of applicants/candidates) from which the migrant-background students enrolled at UFMG come.

The **meso-level** refers to the migrant-background students enrolled at UFMG. It draws on the applicants' profiles, from which we outlined the students', after verifying the applicants who registered and successfully enrolled at UFMG. Because Public Call 624/2020 is addressed to persons from **international** migrant backgrounds (i.e., non-Brazilians), the status of these students at the university is also important: by joining UFMG via Public Call 624/2020 *[are they placed as regular or as international students?]* This also requires gaining more insight into the IaH initiatives at the university. The meso level is thus mostly associated with Stages 2 and 4.

The micro-level refers to the four students who have joined our investigation as research participants. This level is mostly associated with Stage 3, entailing a more qualitative-based analysis. All four participants were initially approached online via social media (at Instagram, successfully; at Facebook, unsuccessfully). This was **the most practical and ethical solution** I found to bypass the constraints of **data protection legislation** in Brazil and at UFMG[44]. At the beginning, of the seven migrant-background students approached online, six originally

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[44] The General Data Protection Law (LGPD) is a comprehensive data protection regulation enacted in Brazil in 2018, and coming into effect in 2020. Its primary purpose is to establish rules for the collection, use, processing, and storage of personal data, whether processed electronically or in physical formats. The law applies to the public and private sectors. Organizations must obtain explicit consent from individuals before collecting and/or processing their personal data (Brasil, 2018a).

agreed to participate, but two changed their minds in the months following our initial contact. Ultimately, four students from migrant backgrounds formally agreed[45] to join our investigation as research participants, two in the middle of 2021 and the other two at the beginning of the 2022 academic year.

3.3 Describing the Methods and Tools

In agreement with the interpretive research paradigm (cf. McKinley, 2020), our research utilizes **qualitative and quantitative methods and tools** for data generation and analysis, with data stemming from multiple sources, as mentioned. On the **qualitative** side, based on studies in similar contexts (e.g., Casanave, 2002; Ruano, 2019), I mostly relied on qualitative methods such as **online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews** held in-person or remotely. I also employed so-called alternative research tools, specifically one-to-one digital exchanges via WhatsApp[46], aimed not only to facilitate interaction but also to establish a greater rapport with the participants (Bueno-Roldan; Röder, 2022). To this end, selective content analysis (Bowen, 2009) and thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009; Morgan, 2022) were employed to identify passages and/or themes relevant to our research, making better sense of the data.

On the **quantitative** side, following my master's degree research (cf. Mattos, 2020), I resorted to **descriptive statistics tools**, such as **statistical graphics** (visual representations of quantitative data, Baffoe-Djan; Smith, 2019) created both in Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets and **violin plots** created with R (R Core Team, 2023) in RStudio (RStudio Team, 2023) using the ggplot2 package. As in my previous research, efficient data visualization has been central when interpreting quantitative data. In the present research, the data visualized with these tools was collected via online public records (i.e., publicly available information stored and retrieved from UFMG web pages). The methods and tools are explained in the following.

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[45] Following ethical guidelines for research in applied linguistics (cf. De Costa, 2015; De Costa *et al*., 2020), this doctoral research was submitted for ethics review to the UFMG Research Council and to Plataforma Brasil – the Brazilian Ethics Review Board (CEP) and approved without revisions (filed under process 63177122.7.0000.5149, review 5.682.044).

[46] Staudacher and Aiser-Grolimund (2016) critically discuss the use of WhatsApp as a tool for ethnographic investigations, while Barbosa and Milan (2019) reflect upon ethical issues when employing this software in ethnographic research. As a *technology of life* (cf. Cruz; Harindranath, 2020), the software is widespread in the Global South, particularly in Asia and South America. Brazil has the second largest market share for WhatsApp in the world, accounting for over 54% of all users in South America, a number surpassed only by India (Bianchi, 2022; Ceci, 2023).

Online Questionnaires and Interviews

The online questionnaires were created with Google Forms in Portuguese. The research participants were instructed to answer the questionnaires in any language with which they felt most comfortable, at any given moment. The online questionnaires were shared via WhatsApp. The first online questionnaire consisted of 20 questions organized into four sections, with five questions each, covering the research participants' sociodemographic information (e.g., age and nationality), formal schooling in Brazil, their undergraduate major at UFMG, and any other HE experiences they have had. Out of the 20 questions, 16 were open-ended and four were close-ended, with additional space for elaboration on the yes/no answers. The research participants' individual answers served as a guide for the first semi-structured interview, also helping us to outline their profiles (cf. Table 4 in Chapter 4).

The second questionnaire had 22 questions organized into four sections. All questions in this questionnaire were open-ended. Designed to map the academic genres with which the research participants interact most at the university, the second online questionnaire also probed into the communicative situations and languages the participants encounter daily at UFMG. The genres inquired about in the questionnaire were selected following our experience teaching languages for academic purposes at UFMG[47]. Similar to the first questionnaire, the participants' individual answers served as a roadmap for the second semi-structured interview.

With the first questionnaire employed as a guide for the first semi-structured interview, our aim was to better understand the migrant students' education background and academic journey up to joining UFMG via Public Call 624/2020. The 60-min interviews were held in-person with Michelly and Syed and online with Amirah and Noelle, as per their choice, valuing **a participant-centric approach** and acknowledging individual preferences, thus potentially contributing to **a more open and comfortable exchange of information**. In the first interview, the research participants shared more **information about their experiences prior to entering university**, including their school experiences upon arriving in Brazil, as well as their **first impressions of the country**, and their **migration journeys** to Brazil.

After the first semi-structured interview, the second questionnaire was shared, leading to the second semi-structured interview conducted in-person with Amirah and Syed, in coffee places close to their respective campuses, following their availability and preference. With

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[47] In my case, since 2018, teaching EAP at the university (cf. Orfanò; Mattos; Terra, 2021; Sá, 2018), and from 2004 to 2009 designing and conducting academic reading and writing workshops to undergraduate students of the School of Social Work at PUC Minas (cf. Sá; Costa, 2012).

Michelly and Noelle, the second semi-structured interview was conducted online, per their choice. This flexibility stresses our understanding of the importance of **accommodating the participants' preferences** in research methodologies. We believe this likely contributed to the willingness and engagement of the participants, fostering a positive research environment – which was always one of my concerns.

Finally, the sequential use of the two questionnaires as a platform for the semi-structured interviews allowed for a more thorough exploration of the research participants' experiences. The questionnaires provided a broad overview of sociodemographic and academic information and the subsequent interviews delved deeper into specific aspects of the participants' migration journeys and schooling in Brazil and their academic demands and challenges at UFMG, among others, enhancing the richness of the collected data. Questions about the difficulties and challenges are not seen as biased, as more conventional researchers would argue, as incoming students are expected to have some difficulty in the transition from high school to HE (Almeida; Araújo; Martins, 2016; Porto; Soares, 2017; Soares *et al*., 2017).

'Conversas': WhatsApp Exchanges

As mentioned, we opted for a more conversational tone midway through the second semi-structured interview, following our perception that the research participants would open up more if they felt more comfortable with the researcher. Aimed at weakening the hierarchies presumed in this genre, as explained in Palmer and Caldas (2017, p. 40), this shift can lead to **more responsive exchanges between the researcher and the participants**, possibly creating partnerships that "legitimize and make visible interviewees' silenced realities", **in their own voices**, as argued in Flecha and Gómez (2004) and Gómez (2016). Hence, when dealing with minoritized and/or historically marginalized groups, as is often the case of indigenous peoples, racialized populations, immigrants, refugees, and other displaced persons, such approach seems paramount (Bizon; Dangió, 2018; Gómez, 2019).

Our conversational approach to the interactions with the four participants, which I have named *conversas* – is an attempt to **break away from more conventional approaches** to data generation aimed at a so-called neutrality by overly focusing on the researcher's individualistic pursuits, as if the locus of the research were this "individual knower" (Viruru; Cannella, 2006, p. 184) and not the research participants or the phenomena under investigation. Chilisa (2020) observes that distanced and detached approaches often render so-called conventional research interviews highly transactional, even the semi-structured/unstructured ones. Our focus, instead,

was on creating space for more open and responsive exchanges with the participants, not shying away from sharing our own experiences, in what Fontana and Frey (2005) deemed a 'feminist ethic', which aligns with the theoretical frameworks favored in our research.

As a result, a more horizontalized dynamic between the research participants and the researcher ensued, as less formality and the use of WhatsApp also provides **a more fluid and spontaneous environment** in which our conversational approach to the second interview organically 'spilled over' into an array of audio messages, written texts, and media sharing, as if the *conversa* had not ended, as a conventional research interview would, constrained by the limitations of a set time and the physical space in which the interaction takes place. Employing WhatsApp both as a data generation and "participant interaction tool", as noted in Kaufmann and Peil (2020, p. 234), means that *we* the researcher and the research participants can interact both in real-time and remotely to address the participants' demands based on *their* availability and willingness to engage[48].

Conversas are primarily structured around texting through written and audio messages as the main modes of communication, supported by non-verbal and iconic elements such as emojis and stickers. However, a *conversa* is not just a chat, as it may move from texting to a video/audio call or even face-to-face interactions, if or when the situation or the participants require it. This means that a *conversa* could be seen as an overarching genre that encapsulates other genres, digital or not, as tends to be a feature of several digital genres (Askehave; Nielsen, 2005a, 2005b)[49]. I understand *conversas* as **the exchanges with the research participants via digital technologies**, made more conversationally, as this was required for accommodating the participants' preferences and optimizing qualitative data generation. It is difficult to predict, specifically, other genres that a particular *conversa* may entail, as *conversas* are carried out following the specific needs of a given research.

Still, seeing that *conversas* are meant to break away from the formality and time-space constraints of traditional qualitative data-gathering tools such as interviews, in an attempt to build more rapport with younger generations, *conversas* will most likely include digital genres

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[48] It should be noted that, differently from other research in which WhatsApp was used as a data collection and interaction tool for migrant and displaced persons (e.g., Alencar; Camargo, 2022), our interactions were carried out one-on-one, not via a WhatsApp group.

[49] Our purpose is not to discuss digital genres: "the complex relation between technical features afforded by the medium and genre in the digital environment" (Luzón; Pérez-Llantada, 2022, p. 18) is not addressed here. For reviews and discussions on the topic, see Herrig (2013), Heyd (2008), Luzón and Pérez-Llantada (2022), and Miller and Shepherd (2009) for genre models and discussions of digital supergenres and subgenres, digital genre features and affordances.

such as online chats. However, it should be noted that *conversas* are not netnography, that is, ***conversas* are not a method** specifically designed to analyze online cultures and communities and consumer behavior[50].

The thread that links the exchanges and makes a *conversa* a single 'unit' of interaction is the topic. Provided that **the topic remains throughout the exchanges**, it does not matter how long the interlocutor takes to reply: it could be within seconds or weeks, as was the case with my last *conversa* with Syed, illustrated in Figure 3.3. When an exchange is made following a previous message left unreplied, then a new *conversa* has started, and the last one ended on 'suspension'. This happened occasionally, and I interpreted it as a sign that the participants did not wish to discuss that particular topic any further – when they forgot to answer or were too busy, they explained the delay in getting in touch with me and returned to the topic we had been discussing.

Figure 3.3 **A**: Example of a *conversa*.
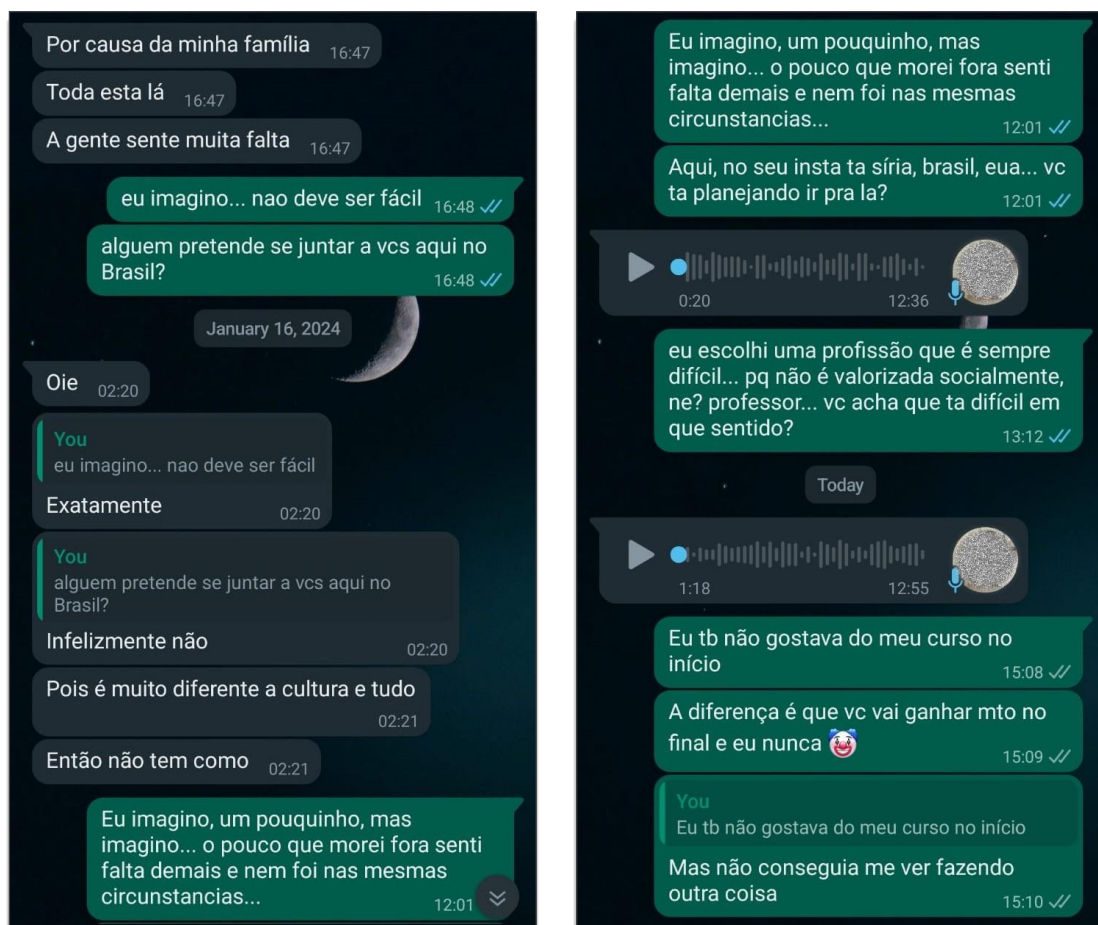
Source: Syed and the author.

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[50] For reviews, see Bartl, Kannan, and Stockinger (2016) and Morais, Santos, and Gonçalves (2020).

One disadvantage of using *conversas* for qualitative data gathering and analysis is the fact that these exchanges can yield non-linear and 'fragmented' data that may be challenging and time-consuming to sort and code. Figure 3.3 A is an example of a *conversa* in which Syed and I discussed his family in Syria. We started the *conversa* on January 15th, 2024, and my 'last' question was "*do any of them [Syed's family] intend to join you in Brazil?*". Syed did not answer the question at the time, only the next day, at 02:20. I replied at noon, we chatted some more about our chosen professions, and I asked "*how do you mean?*" in regard to Syed saying Brazil had become "difficult". This was at 13:12, as the time-stamp shows in the screenshot of the *conversa*. Syed answered this question a week or so later, on January 25th, 2024, at 12:55. This means our exchange started on January 15th and ended – as of the writing of this dissertation – on January 25th with my comment "*but I couldn't see myself doing anything else*", at 15:10, as there have not been any other messages after this one.

Notes on Translation and Transcription

As much as possible, this dissertation brings forth the participants' voices as recorded in the questionnaires, interviews, and our *conversas*, considering speech and written language. The data was generated in Portuguese and translated into English, with the originals provided to the fullest extent possible. My main concern when translating the data was preserving the meaning and intended effects – the same applying to the transcription process. Most of the data generated was relatively simple to translate, with idioms presenting the most challenges. For instance, Noelle once said "*estudar igual um condenado*" (Noelle, WhatsApp, Dec. 15th, 2022), which translates literally as 'to study like a condemned person'. The most natural way of saying this in English, however, would be 'to work like a horse', which was the translation we opted for in this case.

Regarding the transcriptions, I took this dissertation as **an opportunity to test online automatic transcribers.** These software applications are designed to convert spoken language into written text automatically online, employing advanced speech recognition technology to process and analyze the audio input (an audio recording, a video, or live streaming) and generate a corresponding written transcript. This process is carried out with the use of algorithms that recognize patterns in speech and convert them into written words. Users can upload audio or provide access to a live audio stream. **Many transcribers support multiple languages**, with **varying degrees of accuracy**, depending on the quality of the audio, the accent and the accent diversity afforded in software, and the specific language being transcribed.

Automatic transcribers can be accessed via web browsers, allowing users to transcribe audio content without the need for installation. However, an internet connection is required. Figures 3.3 B, C, D, and E respectively show three different automatic transcribers I tested for the research: Descript, Cockatoo, and TurboScribe. I used the free tier of these applications. Descript was the only software out of the three that required previous installation. It was also the only one that allowed for live audio and video stream, even within the free tier. Out of the three applications, I used Cockatoo the least, despite it being fast and more practical: the free version was the most constrained. TurboScribe was the most user-friendly.

Some automatic transcribers let users **edit the transcriptions and customize specific settings**, such as speaker identification and punctuation preferences. Some of these functions are only available for the paid version, and the free versions also come with other constraints, such as limited transcription time (see Figure 3.3 B for Descript) and/or **a limited number of transcriptions per day**, as seen in Figure 3.3 D for TurboScribe. Despite these constraints, I found the applications a convenient alternative to transcribe spoken content into written text.

In addition, many online automatic transcribers integrate with other platforms and/or services, facilitating seamless use in various contexts. For instance, TurboScribe is integrated with Google Translate, so users can upload the audio recording in a given language, generate the transcription, and have it translated within the same online setting. Figure 3.3 D shows other integrations the software has made available even for the free version. As shown in Figure 3.3 E, TurboScribe also offers users the ability to choose between different transcription modes. This feature is not available in the free versions of Cockatoo and Descript. With TurboScribe, users can add and edit timestamps to specific sections of the transcripts, which may be useful when working with longer audio/video files.

Overall, the free versions can meet **simple transcribing needs**, that is, one-voice only per audio and shorter audio files. This means that the applications tested in this research were efficient and time-saving for the audios generated from the *conversas* (based on individually produced audios), but not the interviews, as the software could not distinguish between two voices properly, requiring more efforts in post-editing. This can be just as time-consuming as manually transcribing a recording. It is important to point out that the poor accuracy level of the interview transcriptions could also be due to the quality of the audios: the interviews held in person were recorded in high-traffic places such as cafés and the university campus, so even when there were few people around, the surroundings were not as quiet as a recording studio or a private room, for example.

Finally, I opted for the simplest conventions and transcription guidelines, mostly as a time-saving strategy. When editing the automatic transcriptions, I hence considered false starts, hesitations, repetitions, fillers, and reactions such as laughter, which were signaled between square brackets [ ]. I also used suspension points (…) whenever there were pauses in the speech. Turn-taking was clear and well-defined throughout the interviews, with few overlaps – most referring to agreement [hum hum].

Figure 3.3 B: Transcription with Descript.
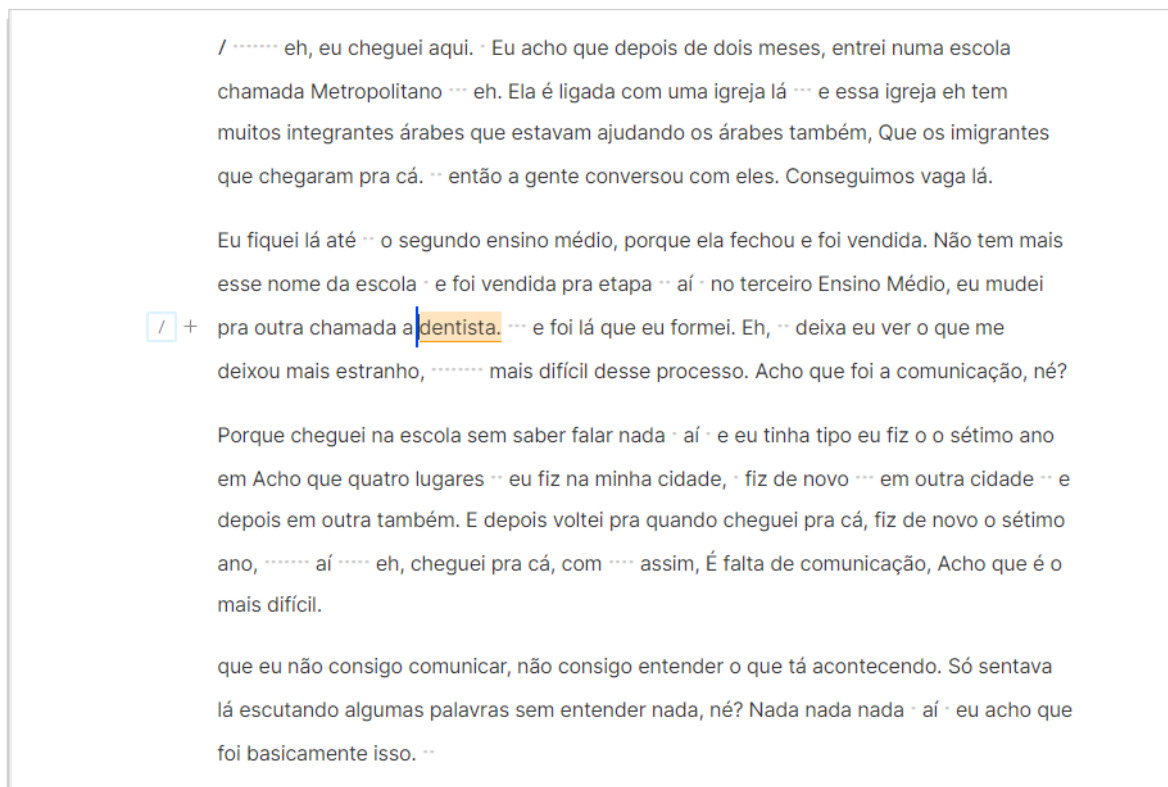
Source: The author.

Figure 3.3 C: Transcription with Cockatoo.
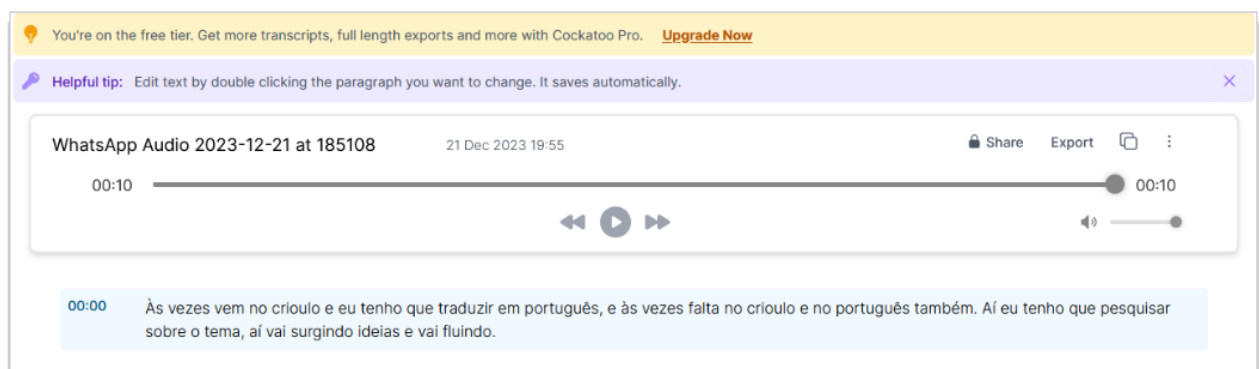
Source: The author.

Figure 3.3 D: Transcription with TurboScribe.

Source: The author.

Figure 3.3 E: Transcription modes (TurboScribe).

Source: The author.

CHAPTER 4

Distances and days existed in themselves then; they all had a story. They were not barriers.
If a person wanted to get to the moon, there is a way;
it all depended on whether you knew the directions,
on whether you knew the story of how others before you had gone.

Leslie Marmon Silko (1977)

4. The Journey to University

This is the first of three chapters pertaining to the data analysis and discussion. This chapter covers Public Call 624/2020 and related legislation, the requirements for **entries 2021**, **2022**, **2023**, and **2024**, and the applicants' participation in the call. I first discuss specific points of interest in the public call and contextualize it within the Brazilian and UFMG legislation and policies implemented for students of international migrant backgrounds. I then analyze these entries by focusing on the entry requirements and the applicants' participation and test scores, outlining their profiles based on publicly available information from UFMG and INEP web pages. I interpret this data by breaking down and cross-referencing the following information the applicants' ENEM multiple-choice tests and essay scores, their UFMG final score, their choice of area and major, their age and generation, and prior applications (i.e., applicants listed in more than one entry).

I treat the data not as sets of unrelated facts but as situated information that reflects each applicant's road to HE in Brazil. This is also what we mean by a 'critical analysis': looking at the meaning behind the numbers and cross-referencing the numerical data with the applicants' sociodemographic information, while understanding that numbers alone do not 'paint the whole picture', and that test scores do not always reflect one's potential – they can, however, give us **some insight into the applicants' profiles** and provide glimpses of their lifelong experiences with literacy, language, schooling and education. It is this information that foretells our analysis of the four research participants' journeys in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapters 4 corresponds to Stages 1 and 2 of the methodological framework, as seen in Chapter 3.

4.1 Public Call 624/2020

This section of Chapter 4 leaps from the public call and related legislation to the entries and applicants, corresponding to the **meso level 3 of the 4M framework** as shown in Figure 4.1 below. This is **Stage 3 of the methodological framework**. This section zooms in on the quantitative data, looking at the number of applicants per call, their chosen majors, disciplines, ENEM multiple-choice test and essay scores, and age. I also address generational differences and issues related to enrollment and retention, as well as each entry's specificities, as there have been changes from entry to entry.

Figure **4**.1: The macro-level of our 4M Framework.
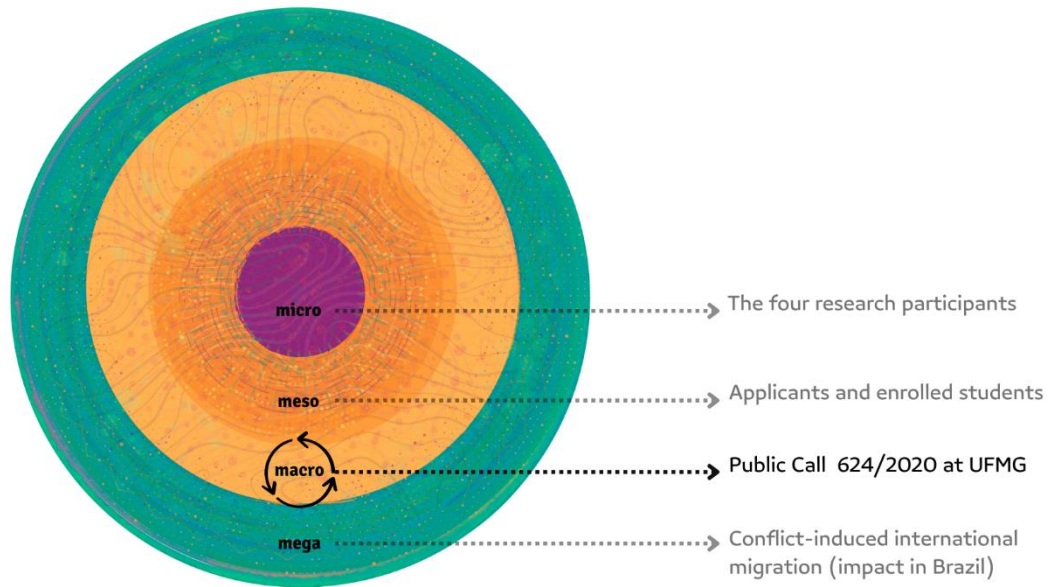
Source: The author.

Public Call 624/2020, also known as '*Edital de Acolhida Humanitária*', is the result of several coordinated actions undertaken by a **multi-disciplinary team** of professors and staff at UFMG, including career professionals from the following institutional bodies: the Council of Education, Research, and Extension (CEPE), the Pro-Rectorate of Undergraduate Studies – Prograd, and the Sergio Vieira de Mello Chair (CSVM)[51] chapter at UFMG. The public call has also had support from the International Relations Office (DRI) and the Standing Committee of Vestibular (Copeve) of UFMG. This is one in a series of recent initiatives implemented in HEIs nationwide (cf. Rocha; Azevedo; Mendes, 2022), as mentioned in chapters 1 and 2.

Call 624/2020 was announced in November 2020, addressing explicitly "**refugees, political asylum seekers, stateless persons, holders of temporary humanitarian visas, and holders of residence permits for humanitarian purposes**"[52] (UFMG, 2020, p. 1, emphasis added), thus invoking the Refugee Law (Law 9474) and the New Migration Law (Law 13445) briefly reviewed in chapter 2. The public call refers to UFMG's civic duty to Brazilian society through its commitment to "the principles of publicity, reasonableness, and public purpose, and

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[51] As of the writing of this dissertation, the CSVM is connected with 39 HEIs located in 13 states and the Federal District. Sala *et al.* (2020) recap the remarkable work developed by CSVM in its 15+ years of existence. The role of CSVM at UFMG is far-reaching, with the university offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses and developing research on topics related to international crisis migration, humanitarian protection, and human rights across several departments.

[52] Original: "1. Refugiados, conforme definido no art. 1º da Lei nº 9.474/1997; 2. asilados políticos; 3. apátridas; 4. portadores de visto temporário de acolhida humanitária; 5. portadores de autorização de residência para fins de acolhida humanitária".

the criteria of convenience and opportunity"[53]. Valid participation following the above legal categories means that specific conditions must be met. One such condition is the applicant's legal status in Brazil at the time of application, with item 1.5 stating that:

> *Entrance under this condition may occur at any time within a period of **up to 5 (five)** **years** from the granting of refugee status, the granting of political asylum, the recognition of the status of stateless person, the granting of a temporary humanitarian visa or the granting of residence for humanitarian purposes.*
>
> (UFMG, 2020, p. 2, emphasis added)[54]

As for the entry requirements, Public Call 624/2020 specifies that the applicants must have sat the **National Secondary Education Examination (ENEM)** within five years before the year of application. Applicants must also produce **proof of having concluded secondary education** by providing a high school certificate recognized in Brazil, and/or by presenting a document of completion attested by the CONARE. While the public call does not specify the language of these documents, based on the Brazilian legislation[55] and related procedures, one can (safely) assume that all related documentation must be in the country's official language: Portuguese.

No specific exams other than the ENEM are required, with the call relying solely on the applicants' ENEM scores obtained up to five years prior to application. However, it should be noted that related provisions do stipulate that **supplementary specific skills** and/or language proficiency exams may be required eventually (CEPE Resolution 07/2019 discussed in the next section), on a case-by-case basis. For the ENEM scores, Copeve UFMG consults the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (INEP) database to verify each applicant's score. This data is then used to determine the UFMG final score[56], calculated based on the sum of all ENEM scores: the four multiple-choice tests and the essay, divided by fifty, as indicated in

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[53] Original: "princípios da publicidade, razoabilidade e finalidade pública, bem como os critérios de conveniência e oportunidade"

[54] Translated from: "O ingresso nesta condição poderá ocorrer a qualquer tempo no prazo de até 5 (cinco) anos a contar da concessão do estado de refugiado, da concessão do asilo político, do reconhecimento da condição de apátrida, da concessão do visto temporário de acolhida humanitária ou da concessão de residência para fins de acolhida humanitária".

[55] Exceptions may apply to specific documents, such as birth certificates, depending on agreements celebrated between Brazil and the migrant's country of origin, with special conditions for countries of the Mercosur trade bloc. As of 2019, Haitian nationals applying for temporary humanitarian visas are also exempt from having to present sworn translations of their birth certificates. See https://www.gov.br/pf/pt-br/assuntos/imigracao/duvidas-frequentes/autorizacao-de-residencia-e-registro-nacional-migratorio-rnm/e-necessaria-a-legalizacao-e for more on the topic (In Portuguese, access: April 08, 2024).

[56] When ranking or classifying applicants, the institution will look at the highest score the applicant achieved in a given year, should the applicant have more than one ENEM participation in the database, as indicated in item 4.1.1. of Public Call 624/2020.

subitem 4.1.2 of the public call. As with other selection processes in HEIs in Brazil, any zero score means immediate elimination.

No registration fees are charged for Public Call 624/2020. Registration requires a valid social security number matching the social security number used at the ENEM. Chosen names may be used, provided the registration is made with a legal name. Based on UFMG's by-laws (UFMG, 2022) and the Brazilian legislation (Law 12.089/2009, Brasil, 2009), a one-seat policy is reinforced. This means that individuals are prohibited from simultaneously occupying two seats in public HEIs: applicants are entitled to only one registration and enrollment. Admission to certain undergraduate courses (e.g., Performing Arts and Music) is done via specific public calls with skills-focused examinations – in addition to ENEM. These majors have not been included in Public Call 624/2020 for entries 2021 through 2024, meaning that if the students of migrant backgrounds decide to pursue them, they have to do so via the major's specific call.

4.2 Related Legislation

Public Call 624/2020 makes explicit reference to the CEPE Resolution 07/2019, which revokes Resolution 03/2004 and **supersedes previous related regulations**. Resolution 03/2004 reissues with modifications on Resolution 03/1998, concerning the enrollment of '*political refugee*' students in undergraduate courses at UFMG[57]. Resolution 07/2019 sets the rules and procedures for the **registration and enrollment of immigrants and refugees** in undergraduate courses at UFMG, addressing: "refugees, political asylum seekers, stateless individuals, holders of temporary humanitarian reception visas and holders of residence permits for humanitarian reception purposes, and other immigrants beneficiaries of humanitarian policies established by the Brazilian Government" (UFMG, 2019, p. 1).

CEPE Resolution 07/2019 puts into effect **critical updates** in the university's admission policies regarding specific groups of people, with the inclusion of other categories beyond political refugee, which up to Resolution 03/2004 had been the only category contemplated in regulatory documents at UFMG. While 'political refugee' is a specific classification within the larger context of humanitarian and refugee categories, the new categories included cover a more extensive range of situations, including **refugees, asylum seekers, stateless individuals**, and those benefiting from broader **humanitarian policies in Brazil**. This shows that there are key

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[57] CEPE Resolution 03/1998 is not publicly available online, as digitized CEPE resolutions date back to 1999 only: https://www.ufmg.br/online/arquivos/anexos/Resol%2003cepe2004.pdf. (In Portuguese, access: April 08, 2024).

differences between these categories, and such differences correlate with the specific policies within a host country.

For instance, as defined in the 1951 Geneva Convention and later in its 1957 Protocol (UNHCR, 1951/1957, p. 3 on both documents), refugees are defined as individuals "unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion". Political asylum seekers are those individuals seeking protection in another country due to persecution or a fear of persecution based on political opinions. Holders of temporary humanitarian reception visas and residence permits for humanitarian reception purposes are those individuals who have been granted temporary visas or residence permits for humanitarian reasons, which includes an authorization to enter and stay in a host country due to humanitarian crises in the individual's home territory. Stateless persons are those persons who do not have a recognized nationality or citizenship, often facing legal issues[58].

The challenges faced by individuals under each condition may intersect at some point – however, the circumstances and critical events leading to their displacement and migration may be different. Factors such as the nature of persecution, the availability of legal avenues for protection, as well as the underlying causes of displacement can vary significantly among these groups. Therefore, understanding these distinctions is mostly essential for developing targeted responses and policies to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of each group, ensuring their **protection and well-being** in accordance with international humanitarian principles and legal frameworks.

By extending admission in undergraduate courses to the above-listed categories, UFMG signals an understanding that different variables are at play when dealing with crisis migration, making a reference to its **implied heterogeneous character**, as conflict-induced displacement and crisis migration are not experienced uniformly. This means that the individuals within these different categories may bring unique perspectives, challenges, and strengths. The university's commitment to inclusivity by acknowledging the diversity within these situations is paramount

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[58] Brazil has become a leading actor in migration policies in Latin America, particularly in regard to statelessness and issuance of humanitarian visas (Assunção, 2021). The Brazil Plan of Action (BPA) proposed eight actions to eradicate statelessness, among them the creation of frameworks to protect stateless persons (Mondelli, 2021, p. 187) and a facilitated process of naturalization to help prevent statelessness (Mondelli, 2017). It should also be noted that statelessness is just as heterogeneous as other migration and displacement conditions. As Goris, Harrington, and Köhn (2009) explain, there are *de jure* and *de facto* stateless individuals, with *de facto* referring to persons who are "stateless in practice, if not in law – or cannot rely on the state of which they are citizens for protection" (p. 4).

to providing more equitable educational opportunities for people in these specific scenarios. This is made even more important in present times of rising political extremism, because:

> *Despite efforts to revitalize the global refugee regime, given the nature and scale of the current crisis, we are likely moving into an era of additional restrictions on refugee entries and increasing efforts to force the return of refugees. While (I)NGOs and refugee advocates call for humanitarian action on refugees and greater openness, nativist voices and politicians frequently focus on potentially negative effects on the economy, social relations, and security threats.*
>
> (Braithwaite; Salehyan; Savun, 2019, p. 7)

As stated in CEPE Resolution 07/2019, each sector, via their corresponding *Colegiado* (Undergraduate Course Board) is responsible for determining the total number of extra seats available for students falling under the aforementioned categories, ensuring that at least **one seat will be made available per course per year for such students**. These are additional spots, meaning that, unlike affirmative action systems that reserve a percentage of seats for specific groups of people, following specific federal legislation (e.g., Law 12711/2012, Brasil, 2012)[59], Public Call 624/2020 is a specific admission process regulated by CEPE (UFMG, 2018). CEPE establishes the admission criteria and manages the selection process, following the autonomy principle that governs HEIs in Brazil. This includes the selection of majors and programs that will be offering additional spots via this specific call.

With Public Call 624/2020, UFMG has allocated **76 additional seats** per entry per year: one for each of the 70 selected undergraduate courses in the Belo Horizonte campuses, and one for each of the six selected undergraduate courses in the Montes Claros campus, as part of the university's response to the growing influx of crisis migrants in the country. This "institutional responsibility" refers to offering "some form of admission for refugee students or individuals with temporary visas for humanitarian reception" (UFMG, 2019, p. 2), drawing on the civic purposes of Brazilian HEIs, as provisioned in the Constitution of 1988 (Brasil, 1988), as well as on the duty of the State in providing access to education (cf. Rangel, 2012).

The resolution also asserts that migrant-background individuals applying via Public Call 624/2020 may be required to complete an additional exam assessing specific skills, should the Pro-Rectorate of Undergraduate Studies deem it necessary. Specifically, paragraph 3 of Article

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[59] Law 12711/2012, enacted in August 2012, guarantees that half of the available seats in each course and time slot in the 59 federal universities and 38 federal institutes of education, science, and technology are reserved for students who have completed their entire high school education in public schools, either in regular programs or adult education (Brasil, 2012).

3 outlines such additional assessment as "a complementary requirement to the score obtained in ENEM" (UFMG, 2019, p. 2). It is unclear what is meant by 'specific skills'. However, we can assume this requirement refers to discipline-specific content related to the major chosen by the applicant.

Language-wise, following CEPE Resolution 07/2019, the Pro-Rectorate **may require approval in a proficiency exam and the completion of a Portuguese language course** as a condition for admission or continuation at the university. This possibly refers to students whose language skills have prevented them from fully engaging with classes and materials *[but how is this verified?]* No specification is made as to what proficiency exam might be solicited. However, Celpe-Bras has been required for access to some Brazilian HE (cf. Sigales-Gonçalves, 2019). Moreover, the resolution outlines that students admitted via the process for immigrants and refugees will be **treated equally in regard to rights and responsibilities** when compared with other UFMG students. This aims at ensuring equality in their educational experience. More importantly, this means that student assistance programs and initiatives also cover migrant-background students, which can be a decisive factor in student permanence and retention.

It is at this point that a discussion raised by Sigales-Gonçalves (2019) about language rights (LR) seems particularly relevant for our research. Sigales-Gonçalves' study indicates that while the Brazil does acknowledge the need to open public universities to forced migrants, this recognition is accompanied by constraints, indicating that this 'openness' has certain limits, as seen in the entry requirements discussed in this chapter. Sigales-Gonçalves (2019) makes the point that calls, resolutions and other institutional documents underscore the 'equality' of rights and duties between students of migrant backgrounds and other individuals joining the university through different selection processes, and yet, these very documents also signal tensions in the welcoming, humanistic initiatives.

Specifically, as Sigales-Gonçalves puts it, there is an **inclusion-exclusion tension** also reflected in the linguistic policies underlying such calls to access HE in Brazil. By requiring **a certain level of proficiency in Portuguese**, more directly with Celpe-Bras or more indirectly with ENEM, the public HE calls addressed to students of migrant backgrounds simultaneously promote these students' linguistic right ("*direito linguístico*") as a linguistic obligation ("*dever linguístico*"). This means that the students *must* learn the country's official language to ensure access to other fundamental rights, as Portuguese is the HEI's official and primary language. Sometimes, Portuguese is viewed as the only language, with the country often seen as largely

monolingual, despite the fact that Brazil is a multilingual country where over 250 languages are spoken regularly, according to the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN).

The literature on LR is quite vast and it is not our intention to review it here. However, we address the concept briefly, understanding that the status of LR is disputed: some scholars use the term Linguistic Human Rights (LHR), for viewing LR as part of human rights, while others retain the term LR, not expanding it, for purporting that LR "do not enjoy the same status as other rights" (Dubar, 2023, p. 25). Generally, LR refer to the rights to language use, at both individual and collective levels (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 2023). Mancini and de Witte (2008, p. 247) define LR "as fundamental rights protecting language-related acts and values. The term 'fundamental' denotes the fact that these rights are entrenched in the constitution of a country, or in an international treaty binding on that country" – a legally-based definition that underscores the close relationship between LR and national territory.

Regardless of the perspective taken, LRs are important in safeguarding and promoting linguistic diversity, fostering effective communication and acknowledging the role of language in preserving cultural identity. Additionally, it should be noted that LR and LHR have gained significance over time, especially as the concept of nationhood evolved. This means that LHR and LR are deeply connected with the rise of the nation-state, with a national language seen as a foundational element of national identity.

The complex interplay between LR and obligations certainly requires more attention. While it is reasonable for HEIs to require **some proof of language proficiency** to ensure that students can successfully engage with their academic programs, it is equally crucial for these institutions provide adequate linguistic support to help migrant-background students overcome language barriers and succeed in their studies. Requiring strict language proficiency without providing adequate support can exacerbate educational inequalities, as these students may not have had the same opportunities to develop their language skills as their peers. Here are some types of support to be offered: i) language classes and tutoring: offering additional language classes and/or tutoring services can help students improve their language proficiency while they are enrolled in their academic programs; ii) mentorship programs: pairing students with mentors who can provide guidance and support can help them navigate the academic and social aspects of university life, and iii) cultural programs: promoting programs designed to help students integrate into the local culture and academic environment can reduce the stress associated with adjusting to a new educational system.

4.3 Entries and Applicants

This section of Chapter 4 leaps from the public call and related legislation to the **call entries and applicants**, corresponding to the **meso level of the 4M Framework**, as shown in Figure 4.3. This is still Stage 3 of the methodological framework. In this section I zoom in on the quantitative data, looking at the number of applicants per call, their chosen majors, areas, ENEM multiple-choice test and ENEM essay scores, and age. I also briefly address generational differences and issues related to enrollment and retention, as well as each entry's specificities, as there have been changes from entry to entry.

Figure 4.3: The meso-level of our 4M Framework.
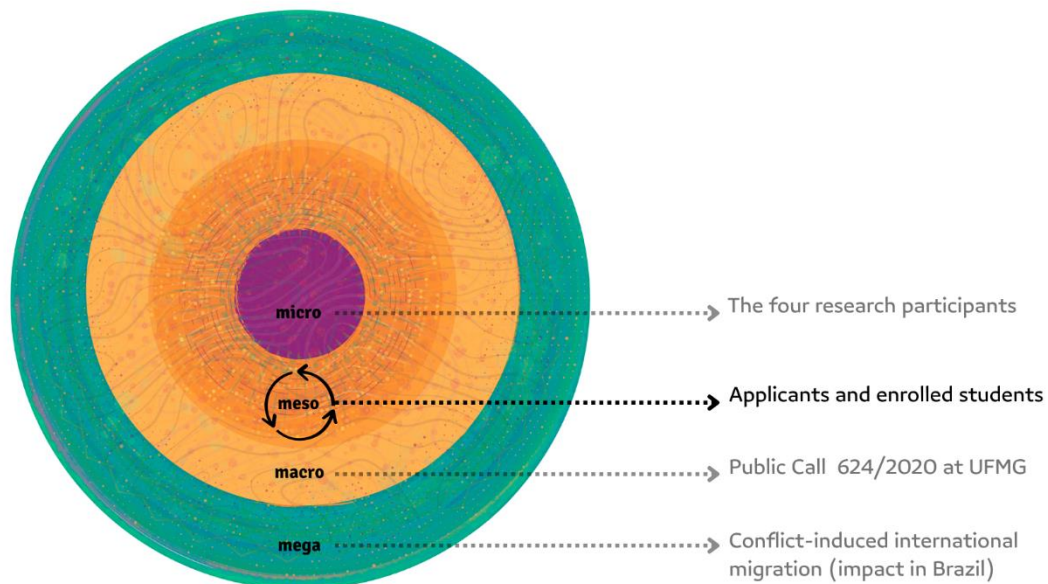
Source: The author.

Because of the **General Personal Data Protection Law** (LGDP), UFMG is unable to share the applicants' personal information. This means that, as mentioned, the applicants' data reported and discussed in this section of Chapter 4 has been collected from UFMG web pages via Google searches. With some **online searching and digital literacy skills**, it is possible to access the applicants' names, dates of birth, choice of major, and ENEM scores. However, other information (e.g., nationality, sex, and time of residence in Brazil) is not shared with the public. Sex and nationality can only be inferred (on the basis of the applicants' full names). Given the unreliability of such inferences, the applicants' sex/gender and nationality will not be factored in our discussion.

4.3.1 Entry 2021

Legal Status and Entry Requirements

As the first entry for the Public Call 624/2020, entry 2021[60] covers **the five categories mentioned above**: "refugees, political asylum seekers, stateless persons, holders of temporary humanitarian visas, and holders of residence permits for humanitarian purposes", for which proof of legal status, as attested by CONARE, must be provided. Moreover, as the document reads, legal benefits granted to a refugee will also apply to certain family members if they are present in Brazil (UFMG, 2020, pp. 1-2 paraphrasing Article 2 of Law 9.474/1997).

In addition to the legal status as any of the five categories listed, approval via the call is contingent upon minimum scores obtained in the examinations. For this entry, applicants were required to present a minimum of 500 points on the ENEM essay and 30 points in the UFMG final score. This means that besides reaching at least 500 points in the ENEM essay, applicants' scores in the four multiple-choice tests had to be high enough so that the sum of the test and the essay scores, divided by fifty, is 30 points or more. Entry 2021 covers scores from the following ENEM editions: 2016 to 2020.

Participation, Scores, and Profile Breakdown

Entry 2021 had a total of **68 valid applications** for 27 majors in six areas. The area with most applicants was Health Sciences (32 applicants, 47%), with Medicine concentrating 35% of all valid applications (24 applicants), followed by Nursing (ca. 7%), seen in Chart 4.3.1 A. The Applied Social Sciences applications came in second with 23.5% (16 applicants) of all applications, with a distribution over nine majors. The Health Sciences, in contrast, had a total of 32 valid applications distributed in four majors. The Humanities area concentrated nearly 12% of all valid applications (eight applicants), spread around three majors. With the exception of the application for Agronomy in Agricultural Sciences, all other majors are housed in the Belo Horizonte campuses. Chart 4.3.1 B[61].

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[60] Process 23072.223744/2020-12: https://www.ufmg.br/dri/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/EDITAL_REFUGIADOS_UFMG_2021.pdf. (In Portuguese. Access: Feb. 05, 2024)

[61] To facilitate reading and follow-up, all charts, graphs, tables, and figures included in each chapter are labeled according to the corresponding chapter and section/subsection. For example: Chart 4.3.1 B refers to subsection 4.3.1, Chapter 4, and is the second chart of the subsection, the first being Chart 4.3.1 A.

Chart 4.3.1 A: Applicants per UFMG area – 2021.

Legend:
- Agricultural Sciences
- Applied Social Sciences
- Engineering
- Health Sciences
- Humanities
- Mathematical Sciences
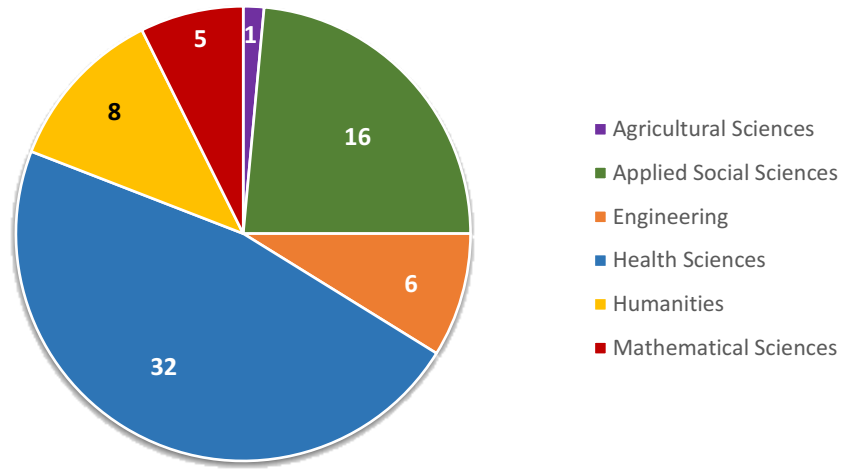
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA – Departamento de Registro e Controle Acadêmico (Office of Academic Records and Registration).

Chart 4.3.1 B: Applicants' choice of major – 2021.
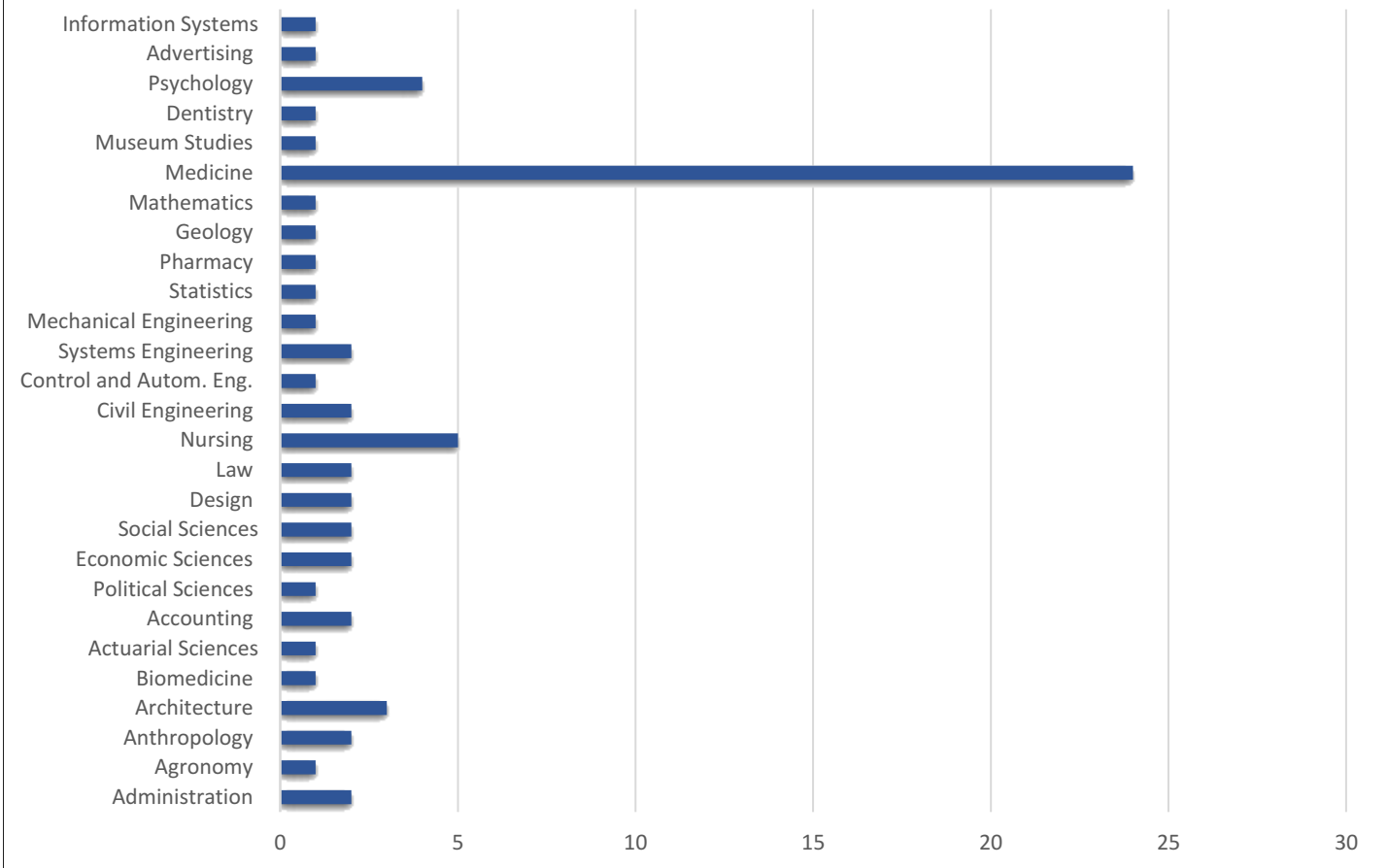
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Essay scores ranged from 200 points, 300 points below the minimum score required by the call, to 960 points, with a mean score of 560 points. When scores under 500 points are excluded, 46 valid applications remain, with essay scores ranging from 500 to 960 points, with a mean score of around 635 points. Chart 4.3.1 C illustrates the variation of the scores. The 22 applicants with essay scores below the minimum 500 averaged a mean score of 368 points, with the lowest score at 200 points and the highest at 480 points. Out of the 22 applicants, 17 scored above 300 points, corresponding to approximately 78%. This is important information, as the minimum essay score for entry 2022 was lowered. As Graph 4.3.1 A and Chart 4.3.1 C indicate, very few applicants – three, to be exact, reached past 900 points. This corresponds to 6% of the >500 essay scores and ca. 4.5% of all scores. Visually, the three highest scores peak out from the others in Graph 4.3.1, as 900 points is a very high score even for Brazilian students who have studied most of their lives in Brazil and prepared for the exam[62].

Graph 4.3.1 A: Applicants' essay scores (≥500) – 2021.
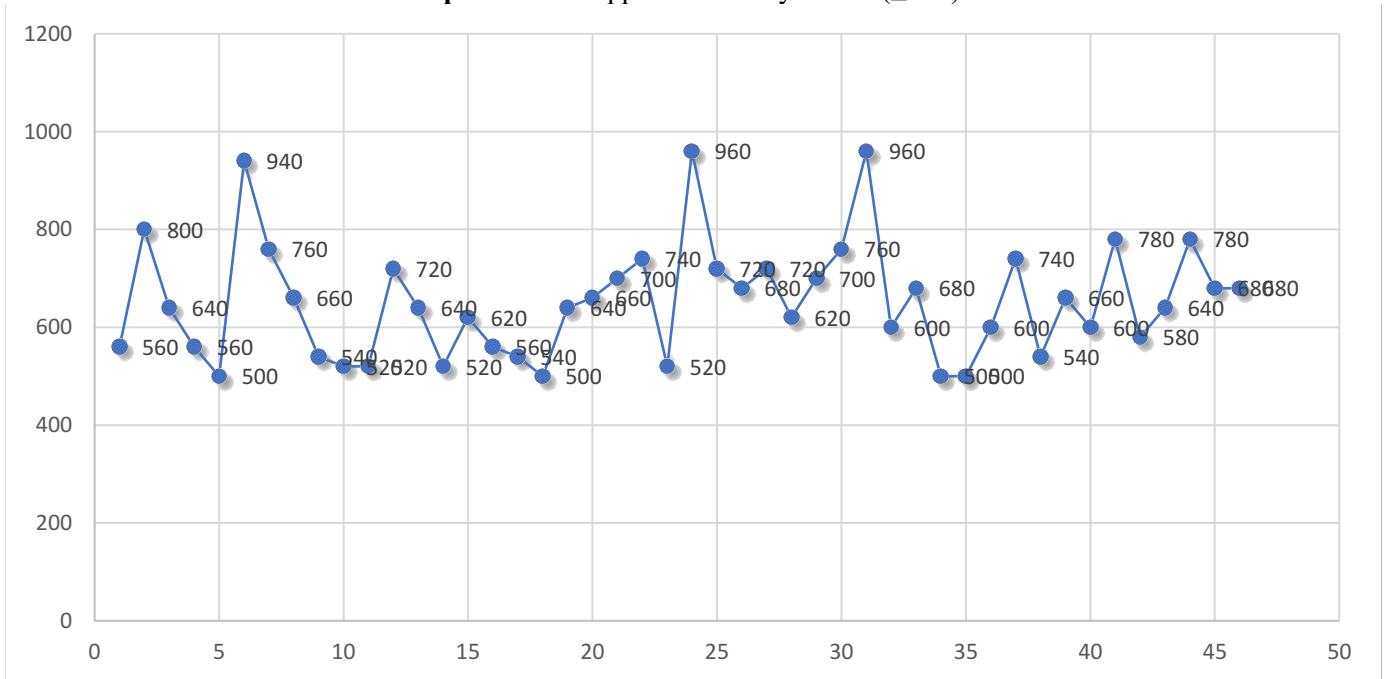
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

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[62] In the 2023 ENEM, approximately 55.6% of the test-takers achieved scores ranging from 450 to 600 points, with only 5.0% attaining grades surpassing 700 points, and only 2% securing grades in the range of 850 to 900. Based on a simple average between the four areas assessed and the essay, the maximum median score was 894.2 points and the average was 543.3 (https://www.nexojornal.com.br/grafico/2024/01/17/notas-enem-2023-media. Access: Jan. 18, 2024).

As seen in Chart 4.3.1 C, the vast majority (33 applicants) fell within the mean area, which is expected. For this entry, most of the applicants scored between 500 points and 700 points (72% = 39% between 500 and 600 points and 33% between 601 and 700 points). Chart 4.3.1 C also reveals that 22% (10 applicants) reached the 701-800 range. No applicants scoring in the 801-900 range.

Chart 4.3.1 C: Essay scores per band (>500) – 2021.
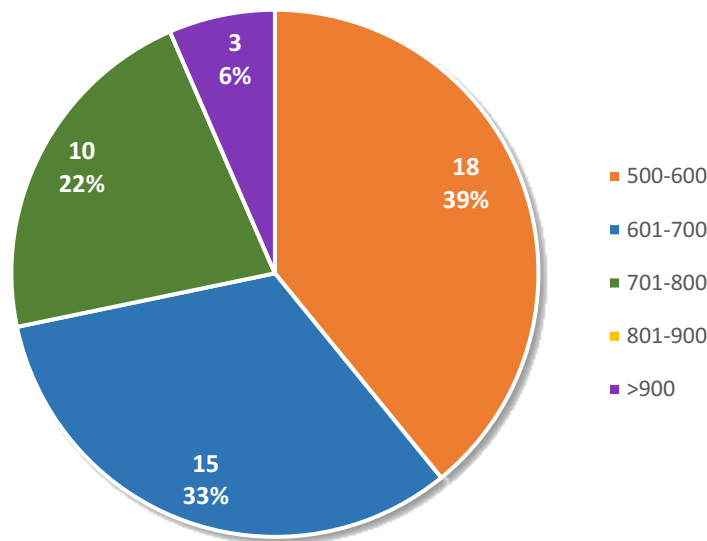
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Graph 4.3.1 B below indicates the applicant's results for the multiple-choice tests per area, and their means, with the highest mean belonging to the Humanities, and the lowest to the Languages area, thus revealing a synchronicity trend, with the applicants scoring either highly, medium, or lowly across the four tests. This trend is visible when the essay score is plotted onto the graph, seen in Graph 4.3.1 C, with a slight variation. What this means is that if an applicant scores highly on one of the assessed areas, the scores of this particular individual for the other assessed areas will also be high when compared with other applicants – even if the score itself is not high in number. For instance, applicant 7 had relatively high scores on all four multiple-choice tests, reaching 940 in the essay, while applicant 33 scored lowly on all four tests, with 380 points in the essay, 120 points below the minimum required for entry 2021. The aim of these graphs is to illustrate the *overall* tendency of the ENEM scores, not to indicate each score individually.

Graph 4.3.1 B: Applicants' multiple-choice test per assessed area – trend line – 2021.
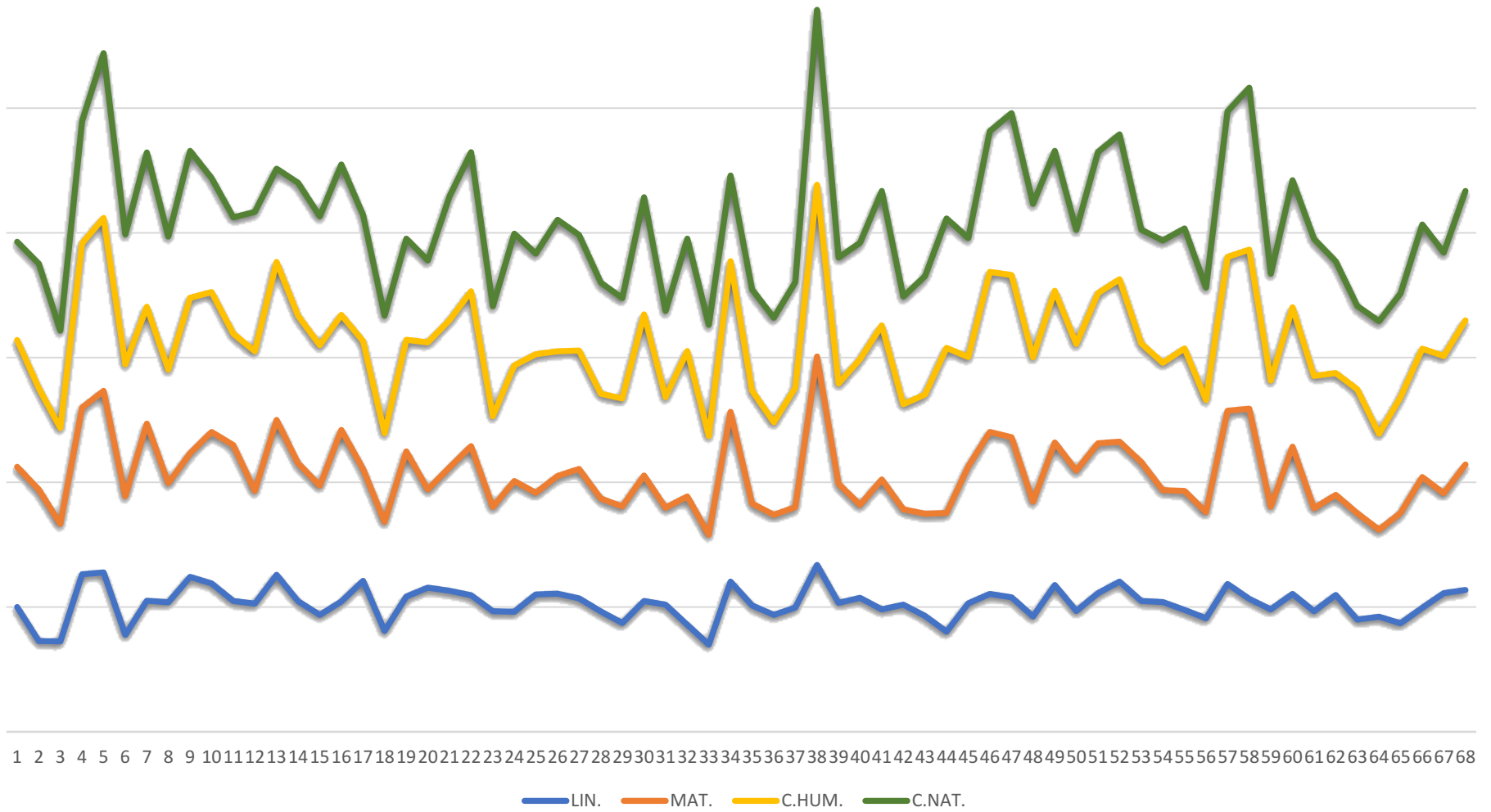
Graph 4.3.1 C: Applicants' multiple-choice test per assessed area and essay scores – trend line – 2021.
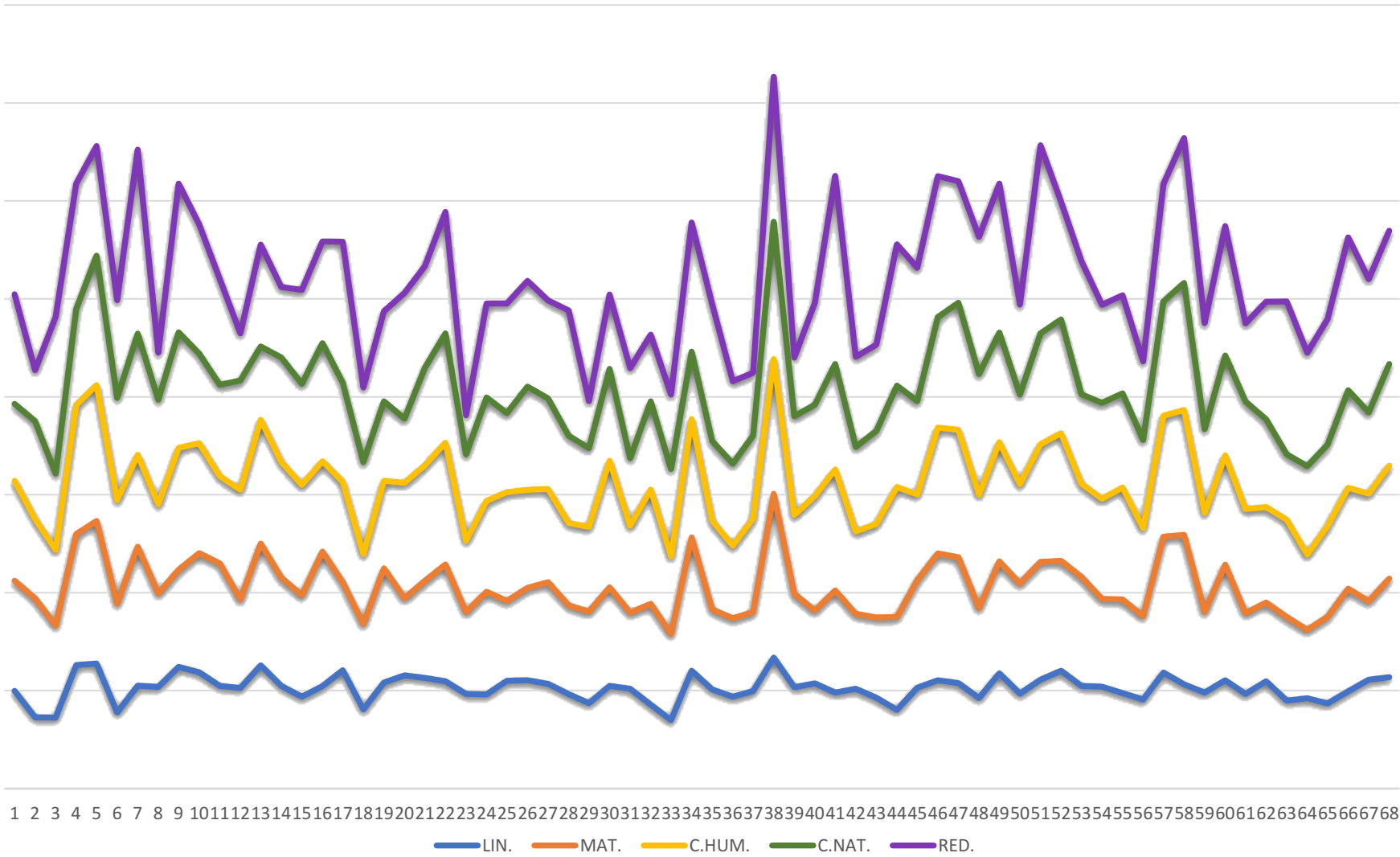
About age, the mean age in entry 2021 was 31 years old, which is relatively high. The youngest applicants were 18 and 19 at the time of application, comprising five and nine applicants, respectively, and the oldest applicants was 49 years old (one applicant). Over 45% of the applicants in entry 2021 were 18-24 years old, which is expected for examinations of this type, followed by around 22% in the 25-29 range, and approximately 22% in the 30-40 age range, as illustrated in Chart 4.3.1 D. In the generational breakdown, over 57% of the applicants are Gen-Z (39 applicants), 38% are Gen-Y (26 applicants), and nearly 5% are Gen-X (three applicants), as shown in Chart 4.3.1 E. Age/generational differences are discussed in subsection 4.4.

Chart 4.3.1 D: Applicants' age range breakdown – 2021.
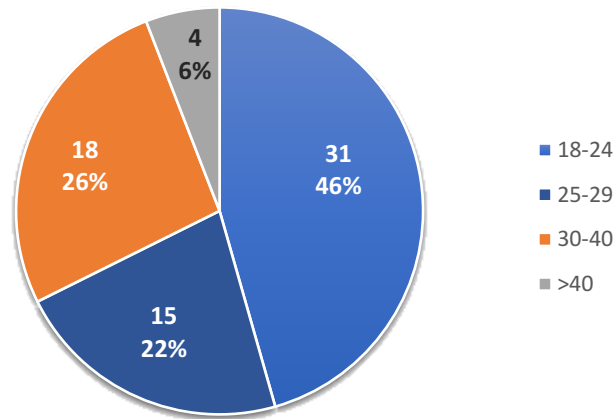
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Chart 4.3.1 E: Applicants' generation breakdown – 2021.
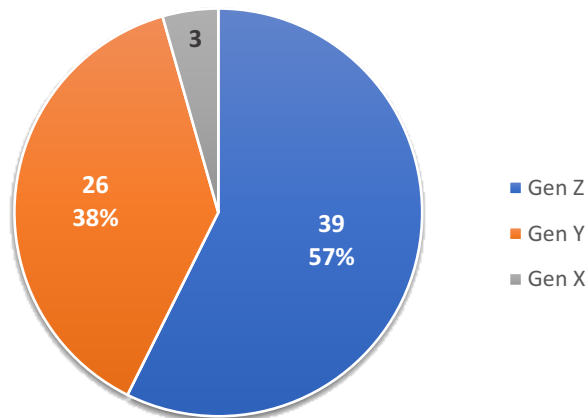
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Out of the 68 valid applications, **10 applications** led to successful registration, all in the first round, with one initially denied, then confirmed after an appeal. The 10 enrollments refer to the following majors: Administration, Anthropology, Architecture, Political Sciences, Civil Engineering, Medicine, Biomedicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry, and Social Sciences, corresponding to 14.7% of the 68 valid applications. This is a record in terms of enrollment thus far: a **13% enrollment rate** out of 100% when considering the 76 seats available for entry in 2021 in the Belo Horizonte and Montes Claros campuses. The 10 enrollments are for majors undertaken in the UFMG Belo Horizonte campus.

4.3.2 Entry 2022

Legal Status and Entry Requirements

As with entry 2021, entry 2022 covers the five categories mentioned above, with the entry addressed to "refugees, political asylum seekers, stateless persons, holders of temporary humanitarian visas, and holders of residence permits for humanitarian purposes". However, this entry changed the minimum essay score required for admission, **reducing it from 500 points to 300 points**. This change is discussed in section 4.4 of the present chapter.

Participation, Scores, and Profile Breakdown

Entry 2022[63] had a total of **37 valid applications** in 19 majors in seven disciplines, with Medicine as the major with the most applications, as in entry 2021. In entry 2022, there were 10 applicants for Medicine, accounting for around 53% of all applications, as illustrated in Chart 4.3.2 A. The Health Sciences discipline concentrated around 51% of all applications (19 applicants), followed by the Mathematical Sciences with around 19% (seven applicants), as shown in Chart 4.3.2 B below. These results are partly in line with those of entry 2021 and with the 2022 SiSU results for UFMG[64], in which the university received the greatest number of applications in the country, with Medicine as the most competitive major in both the quotas and in the wide competition admission system. Entry 2022 covers scores from the ENEM editions 2017 to 2021.

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[63] Process 23072.224757/2021-81: https://www.ufmg.br/copeve/Arquivos/2021/Refugiados_2022-Edital.pdf. (In Portuguese. Access: Feb. 05, 2024)

[64] https://www.ufmg.br/90anos/com-mais-de-170-mil-inscricoes-ufmg-e-a-instituicao-mais-procurada-nesta-edicao-do-sisu/. (In Portuguese. Access: Feb. 05, 2024)

Chart 4.3.2 A: Applicants' choice of major – 2022.
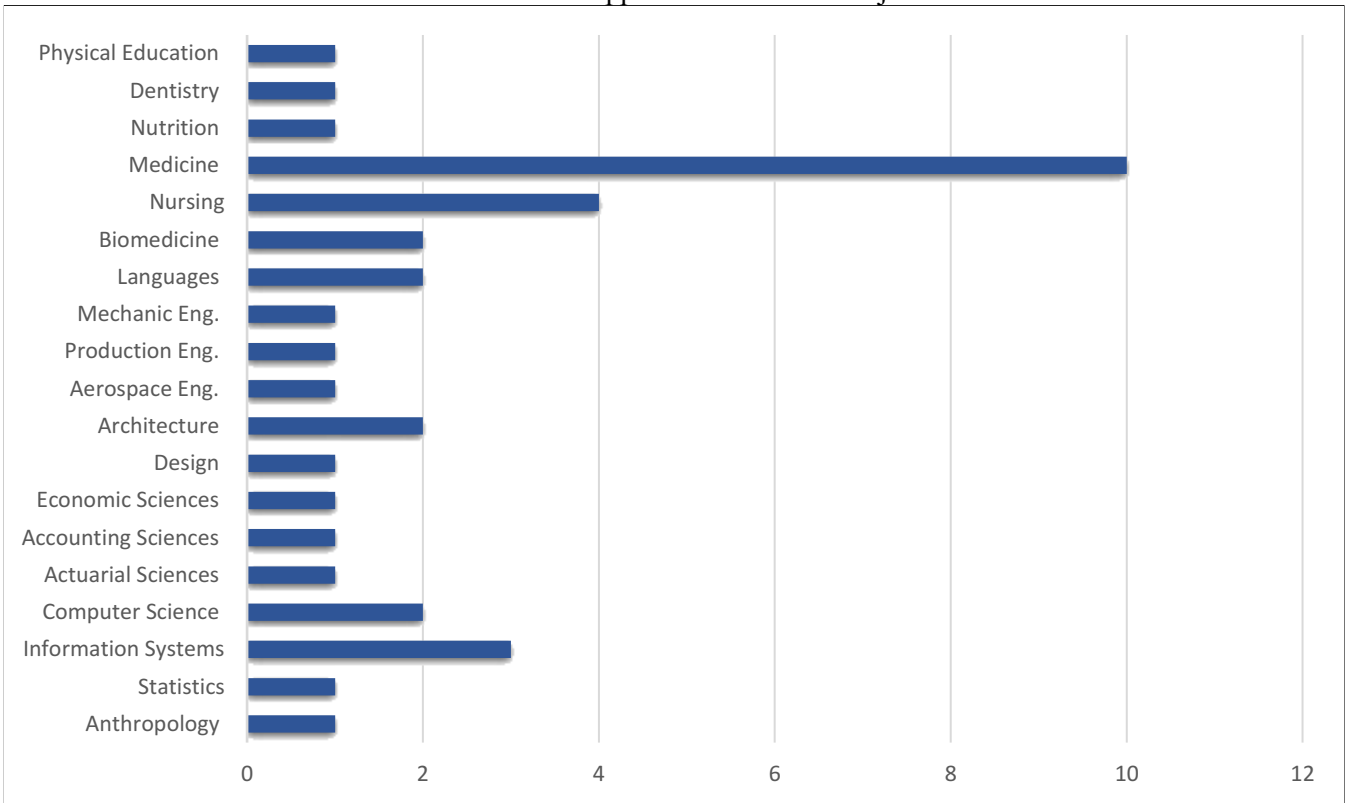
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Chart 4.3.2 B: Number of applicants per area – 2022.
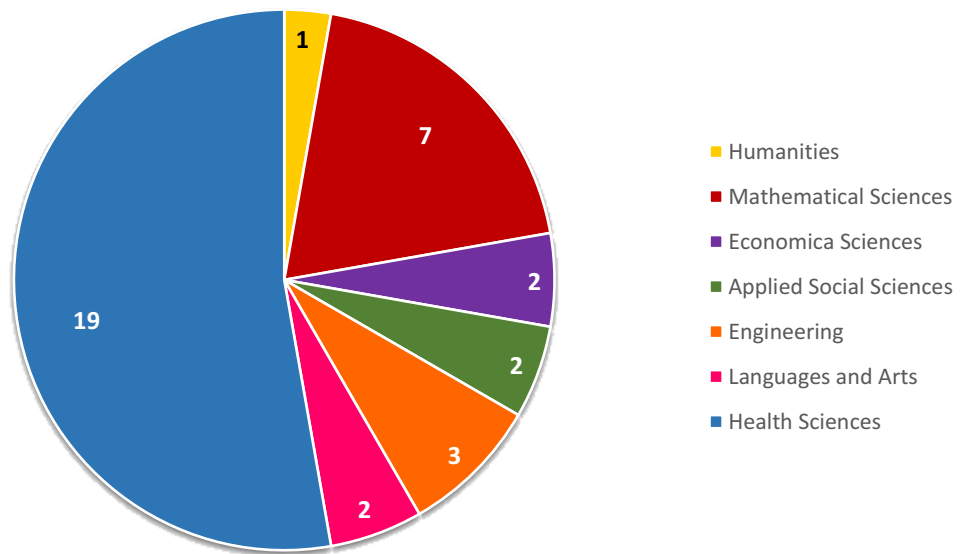
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Essay scores for entry 2022 ranged from 340 points, 40 points over the minimum score required by the call, to 960 points, with the mean score at around 641 points. As seen in Graph 4.3.2 A, the lowest and highest scores are populated by very few applicants, with only one applicant reaching past 900 points. As expected, the vast majority of applicants fall within the mean area, between 450 and 700 points. As Chart 4.3.2 B shows, when refining the data into 100-point bands, most applicants – 13, to be exact, or around 35% – have essay scores in the 500-600 score band, with 300 points as the minimum required for entry 2022. Chart 4.3.2 C shows that four applicants (around 11%) reached the 801-900 essay score range, eight (around 22%) reached the 701-800 range, and seven reached the 601-700 band. Four applicants (around 11%) scored between 300 and 500 points, as also indicated in Chart 4.3.2 C on the next page.

Graph 4.3.2 A: Applicants' essay scores – 2022.
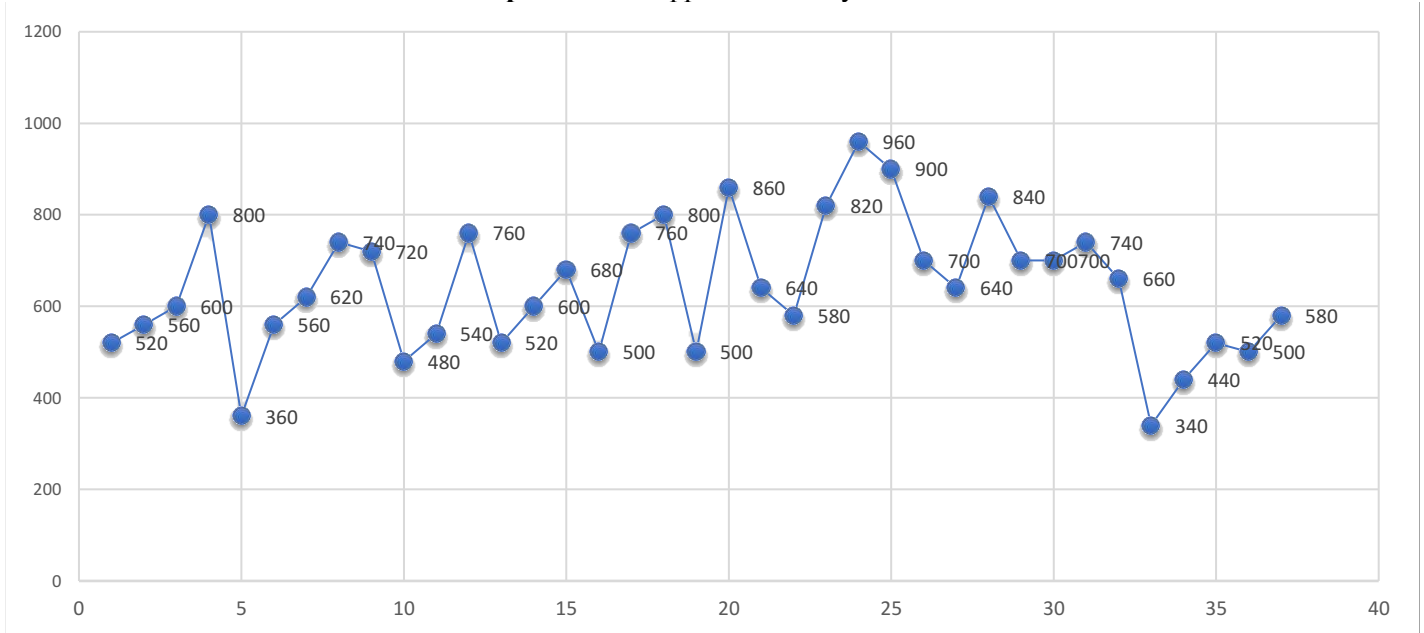
As with entry 2021, the '**synchronicity**' **trend** is also observed in the scores for entry 2022. Graph 4.3.2 B on the following page shows the trend lines of the multiple-choice tests per area, with the highest test scores belonging to the Natural Sciences area, and the lowest to the Languages subjects. The synchronicity trend is also visible when the essay score is plotted into the graph, as Graph 4.3.2 C indicates, with slight variations.

Chart 4.3.2 C: Number of applicants per essay score band – 2022.
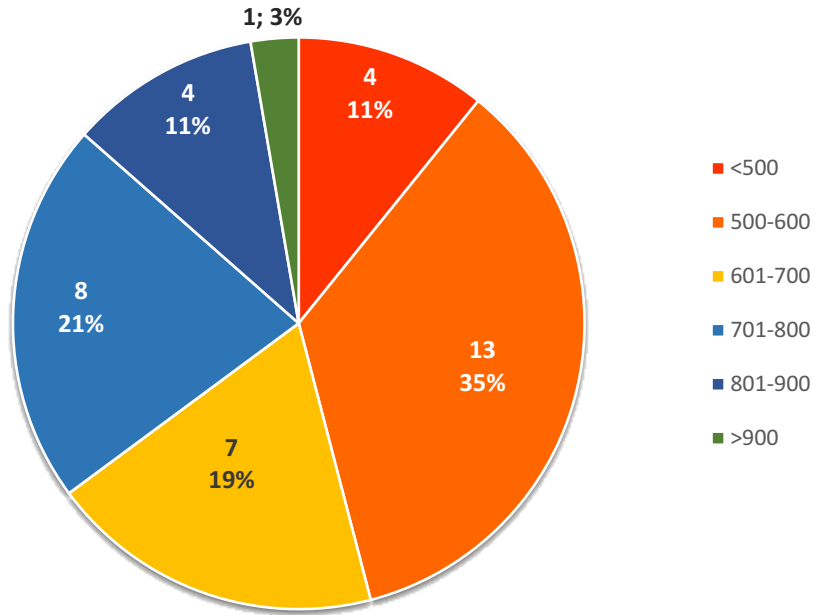
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Graph 4.3.2 B: Applicants' ENEM multiple-choice test scores per assessed area – 2022.
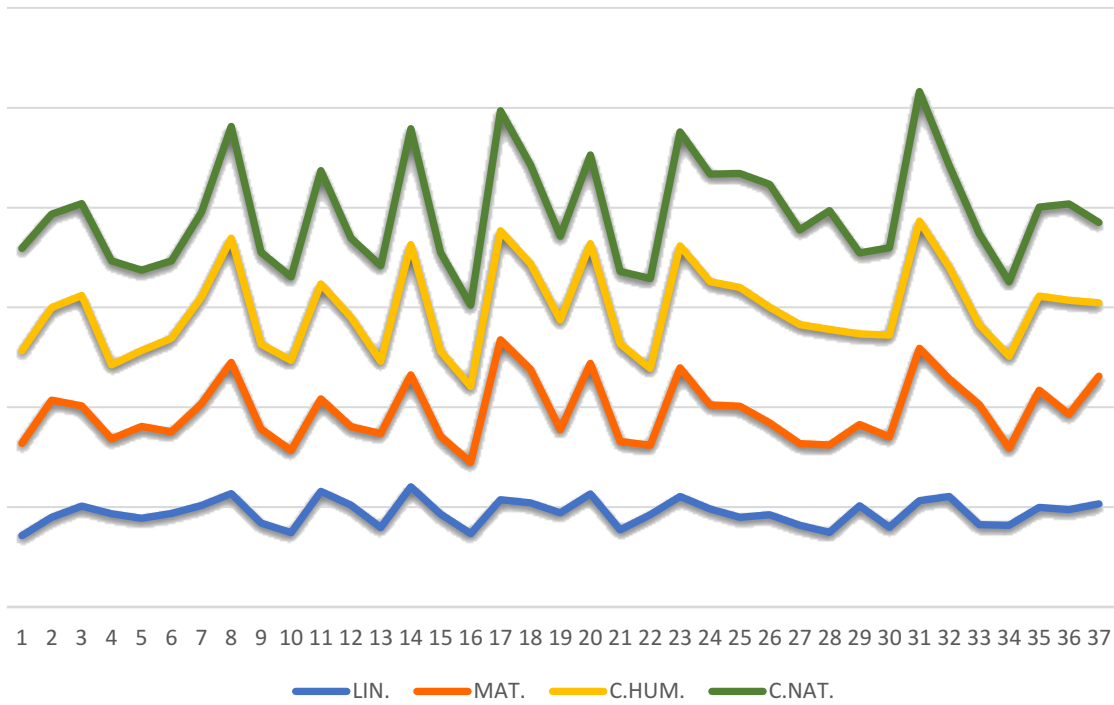
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Graph 4.3.2 C: Applicants' ENEM multiple-choice test scores per assessed area and essay scores – 2022.
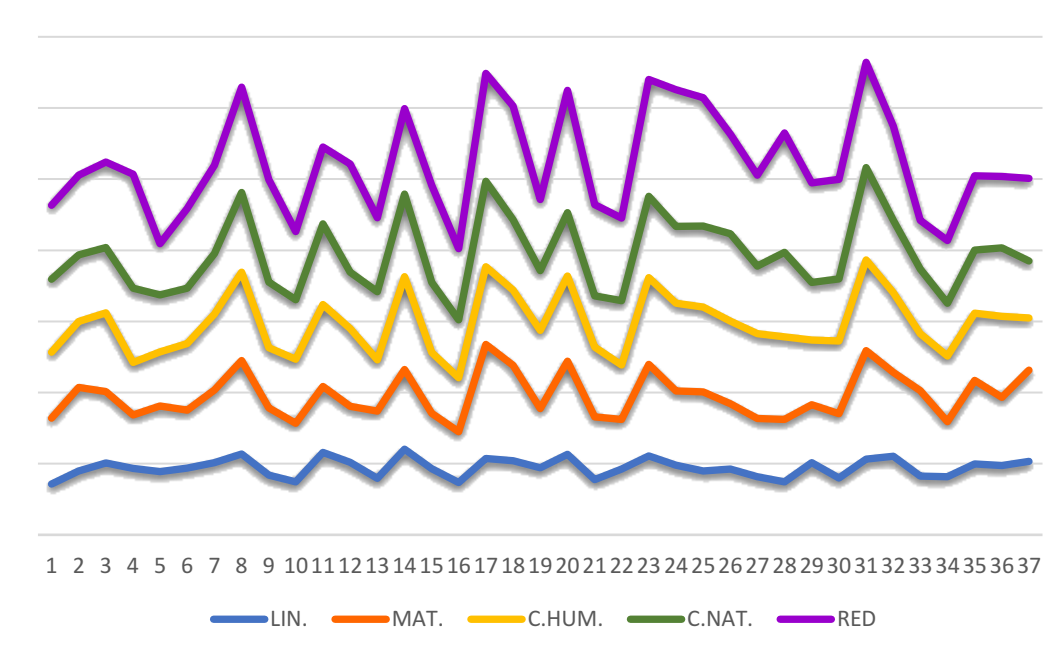
The mean age in entry 2022 was 27 years old. The youngest applicants were 18 and 19 years old at the time of application (one and seven applicants, respectively), with the oldest applicants at 40 (two applicants). Over 48% of the applicants in entry 2022 were 18-24 years old, followed by around 30% in the 25-29 range and approximately 22% in the 30-40 age range, as seen in Chart 4.3.2 D. In the generational breakdown, 67.5% of the applicants are Gen-Z (25 applicants) and 32.5% are Gen-Y (12 applicants), as indicated in Chart 4.3.2 D.

Chart 4.3.2 D: Applicants' age range breakdown – 2022.
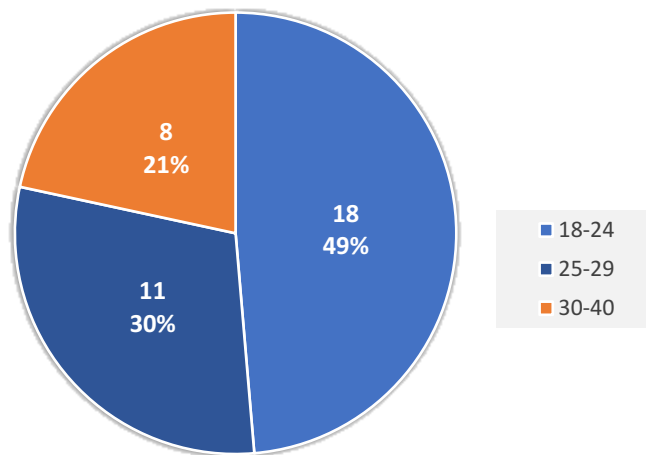
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Chart 4.3.2 E: Applicants' generation breakdown – 2022.
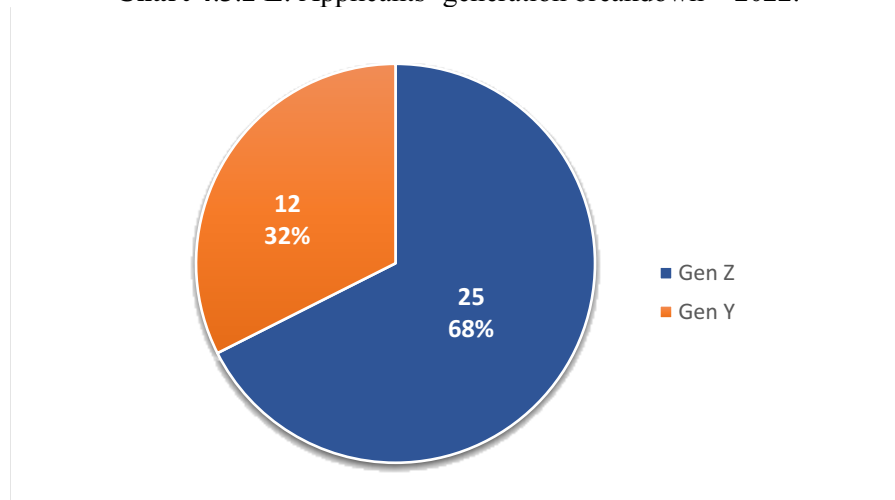
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Mature applicants such as those in their late 30s and/or early 40s could be seeking a university degree as a way to practice their original occupations in Brazil. This assumption is conjectural; however, the challenges faced by migrants to work in their original occupations are widely known, in Brazil[65] and elsewhere. As will be narrated in Chapter 5, this is the case of one of the research participants' father: impediments to validate his degree meant not being able to work in his original professional, in Brazil. The eight applicants in this range applied for the following majors: Accounting Sciences (one), Nursing (two applicants), Aerospace Engineering, Statistics, and Medicine (three applicants). Three applicants placed first and the other five were waitlisted. One of the applicants who placed first had their registration denied and the other two did not enroll at UFMG.

Out of the 37 valid applications, **four applications** led to **successful registration**: three in the first round and one in the second and final round of calls for registration, in these majors: Anthropology, Languages, and Medicine (first round), and Biomedicine (second round). This corresponds to 11% of the 37 valid applications, and a **5.2% enrollment rate** when considering the 76 seats available for entry in 2022 in the Belo Horizonte and Montes Claros campuses. The four enrollments refer to majors undertaken in the UFMG Belo Horizonte campus, two of which in the evening (Anthropology and Languages), one is in the morning (Biomedicine), and one is a full-day major (Medicine). The one major that never fails to effect a registration is Medicine, as expected, seeing how highly competitive Medicine is across the board, that is, both in the

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[65] https://www.tst.jus.br/-/brasil-tem-mais-de-180-mil-imigrantes-no-mercado-de-trabalho-formal. (In Portuguese. Access: Feb. 05, 2024)

wide competition category and in selection processes based on affirmative actions, such as Public Call 624/2020.

4.3.3 Entry 2023

Legal Status and Entry Requirements

Entry 2023[66] maintained the requirements updated in entry 2022 (i.e., the change in the minimum essay score required for admission, reduced from 500 to 300 points), covering the following ENEM editions: 2018 to 2022. The only adjustment made in entry 2023 refers to **legal status**, with the addition of the following category: "**Venezuelan citizens** benefiting from the emergency assistance policy for the reception of individuals in vulnerable situations following **humanitarian crisis-induced migrations**, as per **Law 13684/2018**[67], and related regulations" (UFMG, 2022, p. 1, emphasis added)[68].

The inclusion of Venezuelan citizens is a response to the mass migration of nationals from Venezuela to neighboring countries, including Brazil. One entry point for Venezuelans into Brazil is the northern state of Roraima, where the city of Boa Vista has witnessed a high influx of migrants – according to the IOM (2019), 6.1 million people have left Venezuela, 80% in Latin America and the Caribbean, driven by a severe economic and political crisis Venezuela. Hyperinflation, scarcity of basic goods (mostly medications and food), social unrest, as well as political instability have led many Venezuelans (Indigenous groups included, cf. Simões, 2017) to seek safer and better living conditions elsewhere.

In collaboration with international organizations and NGOs, the Brazilian government has implemented a range of initiatives to address the challenges posed by the high levels of migrants. These initiatives include humanitarian aid, healthcare services, and efforts to integrate migrants into Brazilian society (Rocha; Ribeiro, 2018/2019).

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[66] Process: 23072.223304/2022-19. https://www.ufmg.br/copeve/Arquivos/2023/Refugiados/Refugiados_2023-Edital.pdf. (In Portuguese. Access: Feb. 05, 2024)

[67] The Law outlines a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges posed by humanitarian crises and migratory flows. It emphasizes collaboration among different levels of government, establishes a dedicated committee, and includes the active participation of civil society organizations specializing in migrant rights to ensure a holistic and inclusive response to the situation.

[68] Translated from the original: "Cidadãos venezuelanos beneficiários da política de assistência emergencial para acolhimento a pessoas em situação de vulnerabilidade decorrente de fluxo migratório provocado por crise humanitária, nos termos da Lei 13.684/2018, e normas correlatas."

Participation, Scores, and Profile Breakdown

Entry 2023 had a total of **15 valid applications** for seven majors. As shown in Chart 4.3.3 A below, Medicine was the major with the most applications – nine in total, accounting for 60% of all applications. This is in line with the data from entries 2021 and 2022 and with the 2023 SiSU results for UFMG[69], in which Medicine remained the most competitive major. The 15 valid applications for entry 2023 fall within five disciplines, with Health Sciences and Humanities concentrating four of the seven majors, as shown in Chart 4.3.3 B on the following page. However, the Health Sciences account for the largest number of applicants: nine for Medicine and one for Dentistry. This means that the Health Sciences have a total of 10 applicants out of the 15, or ca. 67%.

Chart 4.3.3 A: Number of applicants per major – 2023.
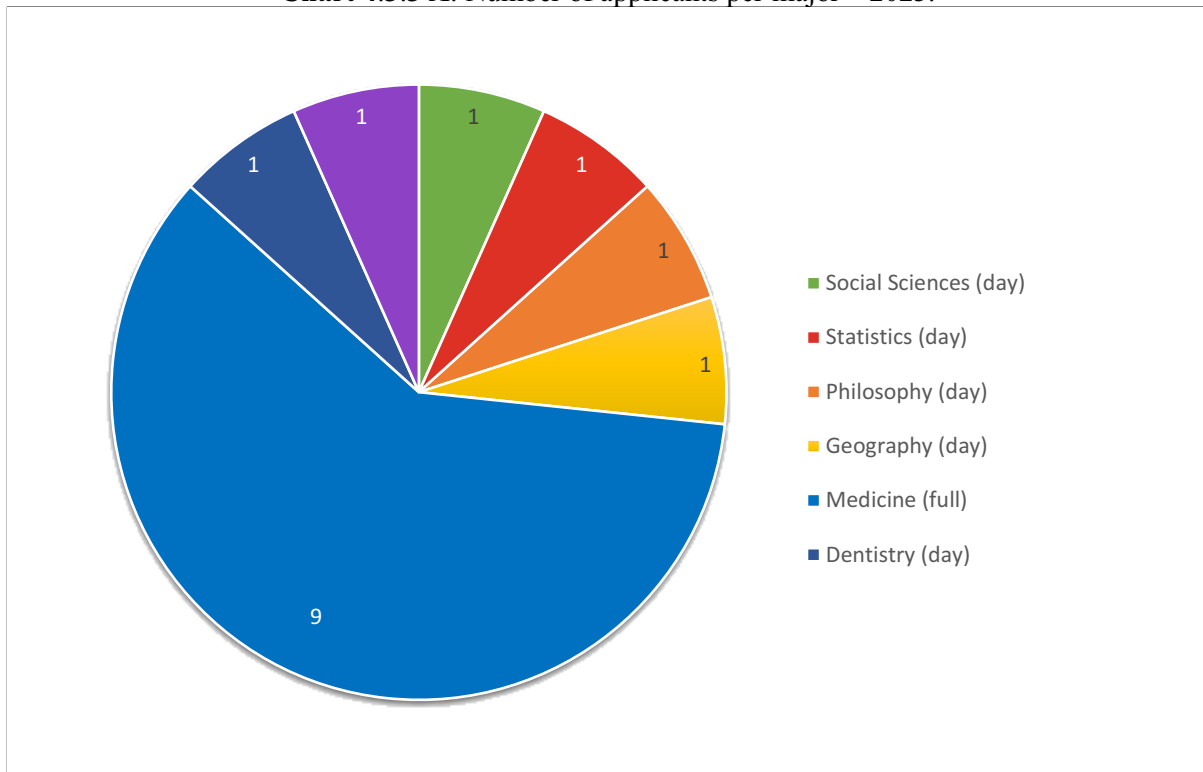
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

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[69] https://ufmg.br/comunicacao/noticias/divulgado-resultado-da-chamada-regular-do-sisu-2023. (In Portuguese. Access: Feb. 05, 2024)

Chart 4.3.3 B: Number of applicants per UFMG area – 2023.
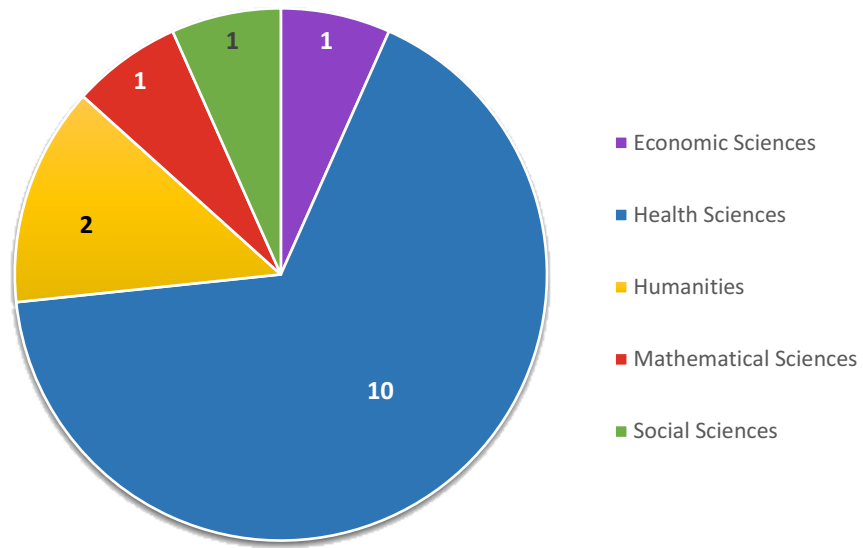
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Graph 4.3.3: Applicants' ENEM essay scores – 2023.
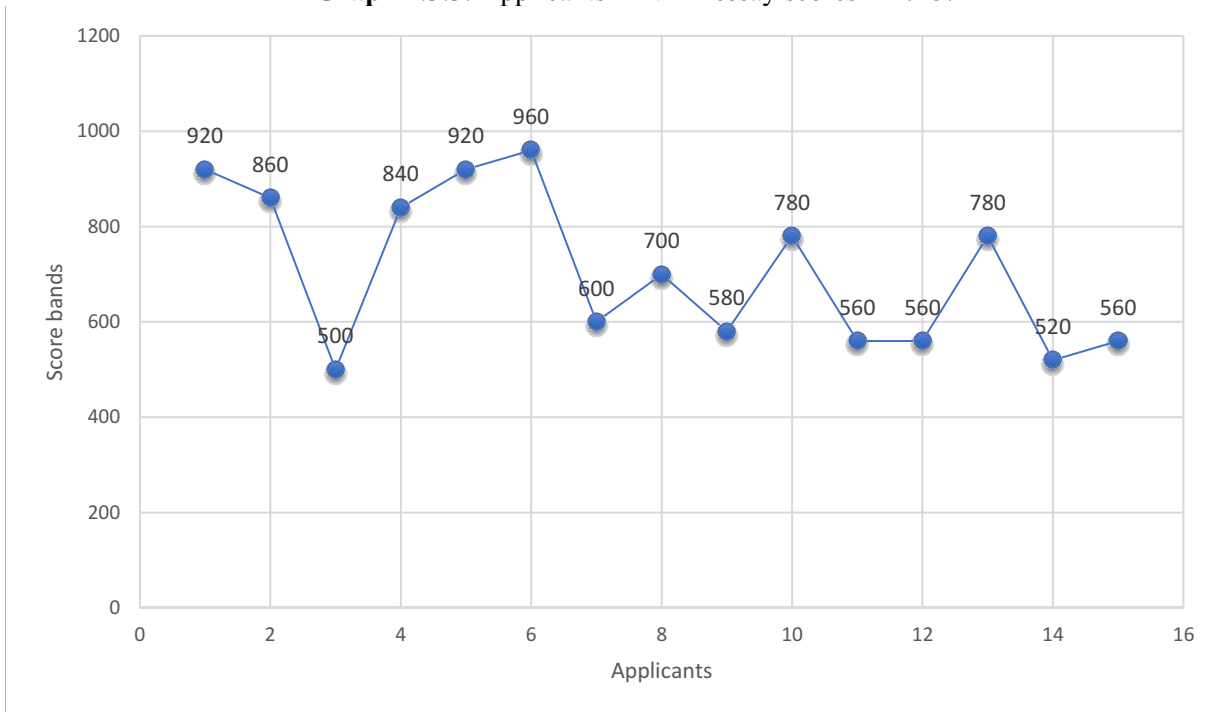
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Essay scores ranged from 500 points, 200 points over the minimum required for the call, to 960 points, as indicated in Graph 4.3.3, with the mean score at approximately 710 points, 70 points higher than the mean score for entry 2022 and 150 points higher than the mean score for entry 2021. Three applicants (20%) reached past the 900-point band, while five applicants (around 34%) reached the 700-800 range, and seven (ca. 46%) reached the 500-600 range. About the multiple-choice tests per assessed area, the highest mean belongs to the Mathematics-related subjects (Math, Geometry, and Physics) and the lowest mean to the Languages subjects, which covers Portuguese, Literature, and Foreign Languages (English or Spanish).

The applicants' sociodemographic data is not publicly available. Only their names and dates of birth could be found. Regarding age, the youngest applicants were 19 years old at the time of application (two applicants, around 14%), and the oldest applicants were 38 years old (also two applicants, around 14%). The mean age in entry 2023 was 29 years old. Chart 4.3.3 C shows a nearly 25-25-50 distribution between the 19-24, the 25-29, and the 30-38 age ranges. Chart 4.3.3 D below shows a nearly 50-50 distribution between the Y and Z generations. This could mean that different priorities, expectations, and possibly different literacy practices are at play. On this note, an interesting point for future research could be to examine the motivations behind the applicants' participation in these public calls, cross-referencing the data with age ranges and generational characteristics and/or expectations.

Chart 4.3.3 C: Applicants' age range breakdown – 2023.
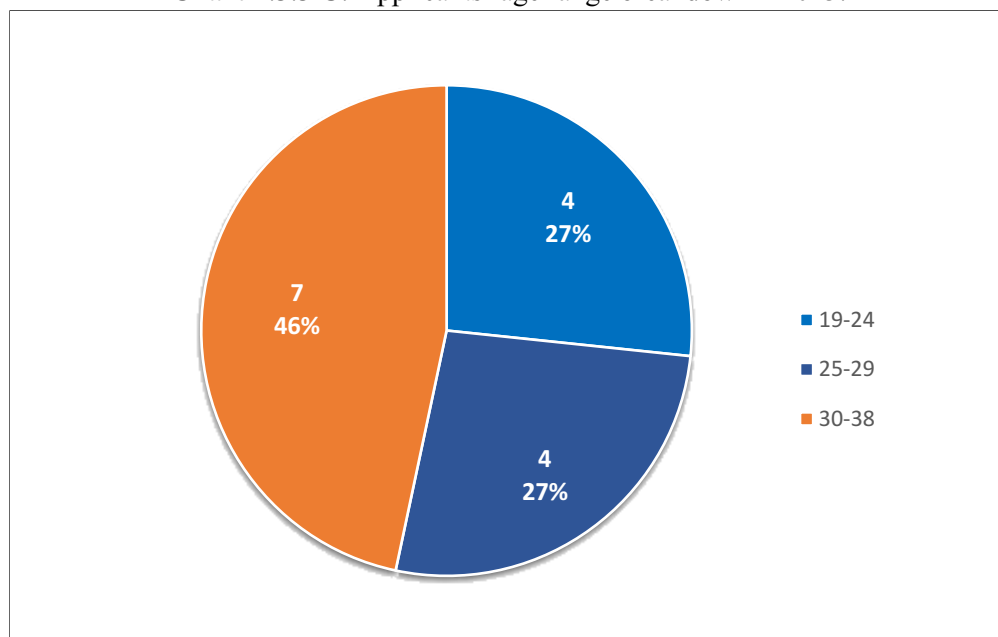
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Chart 4.3.3 D: Applicants' generation breakdown – 2023.
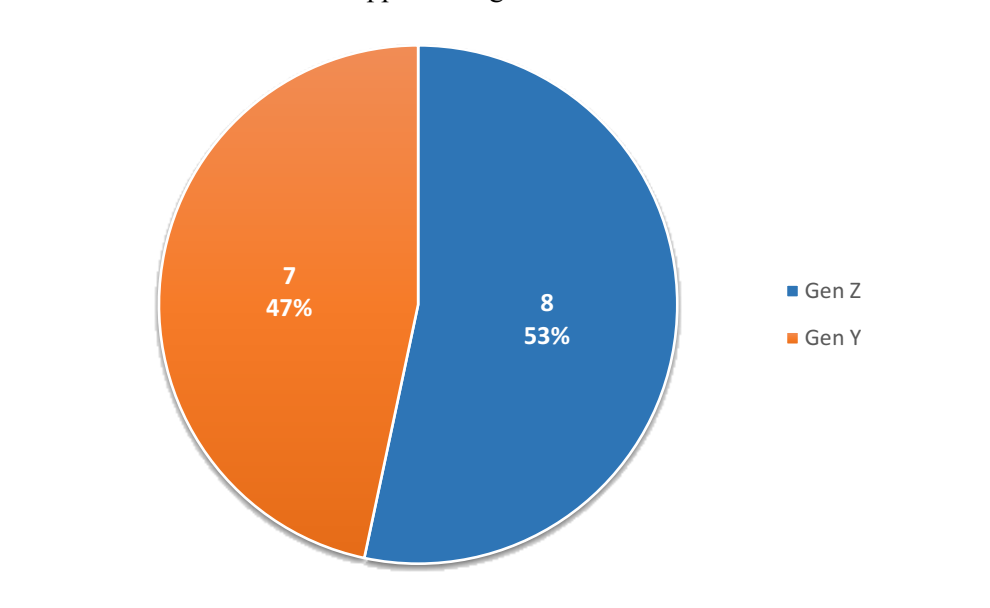
Source: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

Because only one seat is available per major for this call, regardless of year of entry, **out of the 15 applicant**s, **seven were called for registration** – or **46%**. This means 9.2% of the 76 available seats in the Belo Horizonte and Montes Claros campuses. In entry 2023, out of the seven applicants called for registration, **four registered and enrolled at UFMG** in the first and only round, meaning that no registrations were denied, as there was no second round or waitlist. These four registrations correspond to an **enrollment rate of 5.2%**, in four areas and the following majors: Social Sciences, Statistics, Medicine, and Dentistry.

4.3.4 Entry 2024

Legal Status and Entry Requirements

Entry 2024 **maintained the six legal categories from entry 2023**: refugees, political asylum seekers, stateless persons, holders of temporary humanitarian visas, holders of residence permits for humanitarian purposes, and Venezuelan citizens benefiting from the emergency assistance policy for the reception of individuals in vulnerable situations following crisis-induced migrations. No changes were made to the entry requirements – **the minimum essay score remained at 300 points**, which seems more realistic than the previous minimum essay score of 500 points. This change is discussed in section 4.4 of the present chapter.

Participation, Scores, and Profile Breakdown

Given the schedule of entry 2024, we were not able to compile the data pertaining to the ENEM scores and the applicants, as the data is pending release. The selection process of entry 2024 ended on January 5th, 2024, and the only statistics publicly available as of the final draft of this dissertation is dated January 15th, 2024. Hence, we are only able to report on the overall participation figures: **18 applications**, with Medicine as the most sought-after major, with a total of eight applications, representing nearly 45% of all applications. Chart 4.3.4 below shows the distribution per major, with the Health Sciences retaining 61% of all applications.

Chart 4.3.4: Number of applicants per major – 2024.
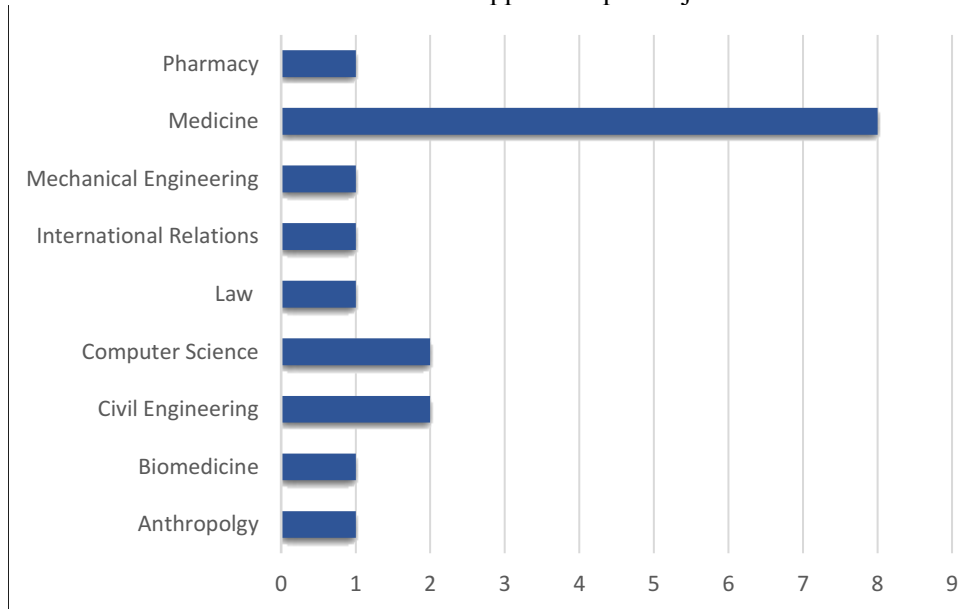
**Source**: The author, based on information by Copeve and DRCA.

4.3.5 Discussing the Data

Cross-referencing Entries 2021, 2022, and 2023

The violin and box plots presented and discussed in this subsection were produced with R (R Core Team, 2023) in RStudio (RStudio Team, 2023) using the ggplot2 package. At the time of producing and analyzing the plots, no data was available for entry 2024, as the entry was launched in November 2023. The plots in this subsection cover entries 2021, 2022, and 2023. We looked at three specific points when designing the plots: total average scores, total scores per age range, and total scores per major. The data plotted refers to all valid applications for the aforementioned entries.

Plot 4.3.5 A: Total average scores per assessed area and the essay, for all applicants.
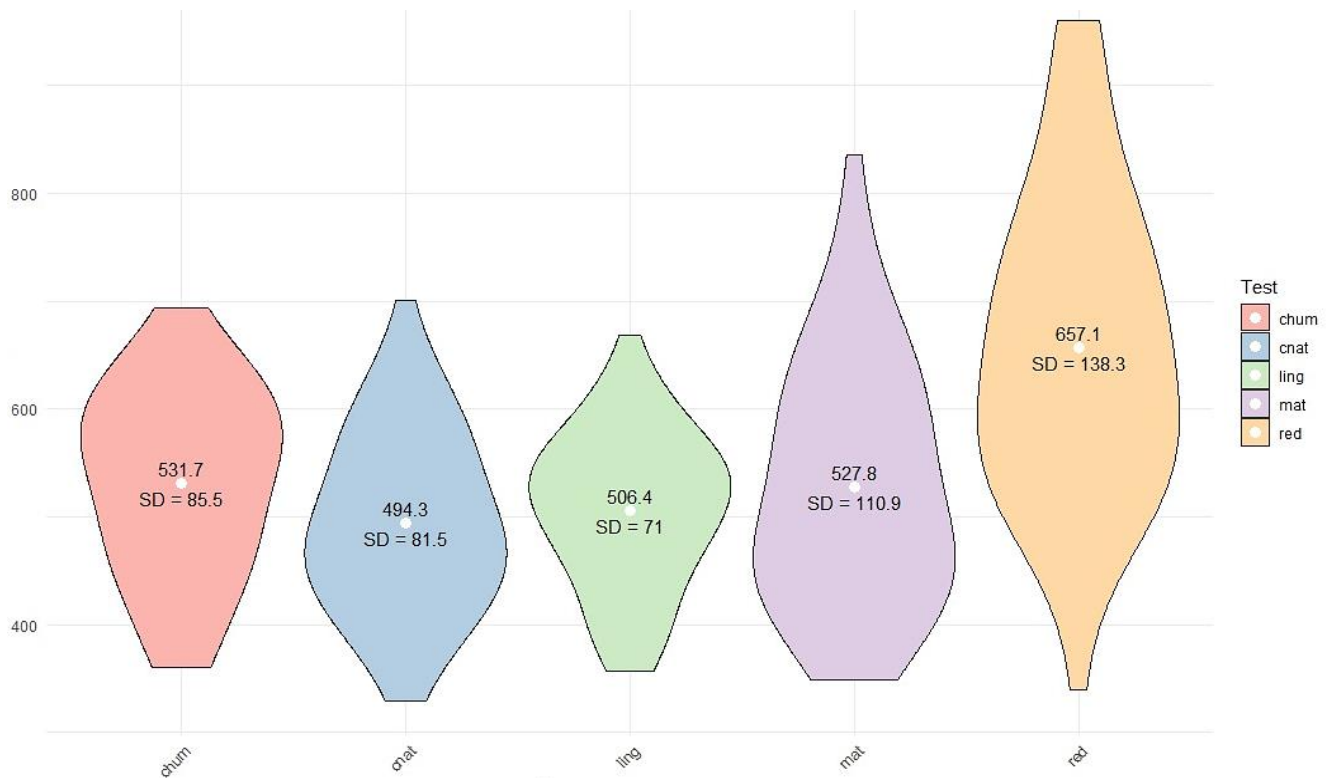
Source: The author.

Plot 4.3.5 A shows the distribution of total scores per assessed area, with most areas of knowledge showing relatively the same average score, indicated right above the white dot. The average score for the subjects in the Humanities block is 531.7, the highest of the areas assessed. The second highest average score is the Mathematics block, at 527.8, followed by Languages at 506.4, and the Natural Sciences at 494.3. The average essay score is the one true variation, at 657.1, meaning that the total sum of the essay scores is higher than the total sum of the four areas of knowledge assessed via multiple-choice tests, highlighting the central role the essay plays in the ENEM.

Additionally, we can see that the standard deviation (SD) is more pronounced for the Mathematics block and the Essay. This means that there **is greater variation within the total scores for the Mathematics block and the Essay**, that is, the applicants produced a greater diversity of scores, from low to medium and high. This is what gives the more stretched shape to the data referring to the Mathematics block and the Essay. The Essay, in particular, displays a few very high scores, peaking above 900 points, and even fewer really low scores, below 400 points.

Plot 4.3.5 B: Total average scores per area of knowledge for all applicants.

Plot 4.3.5 B shows the average score distributed per age range. The highest standard deviation (7.7) refers to scores of the youngest group of applicants, meaning that this group displayed more variable behavior, differing more from the average score values than the rest of the applicants. This shows that some younger Gen-Zers had very high scores, while others had very low scores. The mature applicants (over 38 years old) displayed lower variation and higher scores, in comparison. This could be due to a number of reasons, for instance, higher emotional maturity and more experience with test-taking situations, presumably. Applicants aged 33 to 38 years old were the largest group with average scores, with 55 points out of 100 points. The larger the shape, the more data it concentrates. The youngest group of applicants, aged 18 to 23, had the highest scores over entries 2021, 2022, and 2023. This group almost tied with the second youngest group of applicants, aged 24 to 28, for the lowest scores. The plotted data refers to scores of the areas assessed in the ENEM (i.e., the multiple-choice test scores) and the essay. Based on the data, we can conclude tentatively that younger applicants seem to be both less and more prepared than the applicants from other age brackets.

Plot 4.3.5 C: Total average scores per major for all applicants.
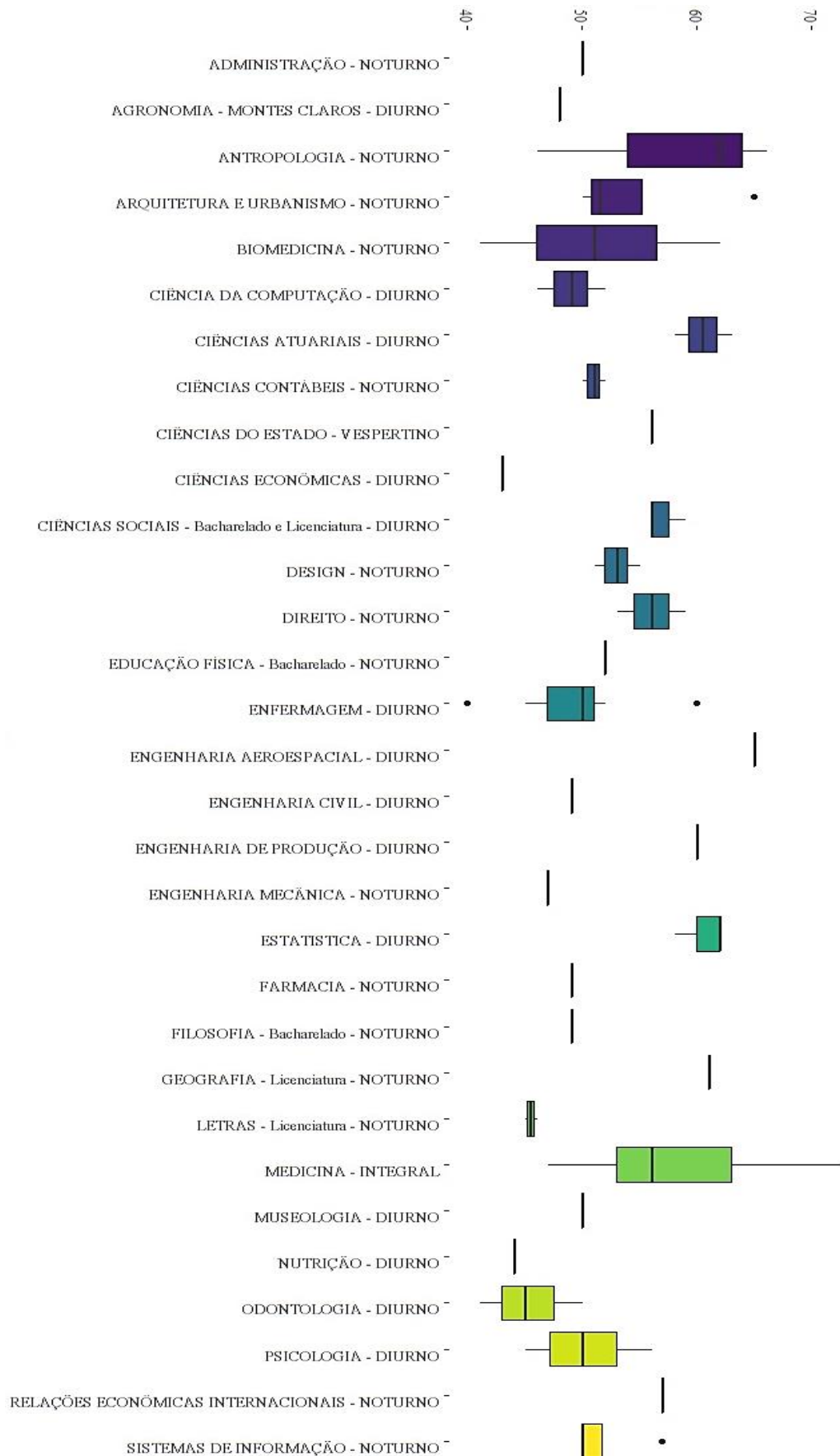
Plot 4.3.5 C shows the total average scores per major: Anthropology, Statistics, and Medicine applicants display higher values than those from the other majors, with Biomedicine and Medicine concentrating most of the applications, followed by Anthropology, Architecture, Accounting Sciences, Law, Nursing, Dentistry, and Psychology. The boxplot is interpreted based on the following: the larger the box, the greater the number of applicants. Where only a vertical line is seen – several majors – the interpretation is: a very low number of applicants, a low enough value that does form a colored box. Aerospace Engineering had one applicant only, being the major with the highest overall score. What the data tells us is that the Health Sciences tend to concentrate larger numbers of applicants, which is expected, not only due to the prestige most Health Sciences occupations enjoy in Brazilian society but also because the Health Sciences programs tend to be the most expensive in private HEIs.

Generational Differences

In the literature, generational scholars[70] have yet to reach a consensus about generational boundaries, as **different authors employ different intervals to characterize each generation**, yielding differences in the mapping of generations (see Cofferri; Martinez; Novello, 2017 for a discussion). However, the fuzzy boundaries show some overlap and agreement, as Figure 4.3.5 C indicates. This means that, despite there not being clear cut-offs between generations, they can be useful constructs when analyzing social phenomena (Campbell; Twenge; Campbell, 2017). For the purpose of this dissertation, we have adopted the following cohorts: **Generation X from 1965 to 1979**, **Generation Y from 1980 to 1995**, and **Generation Z from 1996**.

Our focus lies primarily on Generations Y and Z, as most of the applicants belong to these generational cohorts. The literature on the differences between Generations Y and Z has addressed several key aspects, revealing that the two generations often have quite **different outlooks on life and specific cultural and social habits**, from the use of digital technologies (Kämpf, 2011; Reis; Tomaél, 2017) and the implications of hyperconnectivity (Bezerra *et al.*, 2019) to sustainability (Kara; Min, 2023) and consumption patterns (Ceretta; Froemming, 2011; Karim, 2019).

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[70] It should be noted that generational studies do not come without criticisms. For example, many generational scholars show a dismissive treatment of "important racial, ethnic, national, and regional differences", as noted in Rue (2018, p. 5). Still, with the needed adjustment, we find the concept useful, as different generations share distinct formative experiences, and these cohorts let researchers study how views change over time in a relevant way (Twenge, 2023).

Figure 4.3.5 A: Overlaps in generational cut-off birth years.
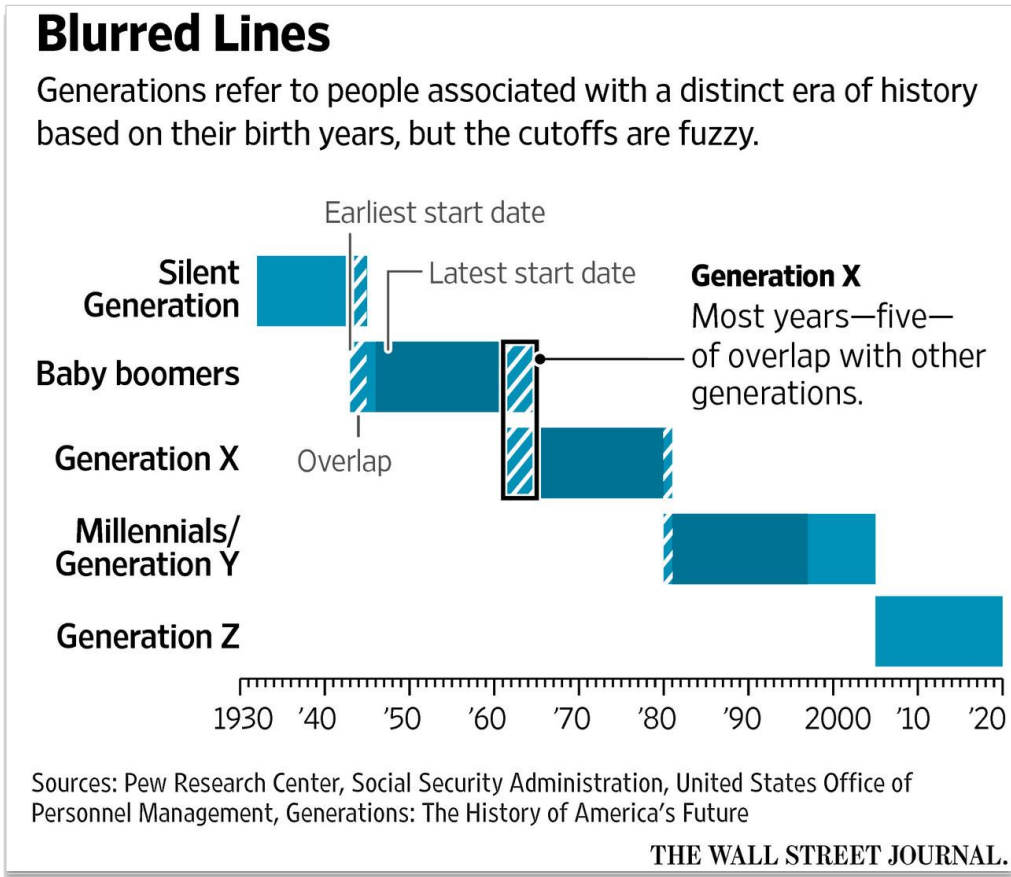
Source: Retrieved from McGinty (2016) at the Wall Street Journal.

Figure 4.3.5 B: Generation timeline.

Source: Pinto (2012, p. 96).

One of the most prominent differences between Generation Y and Generation Z is their relationship with technology. Gen Y/Millennials witnessed the rise of the internet, personal computers, and mobile technology during their formative years. Despite not having had contact with digital technology from birth, Millennials are often considered the pioneers of the internet age and tend to navigate better between technologies, since they also had close contact with analog technology. Television, print media, and 'traditional' advertising played significant roles in shaping the media landscape for Millennials (Twenge, 2023).

In contrast, Gen Z grew up in a 'fully' digital world, with smartphones, social media, and instant access to information as part of their daily lives (Dolot, 2018), making them highly reliant on smartphones and mobile devices for communication, information consumption, and education. This *can* make Gen-Zers more "alert to new developments in technology and are likely to be early adopters", as they usually expect new updates and are more "comfortable navigating such change" (Rue, 2018, p. 6). Gen-Zers also see technology and creativity as an intersecting element of their identities (Trowbridge, 2016) and tend to value diversity and inclusion in their personal and professional/academic relationships (Twenge, 2023).

This difference in 'technological upbringing' likely impacts digital literacy skills and communication styles, with Millennials adopting email as their primary interaction, and Gen-Zers favoring instant messaging and visually-oriented platforms such as Instagram (Seemiller; Grace, 2015). While we understand the particulars of technological shortcomings in Brazil (i.e., the digital divide), it is not unreasonable to assume that younger generations have a closer relationship with digital technology, even with limited access to the internet. This closer relationships colors Gen-Z's communication styles differently, with text potentially becoming more 'plastic' and fluid (Crook, 2005; Kress, 2003), as short-form content, emojis, and memes are commonly used for expression.

This information is important, as **Gen-Z** applicants are likely to have had *some* formal schooling experience in Brazil, as the Brazilian National Council of Education (CNE) ensures the enrollment of children of migrant and refugee backgrounds in the country's public school system (Brasil, 2020). In contrast, **Gen-Y** applicants are likely to have undertaken their formal schooling in their countries of origin. Millennials are more likely to have started or concluded their undergraduate studies *before* relocating to Brazil. As we have seen in the plotted data, it was precisely the youngest applicants who showed wider variation in the ENEM scores.

4.4 The ENEM Essay

As mentioned in Chapter 2, **academic literacy practices at university are built upon previous literacy experiences**. Given the centrality of ENEM in the migrant students' journey to university, we would be remiss not to approach it as part of the research participants' literacy practices pre-university. To that end, in this subsection I discuss specific points of interest about the ENEM essay, for believing that this writing impacts future academic literacy practices and because the essay is likely the most critical component of the examination, possibly the most contentious, as it represents **the exam's only open-ended item**, which can **produce washback effects beyond pedagogical practices**, promoting heated discussions following each ENEM edition, particularly on social media[71].

As with most standardized tests, sitting the ENEM presumes an understanding of the examination, which includes not only knowing the disciplinary content required but also **being acquainted with the exam format and assessment criteria**, for the multiple-choice tests and the essay. About the essay, in addition to the prompt, candidates have access to short supporting material, from advertisements and infographics to pieces of law, among others. While reference to these texts is optional, the essay is supposed to dialog with the supporting material/texts somehow, as implied in the official guidelines[72]. Moreover, as **a genre akin to the school essay** – the '*redação escolar*' (Rojo, 2009), the ENEM essay is centered around the argumentative development of a topic, supported by evidence. Topic development is meant to be concise, with the essay falling between seven and 30 lines, as specified in the official guidelines (Brasil, 2022, 2023).

Another crucial aspect of the ENEM essay is the audience and purpose. University entrance essays are **tailored for a predefined audience of evaluators** (Massi, 2017), for the sole purpose of evaluation. As Rojo (2009) explains, the ENEM essay is designed specifically to be assessed – on the panel's side – and to pass the exam (on the student's part). Hence, to achieve a high grade, the students must gear the writing toward the target audience to meet the

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[71] E. g., https://www12.senado.leg.br/radio/1/conexao-senado/2023/11/07/advogada-fala-sobre-o-tema-da-redacao-do-enem-2023 and https://www.cartacapital.com.br/opiniao/enem-escolha-do-tema-de-redacao-foi-um-ato-de-coragem/. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

[72] "Based on **the ideas present in the motivating texts**, list other information, based on your knowledge of the world, that can contribute to defending the position you have decided to take" (Brasil, 2023, p. 23, emphasis added), "select, based on your own knowledge, **and not just the motivating texts**, information from areas of knowledge relevant to the theme" (p. 11, emphasis added). Original: "A partir das ideias presentes nos textos motivadores, elencar outras informações, com base em seu conhecimento de mundo, que podem contribuir para defender o posicionamento que você escolheu" and "selecione, a partir de seus conhecimentos próprios, e não apenas dos textos motivadores, informações de áreas do conhecimento pertinentes ao tema".

panel's expectations in terms of structure, content, and language use. However, it should be noted that the target audience is defined for the essay as an examination, not for the essay as a communicative task. This would require **simulating a situation of interaction** in which the candidate writes for an imagined reader, based on an imagined scenario, as is done in exams such as Celpe-Bras, in which the piece of writing is meant to be a sample of a genre (e.g., a letter, a report), with a communicative purpose beyond the assessment.

In terms of assessment, the ENEM essay is evaluated based on a five competency rubric: 1) to demonstrate mastery of the formal written modality of Portuguese; 2) to comprehend the writing prompt and deploy concepts from various areas of knowledge to develop the topic, within the structural limits of the dissertative-argumentative prose text; 3) to select, associate, organize, and interpret information, facts, opinions, and arguments to defend one's point of view/perspective; 4) to demonstrate having knowledge of the linguistic mechanisms required for argument building; and 5) to draft an intervention proposal for the issue/topic addressed, respecting human rights in this process[73] (Brasil, 2023). The five competencies are discussed briefly in the following.

Assessment Criteria

As informed in the ENEM official guidelines (Brasil, 2022), **Competency 1** assesses the student's language proficiency in the formal written style of Portuguese, which includes an understanding of writing norms such as spelling and accentuation rules regulated by the present Orthographic Agreement (pp. 9-11). This requires specialized writing practice favoring syntax, lexicon, register, and writing conventions specific to Brazilian Portuguese. A satisfactory/good performance means **having a strong command of formal written Portuguese**. Despite not employing prescriptive terminology, as it did in previous editions (cf. Freitag, 2015), the ENEM essay guidelines favor prescription to the norm, with variation not being rewarded in this section of the examination (Andrade; Freitag, 2016).

Competency 2 assesses comprehension of the essay prompt, which involves a specific topic to be explored through the construction of solid arguments and a feasible proposal. An

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[73] "demonstrar domínio da modalidade escrita formal da língua portuguesa"; "compreender a proposta de redação e aplicar conceitos das várias áreas de conhecimento para desenvolver o tema, dentro dos limites estruturais do texto dissertativo-argumentativo em prosa"; "selecionar, relacionar, organizar e interpretar informações, fatos, opiniões e argumentos em defesa de um ponto de vista"; "demonstrar conhecimento dos mecanismos linguísticos necessários para a construção da argumentação", and "elaborar proposta de intervenção para o problema abordado, respeitando os direitos humanos" (Brasil, 2023, pp. 9-20).

adequate understanding ensures that the student addresses the intended topic and does not veer off into unrelated areas. This requires comprehending the topic, identifying key elements of the question, and understanding the context within which the topic is situated. This assesses the student's sociocultural repertoire: facts, opinions, a quotation, "or a lived experience that, in some way, contributes as an argument to the proposed discussion" (Brasil, 2022, p. 11)[74].

Competency 3 assesses the applicant's ability to select, connect, organize, and analyze facts, opinions, and arguments to support the point of view defended in the essay. It refers to the pre-writing and planning stage, which is "the framework that becomes apparent through the strategic organization of the arguments presented in the text" (Brasil, 2022, p. 17)[75], meaning a clear progression of ideas must be achieved with each paragraph building upon the previous information communicated, without unnecessary repetitions and/or abrupt changes of topic. As Striquer and Batista (2014) explain, the ENEM essay – via competency 3 – favors a formal, school-essay-focused text structure.

Competency 4 is related to **Competency 3**, as it refers to establishing a logical and formal arrangement within the essay's sections. The difference is that Competency 4 assesses specific aspects of language use (e.g., word choice, clarity, coherence, and conciseness) with a focus on the apt use of coherence and cohesion devices, complex clauses (cf. Striquer; Batista, 2014), adequate paragraphing, lexico-grammatical range, referencing via "pronouns, adverbs, articles, synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, hypernyms, as well as summarizing, metaphorical, or meta-discursive expressions" (Brasil, 2022, p. 20)[76], with such language devices articulated to reinforce the argumentative nature of the text.

Competency 5 assesses the student's ability to propose a realistic solution to the social issue from the essay prompt, outlining the parties/actors responsible for bringing the proposal to fruition. The proposal must inform the reader about "the scope of action: individual, family, community, social, political, or governmental" (Brasil, 2022, p. 21)[77], and the means through which the action(s) may be implemented. This competency is connected with **human rights**, with the official document stating that the assessment is "guided by Article 3 of Resolution 1,

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[74] "ou uma experiência vivida que, de alguma forma, contribui como argumento para a discussão proposta".

[75] "o esquema que se deixa perceber pela organização estratégica dos argumentos presentes no texto".

[76] "pronomes, advérbios, artigos, sinônimos, antônimos, hipônimos, hiperônimos, além de expressões resumitivas, metafóricas ou metadiscursivas".

[77] "o âmbito da ação escolhida: individual, familiar, comunitário, social, político, governamental".

dated May 30, 2012, which establishes the National Guidelines for Human Rights Education"
(p. 22)[78].

Themes and Supporting Material

Seeing that Public Call 624/2020 covers the ENEM from 2016 (entry 2021) to 2023
(entry 2024), we will be making reference to the essay themes from 2016 to 2023, as shown in
Table 4.3.5 below. With the exception of edition 2018, all themes from 2016 to 2022 refer to
situations and issues that, albeit not exclusive to Brazil, are situated within the realities of the
country. Effectively, what this means is that test-takers are required some understanding of said
issues as they have unfolded and/or are unfolding in Brazil, which demands **historical**, **social**,
and cultural knowledge. For candidates/students who did not undertake their basic education
in Brazil, **the essay may present challenges that go beyond language use**: they need to learn
about the country, not having grown up *in* the country.

Table 4.3.5: The ENEM essay themes from 2016 to 2023.

Year	Themes
2016	Paths to combat religious intolerance in Brazil
2017	Challenges for the educational training of deaf individuals in Brazil
2018	Manipulating user behavior through data control on the Internet
2019	Making cinema accessible in Brazil
2020	The stigma associated with mental illnesses in Brazilian society The challenge of reducing inequalities among the regions of Brazil
2021	Invisibility and Civil Registry: Ensuring Access to Citizenship in Brazil
2022	Challenges for the respect and appreciation of traditional communities and peoples in Brazil
2023	Challenges in tackling the invisibility of caretaking work carried out by women in Brazil

Source: The author, with information from INEP.

For instance, the 2016 theme addresses religious intolerance in Brazil. Even with the
supporting material, which refers to four texts about the secular nature of the Brazilian State
and its obligation to ensure freedom of belief to all its citizens, a good essay would have to
contextualize and acknowledge this issue while showing that combatting religious intolerance
requires comprehensive efforts from the government and civil society, religious leaders, and

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[78] Translated from: "princípios norteadores dos direitos humanos, pautados no artigo 3º da Re solução nº 1, de 30
de maio de 2012, o qual estabelece as Diretrizes Nacionais para a Educação em Direitos Humanos".

individuals. In particular, ENEM candidates/students would need to know and understand that Afro-Brazilian religions have been the target of such intolerance, and that 'intolerance' may be expressed in several ways, from verbal micro-aggressions to physical violence.

The 2017, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 editions addressed issues associated with often marginalized and/or minoritized populations in Brazil, requiring insight into the challenges the deaf community faces in the country (2017), the negative attitudes and beliefs people in Brazil have toward individuals experiencing mental health issues (2020), the social invisibility and/or marginalization experienced by certain groups of people in Brazilian society due to factors such as ethnicity and social status (2021), the discrimination and inequality surrounding Indigenous, Afro-Brazilian, and other minoritized groups (2022) in Brazil, as well as the caretaking work of Brazilian women, which often goes unnoticed in the Brazilian society (2023).

The **supporting material may offer some assistance**, as it usually presents pieces of legislation, charts, and graphs with current data on the issue/situation/theme addressed. But the supporting material from the 2016 to the 2023 editions presumes familiarity with the language of legal texts, as documents such as the Brazilian Constitution are often included. Additionally, **the supporting material presumes background knowledge of other genres**, seeing that it often includes excerpts from institutional, organizational, and academic texts retrieved from government websites, charts, graphs, and infographics, and publicity material. In past editions, at least one of the texts in the supporting materials relied on multimodal information via a mix of verbal and non-verbal language.

Implications for Migrant-Brackgruond Students

ENEM has been designed with formally educated native speakers of Portuguese (Oliveira, 2019) in mind. Still, knowledge of Portuguese is only one in a series of skills needed to produce a minimally satisfactory essay. This means that even native speakers of Portuguese may find the essay difficult to grasp, as it involves the application of linguistic knowledge in a very specific situation of formal writing, a much **more nuanced process** that involves using language strategically in the interplay between micro and macro-structure (cf. van Dijk, 2004).

This could be because the ENEM essay neither considers the broader social context in which the text could be read nor truly aims to impart innovation in writing practices. In 'real-world' interactions, writers consider **the social context**, **audience**, **and purpose** when creating a text, envisioning future readers, the communicative purpose of the text, how and where the text will circulate, and what potential effects/impact the text can create. The essay, on the other

hand, emphasizes its detachment from real situations (Rojo, 2009), where texts have meaningful audiences, circulate through various means, and serve particular purposes **beyond evaluation and standardized tests**.

Yet, despite its artificial setting, the essay supposedly challenges candidates to address social issues from an interdisciplinary perspective and propose feasible and ethical solutions, avoiding any form of prejudice and/or discrimination. This involves building well-structured arguments associated with a nuanced understanding of social issues and human rights, which can be challenging for individuals who have experienced (or been exposed to) human rights violations, or whose schooling experience did not involve human rights curricular content[79] in subjects such as Sociology or History, or more generally as part of citizenship education, which is provisioned for in Brazilian official documents (e.g., the BNCC).

Hence, the process of writing a good ENEM essay demands not only the agility to draw solid arguments and a feasible solution but also background knowledge of current affairs, as **the theme/social issue is revealed only when the candidates open the exam booklet**. This element of surprise can be intimidating as it calls on the students' ability to think quickly and analyze the theme/issue, make decisions, and then formulate a strong thesis consistent with the arguments and a realistic solution, **on the spot**.

As Tancredi (2021) reports, the mean essay score in the 2020 edition of ENEM was 588.74. A comparison between the minimum ENEM essay score for entry 2021 of Public Call 624/2020 with the median score of Brazilian applicants shows no significant difference. After running a chi-square test with the mean essay score for ENEM 2020 reported in Tancredi (2021) and the minimum essay score required for the public call, entry 2021, the difference between the scores is considered to be not statistically significant. It is therefore unsurprising that the minimum ENEM essay score for Public Call 624/2020 was **reduced from 500 to 300 points after entry 2021**.

Essays in the ≥500 mark show moderate performance and a good/satisfactory level of competence, indicating a reasonable understanding of the topic, some depth of analysis, and a

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[79] As Hillesheim *et al*. (2021) explain, a critical look at the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) (Brasil, 2018b) reveals a tangential approach to human rights when compared with other official documents such as the Brazilian National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) (Brasil, 2013). Given its competency‑driven approach to education, the BNCC tends to address human rights more as a "formality or content to be inserted into documents, policies, and local pedagogies" (Hillesheim *et al*., 2021, p. 522, our translation). This approach to education, more generally, can produce effects not only in pedagogical practices but also on the ENEM, as the BNCC directly influences national examinations (Brasil, 2018b).

structured argument (Brasil, 2022), requiring higher levels of language proficiency. Scores at this level also **demand preparation and access to resources**; i.e., the availability to practice regularly and become familiarized with the essay's format, assessment criteria, and topics. This means having both the material conditions and the psychological well-being (Huppert, 2009) to engage with demanding cognitive tasks (e.g., exam preparation, which may not be entirely realistic for such groups as migrant-background students.

Exam Preparation

Writing a good essay is not a trivial task, as it involves familiarity with the ENEM essay as a genre and an assessment tool. In more concrete terms, understanding the essay's rhetorical structure and communicative purposes, including the target audience (the assessment panel), requires preparation and training. **Consistent preparation for the essay is time-consuming**, generally favoring individuals who have access to additional learning materials (textbooks, online resources, or tutoring) and can afford preparatory course**s**[80] (Massi, 2017), in economic terms and in availability for study sessions beyond secondary education, which is oftentimes incompatible/unrealistic for much of the Brazilian youth, who tend to overlap study and work (Abramo; Venturi; Corrochano, 2021).

Essay preparation therefore involves not only writing but also reading habitually, given the bidirectional nature of writing-reading, a well-known fact in the literature (cf. Fitzgerald; Shanahan, 2000; Jouhar; Rupley, 2021). In the 2022 ENEM guidelines, this is suggested in the official recommendations for reading practice, which include seeking a variety of "high-quality reading sources, ranging from literary works to scientific articles, across various mediums: books, magazines, university websites, blogs, etc." (Brasil, 2022, p. 41, our translation), aimed at broadening the students' "understanding of language, the world, and human relationships, bringing forward not only new words but also more mature, articulated, and well-founded ideas into our texts" (p. 42)[81].

Access to such resources means having the opportunity to develop the strategies and knowledge needed to achieve a high score in the essay, potentially leading to an advantage in

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[80] Preparation may be 'embedded' in school curricula, especially in the last year of secondary education, shifting the focus away from the knowledge, content, and skills meant to be developed at this stage of basic education – a negative washback effect of the examination (Oliveira, 2019). Even with 'extra' classes in high school, it is commonly agreed that passing university entrance exams requires targeted practice in exam preparation courses (Vicentini, 2019).

[81] Translated from: "entendimento da língua, do mundo e das relações humanas, trazendo para nossos textos não apenas novas palavras, mas ideias mais maduras, articuladas e fundamentadas".

preparing for the examination (Massi, 2017). Even when done via *cursinho popular*, which are community-based programs that offer free or low-cost training for university entrance exams such as the ENEM, preparation entails setting time aside for additional classes and developing a consistent study routine specifically designed to practice for the ENEM essay. This includes ample time for reading about the themes that may be covered in the essay and **rewriting mock essays based on expert feedback** given by preparation course tutors and instructors.

Migrant-background students may face additional challenges with the essay. For instance, **cultural differences** may present roadblocks when approaching the essay theme, as discussing certain social issues/human rights may be challenging for individuals whose overall cultural traditions 'clash' with the cultural habits and/or realities presumed in the ENEM essay theme. Migrant-background students also may be unfamiliar with cultural realities/situations specific to Brazil. Familiarity demands time and willingness or openness to process and gain a better understanding of social and cultural differences and similarities, which can be taxing for those already experiencing cultural challenges in their resettlement process.

As the first online questionnaire and the first semi-structured interview indicate, all four research participants had prior training for ENEM. For one participant, training was done via *cursinho*: a 6-month exam preparation course after high school. For another participant, exam preparation came as additional classes at an elite high school, where they held a full scholarship covering tuition fees for the three years of secondary education. Finally, for two participants, preparation was done via the Pró-Imigrantes project (cf. Ferreira *et al*., 2022), which prepares immigrants and refugees for the ENEM and/or other university entrance examinations, free of charge.

It should not go unnoticed that **test anxiety tends to impact negatively on academic performance and achievement** (Gonzaga; Enumo, 2018). Developing coping strategies may help, particularly for younger female test-takers, who have shown to be more susceptible to higher levels of anxiety and stress in such test-taking situations (Gonzaga; Silva; Enumo, 2016). As the four research participants' experiences with ENEM will show, this is one of the central aspects of exam preparation, and it can be determining when taking high-stakes examinations such as the ENEM.

Reinforcing Coloniality?

Ultimately, we see that the ENEM essay is more of an exercise in developing a well-founded argument that appeases the evaluation panel and meets the assessment criteria than an

exercise in developing writing skills that may be needed in HE. This is made evident in the official guidelines with the inclusion of commented top score sample essays from previous editions, added for "having fulfilled all the requirements related to the five competencies" (Brasil, 2022, p. 27-40, our translation). The implication here is that there is an essay model to be followed, however 'flexible' this model may be. Essays that adhere to this elusive model are rewarded with higher scores.

Moreover, the hierarchical assessment and grading criteria classify and rank the essays using specific metrics (in this case from zero to 200 points per competency), as standardized tests invariably do (Baron, 2021). Despite its careful use of evaluative terminology (the word 'bad' is never used, neither is 'error/mistake'), there is an implicit division between 'good' and 'bad' essays in the official guidelines and the grading criteria. The ENEM essay is an open-ended question that creates some space for the candidates to position themselves. However, the essay still is a component of a large-scale standardized test that relies on binary classifications (right/wrong and good/bad), leaving little room for 'gray' zones, or perhaps confounding the gray zones to 'average' scores. The variation provisioned in the grading criteria still responds to a stratified classification.

In light of this, it is difficult not to agree with Dering's (2021, 2022) discussion of the ENEM essay as a means through which **the coloniality of knowledge is reinforced**: content-wise, by 'manipulating' language, students can develop a well-constructed argument that only 'scratches the surface' of the social issue(s) addressed in the essay prompt, while at the same time reaffirming education standards and the **privileged position of written culture** in society. In other words, as long as the essay follows the required structure and maintains a formal writing style, even if tangentially addressing the social issue in a respectful manner, a high score is likely to be achieved; a point made by Massi (2017).

In regard to literacy, we argue that the washback effect produced by the ENEM essay goes beyond curricular content and pedagogical practices (Vicentini, 2014, 2015, 2016; Massi, 2017). Nationally based individuals seeking higher education in Brazil will invariably need to take the ENEM. This means their **literacy practices are also geared toward the essay**, in terms of writing and reading choices and habits, with the guidelines recommending specific types of reading material, which, albeit varied, often do not include vernacular and popular cultural productions, relying mostly on "literary works" and "scientific articles" (Brasil, 2022, p. 41), which the guidelines possibly understand as "high-quality reading sources".

Despite including human rights-related topics and addressing important and complex contemporary social issues, which can produce positive washback effects on society, the essay tends to **reaffirm colonialism-associated binaries**, confining the students' writing and reading practices to norms and/or literacy standards in effect since colonial times (Grosfoguel, 2009; Ochoa, 1996), **potentially reaffirming the coloniality of knowledge**. This is valid for both teachers and students. Vincentini (2015, 2016, 2019), while investigating the washback effect of the ENEM essay, found that teachers often adopt normative practices based on prescriptive grammar and literary works as the pathway to a successful essay.

Finally, we see the contradictions and limitations of ENEM as **mirroring the social and economic inequalities of the Brazilian educational system** (cf. Barros, 2014; Saviani, 2011; Silveira; Barbosa; Silva, 2015; Lourenço, 2016; Souza, 2018). For non-Brazilians, preparing for ENEM might require becoming familiarized with modes of neocolonialism specific to our educational system, the essay being one example. On the back of dealing with the effects of their own countries' colonialities, students of migrant backgrounds may find themselves in a land of new colonialities, new inequalities, new struggles, but perhaps also new opportunities.

4.5 Joining UFMG

Registration and Enrollment

Public Call 624/2020 has had low enrollment rates, with the seats underused. Entry 2021 presented a total of 10 applicants successfully registering and joining the university – a **13% enrollment rate**. Entries 2022 and 2023 produced four successful registrations leading to effective enrollment. This means an overall **5.2% enrollment rate**. As we discussed with the UFMG CSVM Coordinator, enrollment rates have been low, the reason being: the applicants fail to produce the documentation required for enrollment.

Another issue is that of **retention** of the migrant-background students registered and enrolled via Public Call 624/2020, which could be due to cultural adjustments, limited social support, financial strains, or even discrimination. An urgent focus of research should be to probe into the reasons why students of migrant backgrounds drop out or defer their degrees at HEI in Brazil, specifically at UFMG. In this regard, many of the recommended actions we present in Chapter 7 may be useful for the permanence of migrant-background students at UFMG and in other HEIs.

Three of the four research participants had taken part in this public call before. One applicant had been waitlisted (placed second) for their chosen major, and another had been waitlisted (placed third) for a different major (in the same discipline). One had been approved in first place for their chosen major and called for registration in entry 2022, ultimately not enrolling that year and re-applying in entry 2023, with the same scores. This means that this applicant, despite being approved and placed first in entry 2022, may have had an impediment that prevented them from registering and enrolling that year.

Some of these non-registrations could be due to **personal choice**. For instance, in a quick online search, we can see that some applicants apply for various HEIs, via similar public calls or in the wide competition category, ultimately choosing the HEI that best fits their needs. However, as the UFMG CSVM Coordinator informed us, a high number of applicants fail to enroll for **bureaucratic/administrative reasons** (e.g., not having the documentation at the time of registration) or **economic/financial reasons** that prevent them from relocating to carry out their undergraduate studies at UFMG. A pertinent future research agenda would be to probe into the various reasons why these applicants do not register and enroll when approved.

This suggests that the challenges immigrants and refugees may face to access (public) HE are as diverse as their migration and resettlement experiences, defying the often universalist view of immigration (Bartlett; Rodríguez; Oliveira, 2015). Having proficiency in the country's primary/official language(s) is only the 'tip of the iceberg' in a complex process for which many HEIs may not be effectively prepared, despite recent advances. Objectively, as Giroto and Angeli Teixeira de Paula (2020) note, Brazil has made important strides public policies for accessing HE, but more effective actions need to be taken to ensure that everyone can access basic rights in the host country.

CHAPTER 5

Representation is important as a concept because it gives the impression of 'the truth'. When I read texts, for example, I frequently have to orientate myself to a text world in which the centre of academic knowledge is either in Britain, the United States or Western Europe; in which words such as 'we' 'us' 'our' 'I' actually exclude me.

Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2021)

5. Journeys Toward Academic Literacy

As we move toward the micro-level of the 4M framework adopted in our research, our analytical lens shifts from the more general landscape of the call, the applicants' profiles and participation, and related issues, to the more specific scenario of this doctoral study: **the four research participants' experiences and realities at the university**. This corresponds to Stage 3 of the methodological framework. Chapter 5 focuses on the data generated from the first online questionnaire, the first semi-structured interview, and the many *conversas* with the four research participants, zooming in on their identities and migration-related journeys, which ultimately also inform their academic literacy practices and experiences at UFMG.

Figure 5: The micro-level of our 4M Framework.
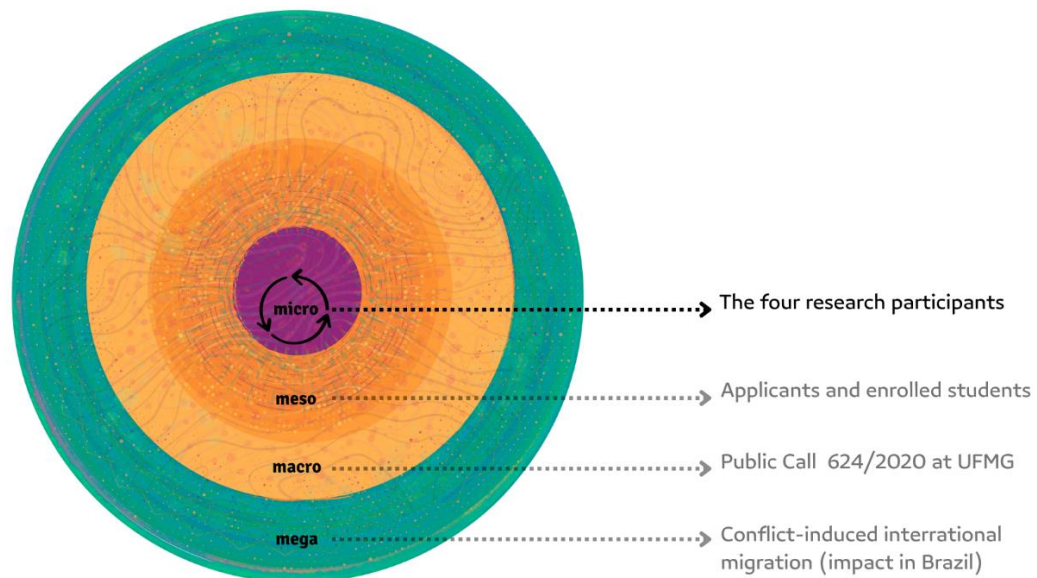
Source: The author.

I begin this chapter by providing a snapshot of the four research participants, as I outline their sociodemographic profiles. Then, I move to sketching the four participants' identities and migration journeys, discussing specific points that caught my attention and were emphasized by the participants. Because I opted for a critical and historicized approach, I interpret the data by associating it or situating it within **broader contexts of international migration and European colonization and imperialism upon Haiti and Syria**. I add a personal note about how I met the four research participants and conclude the chapter with the participants' accounts of intercultural encounters in Brazil.

5.1 Travelers Onboard | The Research Participants

5.1.1 A Snapshot

To safeguard the participants' identities, we decided to not specify their majors, avoiding disclosing information that could eventually facilitate the identification of these students. In addition, we have decided to not divulge their corresponding entries via the public call. We used pseudonyms to refer to the participants in this dissertation and when socializing the research in conferences (Mattos, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c) and publications (Mattos and Diniz, 2024). Based on our horizontalized approach to the interactions with the participants, all four students selected their pseudonyms for the research.

Table 5.1 below lists the four participants' sociodemographic information: age, sex, country of origin, and time of residence in Brazil (i.e., how long they have been living in the country). It also lists the participants' first and additional languages, time of schooling in the Brazilian education system (i.e., when they started school in Brazil), and discipline at UFMG. The data in Table 5.1 was collected in early 2022.

Table 5.1: The research participants' profiles.

Name* (age, sex[82])	Country of origin	First language	Additional languages	Residence in Brazil	Schooling in Brazil	Area of studies
Amirah (20, F)	Syria	Arabic	Portuguese English	8 years	From 7th grade – 6 years	Applied Social Sciences
Michelly (19, F)	Haiti	Haitian Creole	French Spanish Portuguese	6 years	From 9th grade – 4 years	Health Sciences
Noelle (21, F)	Haiti	Haitian Creole	Spanish French Portuguese English	4 years	12th grade only – 1 year	Arts and Languages
Syed (19, M)	Syria	Arabic	Portuguese English	9 years	From 7th grade – 6 years	Health Sciences

* Pseudonyms   **Source**: The author.

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[82] In general terms, "sex is biologically determined and gender is culturally determined" (Torgrimson; Minson, 2005, p. 785), with gender understood as "behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex" (p. 786).

In comparison, as seen in Table 5.1, Amirah and Syed have lived in Brazil longer than Michelly and Noelle. This can be explained by **differences in their international migration processes**: different routes, policies, legal provisions, crisis events, and displacement-inducing conflicts, and geographical location – each with its specificities. **International migration and resettlement are contingent upon one's country or territory of origin** and its political and diplomatic relations with the host country. Specifically, in Amirah's and Syed's cases, the international migration and resettlement came as a result of the Syrian civil war that began in 2011, displacing over 15.3 million people (UNHCR, 2023). In Michelly's and Noelle's case, their parents immigrated and resettled in Brazil first, years before the two Haitians moved to the country, in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, which displaced more than 1.5 million people at the time (Benet, 2020).

Although the four research participants experienced critical events that triggered their exit from their countries and territories of origin, the way they recollect and frame their journeys is rather different. Noelle and Michelly reported having moved to Brazil because of their parents, while Amirah and Syed stated that their migration and resettlement to Brazil came as a result of the war. Michelly and Noelle do not associate their international migration journey with the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. This may be explained by the fact that Noelle first moved to a neighboring country, then relocated to Brazil to join her parents, and Michelly only came to Brazil after her parents had already resettled in Belo Horizonte. From Michelly and Noelle's perspective, therefore, it really was their parents that led them to Brazil, not the earthquake. Despite these parallels, at some point, migration journeys should be approached individually: there are singularities to each person's situation. Such is the approach we adopt, specifically in subsection 5.1.2.

Figure 5.1: The participants' reasons for immigrating to Brazil.

Source: The author and the participants.

Amirah and Syed refer explicitly to the Syrian civil war as the critical event that drove them to Brazil – both left their hometowns with their respective immediate families at the onset of the war, first relocating to neighboring countries. Amirah and Syed were never kept apart from their parents, as with Michelly and Noelle. Their parents did not come to Brazil first, settled, and then had Amirah and Syed relocate to the country. In this regard, Amirah's and Syed's migration journeys to Brazil unfolded as a '**single**' collective effort[83], possibly due to logistic difficulties in leaving Syria or the imminent threat of military occupation and other war-related dangers.

Differently, in Michelly's and Noelle's cases, **this collective effort of migration and resettlement unfolded in a 'trickling' manner**: first came the father (the breadwinner) either alone or with a sibling, then the mother, and finally the children. Michelly and Noelle relocated to Brazil only when their respective parents could provide them with minimal living conditions in the country, that is, after their parents decided on a city of residence in Brazil, found a place to live and jobs to earn a living wage, not necessarily in this order. The process of finding work and affordable housing often unfolds while sorting out legal documentation, learning the host country's primary language, and gaining insight into its cultures and habits, all of which are neither trivial nor particularly easy[84].

Generation-wise, all participants are **Gen-Zers**, which means a different outlook on life and specific cultural and social habits, from the use of digital technologies to the implications of hyperconnectivity. Despite differences in upbringing, the four participants share a preference for online communication via short messages and value the freedom to answer messages at their convenience. Their ubiquitous use of digital technologies and tendency for hyperconnectivity stood out during our first interactions, motivating the horizontalized approach to our exchanges, with Syed commenting: "*I'll tell whatever you need, let's just do it online. This thing with meeting in person is so complicated. With WhatsApp, just text me and I'll get back to you when I can*", as he made hand gestures indicating 'texting' (face-to-face *conversa*, June 24th, 2022).

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[83] This does not mean all Syria-originated migration unfolds in this way: it parallels Amirah's and Syed's journeys in contrast with Michelly's and Noelle's. For a discussion on the topic, see Mehchy and Doko (2011).

[84] Different variables involved in international migration routes and country-internal responses to migration may add more time to one's journey to a new country. For instance, the interiorization initiative through "*Programa Acolhida*" (cf. Neto, 2022; Tüzün, 2018; Zapata; Wenderoth, 2022) meant migrants relocated from the city of Roraima to other Brazilian states, extending one's timeframe to find work and permanent housing in the host country. Interiorization as a 'social right' is discussed in Xavier (2021).

5.1.2 Sketching Identities

Before addressing the four participants' academic literacy experiences, demands, and challenges, we must first situate them as **embodied individuals whose multiple, overlapping identities are constantly (re)constructed, (re)construed, (re)negotiated, and (re)imagined in social interaction in the public and private spheres of life**. I approach and interact with Amirah, Michelly, Noelle, and Syed not as if they were 'severed' from their (interwoven) identities and realities but as *people*. Unsophisticated as this may sound, the critical approach I seek with this research is humanistic (Sheppard, 2020), in dialogue with the tenets of Critical Applied Linguistics and the social theories with which the present research dialogs.

Hence, when 'sketching' the participants' identities, I aim to offer the readers a view of Amirah, Michelly, Noelle, and Syed as *people,* not only as research participants or as students of migrant backgrounds. This means addressing categories such as race and gender, in addition to the social roles the participants play in their everyday lives **beyond the gates and walls of the university** (being a sister, a daughter). Similarly, addressing relevant experiences prior to the participants starting their studies at UFMG can offer insights into their current academic literacy practices and experiences at the university, especially because the research participants' current literacy practices have been built upon histories of literacy. Such experiences have also helped (re)shape the research participants' identities insofar as they are/have been dialectically (re)shaped by the very identities of the participants, considering the many intersections involved therein.

This multi-angle and humanistic approach also serves as a means to break away from **the often totalizing/reductionist connotations in the category of '*refugee*'**, especially in its representations in the mainstream media in Brazil (cf. Cogo, 2018; Ferreira; Flister; Morosini, 2017; Télémanque, 2012), and the symbolic and material dehumanization of immigrants and refugees, most of whom are racialized as non-white in the countries of the Global North and in Westernized societies of the Global South, including Brazil. Although the implications of such racialization are not addressed in detail in our doctoral research, we would be remiss for not pointing out that **racism** plays a role in crisis migration and resettlement processes and the way these processes are handled at the state level (Toledo, 2016), alluding to (nuanced) biopolitics and biopower (Foucault, 1978) and necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003), whether or not the research participants have perceived racism in their migration and resettlement journeys.

When looking at identity through a critical, post-structuralist perspective, it is difficult not to turn to feminist theory, particularly black feminism (e.g., Carneiro, 2003, 2015; Collins,

2019 [1990]; hooks, 2019 [1981]; Ribeiro, 2018) and transnational feminism (e.g., Mohanty, 2013, 2016), under the umbrella of CRT as the main hub for Critical Ethnic Studies. I turn to non-white feminisms because, on a Westernized and global(ized) scenario of race openly staged under the direction of white supremacist, neoliberal, and hegemonic **powers and privileges encrusted in policies and visualities that eventually (or ultimately?) tend to favor lightness**, we are dealing with **research participants racialized as non-white** in the Global North, even when/if some of these individuals are racialized as white in Brazil. This is relevant, as many of these countries are directly or indirectly responsible for the current sociopolitical and economic chaos in the participants' countries of origin.

The centrality of including 'race' as a critical intersection of the participants' identities are justified by the often under-mentioned implications of 'race' in the body of research about migration in CALx in Brazil, an element I see as central, particularly when adopting a critical and historicized approach to language-related phenomena. This applies to both ends of the research: those conducting the research and those taking part in the research as informers and participants. Oftentimes, the reach and/or constraints of one's lens are contingent upon – though not entirely determined – their racialized identities and experiences, as "**there exists no portion of the modern human that is not subject to racialization**" (Weheliye, 2014, p. 8, emphasis added).

Race does not exist in a vacuum or by itself. It is enmeshed with other intersections in one's identities, which is why the notion of *intersectionality* is key. As a theoretical framework that underscores the interconnected nature of social categories such as race, gender, class, and sex, intersectionality allows us to **examine the complexity and multiplicity of one's identities without oversimplifying their experiences**, particularly when referring to individuals who belong to (multiple) marginalized groups (Crenshaw, 1989). In addition, a localized view of intersectionality, such as that of Akotirene (2018), takes into account the historical factors of Brazil, addressing the nuances of racial hierarchies, socioeconomic disparities, and systemic discrimination within the more situated realities of the country. It recognizes the experiences of intersectionality as largely shaped by the unique dynamics of Brazilian society, even if/when someone is not originally from this country, as is the case of the participants in our research.

Humanizing research does not come without perils. The first question we could pose is: what do we mean by '*human*'? As Darling (2021) argues, when humanizing research on refuge and migration, we often run the risk of totalizing the notion of *human*, reducing it to what we, researchers (activists, lawmakers, etc.), believe a human should be, speaking from the 'layers'

of our privilege – however miniscule they may be. When adopting a humanistic approach, it is important **to avoid a normative and universalizing stance**, as much of our understanding of the world has been paved by Western universalizing and normative ontologies and practices. Instead, it could be more fruitful to look at being human through **singularity** (Weheliye, 2014) and **multiplicity** (Rifkin, 2019), both of which are basic tenets of CRT via intersectionality and anti-essentialism (Delgado; Stefancic, 2023).

A humanized and humanizing stance on migration research can help to shed light on the experiences of marginalized groups, therefore potentially contributing to promoting inclusivity and dispelling stereotypes and misconceptions. By acknowledging the uniqueness of individual experiences (singularity) while recognizing and respecting the diversity of one's identities and perspectives (multiplicity), we can take a step forward in approaching humanization in a non-normative and universalizing way, challenging oversimplified views of migrants and migration and possibly fostering a more nuanced understanding of migrants as **individuals with unique stories and backgrounds**.

As Paris (2011) argues, research becomes humanizing when the participants grant the researcher access to understanding their world, in a relationship of mutual trust. Based on work with marginalized non-white youth, Paris and Winn (2014, p. 11) conceptualize humanizing and humanized research as approaches "that involve the building of relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness-raising for both researchers and participants". Jocson (2014, p. 143) adds that humanizing/humanized research is "creating terrains of exchange to confront multiple borders of difference", meaning that the "interactions between youth participants and researchers are shaped by their willingness to share life experiences uncommon in traditional research", which was at the core of my horizontalized approach to the research participants. In this regard, I feel that, in many ways, the participants and myself developed an "academiship": "*academizade*"[85] based on a keen interest in the topics of this research, in the respect for our differences and cultures, and in an openness to making connections and share experiences.

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[85] Academic + friendship, in English, and *academia + amizade*, in Portuguese.

Amirah

Amirah is originally from **Syria**. She emigrated to Brazil when she was **13 years old**. She has been **living in Brazil since 2014**, nearly half her life. She was **22 years old** when we concluded the dissertation, having joined our research when she was 20. Amirah speaks **three languages**: Arabic (her first language), Portuguese (her second language), and English (upper-intermediate skills, which she often employs in her professional social media, as will be seen in Section 6.3, Session C, and, to a lesser extent, in her personal Instagram). Amirah is a shy, kind, soft-spoken, light brown-haired **ciswoman racialized as White** in Brazil, who opens up when she feels comfortable and safe.

Amirah is the oldest of three children: she has an 11-year-old sister and a 20-year-old brother, who is also at university, taking Dentistry at a private HEI in São Paulo – he applied to a Health Sciences major via Public Call 624/2020 at UFMG, eventually changing his mind and staying in the city of **São Paulo**, where Amirah and her family have lived ever since they resettled to Brazil. Her parents work together, as will be narrated further. Amirah's sister was one year old when Amirah and her family arrived in Brazil, having spent only the first months of her life in Syria. Amirah is Christian, as is her family.

Emigrating from Syria | Immigrating to Brazil

As outlined in the previous section, Amirah left Syria and emigrated to Brazil because of the Syrian Civil War. Her journey to Brazil started after her hometown was taken over by the military in 2012-2013, forcing Amirah and her family to relocate to a neighboring town, where they stayed for a few months. From this town, Amirah and her family went to Lebanon and from there to Dubai, to emigrate to Brazil. As she explained in a *conversa*, there were no aerial escape routes available from Syria; it was only possible to leave the country by land (cf. Figure 5.2):

> *...in Syria, the airports weren't open; they were shut down. So, we left this city, which is not my hometown. We fled there [the hometown] because the military got there. We traveled from there [the other city] to Lebanon, and from Lebanon… I believe until Dubai, and from Dubai to here, as there was no direct flight [to Brazil].*

(Amirah, WhatsApp, Dec. 05th, 2022)

Figure 5.2: Transcript of a *conversa* with Amirah.

/ então sobre essa questão eh na Síria não tinha liberado os a os aeroportos, era fora de uso. · Aí a gente saiu da · de uma cidade que é, também não é minha cidade que a gente eh fugiu da minha porque o Exército estava lá. · e a gente saiu de lá até o Líbano e do Líbano? Até eh. Eu acho que até Dubai · e de Dubai até aqui, porque não tem um voo direto pra cá. ····

Source: Amirah (WhatsApp, Dec. 05th, 2022).

As a consequence of the waves of protests and uprisings known as the Arab Spring, which soon escalated into a full-scale civil war involving various Syrian factions with different interests and ideologies (supported/enabled by several domestic, regional, and international actors[86]), the Syrian Civil War has resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis that has displaced 14 million Syrians internally and externally. Like thousands of other Syrians (cf. Osborn, 2015 and Watts, 2015 for accounts), the journey that eventually led Amirah and her family to resettle in Brazil started with internal displacement[87] induced by armed conflict, as Amirah and her family spent two years in between places in Syria before entering Lebanon. From the neighboring country, where Amirah and her family stayed briefly[88], they flew to Dubai and finally reached Brazil. Infographic 5.1 compares the magnitude of 'refugee crises' over time.

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[86] International actors such as the United States, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Russia, and Iran (Phillips, 2019, 2022; Rabinovich; Valensi, 2021), and the United Nations, have acted in state and/or non-state capacity, using the conflict as "a battleground for the proxy competition between regional and international players", as Mirza, Abbas, and Qaisran (2021, p. 51) explain. This logic of "war by proxy" (Asseburg; Wimmen, 2012, p. 3) "with the United States and other Western states backing the Syrian opposition while Russia and China support the Assad regime", shows "signs of rivalry over zones of influence echoing the patterns of the Cold War". It is never irrelevant to remember the long-lasting effects of colonialism and imperialism in war-related matters: the "borders of the Arab states, some of which were drawn in artificial fashion under the Sykes-Picot agreement based on Western colonial interests (…), have for decades suffered from structural instability, manifested in internal and external conflicts" (Dekel; Boms; Winter, 2017, p. 13). In the case of Syria, efforts to find a political solution and rebuild the country face numerous challenges due to the complex array of actors involved and the deep-seated grievances that fuel the war. As specialists had predicted (e.g., Douidri; Krijger, 2018), the Syrian Civil War has entered a 'frozen conflict' situation since 2020. See Michiels and Kizilkaya (2022) for a discussion about the Astana and Geneva processes that led to the de-escalation of the war.

[87] As of late 2022, Syria had 6.9 million internally displaced people (IDP), making it the country with the largest number of IDPs in the world. 2014 was the year with the highest number of IDPs, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). In comparison, Brazil has 44 thousand IDPs as of 2022, a country with ten times the population of Syria. For more information, please check the IDMC country database available at: https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data. Access: Jan 02, 2024.

[88] According to the UNHCR, Syrian refugees have pursued refuge and asylum in over 130 countries, with most now residing in neighboring countries such as Turkey and Lebanon. Turkey, in particular, "hosts the largest population of Syrian refugees: 3.6 million", as of March 2023. The deadly earthquakes in northern Syria and south-eastern Turkey have contributed to these numbers, with around 1 million people displaced internally across Syria. The impact of the 2023 earthquakes adds to the already vulnerable situation of the refugees in Syria, as seen in https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/ Access: Jan 02, 2024.

Brazil may come as a 'safe' choice for Syrian refugees, and sometimes it is their only option. As Amirah reported, her parents opted for Brazil because it "*was the only country that opened [its doors] to refugees*" (WhatsApp, Dec. 05th, 2022), not different from other Syrians who saw Brazil as their only *legal* alternative[89] (Watts, 2015). This possibly explains why Brazil has become **the main host country of Syrian refugees in Latin America** (Vieira, 2015) – in addition to being home to **the largest community of Arab descent in the Americas** (Hassan, 2019; Pelayo, 2021), owing to the waves of Arab migrants the country has received over time (Fahrenthold, 2019; Hassan, 2019).

However, in the landscape of conflict-induced displacement and South-South migration, Brazil is a small player for Syrian refugees, as shown in Infographic 5.2 below, possibly due to **geographical location, language barriers, and stark cultural differences**. On the other hand, because **Brazil houses a large contingent of Arab people** and has facilitated entry for Syrian refugees (CONARE authorized the issuance of visas for humanitarian reasons), resettlement may be assisted by the *Centros Árabes* or *Clubes Árabes*, which are "multireligious Arab social and networking clubs" (Pelayo, 2021, n. p.) often held in large urban centers such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. This seemed to have been Amirah's case, as far as education is concerned.

Table 5.2: Arab population in the Americas.

Country	Arab population	Overall population	Percent
Brazil	7-12 million (others estimate 12-15 million and 20 million for partial ancestry)	211 million	3.5-6%
Argentina	4.5 million	45 million	10 %
United States	3.6 million	328 million	1 %
Venezuela	1.6 million	28.5 million	5.6%
Mexico	1.5 million	127.6 million	1.1%
Colombia	1.5 million	50.3 million	2.9%
Chile	800k	18.9 million	4.2%

Source: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/viva-los-arabes-underreported-stories-of-the-arabs-of-the-americas/. Access: Jan 02, 2024.

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[89] In the "migration industry" (Castles, 2003, p. 15), illegal alternatives involve people smugglers and traffickers. Smugglers act in "facilitating or seeking to facilitate illegal border crossings" (Mandic, 2017, p. 31), and may not be associated with criminal groups (Kyle; Scarcelli, 2009; Tinti; Reitano, 2017), while traffickers use deception, coercion, and violence. Most refugees often have very "limited knowledge of bridge country geography, border crossings, or the nature of neighboring countries' regimes" (Mandic, 2017, p. 36), increasing the risks involved during and after irregular migration. Becoming *illegalized* (Bauder, 2014) can render migrants and refugees even more vulnerable to underpaid or unpaid work, sexual exploitation, and other types of abuse.

Infographic 5.1: Syrian refugee destinations by country.
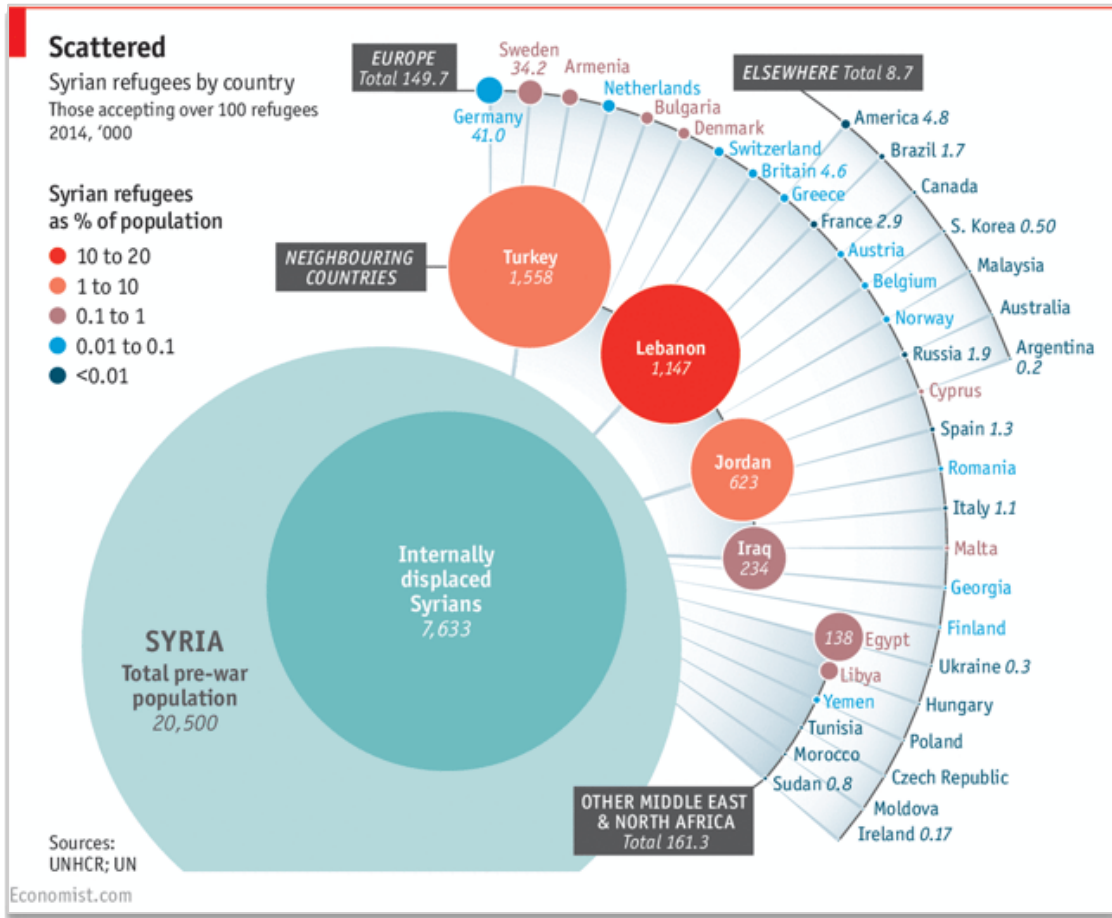
Infographic 5.2: Number of refugees per armed conflict over time.
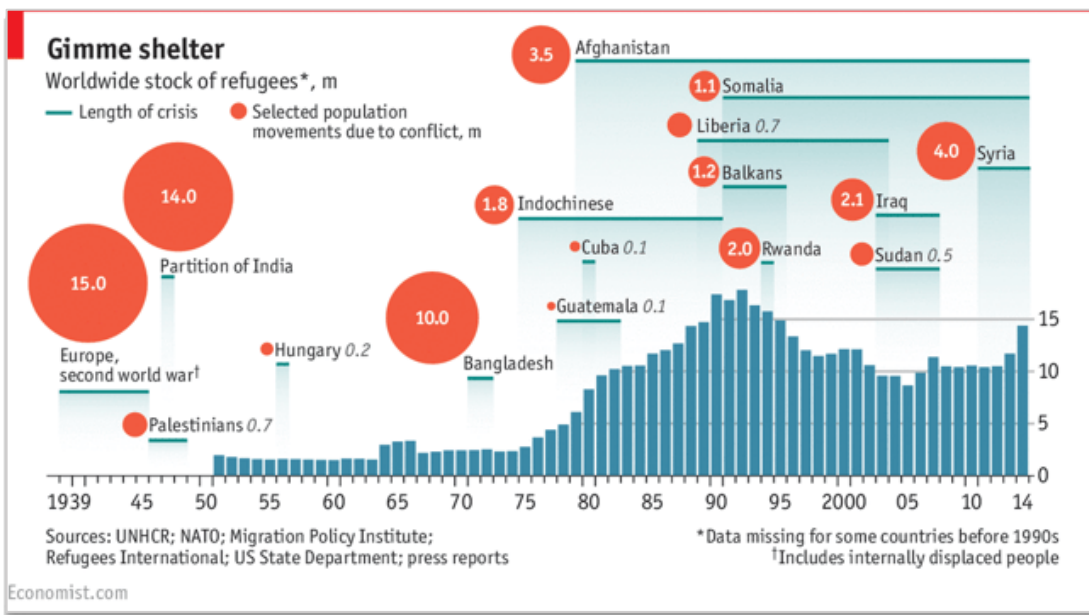
Schooling in São Paulo | Learning Portuguese

Amirah started her schooling process in Brazil in 7th grade, at 12 years old, completing six years of formal schooling in the country. She attended a private school, concluding primary education and doing the entire three years of secondary education in São Paulo. The last year of high school was undertaken in a different private school. As she Amirah in a *conversa*, her enrollment at school was facilitated by an Arab immigrant network:

> *I arrived here... I think after two months, I was enrolled in a school called Metropolitano... It's affiliated with a church there and this church has many Arab members who were helping the Arabs too, the immigrants who arrived here. So, we talked to them, and we managed to get a spot there. I stayed there until the second year of high school because it closed and was sold. It no longer has that name, and it was sold to 'Etapa'. Then, in the third year of high school, I moved to another school, called Adventista… and that's where I graduated.*

(Amirah, WhatsApp, Dec. 05th, 2022)

Language-wise, Amirah learned Portuguese informally with the help of her teachers and classmates, starting school without knowing any Portuguese. **Informal language learning** is a recurrent situation for students of migrant backgrounds in Brazil, especially in non-bilingual[90] schools, "a consequence of not having specialized pedagogical support or specific courses for language acquisition" as São Bernardo (2016, p. 40) notes, even when there are legal provisions for refugee and immigrant students (e.g., Resolution E/CME 32/2019) [91] in this regard. Often, the responsibility for seeing these legal provisions to fruition falls almost entirely on the hands of individual teachers, with no articulated actions or supervised training to better understand or address the needs of these students in their transition into the Brazilian school system (Diniz; Neves, 2018; Oliveira; Souza, 2022).

When discussing difficulties in acclimating and adapting to school life, Amirah listed 'not being able to communicate' as the primary issue, in association with having to do the 7th

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[90] 'Bilingual' and/or international schools may have the infrastructure and pedagogical policies that allow for a smoother transition, particularly in large cities (Porto-Ribeiro; Fleith, 2020), often aiming at internationalization. These 'prestige' schools tend to be favored by socioeconomically privileged families, for the perceived gains in linguistic and cultural capital associated with European languages/cultures (Aguiar, 2007). Such schools should not be confused with bilingual schools for Indigenous or deaf students (cf. Knapp, 2016, for bilingual education for the Guarani ad Kaiowá in Brazil, and Megale, 2019 for bilingualism and bilingual education in Brazil).

[91] Resolution E/CME 32/2019 addresses the high influx of migrant and refugee students in the city of Rio de Janeiro by stipulating that "The receiving institution must establish, through its technical and pedagogical staff, appropriate strategies to meet the needs of refugee students, and those from other countries, focusing efforts on the learning of the Portuguese language so that they can understand other subjects." (Rio de Janeiro, 2019). The resolution also states that "In any case, the certificate of completion of Elementary Education will only be issued if the student has reasonable proficiency in the Portuguese language, demonstrating familiarity with the social and political reality of Brazil", which renders the school responsible for verifying language proficiency.

grade in four different schools, then repeating it in Brazil, as seen in the excerpt. While repeating grades is not uncommon with so-called 'multicultural students', whether or not they come from conflict-induced backgrounds, as Porto-Ribeiro and Fleith (2020) verified, this must be done appropriately. Such a treatment means explaining the reasons behind this *pedagogical* decision (cf. Neves, 2018), particularly when dealing with children. This is because, from a pedagogical standpoint, repeating a grade may actually produce long-term positive effects when the student does not speak the school's language of instruction (Neves, 2018), as learning might have been compromised by the language barrier, as it did with Amirah:

> *I think it was communicating, you know? Because I got to school without knowing how to speak anything, and I had, like, I did the seventh grade in… I think four places… I did it in my hometown, did it again… in another city, and then in another as well. And then I had to retake it here, I did the seventh grade again, and, um, not being able to communicate, I think that was the hardest. I couldn't communicate, couldn't understand what was going on. I just sat there listening to some words without understanding anything, you know? Nothing, nothing, nothing. I think that's pretty much it.*

(Amirah, WhatsApp, Dec. 05th, 2022)

Being unable to communicate at school seems to have impacted Amirah considerably back then. In our *conversa*, as seen in the excerpt above, she emphasized the feeling of being completely lost in the classroom – and, to a larger extent, at school. She uses the word "*nada*" three consecutive times; four times if the use in "*Só sentava lá escutando algumas palavras sem entender nada*" is accounted for (with '*nada*' translated as '*anything*')[92]. Being unable to understand the people around her must have frustrated Amirah, possibly impacting her learning and educational experience, at least initially, as she had little to no *verbal* engagement with her classmates and teachers. This aligns with the experiences of many migrant-background students when first introduced to the schooling system in Brazil, as will be made evident in Michelly's account. In addition, this may be seen as a sign of "vulnerable reterritorialization" (Bizon, 2013, p. 123; Haesbaert, 2004)[93].

Moreover, Amirah did not have support through official and explicit language policies at school, similarly to the other research participants. Despite enjoying higher neuroplasticity

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[92] In this excerpt, '*nada*' is translated as '*anything*', the grammatically correct equivalent in English, to avoid the use of a double negative. See Figure XX and footnote 12 for the transcription in Portuguese.

[93] "*Reterritorialização precária*" in Bizon's original, with territorialization understood as material and symbolic, a process enmeshed with senses of belonging (Haesbaert, 2004; Santos, 2001). The concept has been developed by Haesbaert (2004, 2007).

for second language acquisition (SLA)[94], as she was 12 years old at the time, this 'advantage' should not justify **a lack of articulated initiatives** for the effective reception of students from migrant backgrounds in basic education – or HE, in fact. While the functions and consistency of the L2 input *may* have facilitated Amirah's L2 learning, as Portuguese was the only language of communication and instruction at school, it is precisely the absence of appropriate and/or explicit language policies that can also negatively impact one's resettlement process – in this case, at school, possibly producing negative impacts on overall learning

Figure 5.3: Transcript of a *conversa* with Amirah.

/ ········ eh, eu cheguei aqui. · Eu acho que depois de dois meses, entrei numa escola chamada Metropolitano ··· eh. Ela é ligada com uma igreja lá ··· e essa igreja eh tem muitos integrantes árabes que estavam ajudando os árabes também, Que os imigrantes que chegaram pra cá. ·· então a gente conversou com eles. Conseguimos vaga lá.

Eu fiquei lá até ·· o segundo ensino médio, porque ela fechou e foi vendida. Não tem mais esse nome da escola · e foi vendida pra etapa ·· aí · no terceiro Ensino Médio, eu mudei pra outra chamada a dentista. ··· e foi lá que eu formei. Eh, ·· deixa eu ver o que me deixou mais estranho, ········ mais difícil desse processo. Acho que foi a comunicação, né?

Porque cheguei na escola sem saber falar nada · aí · e eu tinha tipo eu fiz o o sétimo ano em Acho que quatro lugares ·· eu fiz na minha cidade, · fiz de novo ··· em outra cidade ·· e depois em outra também. E depois voltei pra quando cheguei pra cá, fiz de novo o sétimo ano, ········ aí ····· eh, cheguei pra cá, com ···· assim, É falta de comunicação, Acho que é o mais difícil.

que eu não consigo comunicar, não consigo entender o que tá acontecendo. Só sentava lá escutando algumas palavras sem entender nada, né? Nada nada nada · aí · eu acho que foi basicamente isso. ··

Source: Amirah[95].

Amirah's 'deep plunge' into Portuguese at school was something her parents might have experienced differently in terms of *where* they learned the language: Amirah learned it both at school and after school time, with classmates. Her parents learned the language at their work. However, the precarity of L2 learning is also visible in Amirah's parents' experience, as seen through Amirah's eyes:

> *Let's start with my parents, it was really hard for them to learn Portuguese ... because firstly they are older and that makes learning quite difficult... Another thing is that they didn't go to school, college, or take courses to learn Portuguese ... they learned everything at my father's job, who is a tailor. So, my parents learned there, dealing with customers on a daily basis and that was it, but even today they don't know everything... and my mother, especially, she has more difficulty with verbs, conjugation – like, present, future, past. She doesn't really know how to say the verbs correctly, and my father knows more than my mother... I think because he started looking into it on the internet and was more interested in learning the verbs than my mother... But they can speak [Portuguese], you can tell that they are not Brazilian, they have a very strong accent, they make a lot of mistakes... but they find a way to try to communicate with people and with the clients.*

(Amirah, WhatsApp, Dec. 05th, 2022)

In the above excerpt, Amirah also discusses the challenges her parents faced learning Portuguese, attributing difficulties to their older age and absence of an education environment in which they could learn and practice the language. Her parents learned Portuguese on the job: her father works as a tailor, involving regular interactions with customers, and her mother helps him. Despite their efforts, her parents' language proficiency remains limited, with her mother facing more challenges, particularly with verb conjugation in different tenses ("*and my mother, especially, she has more difficulty with verbs, conjugation – like, present, future, past. She doesn't really know how to say the verbs correctly*").

This may be related to willingness to communicate (MacIntyre *et al*., 1998). Being more interested, Amirah's father seems to have made more progress than her mother, specifically via self-directed learning online ("*I think because he started looking into it on the internet and was more interested in learning the verbs than my mother*"). In this regard, Ożańska-Ponikwia and Dewaele (2012, p. 128) explain that "after a while immigrants are likely to increase their use of the L2 beyond pure service encounters, for example through their children's social and school activities or their own involvement in community life". This could have been Amirah's father's case. As the authors observe, several personality characteristics seem to be associated with L2 use (e.g., openness, extraversion, and adaptability), confirming that "an immigrant's personality profile is significantly linked to L2 use and self-perceived proficiency in the L2" (p. 131).

In her schooling process in Brazil, Amirah also felt sharp cultural differences in terms of attitudes and behaviors. When I asked her about school in Brazil, Amirah also said:

> *I also think, now that I remember, that the way of learning here, of teaching, is different from school back in Syria. It's a much less rigid school, whether you want to study or not, it's up to you, you know? It's your choice. And, I dunno, the students, when I first saw them, they were kind of disrespectful... It's not disrespectful, but I, like, I'm used to the fact that at school you need to be one hundred percent polite, I need to respect the teachers, the students and so on. Like, if I want to throw something in the trash, I need to ask the teacher. If I want to drink water, I need to ask the teacher. So, for anything that happens there, I had to ask him, and he can let me or not. So, when I arrived here, I didn't know that it was different here. It wasn't difficult, you know? It wasn't difficult, it's just a different culture, different customs. And that's how I learned.*

(Amirah, WhatsApp, Dec. 05th, 2022)

In this excerpt, Amirah reflects on the **contrasting experiences** between her learning environment in Brazil and Syria, noting a less rigid approach in Brazil, where the students seem to have **the freedom to choose whether or not they want to study**. By 'study' Amirah means to apply oneself ("*whether you want to study or not, it's up to you, you know? It's your choice*"), seeing that basic education is compulsory in Brazil (Brasil, 2009). Amirah observes what she perceives as a certain level of informality among students, which strikes her as disrespectful, at least initially ("*the students, when I first saw them, they were kind of disrespectful...*") – she attributes this perception to a prior experience in a more formal school environment in Syria, where strict politeness and respect for teachers and students were emphasized ("*I'm used to the fact that at school you need to be one hundred percent polite, I need to respect the teachers, the students and so on*").

Despite this 'negative' perception, Amirah seemed to view the schooling experience in Brazil through an intercultural lens, understanding the adjustment needed in relation to the new cultural and educational norms in her school environment as a learning process, which is always a positive outcome. To Amirah, the differences she observed were not necessarily difficult but rather a matter of adapting to different cultural customs in Brazil ("*It wasn't difficult, you know? It wasn't difficult, it's just a different culture, different customs*"). This suggests some openness toward difference: while Amirah did not see herself in her classmates/peers, meaning she likely would not have behaved as they did, she was aware of an existing culture in her school at the time. She seems to have noticed a general culture of more informality in vertical exchanges at school.

Amirah also commented on the challenges her parents face with reading and writing in Portuguese, emphasizing the role education can have in language development:

> *In terms of reading and writing, it's the same thing. Because they didn't take courses, didn't go to school, colleges, and so on, they don't have the habit of writing and reading in Portuguese. Mainly my mother, she has, let's say, a bit of difficulty writing in Portuguese and she makes a lot of mistakes with her letters. Like, she gets the alphabet wrong a lot, the letter O, the letter U, the letter I, and, as we are already used to the English alphabet and the pronunciation of the English alphabet, this made it difficult for my mother to differentiate the Portuguese alphabet from English. In many pronunciations, she uses the English alphabet more than the Portuguese, which she is already more accustomed to.*

(Amirah, WhatsApp, Dec. 05th, 2022)

In the above excerpt, Amirah comments that her parents did not attend formal courses and schools/colleges in Brazil, which could have contributed to a lack of familiarity with written Portuguese, in her view. Amirah's mother still faces difficulty in writing, often making mistakes with letters, such as confusing O, U, and I ("*Like, she gets the alphabet wrong a lot, the letter O, the letter U, the letter I*"). Her mother's difficulty actually refers to vowel sounds and their written representations, that is, to the letter-sound pairings/relations. This difficulty is increased as Amirah's mother confuses the Portuguese letter-sound pairings with the English letter-sound pairings, revealing a conflicting interaction between two additional languages, which Amirah attributes to her mother's familiarity with the English alphabet.

Amirah's rationale and her mother's difficulty are not unreasonable: we must remember that Arabic (their L1) utilizes a completely different alphabet from Portuguese and English: not only is the Arabic alphabet formally represented in cursive style, and written from right to left, without differentiating between upper and lowercase letters, but it is also composed entirely of consonants, with the vowels represented by sets of diacritical marks (Javed, 2013)[96]. This means that there is a stark difference between Arabic, Portuguese, and English, with Portuguese and English using the Latin alphabet, written from left to right, and distinguishing between upper and lowercase letters and more formally between consonants and vowels.

The confusion Amirah's mother makes between Portuguese and English might have to do with exposure to these languages, as it is considerably more likely for Amirah's mother to have been exposed to English more than Portuguese prior to moving to Brazil. This is because

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[96] For instance, Fabri *et al*. (2014, p. 15) explain that "Arabic spelling rules utilize its script as an impure abjad: although diacritics are omitted most of the time, long vowels are always written in Arabic using a combination of an omittable diacritic short vowel and non-omittable compatible consonant, e.g., [u:] is written as uw".

English is more far-reaching in urban centers in Syria than any other non-Arabic language (cf. Etheredge, 2011). The different realizations of the vowels "o", "i,", and "u" in English and Portuguese, associated with their letter-sound pairings, have led to confusion, given the degrees of transparency[97] between the two languages. For instance, the sound of "o" may be realized as [ɔ] and [ɔ:] in English[98], and as [ɔ], [o], and [u] in Portuguese, depending on the word.

Amirah's comment above sheds some light on **the impact of language familiarity** and the influence of a different language's alphabet on the learning and application of reading and writing skills in Portuguese by migrant language users. Hence, in addition to gaining insight into Amirah's family and the linguistic environments where she circulates, her comments about her parents also underscore the importance of continuing education and solid Linguistics and Interculturality foundations for teachers and educators alike. With the increase of *international* migrant students in schools in Brazil[99], our educational system is gradually becoming (more) internationalized – so how exactly are teachers and educators preparing for this reality?

As Roldão, Ferreira, and Branco (2021, pp. 51-52) observe, immigrant education goes beyond enrollment in school: immigrant students must be provided with "an intercultural space, in which they can have a 'turn' and 'voice' in the educational process"[100]. In this regard, schools must be prepared for these students' reception and socialization both in educational settings and in society. For instance, guidelines such as the ones developed by Souza (2019), in addition to *de facto* language and literacy policies created and implemented across school subjects can be seen as a central and articulated step toward a more meaningful reterritorialization for students from migrant backgrounds.

This applies to HEIs as well, seeing that incorporating diverse perspectives and voices in the curriculum allows immigrant students **to see themselves represented and to contribute their viewpoints**. Intercultural education should aim to prepare all students to act effectively in

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[97] Orthographic systems vary in terms of the degree to which letters consistently correspond to specific sounds. The opaqueness of written English is primarily a result of vowel letter-sound pairings (Goswami, 1999). While Portuguese is seen as more transparent when compared to English, its spelling-to-sound correspondences are still somewhat ambiguous (cf. Borgwaldt; Hellwig; Groot, 2005; Ziegler *et al*., 2010).

[98] For a review on the different realizations of vowel sounds in English, see

[99] There were 73 thousand students of other nationalities enrolled in Brazilian schools (public and private) in 2016, according to Instituto Unibanco, cf. https://www.institutounibanco.org.br/aprendizagem-em-foco/38/. Access: Jan 05, 2024.

[100] The original: "A escolarização da criança e do adolescente imigrante, [sic] não se restringe somente à matrícula na escola, mas deve proporcionar às crianças e adolescentes imigrantes um espaço intercultural, no qual possam ter "vez" e "voz" no processo educativo. E, nesse sentido, as instituições escolares precisam estar atentas à [sic] esses novos alunos, propondo alternativas de acolhimento e integração, como também, viabilizar sua inserção escolar e social."

a multicultural world, which involves fostering skills such as intercultural communication and global awareness.

Joining UFMG | Living in Belo Horizonte

Amirah has always lived in São Paulo but is currently *residing* in Belo Horizonte due to her undergraduate studies at UFMG. She joined the university when she was 19 years old, choosing to live alone in a convent in the south-central area of the city[101], from where she walks to one of the smaller, more centrally located UFMG campuses to take her Applied Social Sciences classes in the evening. The proximity between São Paulo and Belo Horizonte means Amirah goes to São Paulo often to be with family and friends: for three-day weekends, winter breaks, and summer vacations, returning to Belo Horizonte for in-person classes and her work as an intern.

Amirah's **choice of major** dates back to her childhood in Syria, as it had always been her dream to work with construction, design, and housing. After Amirah graduates, she plans to return to São Paulo to work in the area or find a job internationally. She has already checked some opportunities in Dubai, mentioning her knowledge of Arabic as a differential. Amirah's university experience and work prospects therefore defy the stereotypical view of immigrants and refugees as low-skilled individuals or 'perpetual victims' in hopeless situations following conflict-induced displacement and migration; the "helpless refugee" or *refugiado desamparado* (Aydos, 2010, p. 59). This stereotypical view borders on an essentialist and reductionist stance in which agency is pushed to the background and misconceptions prevail (Maher, 2007).

It is in this respect that Public Call 624/2020 is a key action for students from migrant backgrounds: it can *facilitate* the students' *ongoing* reterritorialization processes in Brazil. Like other affirmative actions, it does not aim to reduce the migrant student to their circumstance of migration and resettlement but rather acknowledges the impact of such circumstances as part of these individuals' life journeys. In my view, it does not *enable* their entry at university; that would be backgrounding these students' agency. It does, however, aim to facilitate it, in the

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[101] The 'Regional Centro-Sul' of Belo Horizonte consists of 47 neighborhoods over 31.85 km^2, is the third largest region of the city, and the one with the highest socioeconomic indicators, despite the disparities between upper-class neighborhoods such as Lourdes and Sion – with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.973, and low-income neighborhoods (such as Morro do Papagaio, with an HDI of 0.685). This structural inequality reflects the unplanned urban expansion of the city in the 1910s, with the working class pushed out to the peripheries of the city center (Arreguy; Ribeiro, 2008). The area where Amirah lives is safe, with good infrastructure, and easily accessible by public transportation from various parts of the city.

sense that Public Call 624/2020 and related initiatives may also help to strengthen "meaningful (re)territorializations" (Bizon, 2020, p. 587).

I use "meaningful (re)territorializations", "*(re)territorialização significativa*" in the original (Bizon, 2020, p. 587), in contrast, not opposition, to "*(re)territorialização precária*": "vulnerable (re)territorialization", also by Bizon (2013). While the author does not make this contrast explicitly, we can infer from her research that a lack of agency is part of what may be seen as "*(re)territorialização precária*": precarious and vulnerable, based on an essentialist, reductionist, deficit-driven view of immigrants and refugees. Differently, "*(re)territorialização significativa*" would be associated with an effective symbolic and material appropriation of new territories cemented by one's agency in this process.

In addition, actions such as Public Call 624/2020 *must not* be the end goal: first, there are no 'end' goals when it comes to ongoing processes, as purposes are always being renewed and reframed; second, entry and access alone do not 'translate' into permanence, which is why a welcoming program should be created to help these students acclimate to the university space; by nourishing these meaningful reterritorializations and not 'abandoning' the migrant students once they commence their journeys into HE, a process that, even for local students, can be quite significant, as it often means a critical transition from adolescence and secondary education to adulthood and the academic and professional worlds.

Notably, we could also think of one's journey to university as a territorialization process. Territorialization involves **a sense of appropriation and claim over a symbolic and material territory and space**, as the two are deeply intertwined (Haesbaert, 2007): the symbolic and material and the territory and space. Per Haesbaert (2007, p. 21), territories are both material and immaterial, imbued with subjectivities: "the territory, immersed in relations of domination and/or society-space appropriation", and as a process, unfolds "along a continuum", from "the more 'concrete' and 'functional' political-economic domination to the more subjective and/or 'cultural-symbolic' appropriation"[102]. In this sense, the territory of the university is enmeshed with the space the migrant-background access via the call (or other selection processes), with new materialities, nonmaterialities, and subjectivities carved in an ongoing, dynamic basis, as the journey to university is continuous.

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[102] My translation and paraphrase of Haesbaert's (2007) 'quotation within a quotation': "o território, imerso em relações de dominação e/ou de apropriação sociedade-espaço, "desdobra-se ao longo de um continuum que vai da dominação político-econômica mais 'concreta' e 'funcional' à apropriação mais subjetiva e/ou 'cultural-simbólica'" (p. 21).

This means that students are not only physically present at the university but are also **claiming intellectual 'space'**, **forging their academic and professional identities**, asserting their presence and participation in academic discourse, academic communities, as the journey to university. Much like migration, active participation in HE involves more than geographical movement: it implies that students undergo a transformative process, marking their intellectual and personal territories as they engage with academic environments, on-site, offline, and online, as they see where they stand, professionally, epistemologically, ontologically, even if they are not acutely aware of this transformation at the time.

Territorialization implies a sense of belonging. In the context of 'the university journey', this could mean a sense of belonging with one's peers, academic community, future occupation, and the university itself – by identifying with the institution and the students' values, and feeling connected to their chosen field of study. The university journey contributes to the construction and (re)shaping of one's identity – or, better yet, their identities. Through academic pursuits, interactions, and experiences, students carve out their intellectual territories and develop a sense of self within their communities. Framing the journey to university as a territorialization process provides a rich metaphorical view, emphasizing the transformative nature of the experience and the multifaceted ways in which individuals engage with and contribute to the academic space and landscape – and their own.

In this context, the university journey is not merely a physical movement of going to the university space to attend classes, learn, and socialize, but a multifaceted process of academic and personal development. A journey involves moments of reflection and undergraduate studies *should* offer students the opportunity to reflect on their academic and personal experiences. This reflection can inform future goals, career aspirations, and further educational pursuits, as students embark on paths of learning that include not only building academic knowledge but also personal growth, self-discovery, and the development of various skills. **Just as a journey may have a destination, the undergraduate journey culminates in graduation**.

This is a symbolic endpoint that signifies the formal completion of the educational voyage and the beginning of a new phase in life. In addition, journeys invariably involve shared experiences. Similarly, undergraduate and graduate studies *should* foster a sense of community among students through collaborative projects, group discussions, and shared challenges that may contribute to the overall journey, as students interact with their peers, professors, and staff on-site, offline, and online throughout this process.

Framing university studies as a journey provides a nuanced perspective that goes beyond the academic curriculum and accomplishing tasks. It acknowledges the multidimensional nature of the educational experience and the diverse paths that students take during their time in HE. This metaphor aligns with the concept of *lifelong learning* (cf. Field, 2011), emphasizing that **the pursuit of knowledge does not end with graduation** but continues throughout one's life, contributing to one's ongoing personal and professional development. By considering going to, being at, and attending university as a journey, we imply a metaphorical outlook that extends beyond the literal, 'physical', and (sometimes) material act of attending classes and earning a degree, as this metaphor allows for a more holistic understanding of the educational experience.

In other words, the journey metaphor acknowledges that university is not solely about attending classes and earning a degree. It encompasses the entire **spectrum of experiences** that students undergo, including personal development and social interactions. While this may seem obvious, the literature on academic literacy – despite provisioning for this ample scope, has yet to fully embrace the less prototypical side of experiencing academia and the university (Wargo; De Costa; 2017).

Learning the Job | Working while Studying

Amirah is in her **third year of undergraduate studies**, having started an internship in March 2023, in a company within the main area of her Applied Social Sciences major. As she explained in a *conversa*, she decided to seek an internship for two main reasons: first, to gain work experience and a better insight into the area; second, because it is a requirement from her ungraduated program – in her major, students must complete 360 hours of supervised internship to graduate, starting from their third year, meaning she is up-to-date with her obligations at the university. Amirah had started looking for an internship position when she was in her second year; however, all positions required applicants to be at least in the third year of their studies.

The company where Amirah is working is located within walking distance from both her residence and the campus. Following Law 11788/2008 (Brasil, 2008), interns are entitled to compensation and can work up to 30 hours per week. Amirah's internship work model is hybrid, offering flexibility by combining in-office and remote working. It is easier for Amirah to balance work and studies, at least in theory, seeing that she does not have any commute time to go to the office or to UFMG, avoiding spending time in traffic. This means she can also travel to visit her family in São Paulo and work from there during summer and winter breaks. It should be noted that Amirah started her studies at UFMG in 2021 when the remote learning regime

was in place in Brazilian HEIs and schools, so she is familiar with the mechanics of studying – and, in this case, working – remotely.

Personal note 2: meeting Amirah

My first contact with Amirah was on social media.

After I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the research, she readily agreed to help me.

But she insisted on having our first semi-structured interview online.

At first, I didn't really understand it.

Then, after reading her answers to the online questionnaire, in preparation for the interview, I realized her decision had been a matter of safety:

Amirah didn't know me. She was living alone in a new city without any friends or family.

Once Amirah realized I wasn't a 'threat', she agreed to meet me in person for the second interview.

We met at a café across from her UFMG campus on a very rainy day!

We've had numerous 'conversas' ever since... and we even learned we're neighbors as she lives just three blocks away!

She also kindly took part in a workshop on Arabic language and culture when I was teaching at a high school.

That's actually where her pseudonym came from!

أميرة

In this note, I share highlights of my initial interaction with Amirah, which was online (Instagram) and remained online (via WhatsApp) until Amirah felt comfortable to meet face-to-face. The transition from online to face-to-face interaction was a significant milestone in establishing rapport and trust between myself and Amirah. Using WhatsApp for interaction beyond formal semi-structured interviews added an important layer of personal connection, thus reflecting the integration of more informal and digital channels in contemporary research relationships.

My interactions with Amirah expanded beyond the scope of this research, as she took part in an Arabic language and culture workshop with Syed at the high school where I was a teacher. This helped me to gain more insight into Amirah's migration journey and cemented the multifaceted nature of our researcher-participant relationship beyond the research itself. My students responded to the workshop with such enthusiasm and were so charmed by Amirah, calling her "princess", which is where her pseudonym came from (Amirah means princess in Arabic: أميرة). Amirah spoke Portuguese and Arabic at the workshop, teaching a few words to very engaged students who were yearning for cultural exchange.

Finally, I add that, from the very beginning, I approached and treated the research as a joint effort between the participants and myself to create something that could eventually benefit other students at the university – and beyond. It was not about *me*, the researcher, 'helping' the participants. It was *them* giving me access to their world and insight into their life stories so that I could 'translate' part of their journeys and practices into actionable propositions in my area of research. The participants are the keepers of their stories and experiences – and I am grateful and pleased they chose to share some of that with me.

Captions:
Side chat: my first contact with Amirah.
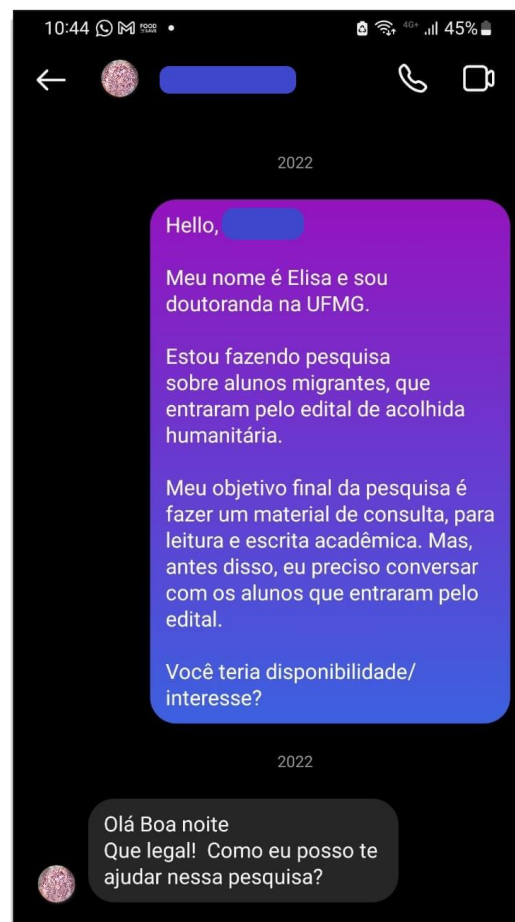
Michelly

Michelly is originally from **Haiti**. She was **13 years old** when she emigrated to Brazil. She has been **living in Brazil for eight years**. She was **21 years old** at the end of our research, having joined our research when she was 19 years old. Michelly speaks **multiple languages**: Haitian Creole (her L1), French (her L2), Spanish (basic skills), and Portuguese. She reads in English when required at UFMG. Michelly is a quite lively, somewhat reserved, black-haired **ciswoman racialized as Black** in Brazil, with a humorous disposition and a winning smile.

Michelly is the youngest of three children: she has an older sister and an older brother. Her brother joined UFMG through Call 624/2020, opting for an Engineering major. Michelly lives with her siblings in a neighborhood close to the UFMG campus in the region of Pampulha, in Belo Horizonte. Michelly is somewhat private about her family, but she did mention that her father used to be a teacher in Haiti and that her sister has a beauty salon in the center of Belo Horizonte. Michelly is Christian, as is her family.

Emigrating from Haiti | Immigrating to Brazil

Michelly reported coming to Brazil because of her parents. Her parents emigrated to Brazil because, as Michelly mentioned, the Latin American country was the most accessible option. She did not elaborate further, but her family is probably one in many to have moved to Brazil in search of better living conditions in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Still, even before the natural hazard/disaster, Haiti had already been experiencing difficulties and instability, both economically and politically[103], which culminated in the 2004 *coup d'état*, when the then president Jean Bertrand Aristide was removed from power and exiled from the country followed by the (highly criticized) UN mission[104] led by the Brazilian Army.

Another reason that may have driven Michelly and her family away from Haiti is the country's propensity to natural disasters and environmental hazards due to its geographical

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[103] Fischer (2004) critically discusses the pots-revolution constitutions, highlighting their hopeful yet unrealistic character (cf. chapter 11) and the numerous struggles the former French colony faced to become a nation-state, associating antislavery movements and emancipation goals in the Caribbean region with contrived modernity.

[104] The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was established in June 2004 as a response to Haiti's political and security challenges at that time, formalized through Resolution 1542 of the UN Security Council, ending in 2017: https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minustah. Access: Jan 02, 2024.

location and size, lying within the 'hurricane belt' of the Caribbean (Felima, 2009, p. 11). This predisposition to naturally occurring phenomena such as earthquakes and hurricanes is amplified by weak infrastructure, making the country more vulnerable to man-made impacts of such catastrophic events. Seeing that "The social context of a society plays a critical role in shaping the consequences of a hazard" (Felima, 2009, p. 12), it is unfortunate, though not surprising, that Haiti is severely impacted when natural disasters occur. As a country stricken by disinvestment from its inception[105] coupled with the long-standing exploitation of natural resources[106], Haiti is more prone to floods, landslides, and diseases once a natural hazard hits its lands (Felima, 2009; Freitas *et al*., 2012).

Haitian immigration to Brazil was not abrupt but rather a gradual process, starting at the northern border of the country in 2011 and becoming more noticeable when the number of Haitian immigrants increased tenfold, between 2012 and 2016 (Silva; Macedo, 2018). The decade-long MINUSTAH Brazilian presence in Haiti might have played a role in this process, as UN peacekeepers helped to promote positive images and share information about Brazil (Uebel, 2016). Additionally, the favorable economic situation in Brazil before the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics may have motivated those seeking employment, particularly in civil construction (Desrosiers, 2020).

Major decisions such as migration and resettlement often involve a number of other smaller decisions and several reasons. Oftentimes, the resolution to emigrate is not as 'clear-cut' as in Amirah's case, where a single critical event drives the choice to leave one's country of origin. Research shows that Haitians usually have various motives for emigrating from Haiti

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[105] The underdevelopment of Haiti dates back to colonial times: its separation from Hispaniola and the French colonial rule and exploitation, under which the colony and the planter class were legally and officially prohibited from establishing manufacturing industries that could potentially compete with French manufacturers, ensuring that French industries maintained a dominant position in the market. The French government and the merchant bourgeoisie promoted the production of agricultural and industrial raw materials required by French industries and "blocked the establishment of integrated industries" (Dupuy, 1989, p. 202). Moreover, the Revolution of 1791-1804 left the country with an independence debt, as France required indemnities to grant Haiti freedom from colonial rule: up until 1825 Haiti was still legally bound to France, and "no nation would recognize Haiti's independence" (Oosterlinck *et al*., 2022, p. 1253). Haiti has never recovered from the economic impacts of the debt, which many see as a prime example of racial capitalism (e.g., Obregón, 2018). The roots of contemporary underdevelopment and economic disparities suggest that "the Haitian population has never experienced itself as completely free of empire" (Obregón, 2018, p. 18), a process historically aided by European former colonial powers and imperialist Anglo-American foreign policies (Casey; Fernandez; Nikova, 2022).

[106] The Spanish and French colonialization of Haiti's territory resulted in extensive deforestation across its lands. This exploitation persisted after the independence, as farmers seized fertile valleys, forcing peasants into steeper areas with little to no infrastructure, increasing the likelihood of devastating structural impacts following natural disasters (Freitas *et al*., 2012). This is particularly visible when Haiti is compared with the Dominican Republic and other neighboring countries, with Haiti increasingly more prone to socio-environmental vulnerability, given its weak governance capability.

and immigrating to Brazil. Despite some degree of convergence, it is difficult to pinpoint a single reason (Faria, 2012) – even when the 2010 earthquake is mentioned (cf. Fernandes, Castro, 2014), other motivations are also listed, such as the high unemployment rate and rampant violence in Haiti. This may have been the case with Michelly and her family, whose migration to Brazil started with her uncle, then her father, and finally herself, her mother, and siblings, as she told me:

> *[You mentioned here that you... have been living in Brazil for six years.]*
>
> *Six years.*
>
> *[And you came... because your parents did? How did that...]*
>
> *My father was already here. My father arrived here in 2016, so he's been here for quite some time… But we entered in 2016... hum No. My father arrived in **2013** and I arrived in **2016**. Oh, so my father had this time in 2013... He... was with his brother during that period and went through the entire process for us to enter. In 2016, my mother entered first. Then I entered, followed by my siblings, and then it was everyone. No one came together.*
>
> *[And your family is large?]*
>
> *Five people, so, my parents and my brother and my sister, right? So, each one came in a different year. No. They came in 2016, but in different months. Oh, like... my mother and I came within a fifteen-day period, and my sister... they came. They came within a one-month, two-month period because there weren't enough tickets for everyone.*
>
> *[I see.]*
>
> *So, we had to come separately for me, as I was a minor. I had to come with my mother. But we couldn't get tickets for two people, and, and it wasn't even my father who bought them, it was a friend of ours who bought them for us. So, I had to go through another process to be able to come with another person. My father, and he had to go through another process to authorize that this person came with me. And this person didn't come to BH. So, I had to have another person accompanying me when I arrived in São Paulo.*
>
> (Michelly and the author, first semi-structured interview, April 2022)

In this excerpt, Michelly initially states that her father had already been living in Brazil when she immigrated to the country in 2016, quickly clarifying that her father actually arrived earlier, in 2013, not in 2016 (in the audio, Michelly stresses "*treze*" and "*dezesseis*" to indicate the right year). As Michelly mentioned, her father was in Brazil with her uncle, working on the immigration process for the rest of the family, who came in 2016. Her mother came first, Michelly followed, and then came her sister and then her brother, in a **collective effort unfolding in a trickling manner**, meaning that Michelly's family members did not arrive together, that is, each person entered Brazil at different times, creating a sequence of arrivals rather than a 'simultaneous', 'one-off' migration.

This is not surprising, for several reasons. First, there are no direct flights from Haiti to Brazil, with most flights connecting in the United States, which can increase costs due to transit visa requirements[107]. Second, international flights are priced in dollars with the rate converted to local currencies: fares may be adjusted (higher or lower) depending on currency exchange fluctuations in association with the airline's pricing practices (see Farias *et al*., 2019). Third, airfares to/from Brazil tend to cost more because of heavy taxation practices and the need for connecting domestic flights, as most international flights land in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Fourth, international flights can only be purchased with a valid international credit card (online, at least), which might not be the reality for many immigrants.

As seen above, Michelly and her family experienced some of these roadblocks in their migration journey to Brazil, with Michelly detailing the logistical challenges she faced also due to being a minor at the time of entering Brazil: being underage, she was required to have a chaperone accompanying her, a role her mother would have assumed. However, there were difficulties in securing tickets for Michelly and her mother on the same flight, a situation made more unfavorable because it was not Michelly's father who would purchase the tickets, but a friend of the family.

To overcome this issue, additional actions were required to facilitate Michelly's travel with another person. This involved obtaining authorization for two chaperones: a person who would travel with Michelly till São Paulo, and another individual to accompany Michelly to Belo Horizonte, her final destination. These complex procedures and arrangements marked Michelly's journey, so she could have a safe immigration as a minor. An added complexity to this already elaborate process was the fact that Michelly did not speak Portuguese at the time and no translators were made available to her:

> *[And... could you speak Portuguese when you arrived...]*
>
> *No! To talk with... I don't know the name, I don't remember, it was a person who accompanied me when I arrived in São Paulo... So in this process, I had to... I talked to her using Google, Google Translate, yeah. I would... put it [words, sentences] in my own language, translate it into Portuguese, and she understood and put it [the person's answers] in her language and translate it back to me in my language.*
>
> *[Wow! So... how old were you then?]*
>
> *Thirteen years old.*
>
> *[Wow... that's... okay... that's a story... that's a book]*
>
> (Michelly and the author, first semi-structured interview, April 2022)

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[107] The United States (US) requires a 185-dollar transit visa that is waived for specific countries, based on country-specific agreements. As of the writing of this dissertation, the fee had been waived for Haitian nationals, as verified in: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/other-visa-categories/transit.html. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

In this excerpt, we can see that Michelly and the person who accompanied her in São Paulo relied on Google Translate to communicate, as both individuals involved did not share a common language. In this situation, Google Translate acted as an intermediary, facilitating cross-language communication by providing translations, which indicates that no translators and interpreters were available to assist Michelly at the São Paulo international airport. While digital technology and artificial intelligence can help to overcome some language barriers, it is important to note that machine translation oftentimes do not capture nuances accurately. Misinterpretations or errors may occur, which, luckily, was not the case for Michelly.

This account underscores the importance of having trained and in-training interpreters, translators, and other Languages professionals familiar with crisis-induced migration, whose work can contribute to welcoming policies in several languages. The "*acolhimento em línguas*", or 'welcoming in languages', as opposed to welcoming in (single) language (Bizon; Camargo, 2018), means that 'migrant languages' also take center stage. These initiatives can be carried out via projects and partnerships between local governments and universities (Bizon, 2020; Camargo, 2018), considering the crucial role of *educação do entorno*, that is, the surroundings of education, where education in situated, cf. Maher, 2007), with ongoing extension/outreach actions that address the communicative needs of immigrants and refugees, likely providing them with a more effective (re)territorialization process (Bizon, 2020) in Brazil.

In addition to evidencing the Brazilian State's absence in offering translation services, Michelly's account also highlights the mutual adaptability to find solutions to communication challenges, leveraging available digital technology to make meaningful exchanges despite linguistic differences, as Michelly and the person who accompanied her in São Paulo resorted to a digitally-based technology to make themselves understood. Perhaps such flexibility also comes as a generational feature: as a 13-year-old Gen-Zer at the time, Michelly probably grew up with some internet and technology, meaning she likely felt more at ease navigating Google Translate and airport wi-fi, which may seem trivial, but should not be understood as a *given* – just a small share of the Haiti population has information technology literacy and access to the internet (cf. Laguerre, 2012).

The importance of understanding conflict-induced international migration, from both ends of the process is that we gain a better view of the challenges faced in the *emigration from* and the *immigration to*. While these may seem like two sides of a single process, their many particularities are contingent upon the situated realities of one's country of origin at the time of emigration, as well as those of the host country, the immigration end. Such understanding can

be instrumental in the design and reinforcement of public policies (linguistic, educational, etc.) aimed at meaningful (re)territorialization.

For instance, Michelly refers to family decisions that played a central role in her reterritorialization process. Indeed, family and family decisions have been pivotal in Michelly migrating and resettling in Brazil, as evident in other parts of our interview:

> *[And, hum... You said that when your father came here, his brother had been here for some time?]*
>
> *His brother, I think he came during this period of two thousand and thirteen, two thousand and twelve... he, this brother of his was already here during that period of time that I mentioned and, then, they were here together, living together, then my father decided to... live alone, he went to live alone with other friends. Before, they shared a house, as it was more... affordable, right? Then, they entered into this process for us to come, for the family to come.*
>
> *[And was it, for example, was it your father's plan to bring everyone? How, how was that? Like, did he want to come to Brazil?]*
>
> *Well, I don't really know that, if he... if he wanted to, or if he didn't want to. You know, because I was very young, so they didn't talk about these things with me. So, I think he had another process to go somewhere else, but as my country went through… the earthquake happened, so all of this contributed to him leaving the country and going to another place that would provide a better life, you know, condition, to have a better living condition and give us better conditions. So, he moved [to Brazil] because of that, but I don't know if he had another process to go to another place or if he was supposed to come to Brazil. And his brother was already here. So, I think this influenced coming to Brazil more than anywhere else.*
>
> (Michelly and the author, first semi-structured interview, April 2022)

In this excerpt, Michelly expresses uncertainty about the specific reasons behind her father's decision to emigrate from Haiti and resettle in Brazil. Being very young at the time, Michelly was not made aware of the details, as her parents did not discuss such matters with her. However, she believes that her father may have had alternative plans or processes to relocate elsewhere. The 2010 earthquake further complicated the situation, prompting her father to seek a country that could offer an improved quality of life and better conditions for the family. This suggests that Michelly's family had already been considering emigrating from Haiti, before the earthquake: "*I think he had another process to go somewhere else, but as my country went through… the earthquake happened*", alluding to such possibility.

Ultimately, the decision to move to Brazil was also heavily influenced by the presence of Michelly's uncle, who was already living in Brazil, making it a more viable option compared to other potential destinations. We can infer that Michelly's father saw potential in Brazil: "*so all of this contributed to him leaving the country and going to another place that would provide*

a better life, you know, condition, to have a better living condition and give us better conditions"
(in Portuguese: "*então isso tudo contribuiu para que ele saísse do país e ir pra outro lugar que
desse melhor vida, vamos dizer, condição, pra ter uma melhor condição de vida e dar pra gente
melhor condição*"). While Michelly does not mention visas quite explicitly in this excerpt, the
National Immigration Council (CNIg) Normative Resolution 97 of January 2012 potentially
played a role in her family's decision to immigrate to Brazil, specifically, as the resolution's
purpose was to grant permanent visas to Haitian nationals (as provided for in Article 16 of Law
6815/1980[108]) based on humanitarian reasons, which are "those resulting from the worsening
of the living conditions of the Haitian population" following the 2010 earthquake (UNHCR,
2016, p. 95). This may have facilitated her family's entry and permanence in Brazil.

Schooling in Belo Horizonte | Learning Portuguese

In terms of schooling, Michelly had a 'bumpy' start in the Brazilian schooling system.
Because her school transcript had been held in Haiti when she came to Brazil, she was placed
in the 7th grade upon enrolling in school in Belo Horizonte. As Michelly told me, joining the 7th
grade was her parents' decision, made in agreement with teachers and coordinators, with the 7th
grade considered as more coherent with her 13 years of age at the time. In Haiti, however,
Michelly had already started the 9th grade[109]. As soon as her school transcript arrived in Brazil,
Michelly was transferred to the 9th grade[110], thus completing **four years of formal schooling**
in Brazil: the last year of primary education at a municipal school and three years of secondary
education at a state high school. When she arrived in Brazil, she did not speak any Portuguese
beyond "*bom dia*" and "*tudo bem*", as recounted in our first interview:

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[108] Law 6815/1980, also known as the Foreigner Statute Law, was formally revoked by Law 13445/2017, the
Brazilian Migration Law, in force as of 21 November 2017 (cf. Brasil, 2017). The New Migration Law aims to
imbue migratory issues with a more humanitarian approach, as outlined in Sant'Anna (2017). This was a crucial
step toward updating and advancing the immigration legislation in Brazil, a need anticipated by specialists and
interested parties (e.g., Milesi, 2012).

[109] In Haiti, Michelly was in the last year of the '*Troisième Cycle*', which is advanced for her age (the third year
of this cycle usually covers 14/15-year-old students, cf. Hadjadj, 2000), and roughly corresponds to the 9th grade
in Brazil. Despite fundamental differences, the two countries share similarities in terms of education challenges
that can be traced back to their colonial past and post-colonial present. For instance, Haiti's "colonial legacy of
violence and exclusion in education" (Luzincourt; Gulbrandson, 2010, p. 6) and the disregard of the elites "for the
education of the masses" (Étienne, 2023, p. 55) parallel with Brazil. Hachem (2023) discusses the age-grade
distortion of immigrant students in Brazil (cf. pp. 187-215).

[110] Michelly did not tell me how long she remained in the 7th grade, only mentioning being transferred to the 9th
grade in the same year. Because I sensed she did not want to discuss the matter any further, I decided to change
the topic. As pointed out in Chapter 3, sensitivity when dealing with research participants is still widely under-
researched in Applied Linguistics, particularly when dealing with socially vulnerable persons who have or may
have experienced traumatic or distressing events.

[Eh... and how did you learn... Portuguese?]

It's quite a story, let's say... When I arrived, at thirteen, it didn't even take a week, I went straight to... to school. So, my father enrolled me in a school, and I went to that school on the same day of enrollment – I thought it would be the next day that I would go to school, maybe in another week, but it was on the same day as registration [laughs]. I said, 'Am I staying here today, right now?' and he said, 'Yes, right here.' On the same day as registration, I already, um... My father went with me in the morning, it was seven o'clock, and on the same day, we stayed there. And it was until eleven thirty, I think...

[hmm hmm]

And I couldn't speak at all. I didn't understand... I only said 'good morning', as far as I remember... because my father had some other people in the house we lived in, a sublet... and there was another Brazilian next door, so my father made me greet that Brazilian woman in Portuguese, say 'good morning', 'how are you?' that kinda thing, I only knew that to greet people. But speaking? I just couldn't.

[And how was that?]

On the first day of school, I cried so much... because I couldn't, didn't understand anything! People tried to talk to me, but I only understood a little of what they said, but I didn't understand very well, as they tried to talk, too… I even tried speaking Portuguese. No, no. Not Portuguese. I tried speaking English, even though I couldn't speak English [laughs], so I understood what they tried to say in English. And so I tried to understand it. But, like, on that day, I remember crying so much and telling my mom: 'I'm never going back there'.

[Both laugh]

But on the second day, I went back and started talking, I began to talk, letting it flow, I started talking a little… and my father also said: 'When someone says something to you that you don't understand, write it down, when you get home, we'll see what it was' And that's how I got the hang of it...

(Michelly and the author, first semi-structured interview, April 2022)

In the excerpt, Michelly describes a swift enrollment at school upon her arrival in Brazil, contrary to her expectation of a more paced introduction to school. Michelly adds a humorous touch (maybe a nervous laughter?) by emphasizing the unexpected nature of the situation and her initial shock at this sudden initiation. Her father seems to be the authority in making educational decisions while her mother may be the person Michelly can confide in. She seems to have had ample support from both her parents throughout her initial schooling in Brazil.

Above, Michelly emphasizes her struggle with the language barrier, expressing an initial difficulty communicating and understanding Portuguese, as indicated by the repeated use of negation and negative words ("*couldn't*" and "*didn't*"). The word "*never*" reveals the emotional stock of the language challenge on her first day: she recounts "*crying so much*"/"*chorei tanto*", saying to her mother: "*I'm never going back there*"/"*nunca mais quero voltar lá*", conveying a

strong reaction to the overwhelming situation of being in a new school and country, where she could not communicate verbally with her peers and teachers. While such an emotional response may be natural in the process of adapting to new surroundings, particularly when faced with language barriers, Michelly was just 13 years old at the time and had never lived abroad. A support system at school certainly would have made this transition less unnerving.

The reference to her father making her interact with a Brazilian neighbor Portuguese suggests that Michelly had an important source of encouragement to learn the language, which may have renewed her confidence, as Michelly attempted to adapt linguistically by trying to speak English, showcasing a willingness to engage with both the new environment and her peers at school. This is also evident in Michelly telling her mother about not wanting to go back to school and in her father's advice: she should write down anything that she did not understand, to be reviewed at home. This piece of advice implies not only a collaborative effort between Michelly and her father to make sense of unfamiliar expressions encountered during the day but also, perhaps more importantly, to help Michelly navigate her Portuguese language learning process at school, where she would not have support in her first language.

After this rather traumatic initial experience at school, and because the Minas Gerais and the Belo Horizonte public school systems (still) lack official language policies to address the needs of migrant students (and plurilingual education), Michelly's parents enrolled her in a PWL course conducted by Projeto LER[111] and the Jesuit Service for Migrants and Refugees (SJMR). She emphasized the importance of having instructors who spoke her first language: "*They [the instructors] spoke Creole, so it helped*" (Jan. 15th, 2023, WhatsApp). The PLAc course was vital to Michelly, as she did not have (or does not recall having had) any language-related support at school:

> *[And in school, did you have any support or something like that, from...]*
>
> *From the teachers?*
>
> *[Hmm hmm]*
>
> *Any support I had… I don't remember if I did! Support in Portuguese... no... I don't recall. But, well, I also took a course about Portuguese for immigrants. I used to go to a course every Saturday for Portuguese [classes] and also with high school, having done high school here, having gone through this whole process all these*

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[111] Projeto LER is a prime example of the civil society response to the lack of official, overt reception policies for immigrants and refugees in Belo Horizonte – as an interdisciplinary outreach/extension program created and conducted by the Graduate Program in Linguistics and Literature at PUC Minas, Projeto LER aims to facilitate the social interaction of children, adolescents, and adults from migrant backgrounds in Brazilian society (cf. Cavalcante; Silva, 2021). https://www.projetoler.com/. Access: Jan 02, 2024.

years… so that also helped [me] to talk better, to write better, you know, to understand Portuguese better.

[And today, where do you practice Portuguese? Where do you speak it?]

Only at school [UFMG]. I'm not taking courses anymore, but in… before, I took the Project LER course.

[Hmm... I see]

Which is from PUC. I used to do it on Saturdays, and I went there, um, I went there and practiced Portuguese, but for now… I'm not doing it anymore. And when the pandemic came, everything stopped, right? Then it started again... I don't know if [Projeto LER is active] now, but I haven't gone back to practicing Portuguese with courses, that kinda thing. But we're always practicing, right? By talking, you know?

(Michelly and the author, first semi-structured interview, April 2022)

In this excerpt, Michelly confirms what São Bernardo (2016) verified with her research: that students from migrant backgrounds eventually learn the host country's primary language by informally interacting with their classmates and teachers and/or by taking specific courses organized by civil society organizations (CSOs), such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based initiatives that may or may not evolve to government actions. As Michelly emphasizes, Projeto LER and the three years of high school were central to her Portuguese language learning process.

She mentions improvement in her speaking, writing, and overall understanding of Portuguese, repeating the adverb "*better*"/"*melhor*" to refer to both reading and writing, acknowledging that, despite no longer taking courses since the COVID-19 pandemic, she practices Portuguese regularly at the university. In many ways, in regard to Portuguese, Michelly's **L2 self** (Dörnyei, 2009) seems 'bound' to school and academic tasks, as she first needed the language more independently at school, a space where, at the age of 13, she would eventually learn to be more autonomous with her education and the language, as no one in her school spoke her first language, thus requiring Michelly to develop strategies to make herself understood as well as to understand her classmates and teachers.

Interestingly, Michelly's autonomy and high self-regulation (cf. Dörnyei; Ryan, 2015) when learning and developing her Portuguese language skills are visible in other situations as well – for instance, when she realized she was using 'too much slang':

There was a time when I used a lot of slang and heard a lot of slang. You know, with people, many, like, are young people and use a lot of slang, so I started using a lot of slang too! But that was done... I had to stop it, you know? Because it was just too much slang.

[Slang, like, that you couldn't use in other situations...]

Yeah, talking to someone, I always used slang, like 'dude'.

[Uhum]

So, I always used those slang words from everyday life, you know, saying those things. So those slang words, I had to stop it, and many... I had to take them out of my vocabulary.

[How did you do that?]

By not saying it anymore! [laughs]

[So, every time you were gonna say it, you...]

No, I thought of something else, to replace it. Also, I realized that it wouldn't... like, help... So, I stopped, but some I still use. You know, I... I say it when I'm angry, you know?

[Like cursing?]

No, not cursing. Slang. But like, in moments when I'm... let's say... um... in a tight spot! So... I end up using it, but like... talking like I am now, in a more direct conversation, I don't use it. It's something that I'm... with some friends. We start talking and... it just comes out! But in more formal conversations, it doesn't come out at all.

(Michelly and the author, first semi-structured interview, April 2022)

In this excerpt, Michelly comments on the actions she took to adjust her vocabulary, avoiding the 'excessive' use of slang words, which she mentions using only when talking with friends in casual and informal conversations, and moments of pressure, as a way to cope with stress and express emotions in challenging situations. This is made evident by the phrase "*in a tight spot*"/"*um momento de aperto*". She suggests that her use of slang words was not always appropriate, alluding to the pervasiveness of slang as one of the reasons she started adopting it. Michelly associates slang with young people. Indeed, slang is often associated with a younger cohort (Menezes *et al*., 2023), understood as "devices for displaying an informal and positive affective tone" (Moore, 2012, p. 185).

Slang is more appropriate and prevalent in unplanned and spontaneous interactions. In Michelly's account, this is indicated by the use of the phrase "*it just comes out*" ("*acaba saindo*"), which suggests that she may not consciously choose to use slang but finds it emerging naturally, reflecting a conversational style influenced by the informal context. Once almost exclusively associated with speech – despite historical records showing its use in writing as far back as the 15th century (Preti, 2000), slang has 'crept into' writing, in particular with the rapid rise of social media, where the informal end of the formality continuum is favored.

I asked Michelly if she was referring to slang or swearing, as the two share some similarities, but also present differences. She clarified referring to slang words, not curse words,

which makes sense given the example she provided: "*dude*"/"*mano*". It felt as though cursing might be taboo to Michelly, and taboo is one of the primary differences between slang and cursing. As Moore (2012, p. 177) explains, "Slang does not inherently oppose social values, but the way it is used can do so. What slang does, by its very nature, is express an insistently informal attitude". Moore (2012) furthers the discussion, arguing that specialists and laypeople "often treat swearwords as though they were slang" because slang and swear words share an "inherent connection to affective expression" (p. 186). As the author adds, they "differ in their prototypical functions: the former serving mainly to promote an ethos of egalitarian sociability within certain groups or contexts, while the latter have as their primary function **the cathartic expression of intense affect**" (Moore, 2012, p. 186, emphasis added).

Based on Michelly's account, my educated guess is that she uses both slang and curse words. We see that the situations in which she reported using slang are associated with two different basic functions: socialization in informal exchanges ("*It's something that I'm... with some friends. We start talking and... it just comes out!*") and release of overwhelming feelings through cathartic expression (for example, in "*I say it when I'm angry, you know?*"). But perhaps what is most interesting about this part of her account is that she knows how to navigate different registers ("*But in more formal conversations, it doesn't come out at all*"), which is paramount both for her professional and academic socialization into different communities of practice (cf. Wenger, 1998).

Socialization and relationships, more generally, are critical elements of one's language development and meaningful reterritorialization. In Michelly's case, in addition to her family, she also made friends at school. One particular relationship is mentioned in the interview – but not elaborated upon:

> *[Did you make... about friends... Did you make friends at school?]*
>
> *Yes. When I arrived in high school, I also made friends with someone... and he, he always says that he's the one who taught me Portuguese [laughs], but, you know, friendship. It just happens... Friendship, real friendship, I made... I guess about three people, you know? The others are... hum, I consider them colleagues.*
>
> *[Uhum... and these people... what are they? All Brazilian...?]*
>
> *Brazilian. In my school, there was only one Haitian.*
>
> *[You were the only other nationality...]*
>
> *Yeah... later, in high school, the school in Contagem, where I was, there were other Haitians, but no, never in my class. Then I moved to Esmeraldas, where my father bought a house for us, so, but... it was just me in the neighborhood, just me at school, as an immigrant.*
>
> (Michelly and the author, first semi-structured interview, April 2022)

In this excerpt, Michelly acknowledges making friends upon entering high school and reports a positive and inclusive experience during that period. The laughter adds a humorous, lighthearted touch when Michelly mentions that her friend claims to have been the one who taught her Portuguese, alluding to the dynamics of their relationship while also highlighting layers of cultural and linguistic exchanges in shared experiences, which occur between **people from different backgrounds**. In the literature, interculturality is often invoked as something that migrant students have to deal with, or that teaching practices must include or address. However, **cultural and linguistic exchanges** between the international migrant students and the local students benefit the latter as well.

Michelly distinguishes between genuine friendships and more casual and formal relationships with colleagues, suggesting a nuanced understanding of different levels of social connections. This is emphasized by the phrase "*real friendship*", which indicates a recognition of deeper and more meaningful connections among a select few individuals. Friendships may come somewhat easily to Michelly, as she says that friendship "*just happens*". This could mean that making friends is not laborious, unfolding spontaneously, implying that genuine bonds developed naturally at school.

Michelly shows awareness of being the 'Other' in her surroundings. When she moved from Contagem to Esmeraldas, this change in living environment meant that Michelly was the sole Haitian in her immediate residential and academic surroundings, besides her family. This sense of solitude might be related to where Michelly lived before moving to Esmeraldas: the neighborhood Morada Nova, in Contagem, is where many Haitian immigrants have taken up residence (Gomes, 2021), possibly creating a sense of belonging and community, which she must have not felt in the new neighborhood – or at her high school, despite the presence of other Haitians in the same school setting.

Michelly's experience in Belo Horizonte seems to parallel Amirah's in São Paulo. In addition, it is consistent with the literature about the inclusion of migrant students in the school system of Belo Horizonte (e.g., Miranda, 2021; Neves, 2018) and in other cities and states in Brazil (e.g., Bizon; Camargo, 2018; Dangió, 2019; Porto-Ribeiro; Fleith, 2020). Despite the multilingual (Müller, 2008) and multicultural reality of the country, the Brazilian school system remains largely monolingual and Eurocentric. The need for explicit language policies that address the demands of plurilingual students can no longer be ignored, especially when legal provisions for plurilingual education are already in place – based on the concepts of 'linguistic

rights' in both its restricted and expanded senses (cf. Abreu, 2020) and 'linguistic diversity',

for instance, via the National Inventory of Linguistic Diversity (INDL)[112].

Joining UFMG | Living in Belo Horizonte

Michelly's **choice of major** is based on her affinity with the Health Sciences area and

her childhood plan of working in the healthcare/medical industry:

> *I've always wanted something related to the healthcare field, to be able to care for the patient, and the [name of occupation] is responsible for guiding the patient on the correct use of medications, providing an improvement in quality of life. In addition, this course has a wide range of opportunities, so all of this attracted me to the [name of major] program.*

(Michelly, first online questionnaire, March 2022)

In this excerpt, Michelly expresses a longstanding desire to work in the healthcare field,

particularly in a role that involves caring for people and guiding patients in the proper use of

medications to enhance their quality of life. In addition to this personal choice, Michelly also

seems aware of the broad range of opportunities associated with her chosen major. Her

motivation stems from a passion for healthcare and patient well-being, and an appreciation for

the varied career prospects within her chosen field of study. Interestingly, in our first interview,

she revealed that her current major was her third choice, as she wanted to study Medicine or

Law:

> *As I was saying... I always wanted something, um, related to the healthcare field. Initially, I wanted medicine... But, as time went by, I ended up choosing [name of major]. In [name of major] there's a subject I like, which is biology, you know? So… that also influenced my choice of [name of major], and this major also offers, hum, a large variety of options, so you can choose several, um, let's say, paths... and you can also work in a hospital, in healthcare. I also like the clinical area and cosmetics in this clinical field.*
>
> *[And you always... hum, you wanted to work in Healthcare]*
>
> *I was torn between the two; I wanted both Law and something to do with Health. I've always liked this area of debate, these things, yeah, but I also liked Healthcare, so I really enjoyed biology and history in my high school, during my school days, I really liked history and biology. So I always wanted both Law and a career in Healthcare, and I ended up going into Healthcare.*
>
> *[And what made you, um... quote-unquote… give up on Law?]*
>
> *I wanted the Law more to... to help immigrants, defend immigrants, but this field of Law has a lot of, let's say, lack of job opportunities, so that made me give up on*

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[112] See Rodrigues (2018) and Soares (2016) for discussions.

studying law... and the aspect of being an immigrant, that too, because of Portuguese, hum… but I think that's the reason... that's it.

(Michelly and the author, first semi-structured interview, April 2022)

In our first semi-structured interview, as based on the answers to the first questionnaire, Michelly showed a very comprehensive understanding of the possibilities offered by her major in Health Sciences, commenting specifically about working in two segments: cosmetics and clinical. She mentioned her affinity with biology as a primary reason for choosing a major focused on Health Sciences.

Michelly also expresses internal struggle in choosing between two career paths: Law and Healthcare, highlighting an appreciation for some of the intellectual aspects of Law, such as debate ("*I've always liked this area of debate*"), and an enjoyment of history. She explained wanting to major in Law as a means to "*help*", "*defend*" fellow immigrants but emphasized obstacles that ultimately led her to pursue a career in Health Sciences: the limited job opportunities within the legal profession and language proficiency. Being an 'immigrant' suggests potential difficulties in language use, as Michelly believed that her Portuguese skills were not advanced enough for a career in Law. She elaborated on this further:

[How would Portuguese, for instance, interfere or affect you do Law?]

Let's say I have to, okay, like, in court, and I have to defend a client. So, I would have to be good in Portuguese to defend that client, be proficient in what I'm doing, so that doesn't interfere. Portuguese doesn't interfere, but let's say I would have to be one hundred percent defending that client. With new concepts, that kinda thing, to defend that client. I think that would be a bit challenging.

(Michelly and the author, first semi-structured interview, April 2022)

As we can see from the excerpt above, when I asked Michelly about Portuguese and a career in Law, she suggested the need to have high proficiency in Portuguese in a courtroom as a means to effectively defend a client. She did not say she was not proficient in Portuguese but rather alluded to the idea that being a lawyer requires knowledge and skills in Portuguese she did not have. This is made evident by the phrase "*one hundred percent*": to Michelly, being able to defend a client meant having mastered the language through which the laws ultimately circulate. The inference is that Michelly has an understanding of the type of Portuguese used in the legal system and legal discourse, and does not seem to believe her skills are at the level required for a solid, effective career in Law.

Moreover, we understand that the phrase "*one hundred percent*" may imply an idealized view of language proficiency, as if the 'native' speaker had full mastery of the language – something a 'non-native' such as herself could not possibly attain, even with a degree in Law and several years living in the country. This idealized view of language proficiency and the **myth of the native speaker** are still pervasive in school and media discourse as well as in academia.

When unpacking Michelly's comment, interesting parallels can be made between the linguistic specificities of different academic disciplines – in this case, Applied Social Sciences, where Law is inserted at UFMG, and Health Sciences, Michelly's area. While both disciplines use language formally in specialized ways, as all disciplines do, they also use language rather distinctly, with specificities involving different degrees of formality, argumentation strategies, and lexicon. The language used in Law is at the other end of the informal-formal *continuum*, both for speech and writing, not only in Portuguese, favoring Latinisms, archaic words, rarely used expressions, and redundant language (cf. Williams, 2004; 2011). To effectively practice Law, one needs to develop legal language skills[113].

We can see, then, that Michelly's concern about her Portuguese language skills is not unreasonable. The language of Law is highly intricate and Plain Language movements have sprung up around the world and recently in Brazil[114], with the purpose of making the Law more accessible, inclusive, and objective (Monteiro; Jahnel, 2019). The language of Biological Sciences carries considerable specificity in some domains and scientific writing, which should be taught more explicitly (Dirrigl Jr.; Noe, 2018; Turbek *et al*., 2016). However, the majority of terms denoting *scientific concepts* have Latin origins and tend to maintain their Latin form irrespective of the language in which they are used (Seraphin *et al*., 2023).

In addition, some scientific lexicons are domain-independent, thus forming a central lexical 'core', meaning that this lexical is shared across disciplines (Drouin, 2010) and can be applied in a transdisciplinary manner. This is an advantage, as Michelly can use some of the already acquired lexicon should she decide to pursue another university degree; for instance, in

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[113] There are countless courses in legal Portuguese for the Brazilian variety, the so-called '*juridiquês*' ('legalese'), both in book format as well as online via YouTube channels. Some examples are Damião and Henriques (2020) and Shocair (2012), for print courses, and Miranda (2023) and Volpato (2019) for online courses.

[114] https://plainlanguagenetwork.org/plain-language/plain-language-around-the-world/. Access: Jan 02, 2024. On December 4th, 2023, the Chief Justice of the Federal Supreme Court (STF) and the National Council of Justice (CNJ) announced the National Pact of the Judiciary for Plain Language ("*Pacto Nacional do Judiciário pela Linguagem Simples*"), to make "justice more accessible to the population and thus contributing to improving the exercise of democracy in society" in Brazil.

Medicine, a major she would like, Michelly can draw from both the Biology and Chemistry lexicons and concepts learned and practiced in her Health Sciences major. Finally, many of the academic writing patterns in the Health Sciences are shared across subdisciplines (Dutra *et al*., 2020), with much of the rhetorical conventions also shared (cf.; Swales; Feak, 2004), in in Portuguese and English.

Michelly resides with her siblings in the São Franciso neighborhood[115], in the Pampulha region of Belo Horizonte, around two kilometers from the UFMG campus. She first lived with her family in Contagem, then moved to Esmeraldas (in the metropolitan area of Belo Horizonte – RMBH)[116], where her father purchased a home. Esmeraldas is approximately 60 kilometers away from the UFMG Pampulha campus. In the excerpt below, Michelly stresses some of the logistical challenges she faced when commuting from her previous residence in Esmeraldas to UFMG:

[When you got here, you lived in Contagem, then you moved to Esmeraldas, but now you're in Belo Horizonte. You're in Belo Horizonte... because...]

Because of college.

[Ah, okay, it's closer. So you live nearby?]

Yes, in the São Francisco neighborhood. On the other side.

[Time, right? Time. It takes less time, I imagine.]

And it's more convenient too!

[Especially in BH, where we don't have a great... well...]

From Esmeraldas, I'd have to take about two buses, and when those buses weren't available, I'd have to take the metro, so metro fare plus two buses, you know? So, very complicated.

[How much time would it take you, give or take?]

Two hours or more... From home, I'd have to go to the metro [station] at Eldorado. From Eldorado to my house is an hour. And from here, from Eldorado to here, it's also an hour. And, and... if the buses come quickly, right? Because some buses take a while.

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[115] The São Francisco neighborhood is part of the Pampulha region of Belo Horizonte. It was created after the UFMG campus was established in the then Cidade Universitária in 1940, with intensified urbanization in 1950 (Ribeiro, 2011). The Pampulha region is located in the north of Belo Horizonte. It has 41 neighborhoods and 16 *vilas* (a group of houses and buildings in small area, with commerce and services, not necessarily low-income) distributed over 51.03 km², and an average HDI of 0.87 Like other Belo Horizonte administrative regions, the Pampulha region has high and low-income neighborhoods, the former located around the Pampulha Modern Ensemble and Gate 6 of the UFMG campus and the latter situated in enclaves and hilltops. São Francisco can be considered a relatively safe middle-class neighborhood (Parreiras, 2022).

[116] Esmeraldas is part of the metropolitan area of Belo Horizonte. Located 59 kilometers from Belo Horizonte, it has 91 neighborhoods and 19 hamlets, low industrialization, and an HDI of 0.671, which is relatively low. It serves as a dormitory town and is underserved in both employment and sanitation, which reaches only 25% of the population – the city ranks among the lowest in most socioeconomic indicators in the metropolitan region. https://cidades.ibge.gov.br/brasil/mg/esmeraldas/panorama. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

[And here, now, how long does it take you?]

Five minutes.

[So you walk here!]

Sometimes, I walk, but there are times when I feel lazy, you know? [laughs]

[laughs. Hmm hmm! Then… you take the bus?]

I always take the bus back home because it's... evening classes and it's also unsafe. So, I return by bus, but coming here, sometimes I walk, sometimes when I'm in a hurry, like now, with the heat, under that blazing sun, then I take the bus.

(Michelly and the author, first semi-structured interview, April 2022)

Michelly narrates needing to take two buses or two buses and the metro, a very time-consuming process. In contrast, with the move to the Pampulha region, Michelly lives within walking distance from UFMG, which is time-saving and economical. The positive impact of the move to a neighborhood close to the UFMG campus is seen in the ease and convenience of transportation, with Michelly taking only one bus to university, as opposed to two; when she is feeling "*lazy*" ("*mas tem vez que fico com preguiça, né?*"), when pressed for time ("*when I'm in a hurry*"/"*quando eu tô apertada*"), and when the heat/weather is intense ("*like now, with the heat, under that blazing sun*"/"*igual agora que tá fazendo calor, pegar aquele solzão*").

Additionally, Michelly mentions safety concerns, so her decision to take the bus back home seems practical. Evening classes at UFMG end at 10:30 p.m., meaning that Michelly must not take more than 20 minutes to get home, arriving by 11 p.m., quite differently from the two-hour commute to Esmeraldas, which would have meant being home after midnight, as commute time was contingent upon the availability, reliability, and integration of different modes of public transport.

This is important because commute time can significantly impact the daily lives of university students in several aspects. For instance, research shows that long commutes can be detrimental to university presence and academic achievement (Kobus; van Ommeren; Rietveld, 2015). The move to the São Fransico neighborhood is also likely to have provided Michelly with easier access to the university facilities, offering more amenities due to its proximity to UFMG and the center of Belo Horizonte, particularly in terms of a better and more reliable infrastructure, which has been a long-standing complaint by Esmeraldas inhabitants (Mello, 2023).

Learning the Job | Working while Studying

Work-wise, Michelly is currently employed in a related Health Sciences company. For the past six months, as of the writing of this dissertation, Michelly has been working during the day and studying in the evenings, not differently from most university students in Brazil, regardless of the HEI type – public or private (cf. Folha Dirigida, 2020; Trópia; Souza, 2023). There are positive and negative implications and consequences of doubling work and studies. On the positive side, university students can learn how to better cope with different demands, potentially handling the stress of multiple tasks more effectively and developing more robust time management skills (Eloy; Carvalho; Lessa, 2021).

Students may experience professional and personal growth and gain insight into their chosen profession. On the negative side, the doubling of work and studies tends to impact academic performance negatively (Sales, 2020), possibly leading to emotional distress and impulsive decision-making (Eloy; Carvalho; Lessa, 2021). Higher levels of stress, exhaustion, and frustration also may be experienced as a result of not being able to manage multiple demands (Cunha, 2023), or due to declines in academic performance, a situation that may be worsened by gender imbalances[117].

One of the main differences between Michelly's and Amirah's work situation is that, with a regular job, Michelly works 40 hours per week, 10 more than Amirah and other interns. However, if/when formally registered under the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT), a job – as opposed to an internship, can provide Michelly with labor rights. Another difference is the fact that, in internships, paid or unpaid, interns are supervised and there is an implicit teaching-learning connection, which may not be present in a regular job past the training period. In other words, there is the expectation that interns are 'just starting' or 'still learning', which may render them leniency, as there might be less pressure, with the internship viewed more as an 'exploration' into areas within one's chosen/future occupation, in which one can discover

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[117] This symbolic violence is maintained through invisible structures of power (Bourdieu, 2007) in which the division of domestic labor tends to fall almost entirely on the backs of women, particularly poor and black/brown women, in Brazil. The so-called '*jornada tríplice*' of work-study-household labor is grounded on the devaluation of women in patriarchal societies, Westernized or not, even when such societies have less strict gender boundaries as Lorber (2018) explains. Gender inequality in Brazil is structural (cf. Hintze; 2020; Silva; Santana, 2020), meaning that a hierarchical system is in place, with women taken as inferior to men in a relational and naturalized manner that spills onto many spheres of social life. At university/academia, expressions of sexism range from microinvalidations and microinsults, often associated with race or ethnicity (Sue *et al*., 2007; Cooke, 2019), to subtle microaggressions experienced by early-career academic women (Boivin *et al.*, 2023), gender bias (Cole; Hassel, 2017), abuse of power, and unethical behavior in asymmetrical relationships (Cohen; Baruch, 2022), and more blatant forms of abuse based on gender. When it comes to the needs of working academic women, this is a scenario higher education remains largely unprepared for (Ávila; Portes, 2012).

interests under the guidance of a more experienced professional, as noted in Silva and Teixeira (2013).

On the other hand, internships might also be considered 'lesser work' or 'lower-level' positions for which 'inexperienced' professionals carry out bureaucratic tasks disconnected from the reality of their future occupation. This could lead to a negative and unrealistic start in one's profession, as the intern does not have the opportunity to develop fundamental skills and knowledge that will be required professionally in the short term (cf. Silva; Teixeira, 2013). Such internships could also be a sign of precarious work conditions under the flexibilization of labor laws, guided by a neoliberal, profit, and market-based logic that often disfigures the role of internships as a learning moment for early career professionals, as Hillesheim (2016) notes. Ironically, some companies do the exact opposite by requiring interns to have previous work experience, as Michelly learned after she started looking for internships in her area, this being the second reason why she opted to seek a job this early in her academic journey: the need to gain work experience.

Michelly plans to find an internship in the medical industry and quit her current job, as a result of a strenuous work-study routine that has interfered with her academic tasks and coursework. As she said in a *conversa*, ever since she got a job and started working, her study plan has become "*messy*", despite provisions to alleviate the situation, as Michelly decided to take fewer classes, extending her graduation by one or two semesters. She is in the third year of her undergraduate studies, and internships are not mandatory in her program. In this regard, the other reason mentioned for seeking a job was financial difficulties, which Michelly commented with humor in one of our *conversas*, saying that she wished she were an 'heiress': "*Eu queria era ter nascido herdeira*": (WhatsApp, Dec. 03rd, 2023, Figure 5.4), possibly in dialog with a popular meme in social media and Brazilian singer Anitta's 'rant' about having to work because she was not born an heiress (Figure 5.5).

Michelly's comment is interesting. While, at first glance, it may seem like 'just a joke', the comment could suggest greater awareness of societal issues, as Gen-Zers tend to be more socially conscious when compared with their predecessors (Smith; Anderson, 2018)[118]. Under this light, Michelly's humorous comment might reflect some awareness of the reality of class

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[118] Likely as a result of the impact of the internet and digital technologies on shaping Generation Z's perspectives and experiences, this increased social awareness could mean that, at least in theory, Gen-Zers are more able or willing to access a vast array of information and diverse viewpoints than the older generations, particularly Gen Xers and Baby Boomers, as Millennials tend to also engage in social activism, online and offline (Seelig, 2018).

struggles under late capitalism, or disenchantment with the state of professional prospects in contemporary times, particularly for the younger generations. More realistically, however, the inference we can make about her comment is that the implications between social class and privilege are well understood: heiresses do not have to experience the 'hurdles' lived by the working class – as part of the working class, Michelly needs to work to earn a living wage, as she does not relish in the privilege of those born into capital.

Figure 5.**4**: A screenshot of a *conversa* with Michelly.
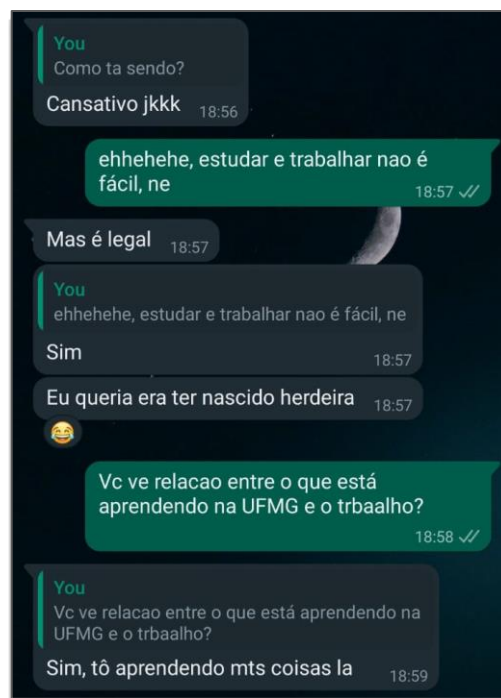
Source: The researcher and Michelly

Figure 5.**5**: A popular meme and singer Anitta's videos.
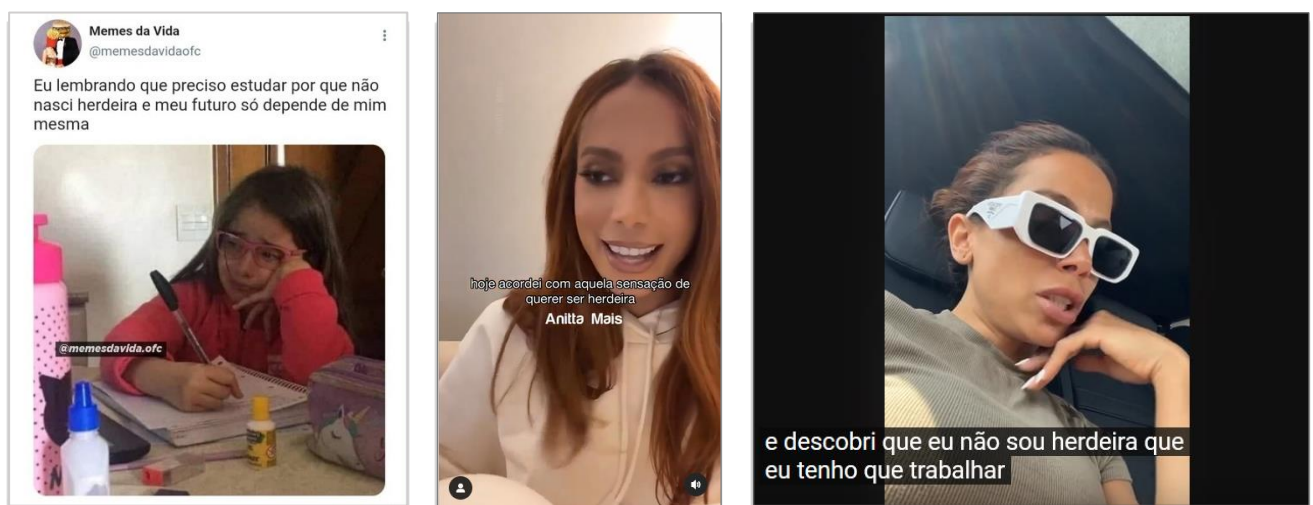
Personal note 3:
meeting Michelly

Screen 1 (MAY 29, 2019):
My first contact with Michelly was through her brother, who had joined and later 'dropped out' of our research. He was really kind to put me in touch with his sister and we started talking via WhatsApp.

Soon we scheduled our first semi-structured interview to be held at the UFMG main campus in CAD 1.

Screen 2 (MAY 29, 2019):
It was a Tuesday evening after one of my EAP classes in 2022 – such a busy year!

I got confused, ended up in CAD 3, rushed to CAD 1 when I realized the mix-up, and met Michelly in the hall of the building. She approached me with a bright smile, leaning forward.

What a disarming hug! ☺

Screen 3 (MAY 29, 2019):
I was definitely not expecting it, having read and been told that we researchers must keep our distance.

But Michelly is such a light-hearted person that she eventually wins you over with her spontaneity and funny emojis – even introverts like myself.

😄 😉 🤓

In this note, I look back at my first face-to-face contact with Michelly at UFMG, in which I tried to coordinate my schedule and hers, my location at UFMG and hers, and ended up 'getting my wires crossed' and going to the wrong building. Michelly kindly waited for me and welcomed me with a big smile and an unexpected hug, contrasting with the conventional advice I had received: that both the researcher and the participants are supposed to maintain a professional distance. To my surprise, this moment of vulnerability and deviation from the norm changed the course of our interview – I believe it made our conversation much more fluid, setting the tone of our interactions with Michelly moving forward.

This is not to my credit. It was Michelly's warmth and spontaneity that initially added a more personal, humanizing element to our exchanges, in stark contrast to the conventional

researcher-participant protocol. This lightheartedness was always part of our interaction, and I found myself chuckling at some of Michelly's remarks about work and the university, that is, I was laughing *with* her. This humorous take seems to come naturally and spontaneously to Michelly as if imprinted in her disposition. To introverts like myself, this is such a delight, to communicate this effortlessly.

It is moments like these, with the unexpected and the human connections that make the experience of doing academic research more memorable and the research process more meaningful. Although I didn't have 'proper' fieldwork to do, I feel my fieldwork was getting to know the research participants in these two years of interactions. Every single thing they shared prompted me to read and investigate. There wasn't fieldwork *in situ*, as I didn't get to observe them in class and at the university. But there was fieldwork on the pages of countless papers and books I got to read about Haiti and Syria – and eventually Brazil.

Caption:

A Happy Holidays message I shared with students and 'academifriends' in December 2022.
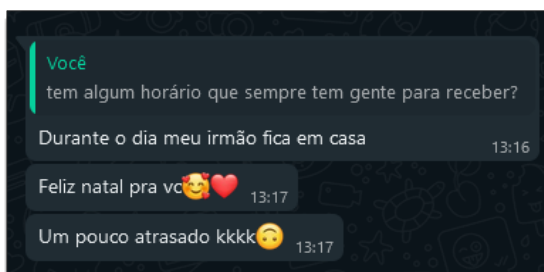
Captions:
Michelly wishing a belated Merry Christmas in response to my Happy Holidays message, and my first contact with her.
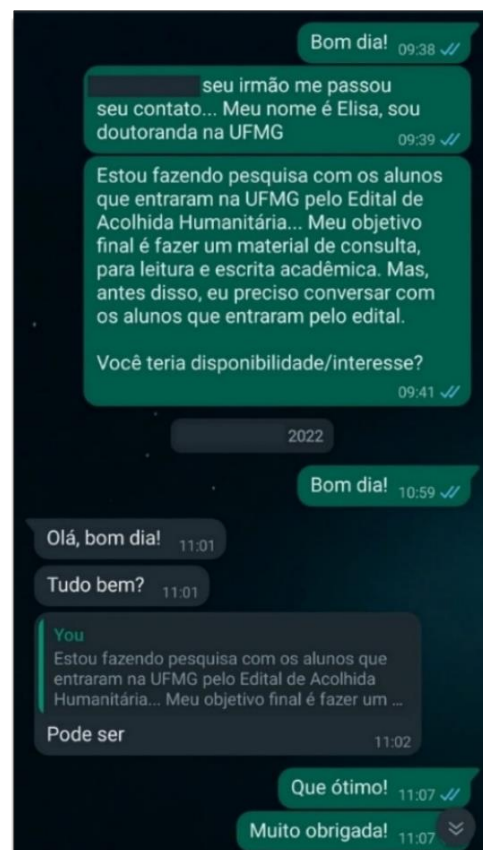
Noelle

Noelle is originally from **Haiti**. She was 17 years old when she immigrated to Brazil. She was **23 years old** when we finalized this PhD dissertation, having joined our research at 21. **Noelle has been living in Brazil since 2019**. She emigrated from the Dominican Republic (DR), not Haiti. Noelle **speaks multiple languages**: Haitian Creole (her L1), Spanish (her L2), French, Portuguese, and English (upper-intermediate skills). She is a very communicative, kind, black-haired **ciswoman racialized as Black** in Brazil, with a very positive outlook on life and a funny disposition. Noelle is a devout member of Jehovah's Witnesses. She has a 13-year-old sister, and lives with her family in the city of Ribeirão das Neves, in the metropolitan area of Belo Horizonte (RMBH).

Emigrating from the DR | Immigrating to Brazil

The transitory character of crisis migration in the 21st century is visible in Noelle's journey, as a displaced person's current place of residence may not be their 'final' destination, even if, at the time, the individual's 'in-between' location is not perceived as temporary. Such is the course of one's migration and resettlement processes: uncertain, sometimes temporary, sometimes less so – with shorter or lengthier bouts depending on the logistics of the journey. For instance, Noelle's experience in Brazil started in Roraima, in the north of the country, where she spent two weeks with her mother and younger sister before joining her father in Belo Horizonte.

Ultimately, the critical event that brought Noelle to Brazil was the devastation caused by the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. However, her journey to Brazil is not that straightforward. Before coming to Brazil, Noelle moved from her native Haiti, where she spent the first nine years of her life, to the DR, living there with her parents and younger sister for the next eight and a half years:

> *At nine I moved there but I went to live with my parents because they had gone first. After a year of them being there, I moved there with them, during that time I lived with an aunt in Haiti. [To Brazil] My father came first, then my mother, my sister and I came.*

(Noelle, WhatsApp, Dec. 15th, 2022)

In the above excerpt, Noelle mentions moving to the DR at nine years old. She did not immediately live with her parents, as they emigrated from Haiti to the DR first and Noelle joined them a year later, during which time she lived with an aunt in Haiti "*After a year of them being there, I moved there with them, during that time I lived with an aunt in Haiti*"/"*Depois de um ano eles estando lá foi que mudei para lá com eles, durante esse tempo eu fiquei morando com uma tia no Haiti*". Noelle explained that in this interim time, her parents were in the process of finding work and housing so that she could join them permanently. Noelle's younger sister, who was one year old at the time, had relocated with Noelle's parents.

After almost a decade in the DR, Noelle and her family immigrated and resettled in Brazil. Similar to Michelly's journey, Noelle's migration process also unfolded in a trickling manner, thus reflecting a pattern in migration scenarios where family members relocate in stages, with one or a few members arriving first, and others following at later times. Such **sequential migration** may be influenced by practical considerations, as one family member establishes a foothold in the host country before the other family members immigrate (whether for employment, housing, or other logistical reasons), an approach that might allow for a smoother transition and adaptation to the new environment.

Noelle's time in the DR was so meaningful that she considers Spanish as her L2, not French, despite having studied French since kindergarten. This is due both to Noelle's age at the time as well as to her studies in French in Haiti. At nine years old, Noelle spent her late childhood years and most of her adolescence in the DR, forging relationships at a moment of significant changes in one's life. Adolescence, in particular, is often marked by (more) autonomy, group membership, exploration, and commitment to various roles and ideological positions (cf. Lally; Valentine-French, 2023). In this regard, Noelle's identities are imbued with references and experiences from the eight and half years she spent in the DR. Moreover, Noelle had very few to no opportunities to practice French in the DR.

The relationship between the DR and Haiti has been tense since the colonial times of Hispaniola; yet another unfortunate lasting by-product of European colonialism, which "shaped the geography, demography and psychology of the new world", in ways that "eventually led to perpetual friction, including the Haitian/Dominican conflict of today", as Morfa (2011, p. 13) explains. Although the DR has always acted as "a temporary and informal refuge in moments of political instability […] or in more critical natural catastrophes, especially after the 2010

earthquake in Haiti"[119] (Wooding, 2011, p. 115), state-level policies have commonly relied on this vulnerability to exploit Haitian immigrants and further divide Dominicans and Haitians in the DR[120]. The tension between the DR and Haiti is galvanized by anti-immigration sentiments coupled with anti-Haitian racism (cf. Childers, 2020) and growing "*antihaitianismo*" (Merritt, 2021)[121].

It is therefore not unreasonable for Noelle's family to emigrate from the DR, despite having spent nearly a decade in the country, particularly if we consider the difficulty in social mobility for Haitians in the neighboring country (Martínez, 2011)[122]. Additionally, the choice of emigrating from the DR to Brazil was the facilitated immigration process. As Noelle noted: her father seems to have chosen Brazil because "*it was within his reach at that time, referring to the visa*"/"*estava no seu alcance naquele momento, referindo ao visto*" (Dec. 15th, 2022, WhatsApp). Noelle did not offer further details and I did not insist on learning more, as this felt like a sensitive topic to her, just as it did with Michelly. The fact that Noelle's family moved to Brazil in 2018 should be considered: by the late 2010s, the number of Haitian immigrants registered as residents in Brazil had increased tenfold (Milesi, 2016).

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[119] "refugio temporal e informal en momentos críticos de inestabilidad política (…) o en catástrofes naturales de mayor envergadura, notablemente después del terremoto en Haití de 2010".

[120] For instance, in the DR, certain underpaid work has traditionally been relegated to Haitian nationals: in the past, work in sugarcane fields in rural areas, in contemporary times, work in construction sites in urban spaces (Childers, 2020, p. 151). Petrozziello (2012, p. 72) explores "various indicators of forced labor among Haitian construction workers in the Dominican Republic", associating exploitation with migration policies, as "There is a clear preference among construction contractors for hiring Haitian workers, presumably because their precarious legal status makes them more flexible and willing to accept exploitative conditions, and less likely to know their rights and be able to claim them". The author adds that "The recruitment process is often informal and less than transparent. It can be characterized as deceptive in cases where misleading information is offered or false promises are made to the worker". However, it should be noted that exploitation does not always come from Dominican nationals. In avoiding a one-sided analysis, Martínez (2011) recaps situations in which Haitians exploit fellow Haitians, meaning that exploitation can take place regardless of national or national alignment.

[121] Childers (2020, p. 153) makes a slight distinction between anti-Haitianism and anti-Haitian racism. While the former stresses "the unique socio-political forces that contribute to discrimination against people of Haitian descent", the latter connects "anti-Haitian experiences to structural racism and global white supremacy". In the author's words, anti-Haitian racism is "systemic discrimination against people of Haitian descent. A form of structural racism, anti-Haitian racism is designed to maintain hierarchical systems that impede people of Haitian descent from political, economic, and social participation in the Dominican Republic. Anti-Haitian racism is rooted in the belief system that people of Haitian descent are inferior to other groups in the Dominican Republic".

[122] In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, the DR adopted an open-borders policy to Haitian nationals, on an emergency basis. However, after this initial period of reception, "repatriation for those who left Haiti irregularly in the wake of the earthquake" increased five times (Kristensen; Wooding, 2013, p. 2). In addition, Dominicans usually leave "the bottom-most jobs for incoming Haitian immigrants" (p. 3), meaning that Haitians often do not find favorable work and living conditions in the neighboring country, a situation that is worsened by the legal status of Haitian immigrants in the DR, as it is "unlikely that the Dominican Republic would consider a fully fledged TPS [temporary protected status] for those who have been displaced by so-called natural disasters such as earthquakes" (p. 3).

Schooling in Belo Horizonte | Learning Portuguese

Noelle's experience with schooling in Brazil is rather short if compared with the other participants: she did **only the last year of secondary education** in Brazil, having taken most of her formal education in Haiti and the DR. Noelle has been exposed to and engaged with multiple languages and education systems throughout her life, which may explain her choice of discipline and major: a teaching university degree in Languages. Because of her very short experience with the schooling system in Brazil, I decided to focus this subsection on Noelle's schooling experience in Haiti and the DR, based on my research and what she chose to share with me in our *conversas*.

In Haiti, schools should have Kreyòl as a language of instruction, with French taught orally from the 1st grade (Hadjadj, 2000) as a subject, not as a vehicle of instruction (Dejean, 2010), an introduction made via the educational reforms of the 1970s. Given its diglossia[123], with high status assigned to French and low status ascribed to Haitian Creole, in effect from the underbedding layers of European colonialism[124], a dispute over the language of instruction remains, based on pervasive language ideologies entangled in racism and social stratification. While linguists, scholars, educators, and some political leaders invest in actions to bridge the gap between Kreyòl and French, as 95% of Haiti's population are monolingual speakers of Kreyòl (Dejean, 2010), antagonistic language ideologies remain in effect, from the times of slavery to the present days (DeGraff, 2005; Hebblethwaite, 2012), with European lexifiers positioned as languages of prestige and high status and Creoles, as this situation is not unique to Haiti (Meakins, 2022, and Sousa, Mücke, and Krämer, 2019, for discussions), placed as

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[123] Creolists (e.g., Dejean, 1983; 1993) dispute this, arguing that diglossic or bilingual status implies that speakers can make a choice between languages, which is not the case for the majority of the Haitian population. Under this light, Haiti is therefore largely monolingual: there is "the bilingual elite and the monolingual urban and rural masses" (Gibson, 2011, p. 19).

[124] As Zéphir (2015, p. 120) explains, "French was the high language, the language of the ruling class (that is of the French planters and their colonial establishments) and Creole the language of the plantation slaves." The slave system in colonial Haiti, as in every colony in the Americas, was highly stratified, and racism played a defining role in language policies and planning, literacy practices, and access to education: "These plantation slaves were known as the *bossal* slaves, meaning 'freshly arrived from Africa. (….) the illiterate majority of the slave population, the *bossal*, were monolingual speakers of Haitian Creole. The smaller number of *Creole* slaves, referring to those born in the colony, who primarily worked in their masters' *habitations* (homes), of course, spoke Haitian Creole, but in addition had varying degrees of proficiency in French. The mulatto population certainly had greater proficiency in French (…) that correlated with their level of education." (2015, pp. 120-121, italics in the original). Present-day language ideologies born out of colonialism gained traction scientifically through neocolonial propaganda promoted by linguists and Creole speakers, based on Creole Exceptionalism: "the postulation of exceptional and abnormal characteristics in the diachrony and/or synchrony of Creole languages" (DeGraff, 2005, p. 534).

inferior. In this regard, Noelle enlightened me as to the complex linguistic situation in Haitian schools:

> *But it varies a lot, you know? In Haiti, it is very mixed, it varies from person to person, from family to family, from school to school, you know? Like, there are schools that really teach French, from the time the child starts learning until you graduate. But there are other cases that, which was my case, right? In preschool, you know? From three, four years old, it was in Creole, so, right? Then you, it starts integrating with French at school. But the student is always encouraged to French. French is very present in the classroom, especially because it is also part of the language we speak, right? Because of the colonization by the French. So, let's say that French is predominant at school. And Creole is used, yes, but the focus is not Creole but French.*

(Noelle, WhatsApp, Dec. 15th, 2022)

In this excerpt, Noelle emphasizes the significant variation in language instruction in Haitian schools, which she attributes to factors such as personal preferences, family practices, and differences between educational institutions ("*it varies from person to person, from family to family, from school to school*"/"*é muito misturado, vai de pessoa pra pessoa, de família pra família, de colégio pra colégio, entendeu?*"). In Noelle's case, early education (preschool) was conducted in Creole from three to four years old. This implies that Haitian Creole served as the initial language of instruction before integrating with French later in her schooling process. Noelle also notes that students are consistently encouraged to learn French, and that this language holds prominence in the classroom, which reflects its historical significance due to colonization. In particular, Noelle stresses that this pervasiveness is also because French is "*part of the language we speak*"/"*faz parte do idioma também que a gente fala, né?*", which implies that she sees Haitian Creole as deriving from French.

The reference to colonization and the persistent influence of the French language in education underscore the subjugated historical and sociolinguistic position of Haitian Creole. The enduring impact of (neo)colonial history on language policies and practices in Haiti is a significant element of the country's linguistic landscape, as French continues to shape the linguistic priorities in Haitian education, despite efforts by scholars and educators to spotlight and promote Kreyòl in the Haitian school system (e.g., DeGraff, 2012) and Haitian society. As Zéphir (2015) notes, one of the main challenges is the role of French as an aspirational language (much like English in Brazil, I should add): many Kreyòl-speaking Haitians want to learn French for the high social and cultural status this language carries in Haiti and beyond.

Noelle's experience also hints at potential challenges in the educational system, where the emphasis on French may pose difficulties for students. This is because French is used as a hegemonic tool in Haiti, with much of its schooling system divided between French-based instruction, which most Haitians do not speak, and Kreyòl, leading to systemic inequality in education. Proponents of Kreyòl as the only language of instruction in Haiti (e.g., DeGraff, 2019; Dejean, 2006) seek to avoid a two-tier system: "one in French for the *bourgeois* and the other in Creole for the *pèp*", as Zéphir (2015, p. 124) explains. In this regard, DeGraff (2019, p. xxii) calls for a truly critical and decolonizing stance on education in his native Haiti, stating that the use of the French language in the Haitian schooling system is "not a mere technical and neutral pedagogical endeavor". DeGraff (*idem*) adds: "those who uncritically teach in French are complicit in the reproduction of the colonial ideology that excludes millions of monolingual Kreyòl speakers from education, administration, justice, etc." (emphasis added).

To Noelle, schools in the DR and Brazil were considerably easier when compared to Haiti. This could be because, as mentioned, French is not a second language to most Haitians but rather a foreign language, acting as such when used as a medium of instruction in schools, meaning that contents across disciplines and subjects are often taught in what most Haitians would comprehend and produce as a foreign language, with limited linguistic competence to effectively engage with the topics under study.

In addition, a school curriculum "based upon an early twentieth century French model, lacks relevancy because teachers provide one-way classical exposition to passive student 'vessels' who are expected to *memorize* French instead of mastering content" (Hebblethwaite, 2012, p. 257, italics in the original). This likely explains the high dropout rates of Haitian students in elementary and secondary education[125], as most Haitian schools follow a highly Eurocentric pedagogical framework inspired by the leading private institutions in the country: Catholic schools, where French and classic European education are favored over Kreyòl and Haitian culture (Lubin; François, 2017, p. 316).

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[125] The high rates of school dropout in Haiti stem from economic challenges, frequent grade repetition, and language barriers, aggravated by a lack of resources, teaching expertise, effective management, and organization (Luzincourt; Gulbrandson, 2010), which have been intensified after the earthquake. School dropout and non-attendance rates are also associated with unemployment, "as 52.1% of broad unemployment in the metropolitan area (Port-au-Prince), 46.5% in other cities; 34.2% in rural areas" lead to chronic poverty (Lindor; Carro-Suárez, 2021, p. 26) and further impede the young from completing their studies, with women and rural communities more likely to experience both unemployment and poverty. As Lindor (2019) explains, poverty and illiteracy are deeply intertwined in rural Haiti, threatening "the fundamental freedom and prosperity of the communities" (p. 30.

About schooling in Brazil, Noelle reported not having faced difficulties[126], as noted in the following excerpt:

> *In Brazil, it was quite easy, actually. I didn't get to do much, as I only did the third year here, so, for me, it was very good, because I avoided the national exam, which I would normally have to do when you graduate, you know? There's this national exam that you take, which is from the government [in Haiti]. Even if you pass the school subject, if you don't pass [the exam], if you're not approved by the government, you won't go to high school. And when you graduate too. Like ENEM, you know? But ENEM is very different in Brazil, right? You take the ENEM to enter a university. There [in Haiti] you really have to do it, right? To test your knowledge. When you graduate, it's like, all the subjects you studied your whole life, right? Then they give you a test, but if you pass it with the teachers, right? In each subject, ok, you have a grade, but if you don't pass, and you fail [the test], you will do high school again, that is, the grade you failed. So, I managed to escape that test, you know? For me it was very good, because I completed the third year and didn't have to take that test and that alone makes me happy.*

(Noelle, WhatsApp, Dec. 15th, 2022)

In the above excerpt, Noelle highlights a key advantage of not having concluded high school in Haiti: she avoided taking the national exam that determines whether students have passed secondary education and can pursue a university degree. Noelle explains that teachers assess students in each subject, and failure in any subject results in the students retaking that specific grade in high school, which is similar to the Brazilian system. However, the national exams in Haiti, according to Noelle, can also set the students back one grade if they fail ("*but if you don't pass, and you fail [the test], you will do high school again, that is, the grade you failed*"/ in Portuguese:"*se você reprovar [na prova], vai fazer o ensino médio de novo, ou seja, a série que você reprovou*").

This is indeed different from Brazil, where the ENEM is primarily employed *by the students* **as a means to access HE** (to the Ministry of Education, it is also a way of assessing the quality of basic education in the country). In Haiti and Brazil, national examinations are comprehensive tests covering all subjects upon graduation; however, in Brazil, failure to take or 'pass' the ENEM does not lead students to retake the last grade of high school and/or not graduate altogether. Hence, Noelle expresses satisfaction and a sense of relief at avoiding the

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[126] As for ENEM, Noelle mentioned having practiced the essay and focusing on not mixing the languages she was familiar with at the time of taking the exam: Spanish and Portuguese. I discuss this in Mattos (under development), when addressing the participants experiences with ENEM, which I have not been able to include in this dissertation.

exam in Haiti ("*So, I managed to escape that test, you know?*"/"*Pra mim foi muito bom, porque eu fiz terceiro ano e não tive que passar por essa prova e já fico feliz da vida*").

Noelle elaborated on the differences between schooling in Haiti, the DR, and Brazil, comparing the three countries:

> *There in Haiti it's very strict, in terms of teaching, you know? Like, everything is the way they want, the student can't make a single mistake, you have to work like a horse. In the Dominican Republic, it was more relaxed, it was more relaxed in terms of studying. And at school, it's the same as here in Brazil. Spanish, so the students here have Portuguese, right? And they [Dominicans] had French and they had Spanish. No, French as a foreign language at school, we had French and English. Spanish was already theirs, right? Just like here in Brazil, we have English and Portuguese, right? Which is the country's [language]. It was very different, it was very relaxed, actually, but compared to Haiti, it was very lax. It wasn't that easy, exactly, but compared to Haiti, which was very strict, with a lot of things to study, it was quite lax, actually.*

(Noelle, WhatsApp, Dec. 15th, 2022)

In the excerpt, Noelle emphasizes the strictness of the teaching approach in Haitian schools, which she describes as a very demanding environment where students are expected to adhere to rules and strictly follow their superiors' guidelines. In contrast, both the DR and Brazil are seen as having a more relaxed atmosphere in terms of studying, providing a notable difference from Haiti's stringent standards ("*everything is the way they want, the student can't make a single mistake, you have to work like a horse. In the Dominican Republic, it was more relaxed, it was more relaxed in terms of studying*"/"*é tudo do jeito que eles querem, o aluno não pode vacilar nem um pouco, tem que estudar igual um condenado. Já na República Dominicana foi mais relaxado, foi mais relaxado a respeito de estudar.*").

In terms of language education, Noelle draws parallels between the DR and Brazil, observing curricular similarities, with students in the DR having both French and English as additional languages taught at schools, with Spanish as the primary language of instruction, and Brazil having English, with Portuguese as the principal vehicle of communication ("*And at school, it's the same as here in Brazil. Spanish, so the students here have Portuguese, right? And they [Dominicans] had French and they had Spanish. No, French as a foreign language at school, we had French and English. Spanish was already theirs, right? Just like here in Brazil, we have English and Portuguese, right? Which is the country's [language]*" (In Portuguese: "*E lá na escola eles, assim, tinham igual aqui no Brasil, o espanhol, assim, os alunos aqui têm o português, né? E eles [os Dominicanos] tinham francês e o espanhol. Não, francês como língua estrangeira na escola, a gente tinha francês e inglês. O espanhol já era*

deles, né? Igual aqui no Brasil, a gente tem o inglês e o português, né? Que já é [a língua] do país").

Noelle's overall sentiment is that, although not necessarily easy, the education in the DR and Brazil appears more lenient when compared with Haiti's rigorous approach at school ("*It was very different, it was very relaxed, actually, but compared to Haiti, it was very lax. It wasn't that easy, exactly, but compared to Haiti, which was very strict, with a lot of things to study, it was quite lax, actually*"/"*Foi bem diferente, foi bem relaxado, na verdade, mas comparado com o Haiti, foi bem relaxado. Não era fácil assim, entre aspas, mas comparado com o Haiti, era muito rígido, muitas coisas pra estudar, foi bem relaxante, na verdade*"). This is similar to Amirah's observations, with the Brazilian educational system also perceived as less considerably strict than the Syrian system. Perhaps not coincidentally, Syria was under French rule during the French Mandate in that country.

Finally, regarding speaking Kreyòl and French, Noelle mentioned having lost touch with French after moving to the DR, stating that:

> *Yes, in fact I grew up with both languages, but my mother wasn't so demanding in this case, I grew up speaking Haitian Creole. But when I was about to reach that very demanding stage, really demanding in the language, which was French, I had already moved to the DR. So, I kind of completely distanced myself [from French] and spent, like I spent eight years there [in the DR], then I kind of ended up completely disconnecting from French. But Creole remained, right? Because it was the language that we used more and that we spoke in the country and all... I didn't reach that stage where it [French] was so demanding, because normally as children they teach the basics. Then it starts to develop. In the fifth and sixth [grades] it starts. Kind of like that, you know? Then it's more demanding and I stopped studying there [in Haiti], it was in elementary school, so I didn't go through that phase, you know.*

(Noelle, WhatsApp, Dec. 15th, 2022)

In this excerpt, Noelle reflects on her linguistic upbringing, explaining that she was exposed to Haitian Creole and French during her childhood. However, the emphasis on French is increased usually from the 5th and 6th grades. But before encountering these heightened demands of the French language, Noelle moved to the DR, which led to a disconnection from French ("*But when I was about to reach that very demanding stage, really demanding in the language, which was French, I had already moved to the DR. So, I kind of completely distanced myself [from French]*"/"*Mas quando estava prestes a chegar àquela fase de muita exigência mesmo, exigência no idioma, que era o francês, eu já tinha me mudado para República Dominicana. Então eu meio que me afastei totalmente [do francês]*"). Noelle then

spent eight years in the DR and, as a result, her proficiency in French did not progress to the demanding stages typically encountered in later grades of elementary school.

Joining UFMG | Living in Belo Horizonte

Noelle is in her **second year of undergraduate studies** at UFMG, with a choice of major based on her interests in languages and education. She reported choosing a Languages major and a teaching degree "*because I saw myself [in the course] and because I love learning new languages*"/"*Porque me identifiquei [com o curso] e porque eu amo aprender novos idiomas*" (Noelle, the first online questionnaire, March 2022). As mentioned, this choice is most likely associated with Noelle's multilanguage childhood and adolescence, having experienced different school systems in three countries: Haiti (from kindergarten to first grade), the DR (from first to the penultimate grade of high school), and Brazil (the last year of high school).

Charts 5.**1** and **5**.**2**: Municipality of residence and nationality of international migrants in RMBH.
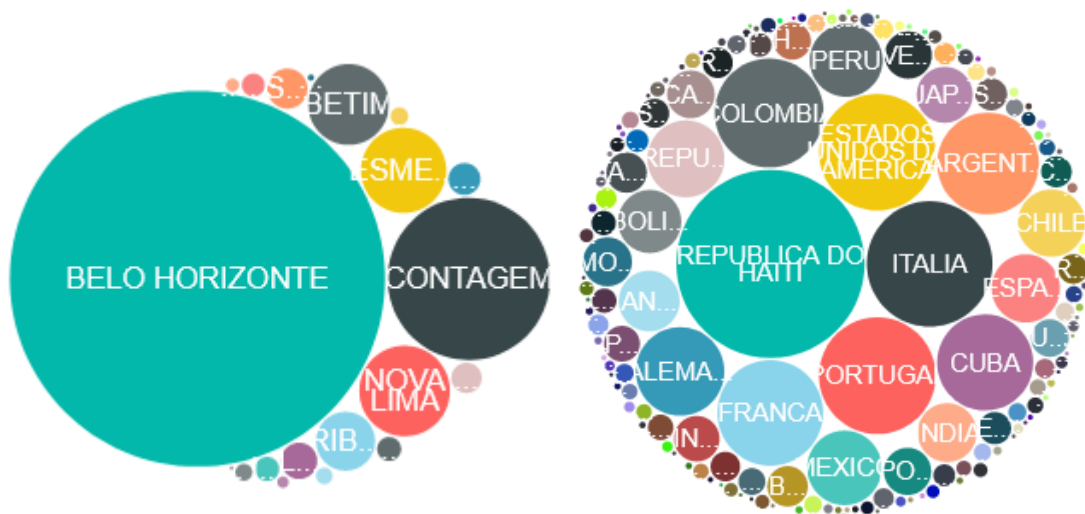
Source: Digital Atlas of International Migration in Minas Gerais (OBMinas, 2016).

Note: The colors of each municipality and nationality are assigned automatically in the system − no correlation is made between municipality and nationality in these charts.

As with most immigrants in Belo Horizonte, Noelle and her family live in the RMBH. The Betim and Contagem municipalities, which tend to offer more affordable housing and are closer to the Minas Gerais Supply Centers (Ceasa) where immigrants are often employed (cf. Gomes, 2021). Hence, **the RMBH tends to concentrate a large contingent of international persons**, as illustrated in Chart 5.1 above. Belo Horizonte has the leading position, as it is often where international students initially/traditionally settle while living temporarily in the city. Until 2016, 'student' was the occupation of most international persons (Chart 5.3). In addition,

in the RMBH, most of the immigrants are males aged 20 to 39 (cf. Charts 5.4 and 5.5). Haitians make up the majority of the immigrants in the RMBH (cf. Chart 5.2).

Chart 5.3: Occupations of international migrants in the RMBH, 'student' in green.
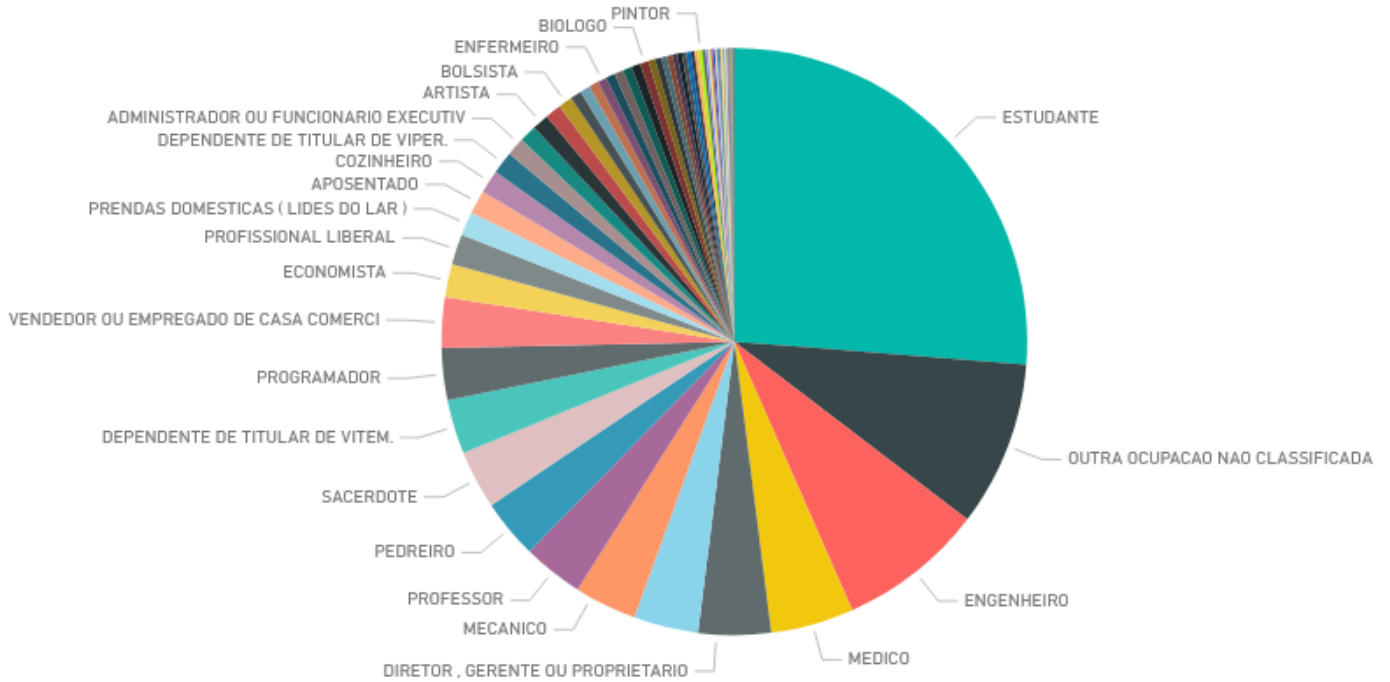
Source: Digital Atlas of International Migration in Minas Gerais (OBMinas, 2016).

Charts 5.4 and **5.5**: age and sex of international migrants in the RMBH.
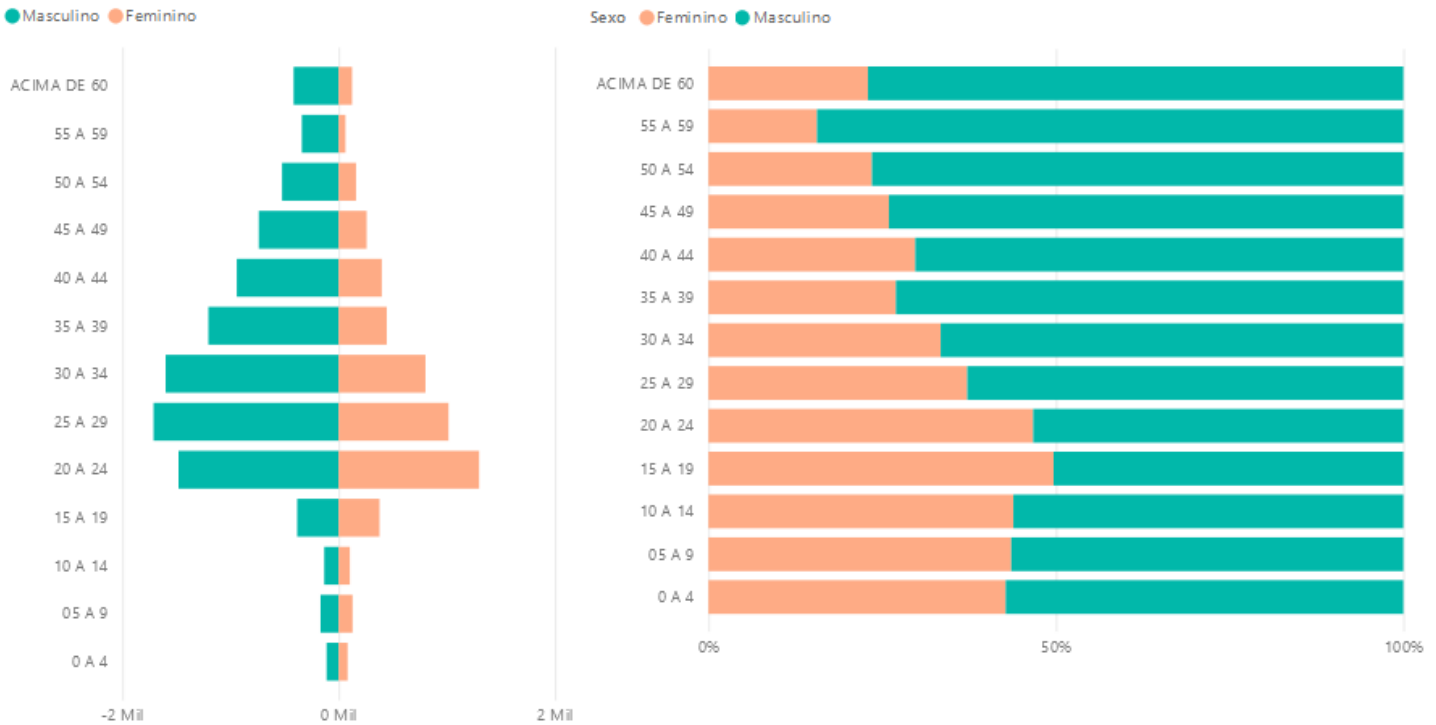
Source: Digital Atlas of International Migration in Minas Gerais (OBMinas, 2016).

Noelle lives with her parents and her younger sister in the municipality of Ribeirão das Neves, 33 kilometers away from Belo Horizonte and the UFMG main campus, in the San Remo neighborhood[127]. She studies in the morning, taking two buses to UFMG and two buses back home – a total of two hours or more per route, depending on the traffic conditions and public transport. Noelle's daily routine exemplifies the effort required from students who live far from their educational institutions. Lengthy commutes are by no means uncommon for students in countries where public transportation can be unreliable and traffic congestion is a regular issue, as tends to be the case in urban areas in Brazil[128].

Although long commute time tends to impact students negatively, as mentioned, we must keep in mind that long commute times may be offset by a sense of community: living with one's family and having a support system in place, surrounding oneself with those with whom one shares values and culture. In Noelle's case, this sense of community is present in Ribeirão das Neves not only in Noelle living with her parents and younger sister but also due to her connections and friends in the Jehovah's Witnesses congregation in her neighborhood. Preaching is one of Noelle's main activities outside the university.

As she told me in a *conversa*, her religion is something she deems very personal, something that she does with her congregation friends at church and in the privacy of her house: "*It's something more private, that is, at home, I take advantage of the opportunities to do this*"/"*É algo mais particular, ou seja, em casa, aproveito as oportunidades para estar fazendo isso*" (Nov 14th, 2022, WhatsApp). Different from Michelly in Esmeraldas, Noelle seems to have formed important bonds in her neighborhood. For example, in her Instagram account, most

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[127] Ribeirão das Neves is considered a dormitory town from where most of its inhabitants commute to work in Belo Horizonte. In the past years, investments have been made to change this scenario and develop the city in three main areas: economy/business, urban infrastructure, and education (Felice, 2020), thereby providing the local population with better living conditions. This is an important step in dismantling negative stereotypes and discourses associated with the city (cf. Souza, 2008; Silva, 2016), with its historical development often linked to correctional facilities established on the outskirts of the town (Silva; Stephan, 2015), inadvertently (?) 'erasing' the rich cultural memory of its history and community (Le Ven; Augusto, 2021), which female political leaders in "Neves", as its inhabitants affectionately call the town, struggle to maintain alive amidst the neoliberal and conservative policies (Mestre, 2023). This stigma is fueled by the fact that Ribeirão das Neves concentrates the largest number of penitentiaries in Minas Gerais, one of which is a public-private partnership (the only of this kind in the country), often called a 'prison town' ('*cidade-presídio*', Aguiar, 2023). Ribeirão das Neves has an HDI of 0.684. The city is divided into three regions: the Center, Justinópolis, and Veneza and 148 neighborhoods distributed over a total area of 155.105 km^2.: https://www.mbi.com.br/mbi/biblioteca/cidade/ribeirao-das-neves-mg-br/;%20https://cidades.ibge.gov.br/brasil/mg/ribeirao-das-neves/panorama. Access: Jan. 12, 2024.

[128] https://www.fump.ufmg.br/. Access: Feb. 05, 2024. Noelle is assisted by the Mendes Pimentel University Foundation (Fump) of UFMG, which helps low-income students, financially, with affordable food (at the on-site university restaurants), housing (university dorms near the main campus), transport (monthly stipends to be used in the Belo Horizonte and RMBH public transport system), and free/affordable health services (through the Student Health Program, which provides medical, psychological, as well as dental care for assisted students).

posts refer to her religious congregation. Religious communities continue to play a crucial role in providing social support and a sense of belonging, which can be particularly significant for individuals in urban or otherwise impersonal settings.

Personal note 4: meeting Noelle

My first contact with Noelle was completely by chance. I was on my way to teach an EAP class at noon at UFMG when I heard two people speaking what to me sounded like French. Without my glasses, it took me a while to realize it was Michelly's brother and a friend. I eventually waved, approached them, said hello. As our quick chat unfolded, I decided to ask Noelle to join the research. And she said yes on the spot! Back in 2022 I was not teaching at noon. The only reason I was at the university at that time was to cover for my supervisor. Serendipity!

In this note, I recall my first contact with Noelle, purely coincidental, occurring while I was on my way to teach a class on the Pampulha UFMG campus at a time I wasn't supposed to be teaching at noon anymore. My EAP supervisor needed to me to cover for her that day, which is how I managed to bump into Michelly's brother and Noelle. Despite my introverted inclination, and perhaps because it was such an unplanned, serendipitous encounter, I made a split-second decision to approach them and say hello. Noelle projected such positive energy that I invited her to join the research. I was so happy that she agreed immediately and was willing to contribute. I feel that this cooperative energy has marked our interactions, further expanding our chats way beyond my research, as Noelle and I have shared teaching materials, public call announcements, job adverts, and language-related workshops, just as I would with my Languages peers. I guess Noelle is very much part of the community by now. 😊

Syed

Syed is originally from **Syria**. He immigrated to Brazil when he was **11 years old**, and has been **living in Brazil since 2014**. Syed was **22 years old** when we concluded the PhD dissertation, having joined our research at 20 years old. Syed speaks **two languages**: Arabic (his L1) and Portuguese (his L2). He has intermediate proficiency in English, which he uses mostly for reading at the university. Syed is a determined, eloquent, and ambitious black-haired **cisman racialized as White** in Brazil. Syed had already started two universities in Brazil, as will be narrated further when I address his time at UFMG.

Family-wise, Syed is the oldest of three children, as he has two sisters: an 18-year-old Syria-born, who is preparing to go to university, and a 10-year-old born in Brazil. His family has lived in the city of **São Paulo** since they migrated to Brazil. Just like Amirah's, Syed's parents also work together, but they do so in a segment quite different from their occupations in Syria. Syed is of Muslin faith, as is his family. He observes Ramadan and navigates well in a mostly Christian country like Brazil – he says it is a matter of education and respect, which certainly speaks to his intercultural competence.

Emigrating from Syria-Lebanon | Immigrating to Brazil

Syed and his family left Syria and emigrated to Brazil because of the Syrian Civil War, just like Amirah. However, differently from Amirah and her family, Syed's spent ten months in Lebanon and initially considered resettling there, as the two countries share linguistic and cultural habits. Because Syrians had assisted the Lebanese during the Lebanese Civil War, in the late 1970s, Syrians fleeing to Lebanon believed they would be received with open arms, as Syed told me in our first semi-structured interview. That was really not the case, as verified by numerous studies: Syrian refugees in Lebanon were met with indifference and hostility[129] and

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[129] Christophersen *et al.* (2013) report that most Lebanese nationals do not feel comfortable living and working with Syrian refugees. Kikano; Fauveaud, and Lizarralde (2021, p. 430) discuss the so-called 'policy of no policy' by the Lebanese government in which "the responsibility for refugee control and administration was transferred to municipalities" in the country, resulting in harder restrictions imposed on poor Syrian refugees. This "policy of neutrality" (Janmyr, 2016, p. 60) served political purposes, "to preserve the delicate political balance between the various sectarian forces which, as political factions, were unable to come to agreement", distancing Lebanon from a country of asylum by positioning it as a country of transit in which the refugees would remain only on a temporary basis before migrating and resettling somewhere else (p. 61). As Mourad (2021) notes, displaced Syrians in

offered lower wages when compared to their Lebanese counterparts in the labor market, a practice justified on economic grounds – the difference between the Syrian and Lebanese currencies has been 'translated into' Syrians participating more in the low-wage market, as Kikano, Fauveaud, and Lizarralde (2021) explain. Housing was also subpar, with a portion of Syrian refugees living in "informal settlements" or "at the risk of frequent evictions and exploitative rent prices" (p. 431).

Like Amirah's family, Syed's had a comfortable life in Syria before the war. His father was an engineer and his mother was a homemaker. They had two apartments, one car, shared three stores with uncles and aunts, and Syed's father had his own engineering practice in the capital of Syria. This suggests that, just like Amirah, Syed's family had the means to emigrate from Syria-Lebanon to other countries, therefore seeking to avoid a more precarious situation, such as living in cross-border refugee encampments.

As Schon (2019, p. 17) explains, "migration timing is influenced by motivation without opportunity, opportunity without motivation, and both motivation and opportunity". Syed's and Amirah's families had both the motivation and the opportunity to migrate, as they were willing to relocate, had resources and assets they could liquidate, and encountered favorable legal conditions to resettle in Brazil, as the country facilitated the entry of Syrian refugees in 2013[130].

Work-wise, Syed's father's Engineering degree was not valid in Brazil. For two years, he tried revalidating his Engineering diploma to practice the profession in the country, to no avail, leading him to start selling clothes, informally, in the São Paulo garment district. Syed's mother started making custom Syrian food on-demand, and the family eventually decided to focus their efforts on the food business: with the help and encouragement of Brazilian and Syrian volunteers, Syed's father started selling Syrian food online, and soon after opened a restaurant, where Syed worked after school at the cash register and helped with the finances. The business remains thriving, almost a decade since its launch.

Lebanon are referred to by several different "legal, social and political categories": "1. nationality-based (whether Syrian or broadly foreign); 2. class-based (either labour/worker and/or motorcycles); 3. refugees or more commonly 'displaced' (*nazihin*); and finally, 4. terms of closeness and care, such as 'brothers' or 'dear' (*al-kiram*)" (pp. 4-7). Such a variety in naming reflects the different attitudes toward the Syrian immigrants and refugees in the country.

[130] CONARE Normative Resolution 17 of 20 September 2013, which facilitated refugee applications by Syrian nationals to enter Brazil. The resolution has since been revoked and replaced by Normative Resolution 31 of 13 November 2019, based on Law 13445/2017, the Brazilian Migration Law, in force as of 21 November 2017 (Brasil, 2017): https://dspace.mj.gov.br/handle/1/5788. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

Brazil was not Syed's family's first choice, but it was their only legal option. In addition to spending two months in Lebanon, Syed's father requested asylum in European countries (Germany and Switzerland), Canada, and the United States, receiving negative responses each time. Syed's family decided to immigrate to Brazil because it was the only country that offered a legal alternative for the immediate family to rebuild their lives, as the situation in Lebanon was also tense (the country closed its borders to Syrian refugees in 2015, cf. Figure 5.6). Syed came to Brazil with his parents and younger sister, leaving his uncles, aunts, and grandfather in Syria. It was four years before Syed's grandfather managed to join the family in Brazil, due to migration restrictions in and around Syria, financial issues, and his ailing health.

Figure 5.6: Map of Syria and entry requirements at its borders.
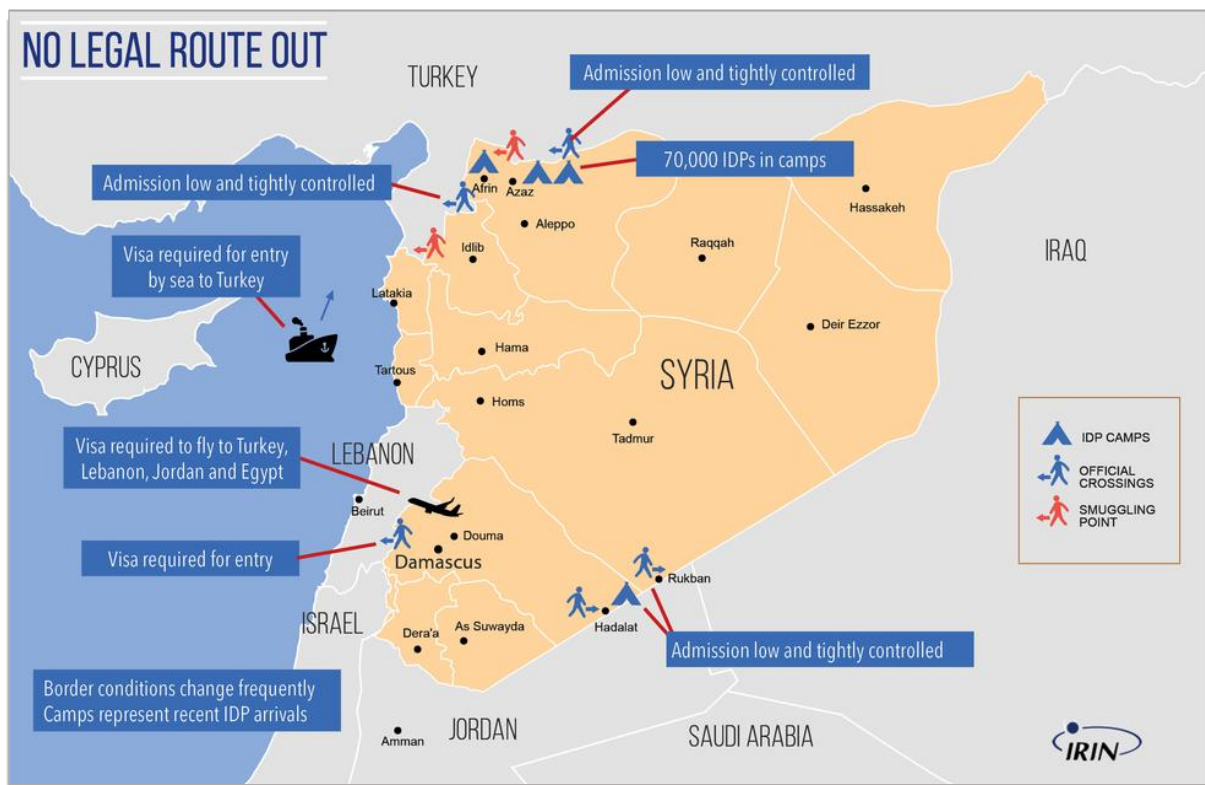
Source: IRIN (https://www.refworld.org/docid/56e2f4014.html. Access: Jan. 05, 2024)

Figure 5.6 shows the entry requirements for Syrian nationals at each border and border crossing. As mentioned in Vio (2016), the closure of EU member state embassies in Syria, and the reluctance of embassies and/or consulates in neighboring countries to process and/or issue visa and asylum applications for Syrian nationals, exacerbated the difficulties faced by those seeking asylum and refuge. This bureaucratic impasse impeded Syrians from accessing legal and safe channels, forcing many to resort to alternative and often perilous, routes. This was

what Syed's family wished to avoid: restrictions imposed on their exit and unsafe migration. In this scenario, Brazil came as a safe and fully legal alternative for migration and resettlement.

Upon arriving in Brazil, Syed's family was assisted by other Syrians in São Paulo. As Syed shared during the workshop at the high school where I was teaching in 2022, his family knew very little about Brazil before resettling in the country – it was other Syrian immigrants (some under refugee status) who assisted them with housing and work in São Paulo. Similar to Amirah's experience in Brazil, religion played a central role in Syed's family's resettlement, as they had the assistance of fellow Muslims and Brazilian NGO volunteers at the Omar ibn Khattab Mosque in São Paulo (also known as '*Mesquita do Pari*' due to its location in the Pari neighborhood). Syed's family learned Portuguese at the mosque, then began having classes at an NGO. The institution helped Syed and his sister at school, as there were no language courses or welcoming initiatives to assist them in adapting to the school system in São Paulo.

What is truly remarkable in Syed's and Amirah's migration journeys is the 'network of support' they found when they arrived in Brazil, without personally knowing a single person or having family in the country. The support initially came from religious groups of Syrians, either of Muslin or Christian faith. Syrian immigrants, refugees, and Brazil-born individuals of Arab descent (the now-grown children of first- and/or second-generation Arab immigrants in the country)[131] have created and maintained formal and informal associations to share and/or celebrate their origins and the cultures of the so-called 'Arab world'. Some of these associations are more modest, while others have become increasingly luxurious, thus positioning Arab/Middle Eastern cultures within the symbolic realm of social and cultural aspiration. In this regard, as Karam (2007) notes, Arab/Middle Eastern culture has grown in Brazil:

> *In the late twentieth century, Middle Eastern culinary, music, and dance forms have been appropriated by the Brazilian national market. Whether it is the lowbrow Habib's fast-food chain, with more than 150 franchises in the country, or belly dancing in uptown studios and a prime-time soap opera, "Middle Eastern culture" is produced through national circuits. (...) Retaking the appropriation of Arab culture, Syrian-Lebanese descendants have sought and gained greater recognition in a consumptively diversified Brazil.*

(Karam, 2007, p. 122)

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[131] See Truzzi (2018) for a historical account of the Syrian-Lebanese migration to São Paulo in the 19th and 20th centuries, and Bittencourt-Francisco (2022) for 23 interviews collected over two years of research with Syrian and Lebanese immigrants and their descendants in Rio de Janeiro. Bittencourt-Francisco (2017) analyzes Syrian-Lebanese immigration in Rio Grande do Sul within 1890 and 1949.

In the highly commodified and commodifying reality of the 'post'-late modern world, Brazilians appropriated and incorporated Arab/Middle Eastern cultural elements, bringing a set of cultural artifacts to the fore, from cuisine (e.g., kibbeh, kebab, sfiha, and tabbouleh) to art and decoration (e.g., belly dance and the Persian carpet). The telenovela "*O Clone*" helped to popularize Arab/Middle Eastern culture in the country in the early 2000s, despite several inaccuracies (cf. Barbosa, 2005), and further elevated Arab/Middle Eastern cultural capital. This means that upon resettling in Brazil, Syrian nationals are likely not met with a sense of estrangement; at least not in large urban centers such as São Paulo, where the majority of the Arab diaspora is located still (Mott, 2000).

This is important, as Syed himself mentioned during the Arabic language and culture workshop, enlisting the names of notable public persons and institutions in the country (e.g., Fernando Haddad and the Syrian-Lebanese Hospital). Likewise, Syed's family found in Arabic food a source of income in Brazil. Syed argued that Brazilians are neither unfamiliar nor resistant to this type of food, despite the adaptations required to suit the Brazilian taste. This is very different for migrants from Haiti, whose migration to Brazil is still quite recent in comparison, and is perhaps producing a new diaspora in the country.

It should be noted that this does not mean there is no discrimination toward Arab peoples in Brazil. There is, particularly for those of Muslin faith (cf. Souza; Zolin-Vesz, 2018). However, the fact that many Arabic individuals are racialized as White (or leaning toward 'lightness') possibly makes their social insertion *less difficult* than for those individuals racialized as Black, or whose non-whiteness or blackness leans toward darker shades (Moraes; Camargo, 2022). Moreover, the point I make is not toward debating over whose culture, skin color, language, or nationality has more/less privilege, as this can produce the opposite effect of inclusivity. The crux of the problem is that in the hierarchy of Brazilian society, being racialized as White has different effects from being racialized as Black, even when/if the 'White' person experiences xenophobia.

Schooling in São Paulo | Learning Portuguese

Syed's experience with the schooling process in Brazil is somewhat unusual: like many immigrant and refugee children, he joined the public school system in São Paulo, where he and his sister underwent primary education. The choice of school – an institution near the family's house – was made with the assistance of Brazilian and Syrian Muslims from the Pari Mosque where Syed's father prayed daily. This community helped Syed and his family with daily

errands, the school enrollment procedures, and communication in their first three months in Brazil. As Syed told me in a *conversa*, his father called the mosque from Lebanon before they moved to Brazil, so they would have someone to host them upon arrival.

Syed and his family have always been very willing to share their migration and resettlement experiences with institutions and news outlets when approached[132]. In one of these moments, when Syed was asked to give a talk at an elite private school in São Paulo, he was 'rewarded' with a scholarship for the entire three years of high school. This reward led to a negotiation between Syed's parents and the school so that Syed's sister could join him at the school and the family could move from the outskirts of São Paulo to the South-region where the school is located (where Syed's family eventually relocated their restaurant), thus avoiding the very costly and time-consuming commute to and from neighborhoods in opposite sides of the city. Syed hence completed **six years of formal schooling** in Brazil, starting in the 7th grade and concluding secondary education.

In Syed's understanding, he was already quite proficient in Portuguese by the time he joined the new school, having learned the language at the mosque and at Instituto Adus, a São Paulo NGO that promotes the cultural, linguistic, social, and economic integration of refugees into Brazilian society. This is similar to Michelly's experience learning Portuguese: she also took PWL classes through community-based projects in which at least one language instructor spoke her first language. In Syed's case at the mosque, several people spoke his first language and were willing to help him and his family learn Portuguese. Some of these people engaged in courses at Instituto Adus[133], **using Arabic as a language of instruction** in the PWL courses. As Syed stated in a *conversa*, Portuguese seemed easy in comparison with Arabic.

Joining UFMG | Living in Belo Horizonte

Syed had already started two majors before joining UFMG, both in São Paulo – one in a private university, to study Engineering, and the other in a public university, in Health Sciences. Following on his father's footsteps, it had been Syed's plan to become an engineer. However, after one semester and several conversations with his father, Syed decided to shift to

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[132] Syed told me in a *conversa* that many Syrian immigrants started charging fees to give interviews to news outlets and talks in companies and other institutions, something he and his family refused to do on the basis of building relationships with these actors and promoting the family business – a Syrian restaurant in São Paulo.

[133] https://adus.org.br/ . The institute offers refugees support to obtain documentation and mediate with government agencies and other NGOs. It provides training, mediates with companies for job placement and offers Portuguese lessons.

a major in Health Sciences – a decision heavily influenced by the fact that his father was not able to revalidate his Engineering degree in Brazil. Syed then applied to a public university via a call addressed to conflict-induced international migrants and refugees. Because he was very dissatisfied with the Health Sciences major at this university, Syed decided to apply to UFMG via Public Call 624/2020, which meant moving to Belo Horizonte, since his former Health Sciences major was held at a public university in São Paulo, and the new one at UFMG was offered in Minas Gerais. When we discussed his Health Sciences major, Syed reported just how central family is and was in his decision-making process:

> *To me, what also really counts is family, right? I had both help and influence from them when choosing, they had a great influence on my choice. Oh, but you have to choose what you like. Yes, but family also counts. Because there's no point taking a course that you like, but everyone around you, like, doesn't support you, because you need their support, right? (...) On top of that, it's a very renowned profession and so on. Oh, so you don't like [name of major]. Quite the contrary, I started to like it. I like it. But, of course, to do what we like, we both know that that's not exactly how the real world works. Oh, I'm just going to do what I like and whatever. No. We have to think about our family, about ourselves later, about everything. It's not just what we like, you know? Although I like [name of major].*

(Syed, WhatsApp, Dec. 10th, 2022)

In this exerpt, Syed reflects on the process of choosing his major and emphasizes the significance of *family* in this process. To Syed, family not only provides support but also has had a substantial influence on his choice of profession. The implication is that family support and guidance have played a central role in his decision: while acknowledging the importance of choosing a profession based on personal interest, Syed stresses that family support is also a key factor: "O*h, but you have to choose what you like. Yes, but family also counts. Because there's no point in taking a course that you like, but everyone around you, like, doesn't support you, because you need their support, right?*" ("*Ah, mas tem que escolher o que cê gosta. Sim, mas a família também conta. Porque não adianta você fazer um curso que você gosta, mas todos ao redor, tipo, não te apoiam, que você precisa do apoio deles, né?*".

This means that Syed's journey to university has not only been about pursuing a major of his liking but also about ensuring that the people around him are supportive and approve of the professional path he has chosen to pursue, whether this is in São Paulo or Belo Horizonte. This social dimension is particularly important in cultures where family and community play a strong role in shaping individual decisions. For Syed, achieving a balance between his personal aspirations and the expectations of those around him is crucial for a harmonious and successful university experience.

Syed highlights the importance of being realistic. Despite personal preferences, he is aware that choosing a profession involves considering broader aspects, such as the well-being of the family, future considerations, and the practicalities of the real world. This might have influenced his choice of a competitive major that can lead to a well-regarded profession, indicating that external factors such as the occupation's reputation contribute to the decision-making process. Perhaps due to his own migration journey, Syed underscores the reality of navigating career choices: and, contrary to an idealistic view of doing solely what one likes, he emphasize the need to consider various factors, including family, personal well-being, and the demands of the real world.

In Belo Horizonte, Syed lives in a rented flat in the neighborhood of Santo Agostinho next to Barro Preto, in the south-central area of the city. Syed's residence is three kilometers away from the Health Sciences campus, from where he walks or takes public transport, as there are several bus lines that connect the central area. By bus, Syed takes no more than 20 minutes – it is a single trip, without having to use the subway or other bus lines. Walking to campus takes from 40 to 50 minutes. As with Amirah, the neighborhood where Syed resides in Belo Horizonte is well served in terms of amenities, transport, and safety. It is also closer to the bus terminal and the airport shuttle terminal.

When Syed moved to Belo Horizonte, he live alone, but since starting a personal romantic relationship with a classmate, he shares the space with his girlfried – a kind Brazilian Health Sciences student racialized as Black. Given the proximity between São Paulo and Belo Horizonte, Syed spends holidays, winter breaks, and summer vacations in São Paulo with his family. His girlfriend often joins him in these trips. Before moving to Belo Horizonte, Syed's father visited the city with him and looked for apartments to rent, opting for Santo Agostinho due to its central location, infrastructure, and safety.

The choice of neighborhood was also made on the basis of practicality: the first two years of Syed's major are split between classes on the Health Sciences campus in the city center and classes on the UFMG Pampulha campus, which is located around nine kilometers away from Syed's apartment and requires a short walk to the bus stop and a trip of around 40 minutes. In other words, Syed's choice of neighborhood was strategically made based on the practical need to commute between two different campuses. By considering the accessibility of public transportation and the overall commute time, he ensured that his daily travel is efficient and manageable. This decision underscores the importance of practical considerations in optimizing the balance between academic demands and personal convenience.

Personal note 5:
meeting Syed

My first contact with Syed was on social media.

Like with Amirah, I reached out, introduced myself, and explained the purpose of the research.

Syed agreed to take part in the research, saying he was used to talking about his migration to Brazil.

After a few exchanges online, Syed answered the first online questionnaire and we scheduled a face-to-face meeting.

We agreed to meet at a café in a 'posh' neighborhood of Belo Horizonte, half-way between Syed's apartment and his UFMG campus, on a Wednesday afternoon.

At the café, Syed told me all about his life in São Paulo.

It was right after lunch, and there was nobody else there, just the owner, eavesdropping on our chat.

When we finished our conversation, the café owner came over, asked Syed about his major in Health Sciences, and introduced himself.

Syed returned the pleasantry - to such a startle!

Upon hearing the non-Brazilian name, the chatty owner went mute, looking confused, as Syed sounds like a native speaker of Portuguese, with a São Paulo accent.

To break the unexpected discomfort, I cut in, saying: "It's not that difficult a name!", dumbfounded myself.

Syed and I left the café just as speechless.

In this note, I recall my first contact with Syed, and narrate a strange encounter we had during our first semi-structured interview, held face-to-face at a café in the 'posh' Lourdes neighborhood of Belo Horizonte in 2022. We picked this café simply because it was halfway from Syed's apartment and his campus, which felt convenient to him – I live in the city center, so moving around in the city is never really a problem. We met right after lunch time, at around 2pm, so the café was empty and we could talk more freely, which was good because Syed likes to talk: he is opinionated, eloquent, and used to discussing his migration journey and experience in Brazil.

After around one hour talking, with much of the talk unstructured as it was nearly impossible to follow the semi-structured roadmap to the conversation (that's how vividly Syed tells his story), I noticed the café owner approaching our table. He had already been listening in our conversation, and seemed interested in Syed's major in Health Sciences when he brought the check. The owner chatted about Health Sciences, mentioning that his son was also doing or had done the same major as Syed. Amidst this talk, we paid the bill and were ready to leave. The café owner finally introduced himself – never asking me for my name – and Syed then returned the introduction: "My name is Syed".

The café owner went mute and drew a blank, as if he had lost his word all of a sudden. The silence that ensued seemed to me like a moment of cultural 'dissonance' – and perhaps even subtle discrimination based on preconceived notions. As mentioned, Syed is racialized as White in Brazil, despite not being white, and does not look Arabic in a stereotypical way. He also doesn't have a foreign accent: his Portuguese sounds like that of a Brazilian who has lived his entire life in the city of São Paulo. Add to the mix the fact that Syed's Health Sciences major is a competitive professional area where the café owner's son was also inserted… and I suppose the combination of all of this really threw him off.

There was such 'heavy' silence in the air – and I was clearly not included in their chat, from the beginning, that all I could do was cut in and try to alleviate this discomfort, not by introducing myself but by emphasizing the simplicity of Syed's name, saying "*Mas o nome dele não é difícil assim!*" ("it's not that difficult a name!"), giving the impression that it was really Syed's *name* that caused such estrangement, not the millisecond associations and stereotypical assumptions the café owner likely made on the spot.

[*and I hope I'm not making the same type of assumption here, as it certainly doesn't help that the owner shares his first and last name with a right-wing Brazilian politician… I can usually read a room very well*].

Syed and I left the café soon after, completely speechless. To my knowledge, he has never returned there – neither have I, naturally. It was my first face-to-face meeting with Syed, so I didn't know him and decided not to ask about this incident. He's never brought it up in our chats. I don't think this is my incident to press upon, so what is left to me, as a researcher and educator is to look at this through an intercultural lens, challenging assumptions based on names, accents, nationalities, and phenotypic traits.

Syed and I have exchanged countless texts since our first meeting. Our *conversas* are usually centered around academic and cultural topics. He tends to take longer to answer but he's very attentive, saying "*olha*, *eu não me esqueci de você... é que tá tudo muito corrido*" ("*I haven't forgotten [to answer your questions], it's just pretty hectic right now*"). We follow each other on social media, I've met his girlfriend, and he very kindly agreed to take part in the Arabic language and culture workshop I promoted at the high school where I was teaching in 2022. On this occasion, Syed shared more about his migration experience and helped to debunk myths and dismantle stereotypes about Arab culture.
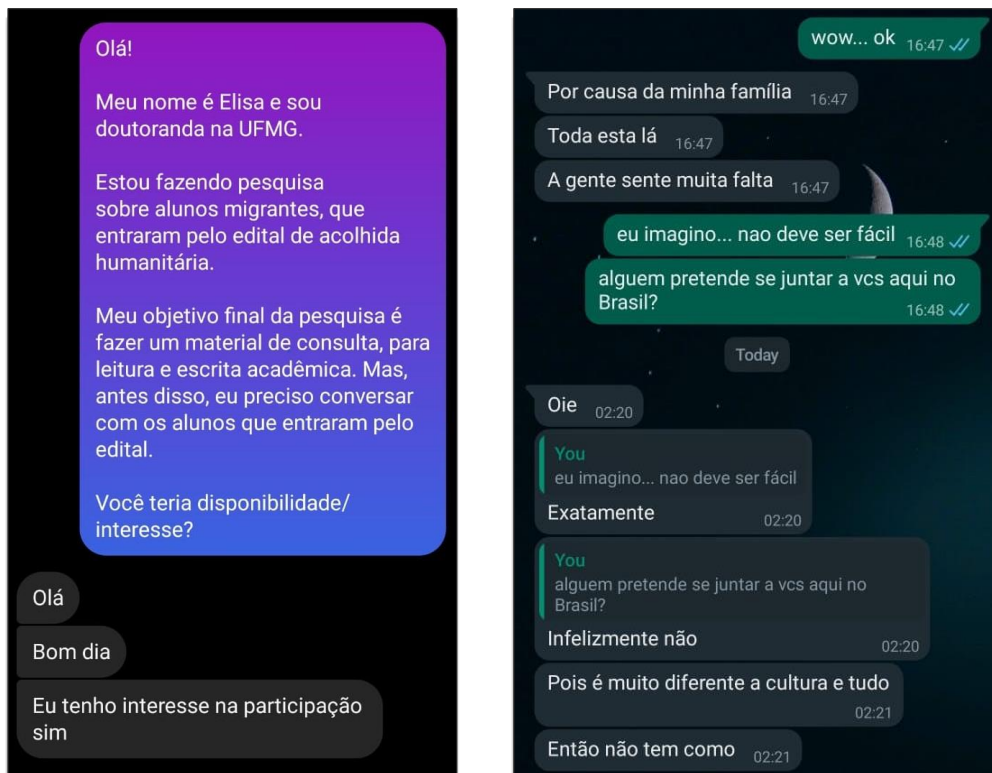
Captions: My first contact with and our latest conversation.

5.2 Clashing Cultures | Intercultural Encounters

In this section, we discuss some intercultural encounters and cultural clashes the four research participants had when they first arrived in Brazil. The 'prompt' was: "*what did you find most different about Brazil when you got here?*". I asked this question one year into my interactions with the research participants, because I wanted them to feel more comfortable talking about non-university-related topics. Amirah was the first to answer my question, saying:

> *I think it was the culture. In my country, you don't see couples on the street kissing, hugging, holding hands and so on… That really weirded me out. Another thing that I think I found stranger than that was [seeing] a gay couple. I had never seen this in my life. I was little too, so we didn't have this topic in my country. Nobody talks about it. Then I arrived and saw this and thought it was very strange. What else? I think that's basically it. Things I don't see there and I saw here for the first time.*

(Amirah, WhatsApp, Oct. 04th, 2022)

In this excerpt, Amirah is expressing cultural shock and surprise at behaviors related to public displays of affection, something that she notes is not common to observe in Syria. The absence of such behaviors is seen as part of the cultural norm in her home country and she initially felt a sense of unease: "*I think it was the culture. In my country, you don't see couples on the street kissing, hugging, holding hands and so on… That really weirded me out*" (Portuguese: "*Eu acho que a cultura em si, no meu país, você não vê casal na rua se beijando, se abraçando, com mãos dadas e tal. Isso realmente me deixou estranha*". This reaction highlights the impact of cultural differences on one's insertion in the host country. Amirah also mentions encountering a gay couple for the first time in Brazil. This experience was particularly surprising and unfamiliar because, in her home country, she indicates that visibility of same-sex couples was not part of the cultural landscape during her upbringing.

From Amirah's answers, we can see that the subject of LGBTQ+ relationships was not included in discussions or was not openly talked about in Syria. Such a lack of discussion and exposure contributed to Amira's surprise upon encountering a same-sex couple for the first time. In this regard, Amirah's narrative suggests a lack of exposure to diversity, including diverse forms of affection and relationships, in her home country during her formative years. This limited exposure contributes to her sense of strangeness upon encountering behaviors strikingly different in the new cultural context of Brazil.

When asked the same question, Noelle opted to talk about the university, and I opted not to press for an answer about Brazil, more generally. In regard to the univertsity, Neolle said:

For me, UFMG is very different, especially at [name of department] because that's where I spend most of my time I thought it would be cleaner and prettier; I imagined that students wouldn't just dress however they want, like [wear] very revealing clothes, but I love the atmosphere. It's very laid back, you can have a picnic… Anyway, I think the atmosphere is nice, except for the people who smoke in the buildings.

(Noelle, WhatsApp, Nov. 18th, 2023)

In the above excerpt, Noelle acknowledges that she had certain expectations about UFMG, some of which were not met. She initially thought that the university would be "cleaner and prettier". Despite this initial mismatch of expectations, Noelle appreciates the atmosphere at UFMG, highlighting its relaxed character. She also emphasizes that the students at UFMG have the freedom to dress in a way that might be considered informal, mentioning that many wear revealing clothes on campus. While this suggests a relaxed and open culture within the university it could also imply a cultural clash, with Noelle expecting more formality. Give her limited experience in schooling in Brazil, this is not unreasonable: she went to a state school where students were required to wear a uniform, so she might have expected more formality from a university setting.

The relaxed atmosphere of Noelle's Languages department at is also visible when she mentions a specific concern: the presence of people smoking inside the Languages building. This indicates that while Noelle generally appreciates the atmosphere, the issue of smoking indoors is a drawback. In addition to the comment on clothing and smoking, which suggest an informal setting, the mention of being able to have picnics also implies causality. We can infer that the Languages building where Noelle spends most of her time at UFMG is surrounded by a casual atmosphere that may not be shared across the campus.

CHAPTER 6

*Often the way we think about language is
a proxy for the way we think about people.*

Myanmar Indigenous Community Partners (2022)

6. Academic Literacy: Practices and Experiences

As we continue at the **micro level of the 4M framework**, our lens remains on the research participants, but it now shifts from looking at them as *individuals of flesh* whose identities intersect race, gender, nationality, and class within their migration journeys, to their **academic literacy practices and experiences**. This still corresponds to Stage 3 of the methodological framework laid out in Chapter 3. However, the present chapter zooms in on the data generated from the second questionnaire, the semi-structured interviews, the *conversas*, and the literacy events developed in five online tutoring sessions.

Figure 6: Zooming in on the micro-level of our 4M Framework.

The four research participants
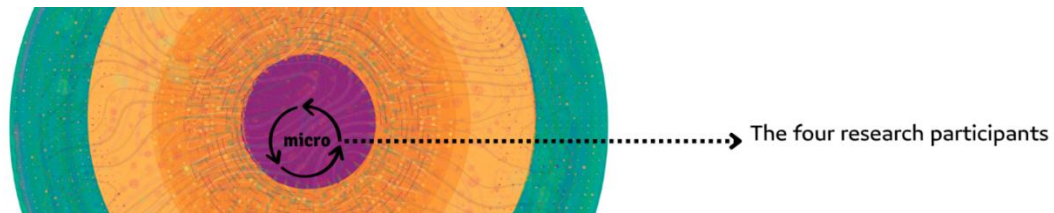
Source: The author.

I begin this chapter by analyzing the research participants' academic literacy demands based on their answers to the second online questionnaire, organized by pairs of productive-receptive skills: reading and writing and listening and speaking. I then discuss the participants' experiences at UFMG, which were brought up in our *conversas* either as answers to follow-up questions (after I revisited the online questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews) or as comments the participants made spontaneously – thoughts, feelings, and impressions they wanted to share. These experiences are mostly focused on the four participants' expectations of their majors and life at the university.

I continue the chapter by discussing the participants' impressions and feelings toward being international/foreign, which was a recurrent theme in our interactions. Then, I address the research participants' requests for academic assistance by describing and commenting on the online tutoring sessions we developed in 2022. I conclude the chapter with a discussion about other emerging academic issues identified in the data generated or unfolded in 2023, based on an expanded view of academic literacy and a critical and oftentimes decolonial take on the topics under investigation.

6.1 Mapping the Land | Understanding Academic Literacy Demands

6.1.1 Dominant Academic Literacy

From our academic literacy discussion and following the second online questionnaire (focused on the research participants' use of language at UFMG), this section is concerned with dominant academic literacy practices, i.e., language practices organized in more conventional academic genres and/or in situations with which the participants engage at the university. The primary goal of the second online questionnaire was to gain a better initial understanding of the four participants' **academic literacy demands**, considering the four skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Given the qualitative character of this stage, no generalizations can be made. However, we do make associations with the related literature, our expertise, and the data generated.

Reading and Writing

The research participants' reading practices involve articles, chapters, workbooks, and slide presentations (100%), with summaries and exams (75%) coming in second, as shown in Figure 6.1.1 A. Interestingly, course syllabi were mentioned by the participants who joined UFMG earlier: Amirah and Michelly, who were in their second year at the time. This could be related to the nature of the classes taken in the first and second years, regardless of the major. Another possibility is that Amirah had different expectations about her major, as will be discussed, and Michelly wanted a different major, initially.

Figure 6.1.1 A: The participants' academic reading demands at UFMG.
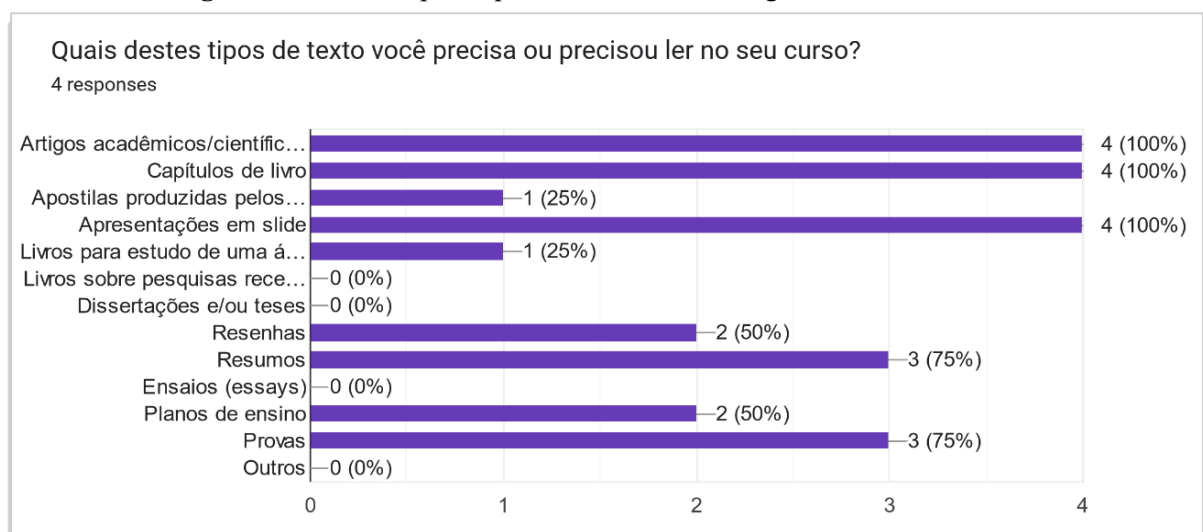
Source: The author and the participants.

Figure 6.**1**.**1 B**: The participants' academic writing demands at UFMG.
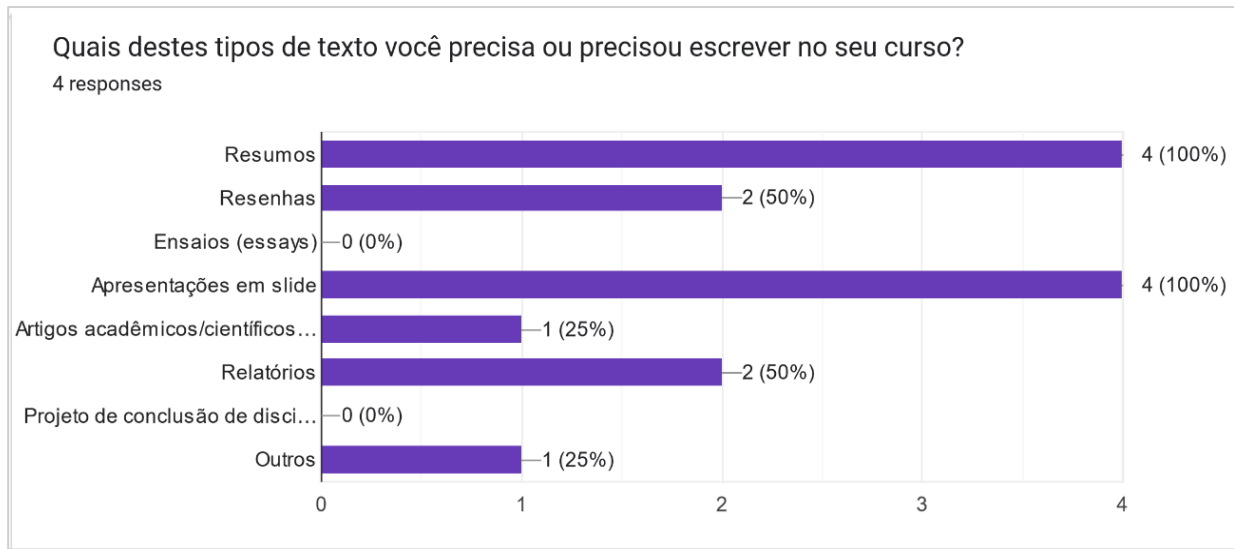
Source: The author and the participants.

As for **writing**, all research participants reported having to produce **summaries and slide presentations** (100%), with **reviews and reports** mentioned by half, and **articles** by only one: Syed, as shown in Figure 6.1.1 B. In one a *conversa*, Syed explained that this was a group project: "*Because I'm a foreigner, I very rarely deal with writing… I usually deal with the research part, which is easier for me*" (Syed, WhatsApp, Nov. 18th, 2022). He added that he had to write a 'final paper/article' in high school, following the Brazilian National Standards Organization (ABNT), with citations and references.

Summaries have been a 'staple' of school and academic writing in Brazil, for a variety of reasons. In a more 'traditional' view, the genre is chosen as a way of verifying that students have completed their reading assignments (Assis; Mata, 2005; Salete, 2004). Summaries provide instructors with a means to evaluate students' understanding of the source materials and the ability to communicate key information concisely (cf. McMillan, 2012). Summarization therefore requires understanding the main and supporting ideas and discerning between essential and peripheral details, that is, what to include and what to omit. In a more critical view, the genre may be favored due to its '**scaffolding' potential**. As Fischer (2006) notes, summaries tend to be required in (early) academic writing for their possibility to be built upon, as students can draw on some of the strategies and techniques employed in summary writing to produce other academic genres (Assis; Mata, 2005), for instance, literature reviews (Ridley, 2012) and reviews. As indicated in Figure 6.1.1 B, reviews are also required in academic writing for two participants: Amirah and Noelle, in Applied Social Sciences and Languages.

Slide presentations can play a defining role in pedagogical practices and learning experiences in HE, where complex concepts are often communicated separately through speech (lectures, talks) and writing (articles, whiteboard notes). Hence, by relying on **the interplay between semiotic modes**, as discussed in Chapter 2, visually appealing slide presentations can capture students' attention and foster engagement, possibly reflecting more interactive teaching practices, if planned adequately. It is therefore reassuring to learn that the participants are required to read and write slide presentations, as this is a key genre for both academic and professional life (Gelbes, 2013; Yates; Orlikowski; 2007).

After checking "*Outros*" (Figure 6.1.1 B), Michelly reported having to write research. In our *conversas*, she elaborated on this: the research referred to a six-page task on respiratory physiology, reproduced in Figure 6.1.1 C below. What had been required was a guided study ('*estudo dirigido*'), where the professor set guidelines for research on a specific topic, including guiding questions and/or word count/page limit. Michelly's professor instructed the students to a) use high-quality sources from science databases and books, b) add a reference list, c) avoid being "superficial" and "long-winded", and d) not plagiarize. No information was given as to what was meant by "long-winded".

Figure 6.1.1 C: A task for one of Michelly's classes.

Façam uma pesquisa sobre os temas abaixo, com data para entregar **até 17/7 as 22:00.**

· Sobre a forma do trabalho: no mínimo e máximo **2 paginas de conteúdo por questão apresentada**, sendo uma pagina de capa e uma de referencias bibliográficas.

· **Não sejam superficiais e ou prolixos.** Usem o espaço de 2 paginas com boa informação sobre cada assunto.

· **Usem referencial bibliográfico de qualidade**, bases cientificas, artigos, livros...

· **É obrigatório o uso de referencias bibliográficas** para eu saber de onde vocês retiraram as informações e conferir.

· Se houver **trabalhos copiados/duplicados implica na anulação** de ambos.

Questões para pesquisa:

1- Sobre a mioglobina, descreva sua função e importância para oferta de oxigênio nos tecidos e em condições de exercício. Explique a importância da mioglobina para adaptação a grandes altitudes.

2- Explique os mecanismos reguladores da eritropoiese: (a) os fatores que induzem a produção de Eritropoetina (EPO), (b) onde é produzida a Eritropoetina (EPO) nas diversas fases da vida (gestação e pos nascimento) e sua atuação nas células alvo, (c) como elevadas altitudes (acima de 3000 metros) estimula a eritropoiese, e (d) como funciona o feedback negativo de redução da eritropoiese quando um individuo retorna de elevadas altitudes (acima de 3000 metros) para o nível do mar.

3- Descreva os mecanismos de síntese da 2,3-DPG (difosfoglicerato) pela hemácia dependente do pH, suas funções sobre a hemoglobina, e os mecanismos de liberação da 2,3-DPG (difosfoglicerato) pela hemoglobina.

Source: Shared by Michelly, personal/identifying data concealed.

In a *conversa*, I asked Michelly whether any academic writing courses had been offered as preparation for tasks such as the guided study reproduced in Figure 6.11 C above. The answer was negative, with Michelly explaining that she learned to 'write academically' (using citations and references, for instance) by watching YouTube videos and searching for information online, and by relying on related knowledge developed in high school. Importantly, **all four research participants reported not having had any academic writing classes at university**. While it is commendable that Michelly made the effort to learn about academic writing on her own, citing and referencing are more superficial aspects of academic writing. I discuss this further in Subsection 6.5.3.

Listening and Speaking

In regard to listening, the four research participants reported having to practice this skill in oral presentations and group discussions (100%), followed by practical classes in laboratories (75%). Surprisingly, lectures ('*aulas expositivas*') were mentioned only by two participants (50%), which might be a sign of changes in teaching-learning patterns at the university, as discussed further. This is supported by the research participants' engagement with more '*bilateral*' genres such as group discussions. As the participants mentioned, these interactions are conducted in person, in Portuguese, usually centered around specific topics or a class project, on campus. However, discussions are also carried out in WhatsApp text chains/groups.

Figure 6.1.1 D: The participants' academic listening demands at UFMG.

Em quais destas situações você precisa ou precisou participar por meio de escuta (ouvindo) no seu curso?

4 responses

Aulas expositivas	2 (50%)
Aulas práticas (laboratório)	3 (75%)
Apresentações de trabalho	4 (100%)
Palestras	2 (50%)
Webminars e lives	0 (0%)
Discussões teóricas em grup…	4 (100%)
Reuniões	0 (0%)
Outros	0 (0%)
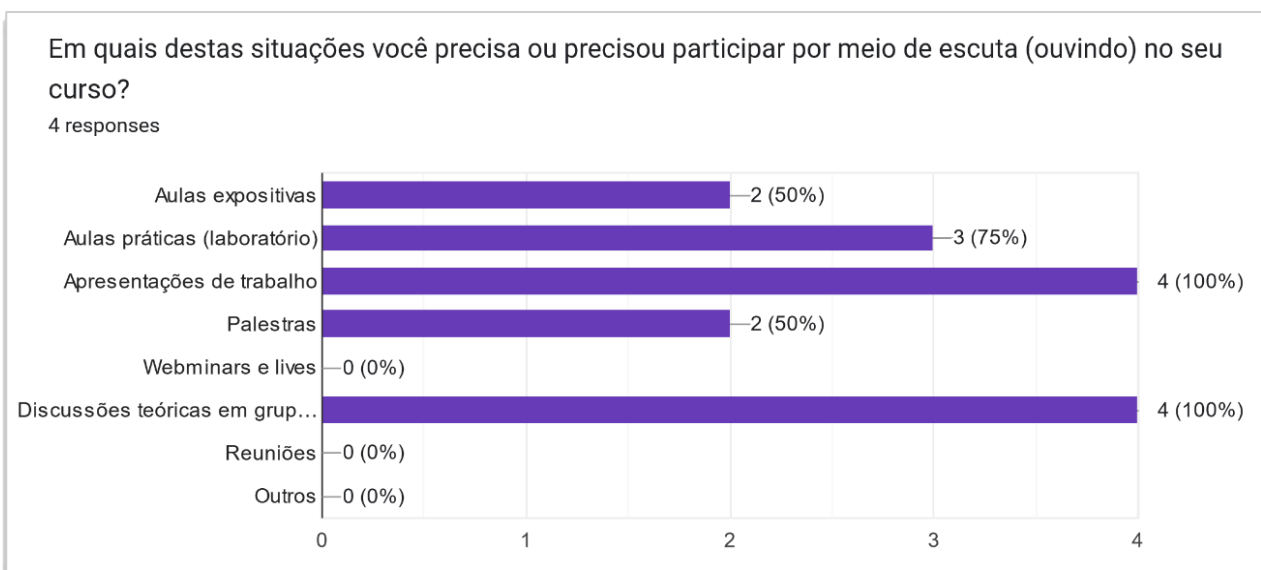
Source: The author and the participants.

Figure 6.1.1 **E**: The participants' academic speaking demands at UFMG.

Em quais destas situações você precisa ou precisou participar oralmente (falando) no seu curso?
4 responses

Situação	Valor
Aulas expositivas	1 (25%)
Aulas práticas (laboratório)	3 (75%)
Apresentações de trabalho	4 (100%)
Palestras	0 (0%)
Webminars e lives	0 (0%)
Discussões teóricas em grupo…	1 (25%)
Reuniões	0 (0%)
Outros	0 (0%)
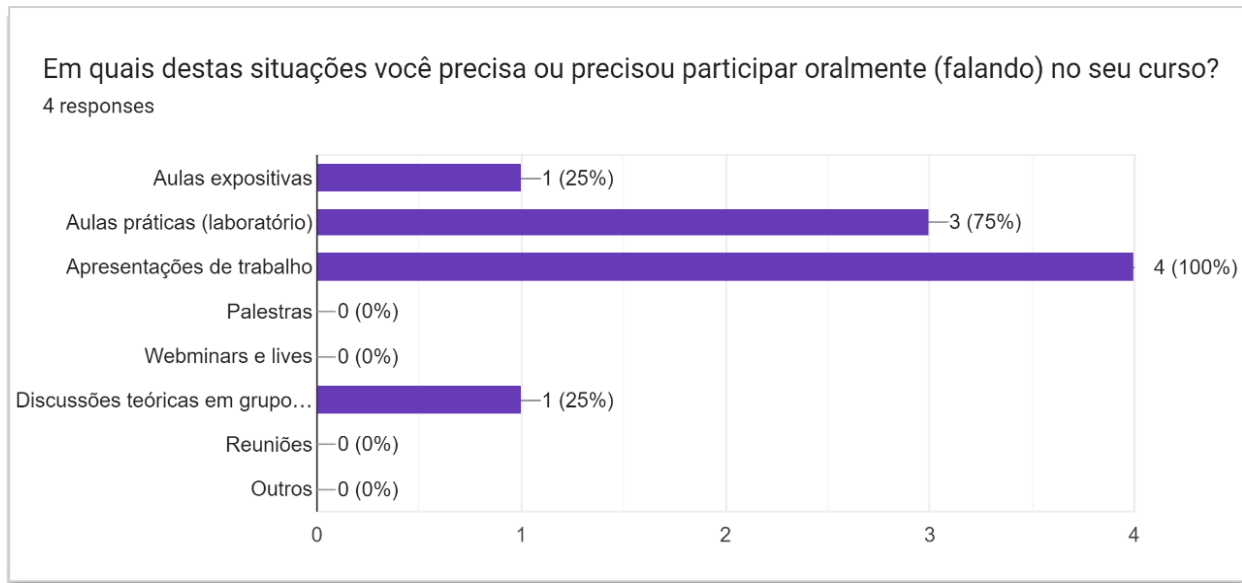
Source: The author and the participants.

Speaking practice involves oral presentations (100%), followed by interactions in laboratory activities (75%), situations/genres in which speaking is practiced alongside other semiotic modes. In class presentations, the students speak while engaging with the slides, the equipment (data projectors), the professor, and the classmates, which involves different types of knowledge usually built in schooling experience; from digital literacy to handle the technological variables of producing and delivering an oral presentation to time management, self-confidence and anxiety control (Dias *et al*., 2017; Egan Warren, 2020).

As all four participants reported, oral presentations have been required in most classes. Sometimes, mini-oral presentations are embedded in laboratory practice. Oral presentations are therefore included in the participants' listening and speaking practices in laboratory activities (75%), ranging from less structured mini-presentations without slides, Michelly said in a *conversa*, to more conventional oral presentations structured around slides and other visual aids prepared in advance (Kaur; Ali, 2021).

When comparing listening and speaking participation in group discussions around a theoretical issue, all participants reported taking part in such discussions in listening form. Yet, only Amirah reported engaging in speaking in these situations, despite her shyness. Discussing ideas is a valuable aspect of academic socialization that can promote a richer and more engaging social and academic environment, contributing to student retention and permanence.

6.1.2 Less Dominant Academic Literacy

As discussed in Chapter 2, and elsewhere (Mattos; Diniz, 2024), we have proposed a **decolonial view of academic literacy** that can capture the realities of academic practices, as often permeated by digital communication and diversity in student backgrounds. This section is concerned with the language practices associated with processes that involve engagement with a range of texts in academic settings or about academic culture. Just as with the previous section, our discussion is focused on the four participants' answers to the second questionnaire, which we associate with data from the interviews and *conversas*.

Reading and Writing

Reading beyond coursework includes forms (enrollment, course assessment, etc.) and institutional emails (100%), seen in Figure 6.2.1 A, followed by announcements and calls for academic internships, mobility programs, and academic conferences (75%). Given the purpose and research nature of the university, such answers were expected – UFMG has several research centers and a tradition of establishing partnerships with public and private Brazilian companies in numerous sectors (e.g., Oliveira; Garcia, 2021; Rodrigues Júnior *et al*., 2000). University legislation (e.g., regulations and by-laws) and maps were mentioned by half of the participants, followed by posters (25%, i.e., one answer).

Figure 6.**2**.**1 A**: Participants' reading demands at UFMG.

Quais destes tipos de texto você precisa ou precisou ler na sua atuação na UFMG?
4 responses

Tipo de texto	Valor
Formulários (matrícula, avalia...)	4 (100%)
Legislações (normas e regula...)	2 (50%)
Editais (chamadas para publi...)	3 (75%)
E-mails institucionais	4 (100%)
Cartazes	1 (25%)
Mapas	2 (50%)
Outros	0 (0%)
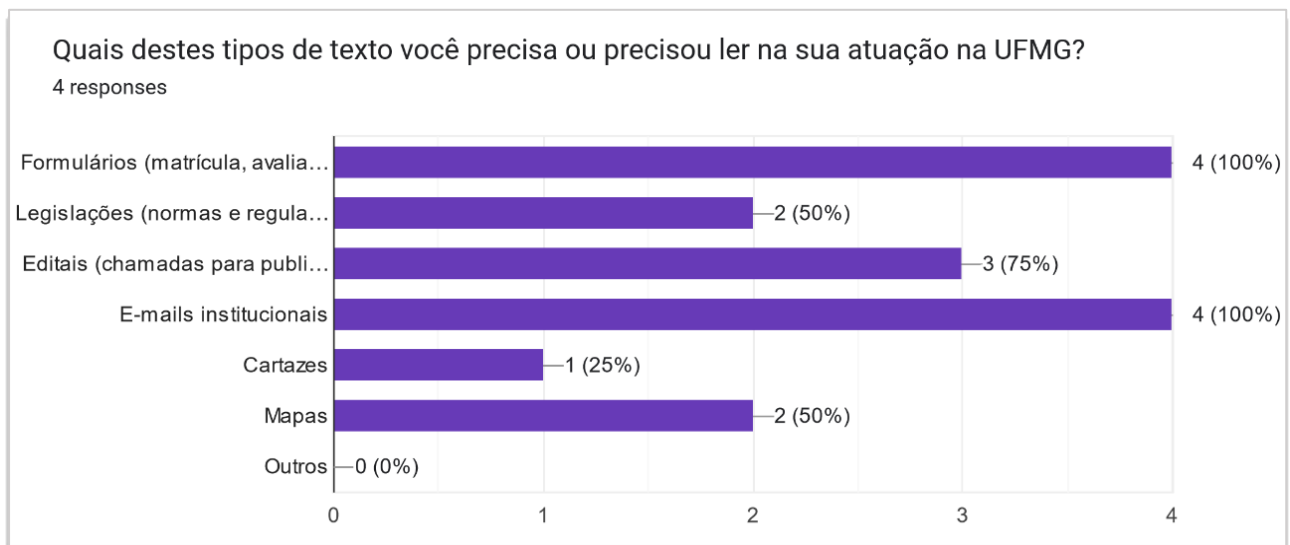
Source: The author and the participants.

The two participants who reported having to read **university maps** take classes on the UFMG main campus in the Pampulha region of Belo Horizonte. With facilities spread around 165,000 square meters of floor area, the main campus houses most of the university's undergraduate and graduate programs. Classes on the campus are usually distributed between faculty buildings and the three Centers for Pedagogical Activities (CADs), highlighted in red in Map 1 below. The other two participants have classes in other UFMG campuses located in the city, which are significantly smaller in size and do not require maps, as these campuses consist of single buildings or a small complex of buildings built side-by-side, shown in orange in Map 2.

Map 1: CADs locations on the UFMG main campus.
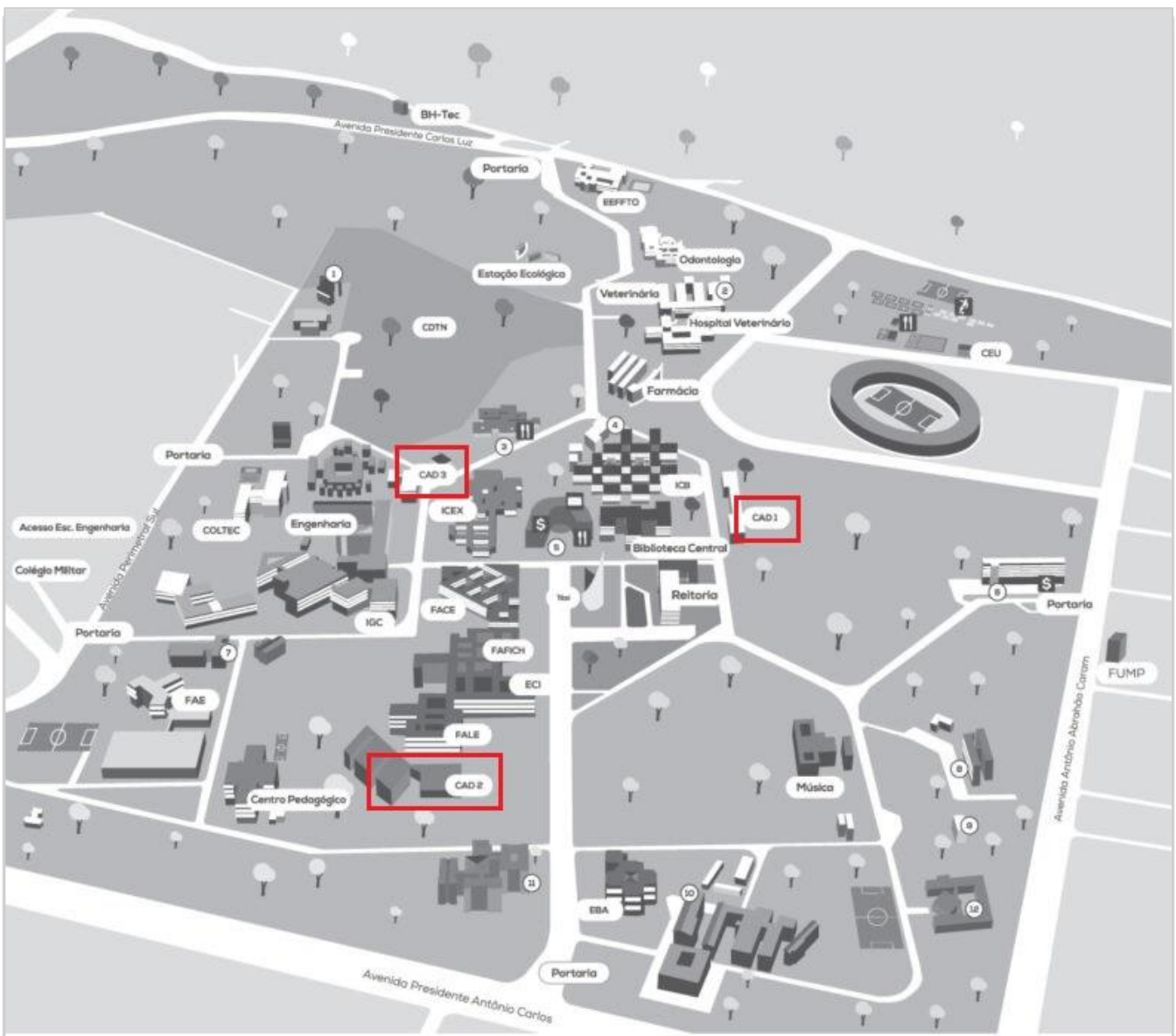
Source: https://www.ufmg.br/viverufmg/conheca-a-ufmg/campi/. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

Map 2: UFMG campuses in the center of Belo Horizonte.
In orange: The School of Law (3) and the School of Medicine (4-6)
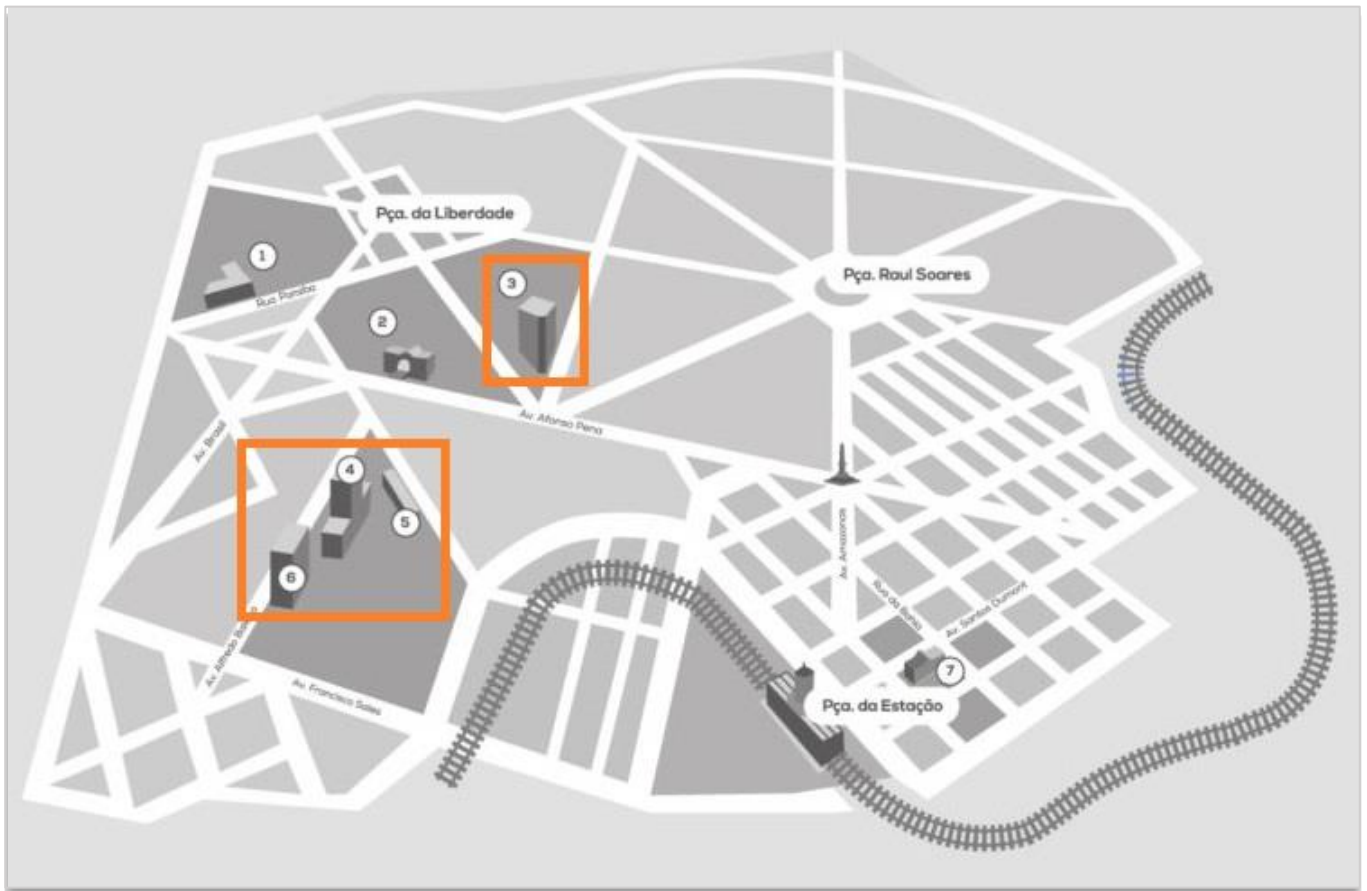
Figure 6.2.1 B: The participants' writing demands at UFMG.

Quais destes tipos de texto você precisa ou precisou escrever/preencher na sua atuação na UFMG?
4 responses

Formulários (matrícula, avaliação de serviços etc.)	4 (100%)
Inscrição para editais (chamadas para publicação, e…	3 (75%)
E-mails	2 (50%)
Cartazes	1 (25%)
Outros	0 (0%)
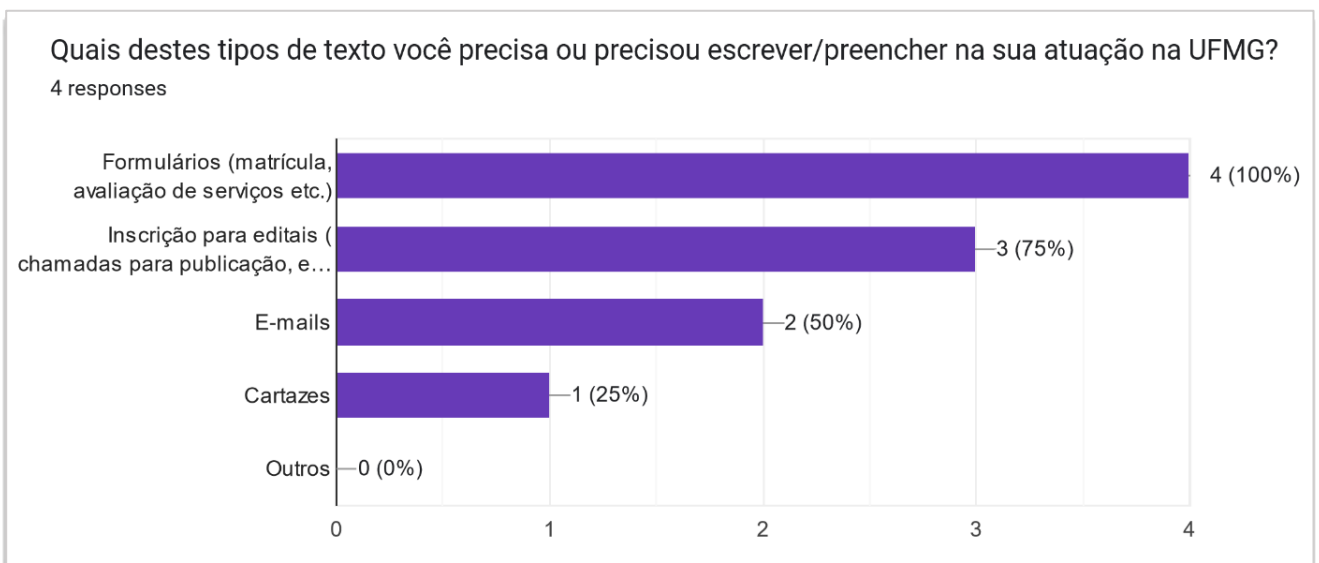
Source: The author and the participants.

Figure 6.2.1 C: An email sent to Amirah.

----- Repassado por   Central de Estágios   UFMG em 14/11/2022 11:11 -----

De:

Para:

Data: 14/11/2022 10:50

Assunto: Vaga de estagio

Bom dia,

Gostaria de anunciar uma vaga de estágio. Segue dados da vaga:

- Turno: Manhã, 4 horas
- Remunerado
- Local: Lourdes, Belo Horizonte
- Diferencial: Conhecimento em ferramentas BIM

Enviar currículo e portfólio para
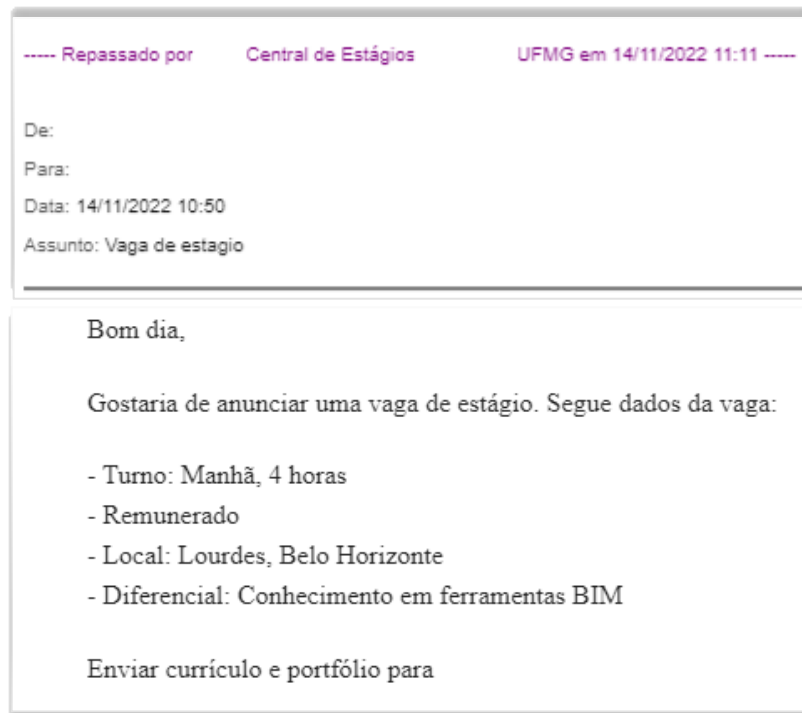
Source: Shared by Amirah, personal/identifying data concealed.

Writing practice beyond the academic genres listed primarily refers to filling out enrollment and course assessment forms (100%) and registration forms for calls and announcements at UFMG (75%). Two participants mentioned having to write emails (50%) to professors and administrative staff, inquiring about intra-organizational matters or professional or academic opportunities. Figure 6.2.1 C is an example, in which the participant – Amirah – received an email regarding a paid internship position, which led to one of our online tutoring sessions so Amirah could improve her resume. Often the university serves as a professional liaison between students and companies, bridging the two via *Central de Estágios* (internship offices) that promote internship opportunities and early career placements. This bilateral relationship is indicative of the role universities have in society and the model of higher education favored in Brazil: one that responds to societal needs *and* market demands (Souza *et al*., 2013).

Despite internship offices and partnerships with companies interested in recruiting interns and early career professionals, the university still lacks a consistent program to guide novice professionals/academics toward developing effective communication skills for future work. In this regard, Amirah's request for assistance with updating her resume reflects a need

expressed by other students at UFMG (e.g., in the EAP courses). Amirah's updated resume is discussed in section 6.4, Session C.

Listening and Speaking

All four research participants reported few opportunities for oral communication beyond classes, shown in Figure 6.2.1 D. Amirah was the only participant who mentioned having non-academic interactions with her fellow university students outside the classroom. In the questionnaire, she reported engaging in discussions, without specifying the nature of these discussions. However, in our second interview, Amirah explained that these discussions range from academic topics and projects and assignments for university to conversations about non-academic subjects (e.g., social life and personal relationships, etc.), in Portuguese.

Noelle's oral communication outside the classroom involved interacting with her preaching friends in Haitian Creole (her friends are also Haitian and go to UFMG), and taking part in bi-weekly scientific research meetings conducted in person, in Portuguese. Participation in research activities in her first year of university highlights a commitment to early academic investigation and collaborative efforts within a scientific community, which may be helpful to navigate the university and the academic world. Interestingly, the research group is primarily focused on investigating migration and language-related topics in the context of Brazilian communication.

At the time of responding to the second questionnaire, Syed had interacted only with his peers in class, stating not having had any other activities beyond coursework (Figure 6.2.1 D, third answer). The use of "*até o presente momento*" ('up to now') implies the situation could change. While it is not uncommon for students to initially focus on their coursework before potentially branching out into additional activities as their academic journey progresses, the lack of social interaction is telling. Syed moved from São Paulo to Belo Horizonte with the purpose of joining UFMG for his undergraduate studies, not knowing anyone in the city.

Finally, Michelly reported not participating in any events and/or interactions beyond her classes. She stated that, at the time of responding to the questionnaire, she had not taken part in any events at UFMG that required interaction or conversation, which might suggest a lack of involvement in extracurricular or social activities within the university. This situation could be due to various reasons, such as time constraints, personal preferences, and other commitments. However, as revealed further, Michelly expressed her desire to socialize and join a research

project – a crucial aspect of the academic experience, which can foster collaboration and a sense of belonging.

Figure 6.2.1 D: The participants' speaking situations at UFMG.
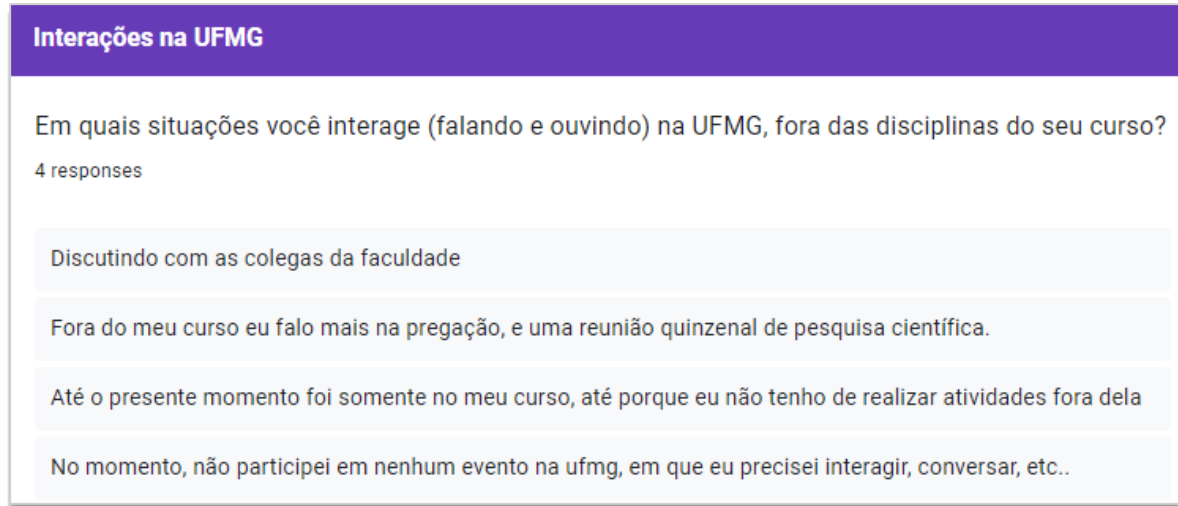
Source: The author and the participants.

Figure 6.2.1 E: The participants' answers about interaction difficulties.
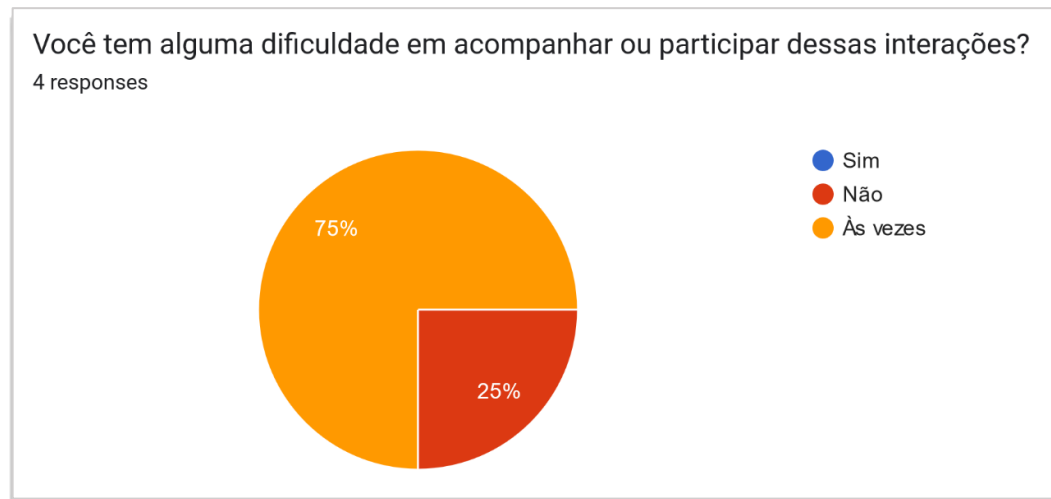
Source: The author and the participants.

When asked whether they have any difficulties in taking part in these situations, only one participant – Syed – reported not having trouble following or interacting beyond his classes, as shown in Figure 6.2.1 E. This might be due to the initial fast pace and intensity of his major. In Figure 6.2.1 F, Syed explains that whatever available time he has is funneled to studying for classes, which makes it challenging to engage in additional activities, academic or otherwise. The phrase "*bem corrido*" ('pretty hectic') indicates the fast-paced nature of his major, which

can be typical of undergraduate programs where rigorous study schedules are necessary, as seems to be the case of most Health Sciences majors.

Figure 6.2.1 F: The participants' comments about interaction difficulties.

Comente sua resposta brevemente, por favor.

4 responses

Às vezes eu não consigo interagir bem com as colegas ou não me sinto acolhida com os assuntos falados

As veces porque a dificuldade mesmo em algumas tarefas acadêmica.

Como está no começo e está bem corrido o curso, o tempo que sobra é apenas para estudos, com isso fica bem difícil de participar de outras atividades

Na UFMG, fora das atividades das minhas disciplinas, não realizo nenhuma outra atividade porém, eu tenho interesse em participar de iniciação científica, para que eu possa interagir mais, compartilhar idéias e expor minha opinião sobre algum tema específico.

Source: The author and the participants.

Amirah experiences occasional difficulty in interacting with her peers or feeling included in the topics discussed. The use of "*Às vezes*" conveys that this is not a constant sentiment. It is not uncommon for individuals to experience varying degrees of comfort or discomfort in social settings. However, as she explained in the second semi-structured interview, she did not feel welcomed with the topics discussed outside the classroom, a point we approach in Chapter 7 when dealing with **the importance of socialization at university**.

Noelle's answer refers to occasional academic-related difficulties, as indicated by "*Às vezes*" ("sometimes"). This difficulty is in line with the literature about the challenges of first-year students and the need for study skills courses, which have become increasingly common in higher education (Bernard, 2003; Boettler *et al*., 2022), including in Brazil (Bork *et al*., 2014; Camargo; Berberian, 2023; Oliveira *et al*., 2014). Academic challenges can vary, and students may encounter difficulties in specific tasks and subjects, especially if/when unfamiliar with academic culture and discourse.

Finally, Michelly's answer highlights an expressed interest in participating in scientific activities at the university. As she reports, this is driven by the desire to share ideas, interact, and express opinions on topics related to her major. With this statement, Michelly seems to indirectly acknowledge **the potential of intellectual exchanges** in her studies and academic

development beyond the standard curriculum. This may reflect a proactive attitude towards academic involvement and a keen interest in contributing to and benefiting from the broader intellectual community within the university.

6.2 Navigating Academic Life | Expectations vs. Reality

Mismatches between student expectations and experiences, and student-lecturer expectations are not uncommon in HE. In this regard, when discussing their courses and experiences at UFMG, Amirah and Noelle expressed some confusion and frustration as to the nature of certain classes, the overall organization, and the purpose of their degrees. To Amirah, for instance, the number of readings on social theories and phenomena has been "*too much*" for a degree aimed at structural design. As she explained:

> *There's this class I started this week, and I found it quite complicated […] It's a lot of philosophy, history… it's too broad. He's [the teacher] talking about the history of architecture, the history of planning… I'm a bit lost.*

(Amirah, *conversa* face-to-face, Sep. 27th, 2022).

As shown, Amirah sees a disconnect between the reading requirements and the reality of the professional market, asserting that in her future occupation, she will not need "*to discuss theory. I'll have to build things. So how is this related to my profession?*". She added that, in her home country of Syria, this course would belong either to Engineering or Exact Sciences, thereby organized around mathematics, applied software, and workshops. In Amirah's view, this is "*practice*", in contrast with the Humanities-related content of her major (which is part of the Applied Social Sciences area), hence the readings on social theories. She expected classes to be more focused on mathematics[134], therefore finding the Humanities-related content less relevant.

In our *conversa*, I asked Amirah to elaborate on this issue: how/when did she realize her major was perhaps more focused on Humanities? She answered that it was "*because of the readings*": many of the classes relied on reading material in philosophy, sociology, and history as the basis for class discussions and assessment. In many ways, the types of readings Amirah mentioned do not seem distant from the degree's overall purpose: to develop experts with the ability to address societal needs in projects about space management and the capacity for critical

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[134] Public and private HEIs in Brazil have autonomy to make decisions about their undergraduate and graduate programs. Some HEIs adopt similar programs as UFMG. In others, Amirah's major belongs to the Engineering program (e.g., Unicamp).

self-reflection and reflection on the surrounding world; and to actively engage in efforts to alter and enhance the existing reality, as paraphrased from the program's website.

Similarly, Noelle, who plans to be an English language teacher, did not understand the rationale of having to be fluent in this language before starting her undergraduate studies:

> *One thing I didn't like about college here [in Brazil], and this is not really about UFMG […] is the fact that you have to be fluent in English when you enter university […]. So, what I can't really understand is… if I speak English, then why do I need to go to college… just to get the degree and teach somewhere? Why can't I learn the basics in college?*
>
> (Noelle, *conversa*, Dec. 21st, 2022, WhatsApp)

As seen in the excerpt above, Nolle questions the necessity of being fluent in English, expressing confusion about the requirement for her major and wondering why someone who already speaks English proficiently would need to attend university to teach the language. As I explained to her, to teach in Brazil, at the municipal, state, and federal levels, one is required to have a teaching degree ('*licenciatura*') from a HEI, recognized by the Brazilian Ministry of Education[135]. In addition, a teaching degree aims to provide future teachers with the skills and knowledge needed in the occupation, which can vary depending on the subject matter (e.g., a teaching degree in Geography or History will cover different content and possibly different methodologies from one in Languages).

Noelle's comment suggests that if the primary goal is to obtain a degree and teach, it might seem unnecessary to have a language proficiency 'requirement'. She proposes the idea of learning the basics of English within the university setting rather than as a prerequisite for entry, not only at UFMG. This implies that Noelle seems aware that prospective students in her chosen major are expected to be fluent before entering HE, echoing the discomfort felt by other students in courses that deal with phenomena under umbrella terms such as *Letras*, particularly when focused on teaching additional languages such as English.

In this regard, oftentimes, domestic students who pursue these degrees believe they will learn their languages of choice when entering university (Silva, 2005; Sturm; Lacourt, 2010; Rodrigues, 2014), as Noelle expected. However, the rationale behind many *Letras* programs is different *as far as teaching degrees in English are concerned*, for example, with faculty arguing that students can benefit more by starting their studies at an intermediate level of proficiency

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[135] See Castro (1974) for a still relevant review and discussion about *licenciaturas* in Brazil.

(Kobayashi; Gallardo, 2021), which could be due to the need to differentiate themselves from commercial HEIs (Diniz-Ferreira, 2015).

Amirah and Noelle were second-year and first-year students at the time, which means that their impressions draw only a partial picture of their majors. This may also explain their bemusement toward certain aspects of their undergraduate studies and future professions. The important takeaway is managing expectations. Often, one's expectations will not be met, only managed, particularly in situations where the individual has little control throughout events. In this regard, studies show that the higher one's expectations, the more prone these students are to frustration at university (Bisinoto *et al*., 2016).

Certain expectations are grounded in personal constructs and imagined realities that change or even cease to exist, based on the individual's experiences at university (Moreno; Soares, 2014). The mismatch between Amirah and Noelle's expectations and the reality of their majors could likewise be seen as a *cultural difference*, as both participants have spent most or a considerable part of their lives outside Brazil. As Amirah and Noelle shared, while the degrees and occupations they have chosen had always been part of their imagined futures, their current academic setting was not – and neither was the reality of not attending university in their home countries. This is a specificity not shared with Brazilian students and it is a key difference that should be addressed as the migrant-background students transition and adapt to academic life in Brazil.

Syed's experience tells a different story. After a negative academic experience at another HEI, in which the Health Sciences degree had taken a more humanist and holistic approach with no examinations and an 'alternative', unconventional curriculum, Syed applied to UFMG via Public Call 624/2020, reporting a positive experience:

> *The course is pretty much what I expected from UFMG. We learn… It's from the tiniest parts and molecules to the macromolecules, so we learn everything. It is exactly what I expected… The [other university] was terrible 'cause we only had three classes per week, no tests, so I wasn't really learning there. But here [UFMG] it is literally what I'd expected.*

(Syed, *conversa* face-to-face, Dec. 14th, 2022)

In the above excerpt, we can see that Syed had specific expectations about the course content and structure before joining UFMG, and the actual experience at UFMG has met or even exceeded those expectations. In contrast, the other university is described as "terrible" due

to a limited number of classes and the absence of tests, which suggests Syed expected a traditional approach to teaching/learning, with a thorough exploration of the subjects.

Syed's expectations about the Health Sciences major at UFMG suggest he had already looked into the academic curriculum and the classes, which can be a good strategy to help in managing expectations. This is precisely what Michelly did. Because she wanted either Law or Medicine before deciding on her Health Sciences major, she made an effort to understand the types of classes she would have at UFMG and the professional outlets the degree would offer. As she mentioned in our first semi-structured interview, she always checks the UFMG academic system to learn about the classes she will have to take: "*And I always look at the study plan to know which subject I'll have to take next. And when it's going to finish as well*".

Michelly is pleased with the classes she is taking, but this was not always the case. She was initially unhappy with her choice of major, as she still thought about going into Medicine. While this has not led Michelly to drop out or disengage from her classes, it may have made her initial experience at university somewhat negative. In her own words:

> *[Okay, and... are you enjoying the course?]*
>
> *Yes. At first, not really, but at first, I just wanted to switch to Medicine. I always... I wanted, in the beginning, I only wanted Medicine! I would say: I'll either change my major or take the ENEM again. But taking the ENEM again... I thought the [name of major] course has a lot of chemistry and this would give me a solid foundation for the ENEM, and also biology, which would be a good basis for getting into Medicine. But now that I'm starting to have more subjects related to biology… because before I only had chemistry, so it was hectic, a lot of things at the same time. I used to say: I'm going to change majors.*
>
> *[But now you can see that there's a biology component too…]*
>
> *Now there's even [name of subject], now I'm starting to feel like a future [name of occupation]!*
>
> (Michelly and the author, first semi-structured interview, April 2022)

In this excerpt, Michelly admits that, initially, she did not enjoy her major, as she had a strong desire to pursue Medicine from the beginning. Faced with dissatisfaction in the early stages of her major, Michelly contemplated changing the major or retaking the ENEM. Michelly then acknowledged a shift in perspective as she began to experience more subjects related to biology (the initial focus on chemistry had made the workload overwhelming, also leading her to consider changing majors). This is a good example of expectation management, in which the student gradually started enjoying her major as a result of taking specific classes.

Positive engagement with core curricular components of one's major is essential to maintain motivation and focus at university, especially for first-year students who are still transitioning from secondary education and adapting to academic life (Bisinoto *et al*., 2016). As seen in this subsection, Syed's and Michelly's experiences at UFMG indicate satisfaction, somewhat differently from Noelle and Amirah. It is not unusual for HE classes to take a 'generalist' approach initially, gaining specificity from the second half of the major.

All four research participants seem aware of the association between their majors and their future occupations, indicating a career-focused approach to their undergraduate studies. This is particularly visible in Amirah's account and Syed's previous experience, but Michelly and Noelle also refer to their future professions when discussing choice of major. Having a clear career trajectory can contribute to a quicker adaptation to the demands and expectations of university life, as students who have a clear understanding of long-term career goals are more likely to transition successfully to university (Tinto, 2012).

However, a singular focus on employability might overshadow the importance of a deep(er) approach to learning (Hassel; Ridout, 2018) – or a more diversified university experience not exclusively focused on core content. While students who have a clear vision of their future careers may be more motivated to align their academic pursuits with their professional aspirations, they may also be more concerned with achieving only the necessary skills to graduate. Hyper focus on career over learning may also be an indication of the increasing market mentality 'hovering over' the university experience; a consequence of globalization, as Stromquist and Monkman (2014) suggest.

Students' expectations impact their transition and adaptation to university life. Soares *et al*. (2014) argue that different variables influence this process: socialization, vocational goals, and engagement with curricular and extracurricular activities, financial matters and previous educational experiences. If the students are prepared for the level of difficulty, the teaching methods, the workload, and the potential curricula they will encounter at university, they are more likely to succeed in managing initial expectations and coping with the academic demands of their courses (Bisinoto *et al*., 2016). To assist students with a smooth transition and adaptation to university, welcoming policies are recommended via academic programs – not events – centered around institutional actions aimed at transforming incoming students into members of the community (Bisinoto *et al*., 2016; Hassel; Ridout, 2018). For students of migrant backgrounds, a welcoming program could help to create a sense of belonging, as will be discussed further in this dissertation.

6.3 Of Being International | Matters of Identity

In the second online questionnaire, I asked the students about the situations in which they had to read, write, listen, and speak at UFMG. While all of them reported having to read articles and produce and deliver oral presentations in Portuguese, among others, what caught my attention were the comments they made in the questionnaire and the following *conversas*. When explaining their challenges, particularly in listening and speaking, all four participants reported having some difficulty understanding **cultural habits** and historical events specific to Brazil, content related to knowledge typically acquired in primary and secondary education in the country, and idiomatic language (e.g., popular sayings and slang).

For instance, Noelle shared feeling "*kinda lost*" when faced with information that is common knowledge for those who have spent their entire life in Brazil:

> *In class, I feel like I'm on another planet because I didn't grow up here and there's a lot I don't know… so I feel kinda lost when the teacher says "oh, remember this and that from high school?" or when the teacher refers to something else that I'd never heard of [from high school], those who've studied their whole life in Brazil just know it.*"

(Noelle, *conversa*, Dec. 21st, 2022, WhatsApp)

In this excerpt, Noelle expresses a sense of alienation and confusion in a classroom setting. The phrase "*I feel like I'm on another planet*" conveys a sense of disconnection. This feeling of isolation and disconnect is attributed to the fact that Noelle did not grow up in the same educational system and cultural context as her peers, so she feels lost in class due to a lack of familiarity with certain topics and historical events. These cultural disparities may be intensified when the professor refers to concepts or materials from high school, assuming prior knowledge that Noelle does not possess, since she did not study her whole life in Brazil. Noelle experiences a sense of unfamiliarity and disadvantage in comparison.

This suggests that, despite having concluded secondary school in Brazil, having taken preparation classes, and having joined UFMG via the same *examination* as her peers, Noelle does not share similar experiences or educational background, precisely for not having spent her childhood and adolescence in Brazil. This should not be read as a limitation on Noelle's part, but rather as a sign that students of migrant backgrounds may not have certain cultural knowledge(s) commonly shared among Brazilian students, even if the migrant students have done part of their basic education in the host country.

At the time of our *conversa*, Syed had been living in Brazil for 10 years, nearly half of his life. He also expressed some difficulty when interacting with his peers at university – not related to his understanding of what his peers are saying. Differently, his difficulty manifests when interaction relies more heavily on cultural habits and idiomatic language:

> *I feel most like a foreigner when [faced with] slang, certain habits that I see and go: 'whoa, but I'm not like this, I don't even know how this happens'… so at college and situations like this [socializing with peers] I really feel like a foreigner.*

(Syed, *conversa*, Mar. 4th, 2023, WhatsApp)

In this excerpt, Syed perceives a gap between his ways of speaking and behaving and those of his peers. This divergence may be related to cultural or regional differences, as Syed has spent most of his time in Brazil in the city of São Paulo. This means that, when we think about Syed's situation, we must take into account that he feels like a 'foreigner' not necessarily due to nationality but rather because of differences in language use and cultural habits that may also stem from being new to Belo Horizonte (even if he has not realized that yet). Still, there is no denying that with the phrase "*I really feel like a foreigner*" Syed emphasizes a significant level of disconnection in socializing with his peers in specific situations, as if he were not 'aligned' with the social norms of the group. Once again, we can see that it is not exactly the language, in its more 'superficial' layer, that creates challenges, but the cultural assumptions and meanings associated with it.

Syed reports feeling most 'Brazilian' when "*doing something disciplinary*" with his peers, particularly when it comes to assessment and testing. It seems that Syed feels more on equal terms with his peers when his identity as a Health Sciences student – not as a foreigner or refugee – is at play, in more impersonal academic situations, such as when taking content-based written tests. However, as he develops this thought, his intersecting identities (cf. Collins, 1998, 2019; Crenshaw, 1989, 2002, 2017; Akotirene, 2019) soon catch up:

> *When taking exams, there's no such thing as being Brazilian or a foreigner… During an exam, it's, hum, you either studied or you didn't. If you're a foreigner or not… that won't change a thing when it comes to your grades. So, I think I feel most like everybody else in this sense, I have difficulties, but they [Brazilian students] also have difficulties. I mean, yeah, sometimes I have more difficulties than the others… but this is a challenge I have to deal with, it's my learning, you know.*

(Syed, *conversa*, Mar. 4th, 2023, WhatsApp)

As can be seen in this excerpt, Syed views his academic difficulties as a 'non-Brazilian' student as his own responsibility. This could stem from a deeply ingrained view of literacy as

a skill, an individual-oriented process that rests solely – or almost exclusively – on the hands of the learner (Lea; Street, 1998, 2006). Syed also stated that none of his peers know he joined UFMG through Public Call 624/2020 – and he wishes to keep it that way. It seems that, to Syed, it is important that his peers not see him as a '*cotista*', that is, as a beneficiary of a type of affirmative action at the university. This could be related to the 'charged' connotation still associated with both the categories of '*cotista*' (Nery; Costa, 2009; Souza, 2019) and 'refugee' (Moreira, 2014).

A sense of foreignness (Arar *et al*., 2022) is also observed in Amirah's accounts. When discussing her interactions on topics not directly related to a specific class or a given project, Amirah reported having difficulty following the conversations and feeling disconnected from her peers: "*Sometimes I don't interact well with classmates or I don't feel welcomed with the topics discussed*" (Amirah, second online questionnaire, April 2022). Amirah later explained that her peers do not make much of an effort to include her in these situations, stressing that she has not made many friends at the university.

Differently from Syed, Amirah told us that she sometimes feels unwelcomed, like an 'outsider', when delivering presentations for assessment. As a shy person, she said:

> *When I speak in Portuguese in front of everyone… then I get a little nervous because my accent shows and people in my group think I'm speaking in the wrong way, or that I'm not presenting well.*

(Amirah, *conversa*, Mar. 4th, 2023, WhatsApp)

In this excerpt, Amirah mentions feeling nervous when speaking in Portuguese in an assessment situation, which could be attributed to foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, 2010): the different levels of uneasiness or apprehension that arise when using a foreign language – which emerges as a transfer of other types of anxiety or due to a specific situation that triggers the feeling (Horwitz; Young, 1991; Horwitz; Tallon; Luo, 2010). In evaluative situations, the fear of being judged or misunderstood is enhanced when employing a foreign language, even when anxiety is not a defining trait of the individual (Horwitz; Tallon; Luo, 2010). Amirah's nervousness seems to be linked to how her Portuguese language skills, particularly her accent, may affect the perceived quality of her answers and speech during a group presentation. This concern about linguistic performance can impact confidence in public speaking situations.

Based on her understanding, Amirah seems to view her peers' attitude toward her as lacking *some* empathy, which could distance her to the margins of the group/university and make her feel even more like an 'outcast'. This may also explain why she has not made friends

at UFMG, as she mentioned in a *conversa*. In this particular situation, we beg the question: would her peers' reaction have been different if this slightly 'broken' accent had come from an 'elite', (stereo)'typical' international student, perhaps one from the Global North, showing signs of a more globally prestigious language? How are Amirah's **intersecting identities**, as manifested in her name, physical appearance, first language, and country of origin – being 'integrated' into the university? These are also micro-power dynamics at play.

Going back to Noelle and Syed, it is also possible to understand their situations as the result of home-school discontinuities: when migrant students leave school (and this may also apply to the university) and return to their homes, they are also returning to their mother tongue, to the cultures they share with their families, to the physical and symbolic spaces in which they can relish in a more immediate sense of belonging. Such a feeling may gradually develop at school (and university) over the course of one's experiences. However, it is the home and the inner family circle where migrant students may usually find more immediate comfort, especially when their styles, habits, and culture(s) contrast more strongly with those from the school environment (McGovern; Davis; Ogbu, 2008). At home, migrant students often may distance themselves from Brazilian cultural habits and literacy practices – and likely do not interact in Portuguese.

Home-school continuities-discontinuities have been addressed in the more specialized literature and pedagogical practice through cooperative learning (e.g., Gay, 2002), culturally responsive pedagogy (e.g., McGovern; Davis; Ogbu, 2008; Ogbu, 1982; Reese; Gallimore, 2000) and boundary-crossing (e.g., Akkerman; Bakker, 2011; Akkerman; Van Eijck, 2013; Bronkhorst; Akkerman, 2016; Gulikers; Oonk, 2019, 2023; Tsui; Law, 2006, among others). These approaches and frameworks gravitate around a view of sociocritical literacy (Gutiérrez, 2002), which values a historicized understanding of literacy "that privileges and is contingent upon students' sociohistorical lives, both proximally and distally", as Gutiérrez (2008, p. 149) explains. They can also be closely associated with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory and Activity Theory, as both theories spotlight the role of mediating tools in learning processes, since mediation is a central element in the aforementioned approaches, especially for boundary-crossing education (Tsui; Law, 2006). A welcoming program for migrant students should be guided by similar principles.

6.4 Roadblocks Ahead | Facing Academic Challenges

In regard to research design and data generation, this doctoral research also involved providing online tutoring sessions over the two years I interacted and engaged with the four participants, mostly through digitally-based exchanges. My interactions and engagement with the participants yielded a total of five online tutoring sessions of around 60 minutes: three with Amirah, one with Michelly, and one with Noelle. Each online session dealt with specific academic demands and challenges the participants were faced with in 2022 and 2023. I centered the five online tutoring sessions on the demands as the participants communicated them via WhatsApp in our *conversas*.

Syed never requested my assistance over the two years we interacted. This could be explained by a) Syed predicted needing assistance at the end of his undergraduate studies, as he mentioned in our *conversa* from March 2022; b) he may not feel entirely comfortable with a woman helping him with his academic tasks, particularly because he seems to put significant pressure on being self-sufficient in his academic endeavors (cf. Section 6.4); and c) in group tasks, Syed has been delegated research-based tasks, steering away from writing, which might have been the 'skill' I could/can eventually help him with, in the course of his undergraduate studies. This is unfortunate. It is as if the fact he is not Brazilian and therefore does not have Portuguese as his first language made him not 'competent' enough, by default, to handle the more language-related tasks of group assignments. This might be a sign of the neoliberal university and academia: in a results-focused educational environment, it is not the process that counts; it is the successful outcome of one's actions; in this case, the assignment grade seems to be favored over the opportunity for training and improvement.

The sessions are organized as A to E, moving from more conventionally academic challenges focused on reading and writing at university to demands not necessarily related to language use in academic settings, still connected with acting and navigating university life. Session A deals specifically with developing conceptual knowledge and academic writing skills (via reading practice). Session B is related to assessment criteria. Sessions C and D focus on communicating at the boundaries of university and work (internship), offline and online. Session E is concerned with university culture. The situation from Session B evolved into formal complaints by a group of students, mobilizing other parties – not just the research participant (Amirah). I address the aftermath of this situation in Chapter 7 when discussing the role of social media and the 'academic grapevine'.

Session A: Reading Like a Writer

In one of our *conversas*, Michelly expressed concern about writing reports for a class. At first, her challenge seemed to involve language use in academic productions, specifically in writing. As she told me, her main issue was "*putting my ideas on paper, I can't find the words*". However, after talking more extensively, she explained in more detail that the words simply did not come to her:

> *Sometimes it comes in Creole, and I have to translate it into Portuguese, and sometimes it's missing in both Creole and Portuguese. Then I have to research the topic, and ideas start coming, and it [the writing] flows.*

(Michelly, *conversa*, Mar. 11th, 2023, WhatsApp)

As I explained then, this is a natural process of building conceptual knowledge, going beyond language use, language proficiency, and writing *per se* – at least initially, which means that even when someone is highly skilled in academic writing and proficient in a given language, they may not find the 'right words' to communicate their ideas, because it is the ideas that need to be developed first.

Naturally, this process is imbued with language, in reading, listening, writing, speaking. Yet, the source of Michelly's difficulty was not the writing process, the genre 'report', or even lack of specialized lexicon in Portuguese, Haitian Creole, or French, as yet; but rather referred to building new concepts specific to her disciplinary field of Health Sciences and gaining conceptual knowledge[136].

Ultimately, Michelly's difficulty can be associated with Lillis' (2001) argument that when dealing with academic writing, it is usually not "surface features" (p. 27) that cause most issues, but "the complicated history of writers' intentions around meaning making in texts". Michelly's roadblock was in the pre-writing stage which helps to render the writing meaningful – both as a process and a product. As we discussed the assignment she had to complete (a report), it was clear that Michelly understood the task and the genre – she had been provided with a sample report to be used as a reference. However, because she had not had any academic writing instruction and practice beyond the importance of citation and referencing, we felt it would be useful to 'flesh out' the writing process – let it out in the open, explore the process of writing academically, more generally.

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[136] The neurocognitive foundations of how humans build conceptual knowledge are discussed in Lambon Ralph (2014). For reviews about the nature of 'concepts', see Glock (2010) and Margolis and Laurence (2023).

To this end, our tutoring session continued as I explained that the writing process is often misconstrued as linear and 'neatly sequential': a progression of orderly unfolded stages, when, in reality, it is a more dynamic, non-linear, 'messy' endeavor. At university, professors usually hold this view of 'neat sequentiality', quite possibly due to a lack of reflexivity about their own writing processes. Unless one works with academic writing, and *depending on one's discipline*, the act of writing *might* be taken as an afterthought or the very last stage of research. This is wildly misleading: writing does not 'come into existence' the moment one sits at their desk and starts typing or writing – it *lives* in one's mind and body-hands until it is awakened, summoned – whichever state the writer finds themselves in at the moment they 'outwardly' begin 'physically' writing.

The recursive nature of the writing process is discussed further in Subsection 6.5.3. Suffice it to say, for now, that I also shared and discussed related diagrams with Michelly. An example is shown in Figure 6.4 A, which was translated into Portuguese and shared with her and the other research participants. As Curry and Hewings (2003) explain, looking at writing as a recursive process renders enough flexibility, allowing for an integration of both process-oriented considerations and attention to the textual aspects of writing, while highlighting the diverse ways in which writers navigate the writing process: some stages may be more relevant or unnecessary for specific writing tasks.

Michelly shared feeling somewhat insecure and asked me for reading material on how to write more academically. As she mentioned, one professor suggested reading more "*to build more knowledge*", without specifying the type of reading Michelly should make. Such generic suggestions imply that the lecturer either had a type of reading in mind, and decided not to disclose this information with Michelly, or, more likely, simply suggested reading as a general way of building knowledge, which indicates a traditional and monologic (Lillis, 2003) view of academic literacy, with knowledge seen as a skill to be acquired and developed from reading about a given topic. The professor's suggestion hints at an 'essayist literacy' (Scollon; Scollon; 1981; Farr, 1993) is foregrounded: a still dominant practice in Westernized HE: an idealized understanding of both writing and text, as if the writer and the audience were 'severed' from the sociohistorical context, thereby able to transit more freely in between rationalities and conceptualizations, seamlessly and effortlessly transferring the knowledge absorbed during a reading session into writing skillfulness – such prowess!

Figure 6.4 A: A circular, recursive diagram of the writing process.
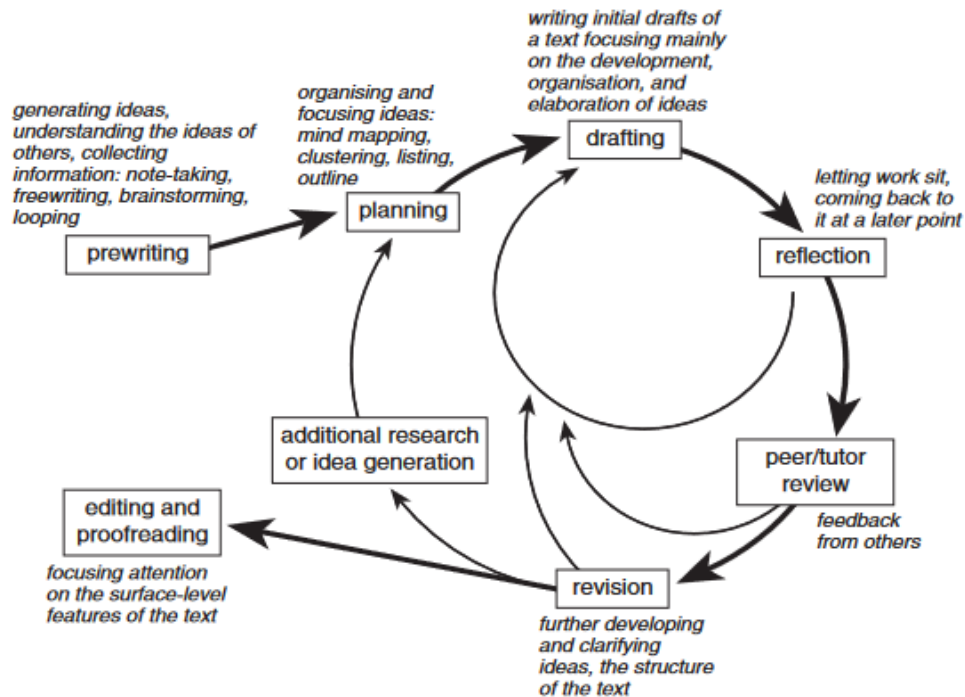
To assist Michelly with writing academic reports, I devised an academic reading and writing plan based on the ideas of Cassany (1999), in *Leer como un escritor*, and Bunn (2011), in *How to read like a writer*, to guide Michelly in identifying the author's choices and the text's purpose, features, and organization. Reading like a writer is about thoroughly examining "the things you read, looking at the writerly techniques in the text in order to decide if you might want to adopt similar (or the same) techniques in your writing." (Bunn, 2011, p. 72). While this may seem too focused on linguistic and textual features, there is room for reflection by asking the student-writer to evaluate whether or not they would want to incorporate these choices and techniques, to what purpose.

The academic plan involved examining a set of articles from Michelly's readings for a specific class, and designing tasks through which she could study the texts, paying attention to the choices the authors of these texts made in terms of a) the overall communicative purpose of the text and genre; b) the information foregrounded (e.g., concepts, results); c) the way such information is presented (e.g., text, charts, citations); d) the linguistic choices encoding this communication (e.g., verb tenses, active/passive voice, modality), and e) the writing and style conventions adopted (e.g., citation and referencing norms). The idea was to inspect the textual, discursive, and linguistic features of the selected texts and to create opportunities for Michelly to reflect upon her writing process.

Session B: Understanding Assessment Criteria

Amirah requested assistance with a typical situation at university: confusion as to lack of clarity in task instructions and assessment criteria. Specifically, Amirah asked me to help her understand the syllabus and the assessment criteria for a particular class from her major in Applied Social Sciences. The syllabus[137] is a nine-page document where the first two pages are topic-related quotations by authors such as Deleuze, Foucault, Adorno, and Lefebvre, organized into seven headed sections that included the objectives, assessment procedures, and schedule, among others.

As she explained, for this class, the students were required to produce summaries of all articles/chapters/books from the syllabus, encompassing a total of 75 texts: 23 main texts (*textos base*) and 42 supplementary texts (*textos complementares*); most texts were in Portuguese; however, 10 were in other languages: five in French, three in Spanish, one in Catalan, and another in Italian, representing around 13%. For this introductory class, no prerequisites had been established in the syllabus nor prior to enrollment, which is not a standard procedure at the university.

The 75 texts refer to a 15-hour course corresponding to one credit, scheduled to take place over four meetings of three hours and 40 minutes each: three meetings held in-person and the final meeting conducted online via Google Meet. Specific texts were assigned to each meeting, to be presented by the students in the final meeting as an oral guided study ("*estudo digido oral*"), graded as follows: 100 points distributed over three guided studies, with 30 points referring to the readings assigned for the first and second meetings, and 40 points for the readings assigned to the third meeting (Figure 6.4 B).

Assessment was focused on the main texts, but "even some of the supplementary texts" ("*e até de parte dos COMPLEMENTARES*", in the original) could be required. All main and supplementary texts had been listed in the schedule for each of the meetings: 37 in total. However, the reference list in the syllabus included other texts under both categories – main and supplementary, reaching the total 75 texts mentioned previously. The implication was that the students were supposed to read and summarize all texts. The oral guided study was based on specific topics, shown in Figure 6.4 C, and discussed in the following.

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[137] To safeguard the professor's identity and avoid ethical issues, we decided to not share/reproduce the syllabus in its entirety in this dissertation, opting to share only specific parts from which our envisioned readership may get a better insight into Amirah's request for assistance.

Figure 6.4 B: Assessment procedures for the class.

PROCEDIMENTOS DE AVALIAÇÃO

A partir da preparação e síntese ativa - escrita e prévia, individual ou em grupo/equipe - dos TEXTOS BASE indicados, e até de parte dos COMPLEMENTARES, bem como das exposições, leituras comentadas e debates nas aulas das três primeiras "sessões presenciais", questões específicas e gerais tratando do conjunto de ideias, temas e noções do conteúdo programático serão respondidas em estudos dirigidos orais por equipe ['n' equipes na turma, cada uma com 05 alunos], na última "sessão presencial", ou, excepcionalmente, "sessão remota assíncrona" do curso. São os seguintes estudos dirigidos orais por equipe:

Av.1 ‣ Ex.1: Questões do Estudo dirigido oral I   : **conteúdos das aulas de 31out2022** - 30 pontos
Av.2 ‣ Ex.2: Questões do Estudo dirigido oral II   : **conteúdos das aulas de 07nov2022** - 30 pontos
Av.3 ‣ Ex.3: Questões do Estudo dirigido oral III : **conteúdos das aulas de 14nov2022** - 40 pontos
                                                                                            [total - 100 pontos]

Source: Shared by Amirah.

Based on the syllabus, the students were supposed to read all 75 texts, not knowing exactly which ones the assessment would cover. This preparatory reading task involved identifying the following: a) the main idea and/or the author's argument, b) the secondary ideas, c) the way the author(s) developed the ideas or argument throughout the text, d) the concepts discussed in the texts, d) how the authors discussed or deconstructed the concepts, and c) any gaps and themes, as shown in topics a-e in Figure 6.4 C. Then, after answering these 'questions', the students were supposed to write an expanded summary of each text (topic f in Figure 6.4 C), also to serve as the source of class discussions. As Amirah explained, the professor initially did not inform the students whether these expanded summaries were meant to be handed out – or even whether they would be considered in the assessment.

Figure 6.4 C: The guided study for the class.

PREPARAÇÃO E SÍNTESE ATIVA - ESCRITA E PRÉVIA - DOS TEXTOS BASE E COMPLEMENTARES

Leitura/estudo-síntese em grupo/equipe, ou individual, preferencialmente por escrito; poderá ser solicitada a entrega ao professor. Tem por objetivo orientar e focar a leitura/o estudo-síntese pelos alunos - de forma ativa e crítica - dos TEXTOS BASE, e até dos TEXTOS COMPLEMENTARES, acima indicados. As sínteses ativas e que devem ser do texto inteiro (a partir de cada parte do texto, de cada parágrafo, de cada tema, etc. - conforme o interesse individual/da equipe) deverão, metodologicamente, seguir e responder (com base em citações textuais e referências bibliográficas corretas, ou seja, conforme as normas da ABNT) cada um dos seguintes tópicos:

a. **Qual** a **ideia principal**, ou o **argumento, do autor** no(s) texto(s);

b. **Quais** as **ideias secundárias**, cite(m) textualmente;

c. **Como** o autor constrói o **desenvolvimento**, o **encadeamento ou percurso da exposição das ideias**, ou seja, cite(m) textualmente qual(is) a(s) articulação(ões) entre : ideias secundárias → ? ◎ ←ideia principal;

d. **Quais** as **noções usadas** e **como são (des)construídas pelo autor**, cite(m) textualmente;

e. **Quais aberturas/temas/problemas o(s) texto(s) lhe(s) sugere(m); formule-os teoricamente**, ou seja, relacione(m) suas ideias com as ideias e noções usadas e (des)construídas pelo autor, citando-as textualmente, para melhor embasar a discussão em sala, ou para melhor expô-las à apreciação por escrito; e

f. com as respostas dos tópicos acima, redija(m) um **resumo expandido do texto**.

Source: Shared by Amirah.

In terms of genre format and purpose, the 'expanded summary' resembles more a critical review than a summary. Critical reviews have become increasingly common in undergraduate academic writing in the past decades (Devira; Westin, 2021), particularly in Westernized HEIs, as is the case of UFMG. The a-e topics show many similarities with the moves/schematic stages of critical reviews identified by Devira and Westin (2021, p. 34) for this genre: "Introduction, Summary of the Article [a-b], Analysis of the Article [c-d], and Conclusion [e]". As the authors explain, the summary part deals with the main ideas and the analysis part provides a critical evaluation of such ideas.

Additionally, critical reviews have been favored as a source of assessment because of their multipurpose potential: reviews may be used to verify the depth of knowledge of a particular topic – not just one's understanding of the source text, as in summaries. This is because the purpose of reviews is to summarize *and* evaluate the source text, which requires analyzing the source text considering the author, the content, the organization of the text, as well as the relevance and potential contributions the source text presents (cf. Motta-Roth, 2001). When producing reviews, students must associate the source text with other references, using evaluative language to signal their position toward the material.

At first glance, the task seems to be aimed at stimulating a critical synthesis of the main and supplementary texts, emphasizing key elements and argumentative structure. In topic 'a', the students must identify and communicate clearly the main message conveyed by the author in the texts. In topic 'b', they have to quote verbatim the secondary ideas that contribute to the development of the main idea or argument, which is expected of summary writing and may be helpful when learning or revising new concepts. Still, identifying main and secondary ideas does not really correspond to interpreting the ideas in depth. In topic 'c', the students must analyze how the author develops their argument, examining the connection between the secondary ideas and the main idea by quoting specific passages that demonstrate how the author links their arguments. In topic 'd', the students are asked to identify the key notions present in the text and how the author utilizes them, observing how the author may deconstruct or problematize these notions throughout the text and quoting relevant passages to support this analysis. Understanding how authors build arguments and articulate ideas does not really mean comprehending the arguments and their theoretical/conceptual associations.

Finally, before writing the so-called 'expanded summary' (topic 'f'), the students had to explore the gaps, themes or problems suggested by the texts, associating these ideas to the notions discussed and deconstructed by the author(s), establishing theoretical connections and

quoting specific passages to substantiate such relationships (topic 'e'). This seems to be the analytical part of the task, requiring the students to interpret and evaluate the ideas of the text, focusing on the content, as opposed to the textual features and the rhetorical moves used to build arguments and articulate main and secondary information. Topic 'd' could have been the primary goal of the entire task.

<p align="center">* * *</p>

In addition to a very demanding syllabus and schedule for second-year students, no information on the assessment/grading criteria was shared, other than the assessment procedure, which was also not clear: would the students be evaluated based on the so-called summaries or based on the oral guided study? Were they supposed to produce slide presentations focused on the summaries? What does an oral guided study entail? Would the students be assessed on depth of analysis based on the summaries or the 'mysterious' oral guided study? This **lack of clarity** led to even more confusion and frustration: "*I didn't understand what he wanted, it's not clear in the syllabus*", Amirah later explained in a *conversa* (*conversa* face-to-face, Sep. 27th, 2022).

Eventually, the professor explained that the students would be assessed on their oral explanations as related to the topics a-e, not specifying which of the 75 texts the questions would be about. This Q&A session in which the students answered questions "*on the spot*" as if in an academic conference presentation or a thesis/dissertation defense, was termed by Amirah and her classmates as an "*oral exam*" (*conversa*, WhatsApp, Nov. 7th, 2022). She added that the professor was never satisfied with the students' answers. Hence, I raise the following questions: *What is the purpose of this task? To check the students' depth of understanding, or is it to verify their academic reading and/or writing skills?*

In a five-year undergraduate course with mostly evening classes, is it realistic to expect second-year students to read 75 highly theoretical texts for a 15-hour class? Is it fair to require these students to read texts in languages to which they may not have been exposed, without informing them in advance, before enrollment? Is it reasonable to expect these second-year students to identify gaps in texts about concepts or theories not studied before, and then have the students write summaries?

Session C: Writing for Future Work

This online session was focused on helping Amirah to craft a professionally-looking resume, after she contacted me asking for assistance to update and improve her old resume (Figure 6.4 D) so she could apply for an internship position. To this end, we discussed the job opening, Amirah's previous work experience, her skills, interests, and professional profile. We focused on adding details and relevant information, adjusting Amirah's work experience to emphasize her strengths in a truthful way. We geared the document toward the desired job post, after a brief discussion about the components of a resume, the role and expected content of each section in this genre.

Amirah's 'old' resume suggests that she already had a clear understanding of the genre format and purpose: she organized the information in headed sections that included previous work experience, education, skills, language, and personal details. The resume also shows her name and last name in a larger font on the top of the page, followed by contact details, which is expected in the genre (Cassany, 1993), as are additional categories such as 'skills' (Gottlieb; Promes; Coates, 2021). The use of bullet points and the content are appropriate. However, the bright blue color, inconsistent spacing, and irregular alignment give Amirah's resume an amateur look and could be improved upon.

The importance of multimodality in contemporary academic communication cannot be overstated, as discussed in Chapter 2, particularly with the rise of social media and its role in science communication during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is not just social media and science communication that demand a competent manipulation of various semiotic modes. CVs/resumes require multimodal competence, particularly with the rise of online platforms and digital submissions (Sołek-Borowska; Wilczewska, 2018), which may also require video CVs/resumes (Wallwork, 2014).

A well-designed CV/resume can capture the attention of recruiters more quickly and effectively. Visual elements (e.g., layout, color, and typography) contribute to the document's aesthetic appeal (Craig; Scala, 2012), potentially helping to create a positive first impression. Visual elements should be employed appropriately, considering not only the job post and the company but also – and perhaps more importantly –, the culture in which one's CV/resume will circulate. Designing an appropriate CV/resume involves understanding how non-verbal elements can be integrated with verbal content to produce specific effects, such as confidence and professionalism while adhering to the genre's visual and schematic presentation.

Figure 6.4 D: Amirah's first resume.

AMIRAH HADDAD

@   @gmail.com   📍 Rua
(11)9

EXPERIÊNCIA PROFISSIONAL

| 08/02/2021 - 15/03/2022 | Farma Conde
Auxiliar de loja |

EDUCAÇÃO

| 2019-2020 | Colégio Adventista da Liberdade
Ensino Médio |
| 2021-presente | Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais |

HABILIDADES

- Curso de informática City Computer Duração: 180h
- Curso de AutoCad 2Dl e ll+Revit +Sketchup+3D Studio Max The Best Idiomas e Informática Duração: 210h

LÍNGUA

- Inglês (Intermediário)
- Árabe (Nativo)

INFORMAÇÃO PESSOAL

- Data de Nascimento :
- Estado civil   : Solteira

Source: Shared by Amirah, adapted to conceal personal/identifying data.

To make Amirah's new resume professionally looking and appropriate, we opted for a three-color scheme: a white background, dark gray font, and sea green names. We enlarged Amirah's first and last name to make it stand out, separating it from the body of the resume with a bold gray line. We placed her contact details on the top right-hand corner of the page. While some authors (e.g., Bennet, 2014) recommend not including the email address underlined in blue, for it can shift the reader's attention from the candidate's name, we left it in blue to signal that the email address is a clickable link.

We also added a professional summary with a personal statement. As I explained in our tutoring session, this section is expected in CVs and resumes in Brazil (Severiano, 2022). The summary was written entirely by Amirah. She included her professional goal and desired position: an internship in her main area (Figure 6.4 E). Amirah describes herself as a student with excellent grades and a spirit of leadership and autonomy, thus avoiding vague adjectives and clichés (Bennet, 2014), which could have undermined her potential. She stated the year she was at UFMG at the time: *quarto período*, as internship positions tend to be directed at students in specific stages/years of their undergraduate studies.

The headed sections were slightly altered in the new resume. We changed their order, with 'Education' first, as recommended in Bennet (2014), seeing that Amirah's undergraduate degree seemed more relevant for this particular job post, not breaking away from the genre's expected schematic structure (Cassany, 1993). We also listed her education entries in reverse chronological order, as this is the favored format for contemporary resumes/CVs (Gottlieb; Promes; Coates, 2021; Severiano, 2022), placing more emphasis on the latest qualification(s). We removed the color-block divisions and instead used blank spaces as lines to separate the sections, producing a cleaner look, and manipulating the white space on the page according to the genre's schematic structure and Amirah's visual preferences.

In addition, we included key tasks under Amirah's sole work experience entry, after discussing her experience in the tutoring session. This information 'fills the page' of the resume and offers the reader insight into her previous work experience. Because her past position as a salesperson in a drugstore chain in São Paulo is unrelated to her current professional goal, we opted for bullet points listing her tasks, as opposed to action statements with specific accomplishments highlighted with action verbs and measurable results, which would be recommended for related work experience (Bennet, 2014).

In keeping with the old resume, we listed Amirah's specialized training courses in the category 'Skills and Courses', making it more coherent. Under 'Languages', we specified Amirah's language skills, including Portuguese as her second language. We also created the section 'Interests', with Amirah's past times. Despite the lack of consensus about this category in the literature (e.g., Bennet, 2014), we believe it can serve as an ice-breaker in job interviews, promoting a sense of identity and a connection with recruiters (Gottlieb; Promes; Coates, 2021). 'Other Information' includes Amirah's nationalities and date of birth, with an understanding that such additional information applicants and candidates are not obliged to divulge in Brazil.

The result is a simple and professional-looking document that showcases Amirah's professional and academic details. The simplicity of the layout means the resume can be built upon in several different ways: from adding new categories/sections to changing colors and experimenting with more advanced and visually appealing templates in user-friendly software (e.g., Canva, which Amirah started using for her slide presentations). The simple design and layout offered Amirah room to adjust the content of the resume as required. We also created an alternative resume with more color-blocking.

Figure 6.4 E: Amirah's improved resume.

AMIRAH HADDAD

Rua
Belo Horizonte - Minas Gerais
55 11
@gmail.com

PERFIL

Estudante do curso de _____ (quarto período) na UFMG, com ótimas notas, espírito de liderança e independência. Interessada pela _____ pela sua capacidade de construir moradias e transformar vidas. Busco uma oportunidade de desenvolver meus conhecimentos e de contribuir com o crescimento da empresa como estagiária.

EDUCAÇÃO

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais - UFMG
Bacharelado em _____ (2021- presente)

Colégio Adventista Liberdade - SP
Ensino Médio (2019- 2020)

EXPERIÊNCIA PROFISSIONAL

Farma Conde
Auxiliar Comercial (Fev. 2021 - Mar. 2022)
- Atendimento ao público e a representantes comerciais
- Controle de registros e de estoque
- Abertura e fechamento de caixa

HABILIDADES E CURSOS

| AutoCad 2D I | Revit | 3D Studio Max (em curso) |
| AutoCad 2D II | Sketchup (em curso) | Pacote Office |

IDIOMAS

| Português: segunda língua | Inglês: intermediário superior | Árabe: primeira língua |

INTERESSES

Desenhar, ler livros, fazer exercícios físicos, visitar museus.

OUTRAS INFORMAÇÕES

Nacionalidade: brasileira e siria
Data de nascimento:

Source: The author and Amirah, adapted to conceal personal/identifying data

Genres vary across time and space, and discursively encode cultural norms. As a consequence of increased globalization and its impact on professional practices, CV formats may vary rather slightly in Westernized countries such as Brazil, often sharing communicative purposes, rhetorical structure, and textual features across many cultures (Tichich, 2005). In this regard, Lombardi and Luttermann (2023, p. 55) note: CVs are "characterised by a high degree of standardisation in relation to macro- and micro-structure and fulfilment of communication function – these features being common to different languages and cultures".

As Lombardi and Luttermann (2023) elaborate, "cultural influence is essentially based on its [the genre's] historical development within a language community" (p. 64). Hence, a 'glocal' approach is recommended for professional genres (Li, 2011), with the genre analysis and production based on both global/Western as well as local practices and conventions. This 'glocal' perspective means a coherent articulation of various semiotic modes to answer appropriately to communicative demands from imagined audiences, negotiating between the global and the local in terms of content and presentation. This negotiation is explored further in Session D.

To this end, we also discussed Brazilian recruitment culture and communication and recruiters' expectations when it comes to CVs, job interviews, and professional communication, drawing on my experience teaching Business English and Portuguese and mentoring professionals in-company (e.g., Sá, 2014), and my work as an interpreter alongside Brazilian and international directors and recruiters in large multinational companies in Brazil. This discussion was vital, as recruitment and selection processes are situated practices, even if the job post refers to a position in a multinational company.

Amirah wanted to understand how to approach interviewers and write professional emails, asking if she could "*write something specific or just send the resume*?". She had thought about "*just saying good afternoon and here's my resume*" (Amirah, WhatsApp, Nov. 18th, 2022). We then discussed how to write professional emails, stressing the need to consider the cultural differences in language use, which involved understanding that Brazilians tend to overtly display animation and interest in face-to-face interactions via gestures and other non-verbal markers of immediacy (Novinger, 2003). For instance, the use of exclamation marks, which is often employed in professional or semi-formal emails in Brazil, might not be appropriate in professional emails written to individuals from other cultures. The same applies to email openings and closings. In Brazil, professional/formal emails invariably start with '*Prezado/a [primeiro nome]*' or '*Caro/a [primeiro nome]*' ("Dear [first name]"), sometimes followed by a greeting such as "good morning" or "good afternoon". Using someone's first name is not inappropriate in Brazil, even in formal emails. In Brazil, professional/formal emails are usually closed with '*Atenciosamente*' ("Best regards"), but as the communication unfolds, we may gradually move to either its abbreviated form '*Att.*' or to the less formal '*Abraços*' ("Hugs"). We concluded the online session with a model email Amirah could adapt when needed.

Session D: Creating a Digital Presence

Prior to our tutoring session, Amirah had created a LinkedIn profile, adding only her high school experience and a professionalizing course she had started in São Paulo. Amirah's current LinkedIn profile is reproduced partially in Figure 6.4 F. The profile is quite simple, yet it conveys key professional and academic information future employers might check. I now discuss Amirah's digital presence in the professional social network.

As a Gen-Zer, Amirah had no difficulty adding information to her profile. She did ask for some references on **what to include** in the basic layout of the profile. I shared my profile as a reference, reminding her that LinkedIn profiles may vary across occupations and disciplines (Zide; Elman, Shahani-Denning, 2014), so she could study it and add her own work entries accordingly. The result is a simple yet appropriate profile that somewhat mirrors her resume. I advised Amirah to add posts about her professional interests, as recruiters often scan LinkedIn profiles to gain more insight into the applicant (Kluemper, 2013).

Remarkably, in this social network Amirah shares traits of her Syrian heritage/identity in connection with her major and **her future professional self**. For instance, the posts from Figure 6.4 G show Amirah referencing Syrian houses and architecture, using Portuguese and English. Her Syrian identity is not made visible verbally but with visually engaging content she shows a connection with her country of origin. Such information is not made explicit, as there are no signs of her Syrian nationality and Arabic descent in her LinkedIn profile, other than her name and the inclusion of Arabic in the 'Languages' section.

As shown in Figures 6.4 H and I, Amirah posts her art and professional projects, using English or translanguaging with English and Portuguese. When referring to Belo Horizonte, she posts in Portuguese (Figure 6.4 J). Amirah seems to be very aware of her **LinkedIn audience**: she knows English is an international, wide-reaching language and that by posting in this language, she will likely attract international and domestic readers. She also knows that Portuguese is the language of her future employers in the short term; at the very least while she completes her undergraduate studies at UFMG. In this scenario, posting in more than one language may show 'purposeful versatility'.

Figure 6.4 F: Amirah's LinkedIn profile.

Source: Retrieved from Amirah's profile, personal/identifying data concealed.

Figure 6.4 G: Posts from Amirah's LinkedIn.

Source: Retrieved from Amirah's profile, personal/identifying data concealed.

To confirm my assumptions, I asked Amirah why she never posts in Arabic, and she replied: "*if you post in Arabic, no one will understand. In Portuguese or English, you get more views*" (Amirah, WhatsApp, Nov. 24th, 2023, Figure 6.4 L below, with "*acesso*" translated as "*views*"). Yet, I cannot help but feel that Amirah seems to place traits of her Syrian identity or origin in the background. She chooses to not foreground her Arabic descent, verbally or otherwise, it seems, perhaps not even detrimentally, as she employs English and Portuguese as a discursive strategy in a highly competitive digital arena.

Amirah's language choices at LinkedIn could be explained by the following ideas: the notions of language market (Bourdieu, 1998) and language commodification (Heller, 2003; 2010a; Irvine, 1989). When languages are treated – and traded – as commodities (Heller, 2010b; Mufwene, 2010; Skutnabb-Kangas; Phillipson, 2010), **the values we assign to languages, varieties, and ways of communicating fluctuate in symbolic and material terms**, mirroring socio-historical processes that enable and maintain such commodification. The cultural value and the social status we attribute to specific languages and ways of communicating reflect

tensions and pressures (or oppressions?) enmeshed in the dispute and desire for recognition and power.

**Figure 6.4 H**: A post from Amirah's LinkedIn.
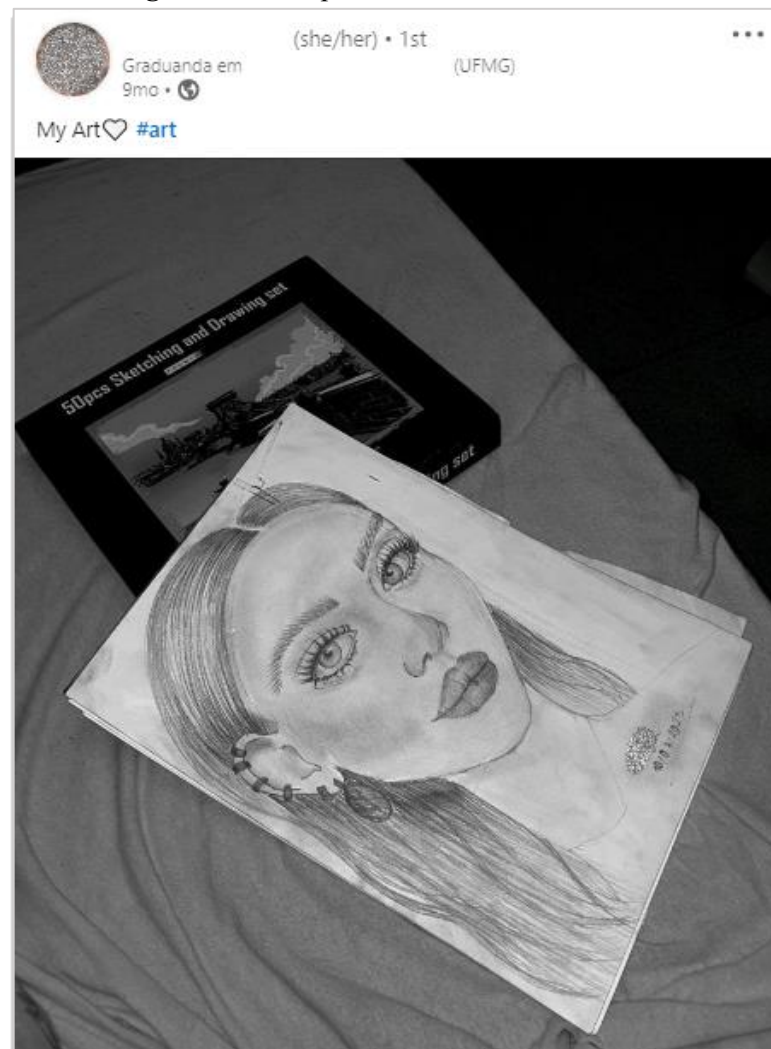
Source: Retrieved from Amirah's profile, personal/identifying data concealed.

Because language and mode choices are made on a situated basis, Amirah deploys all languages and modes at her disposal. In a strict view of language, she uses Portuguese and English. In an expanded view of language, Amirah resorts to images, photos, videos, colors, emojis, and hashtags *in addition* to verbal language encoded in Portuguese and English. The emojis in Amirah's posts serve an emotive function (cf. Danesi, 2017), reinforcing the content of the posts. This reinforcement is also achieved by matching the predominant/outstanding colors of the images with the color of the emojis, seen in Figure 6.4 G: the blue heart emoji and the blue details on the doors and the fall emoji with orange and mustard yellow colors matching the Damascus doors from the video. There is also the white heart with gray lines, matching the

white paper and the shades of gray in the photo, seen in Figure 6.4 H. Interestingly, when she posts about Belo Horizonte, no emojis are used, as shown in Figure 6.4 J (and verified in other posts in her LinkedIn profile).

Amirah builds her digital presence at LinkedIn by negotiating her identities online, meaningfully employing linguistic and cultural repertoires with specific variables: her imagined audience, the functions and purposes of LinkedIn, the content of the photos she chooses to share, and the image she wishes to project, alternating between a more global and a more local identity, a more personal and more professional self. While these may seem like binaries, they should not be viewed as such: global and local, and personal and professional, co-exist and are deeply intertwined. They are part of her translanguaging, in so far as she relies on 'languaging' drawn from a multiplicity of voices (Bakhtin, 1986; Lillis, 2001) and languages that come into view when she is interacting online, moving between linguistic systems and semiotic modes, using writing, images, and iconicity. In this negotiation, "Translanguaging is a transformative, resemiotization process, whereby language users display the best of their creativity" (Wei, 2018, p. 22).

Figure 6.4 I: Another post from Amirah's LinkedIn.
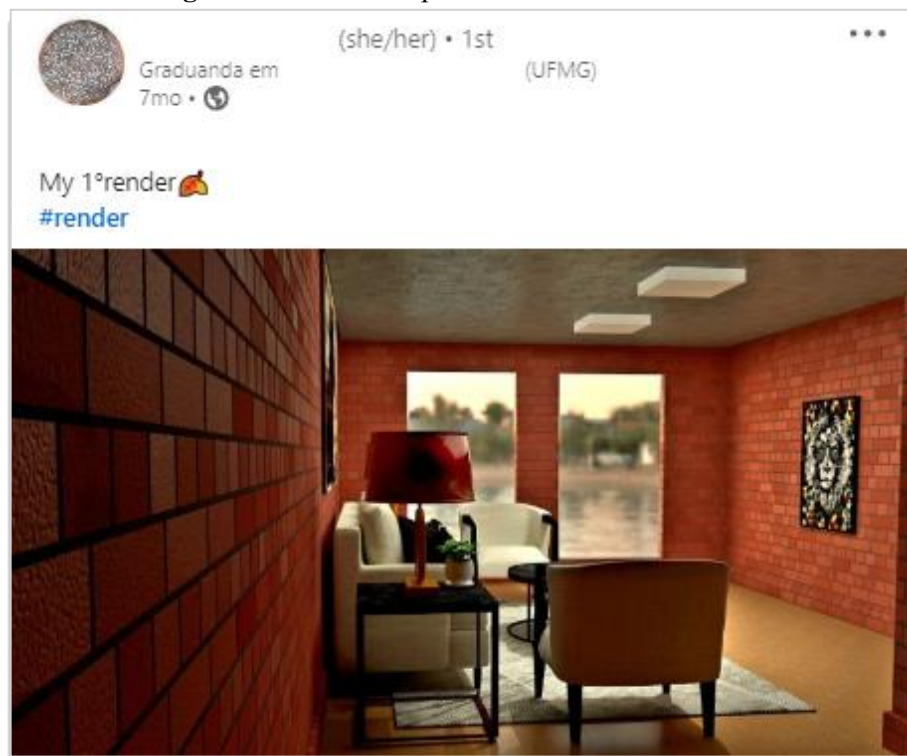
Source: Retrieved from Amirah's profile, personal/identifying data concealed.

Figure 6.4 J: A post about Belo Horizonte from Amirah's LinkedIn.
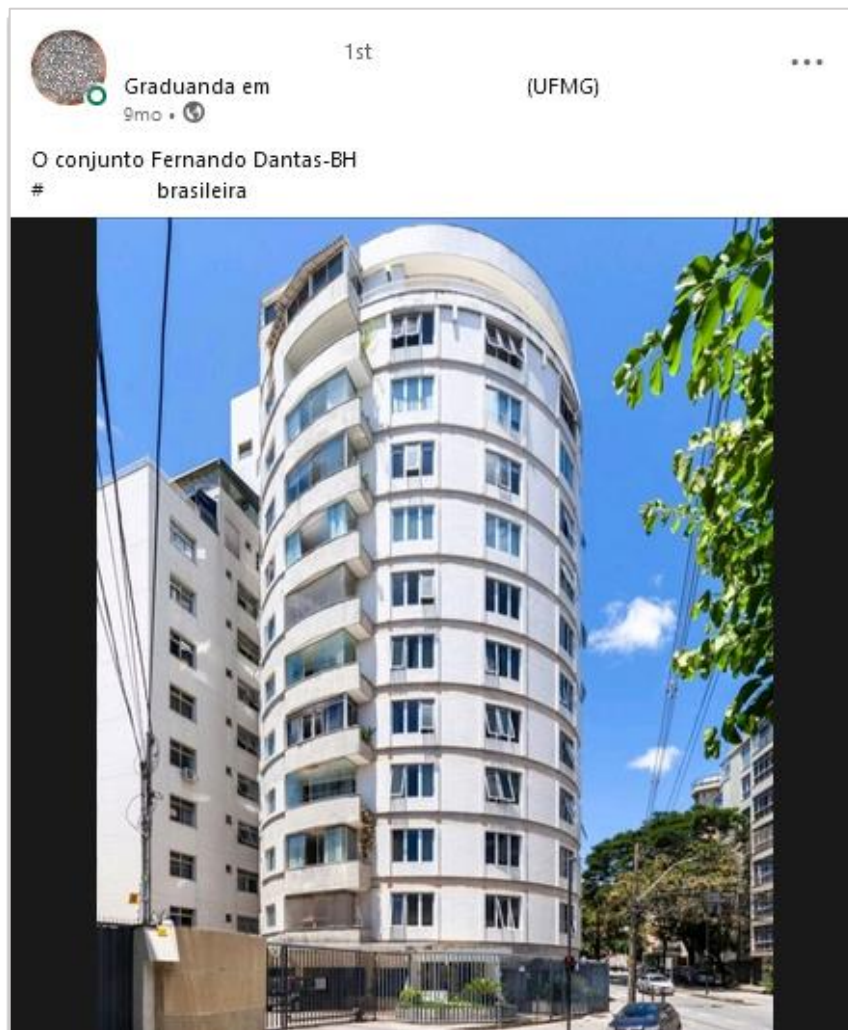
Source: Retrieved from Amirah's profile, personal/identifying data concealed.

About identity, as Lee and Barton (2011, p. 57) explain, identities in online spaces are "fluid and dynamic, with participants projecting multiple senses of self". While online spaces may heighten such multiplicity, perhaps making it more visible, we contend that identities in 'offline' spaces are just as dynamic and fluid, for two reasons: a) what we do on social media, in particular, starts in the offline world (Recuero, 2014), stemming from our desire for sociality; and b) the ubiquitousness of digital media technologies and digital mobility has blurred the lines between 'online' and 'offline' (Chayko, 2017), entangling the physical and the virtual through the embeddedness of the digital in everyday life (Lewis, 2018), despite its uneven distribution across societies and disparate levels of penetration.

Figure 6.4 K: A post about Amirah's 'graduation' at an IT school.
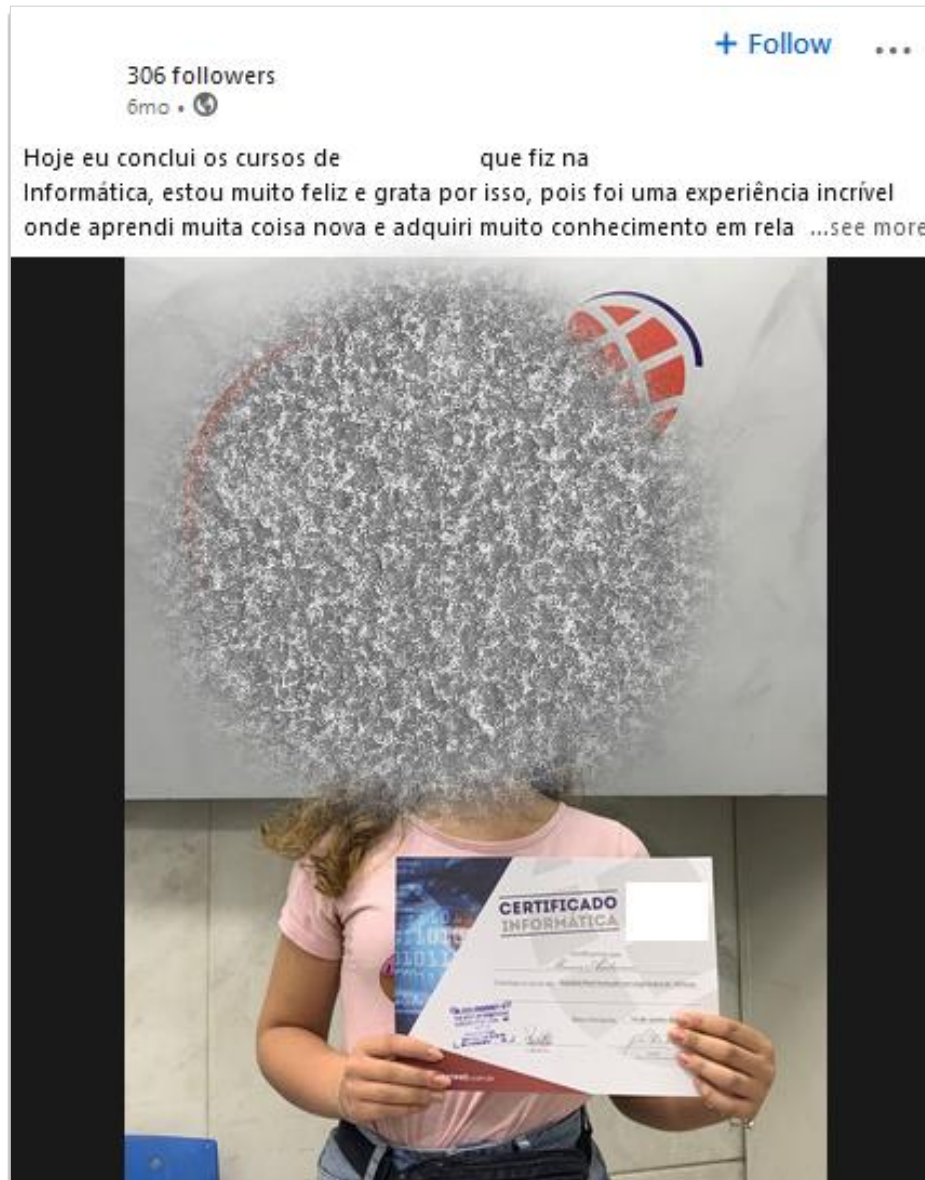
Source: Retrieved from Amirah's profile, personal/identifying data concealed.

Figure 6.4 L: Screenshot of a *conversa* with Amirah.
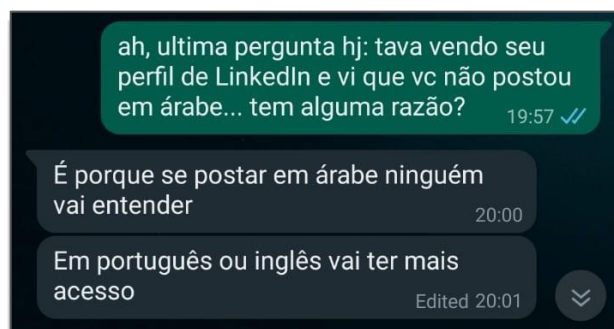
Source: Amirah and the author.

Session E: Translating University Culture

Noelle's request for assistance did not involve difficulty in writing academically or professionally. Differently, she wanted help with university-related matters, after reporting feeling "*lost*" when choosing her classes for the following semester, mainly due to the enrollment system and the types of courses offered by her faculty, department, and by other UFMG faculties. Specifically, Noelle had trouble understanding the different enrollment rules, procedures, and dates, the classes and courses she could or could not include in each registration, as well as the (situated) meaning of the different courses at UFMG, which requires knowledge of how the undergraduate courses are structured.

At UFMG, courses are categorized as '*obrigatória*': mandatory or core classes, and elective – '*optativa*', which refers to classes the students take based on their interests. Core and electives are part of specific and general knowledge strands, with enrollment requirements, dates, and procedures varying for each course and strand. In addition to core and electives, UFMG offers advanced courses at graduate programs, supplementary ('broader' electives), extension courses in association with outreach programs, and cross-cutting thematic courses ('*formação transversal*') as part of the general knowledge strand.

Our online tutoring session was focused on 'translating' part of this university culture at UFMG, associating it with Noelle's major, as based on a flexible academic curriculum. While most curricula at the university do present some flexibility, offering some room for choice (i.e., electives), most majors are structured around fixed sets of classes and courses. The Languages curricula, on the other hand, are significantly more flexible, especially because of the different types of degree offered, a situation made more complex as a result of curricular changes made in 2021 (effective as of 2022), when Noelle joined UFMG.

In this landscape, Noelle's main issue was understanding the **situated meaning** of the 'elective' classes at UFMG. She initially thought an 'elective' class meant she could opt out of taking it, with 'elective' understood as optional altogether, that is, a class she could choose to *not* take. Noelle wanted to understand the difference between 'core' and 'supplementary' classes, and what 'elective' entailed: "*If I have to take it, then it's not really optional, so why do they call it 'elective'? I just don't get it.*" (WhatsApp, Dec. 21st, 2022). This is not an unreasonable consideration, but for the university, 'electives' are a group of non-core 'mandatory' classes from which the students can choose, based on their interests, study plans, and academic pathways at UFMG.

Noelle's confusion might have been the result of being '**lost in translation**', as '*elective*' means '*optativa*' in Portuguese, translated directly to '*opcional*' in Spanish and '*facultatif*' in French and Haitian Creole, languages Noelle speaks. In fairness, '*optativa*' does convey the idea of 'non-mandatory', of one being able to 'opt out of', especially if taken out of context. However, in the context of higher education in Brazil, '*optativa*' is nuanced, with its meaning highly culturally bound. For instance, at UFMG, as mentioned, classes are either 'mandatory' or 'elective' ('*optativa*') in undergraduate programs, but other HEIs have '*eletivas*' (entirely non-mandatory) and '*optativas*' (mandatory from which one chooses a class), each with a specific meaning[138].

This shows that **language encodes culture** – dialectically "culture is encoded in the linguistic sign and its use", as Kramsch (2014, p. 37) explains. Culture is connected to language "semiotically, discursively, and linguistically", through cultural schemas, cultural categories (Sharifian, 2014), and past experiences (Kecskes, 2014), often in unintentionally 'opaque' ways to those not really familiarized with a particular culture. This seemed to be Noelle's case – we must remember that Noelle has been living in Brazil for only four years, having had one year of formal education in the country, the last year of secondary education, before joining UFMG. Her experience with education in Brazil is therefore limited when compared with the other three participants.

Our session lasted 60 minutes. In addition to discussing mandatory and elective classes, we also talked about the Complementary Academic Activities (AAC), which refer to roundtable discussions, lectures, short courses, and workshops the student attends over the four-five years of undergraduate studies. The AAC rely heavily on academic events such as conferences and extension/outreach programs and initiatives, helping the student to expand their academic horizons through the **education-research-extension triad** on which Brazilian universities are built. Each *Colegiado* has the autonomy to decide how the AAC will be distributed in the curriculum; in some UFMG undergraduate programs a total of 270-330 hours of AAC may be required, with specific credits assigned to each AAC, as is the case of Noelle's major[139]. I emphasized the fact that the AAC are not optional: students must complete a specific number of hours in research or extension activities, without which they are not allowed to graduate.

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[138] https://www.uff.br/?q=disciplinas-tipos-inscricao-e-cancelamento (in Portuguese. Access: Jan. 05, 2024).

[139] For instance: https://grad.letras.ufmg.br/vida-academica/novo-titulo/13-aacc (in Portuguese Access: Jan. 05, 2024).

Figure 6.4 M: Undergraduate Studies Regulations.
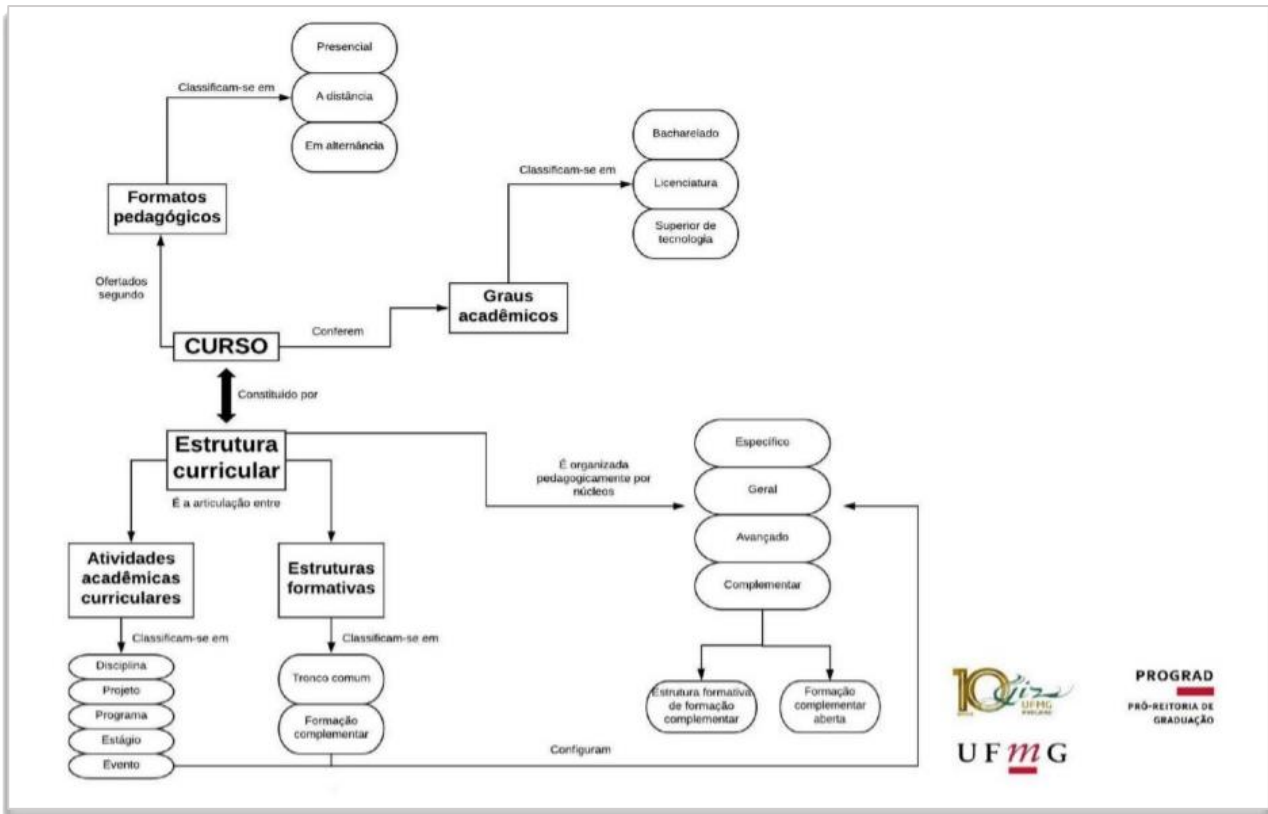
Noelle's confusion might be indicative of some unfamiliarity with the regulations that govern the design of the undergraduate courses. While the official documents and regulations do tend to be overly technical, with highly specialized language and intricate diagrams (Figures 6.4 M and N), the students have access to a dedicated website with essential guidelines, FAQs, and other information on academic life at UFMG. However, when I asked the four research participants whether they knew about the *Viver UFMG* website[140], only one replied positively, and three of them had never heard of the website before our *conversas*. This could be due to generational preferences: Gen-Zers tend to consume content through social media platforms[141], not websites, a habit made visible with the rise of social commerce (Kastenholz, 2021) and the omnichannel strategy (Akter; Hossain; Strong, 2021).

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[140] https://www.ufmg.br/viverufmg/ (in Portuguese. Access: Feb. 05, 2024).

[141] We trace a parallel between Gen-Zers' consumption of products and the consumption of information and content, considering that habits from one area of social life influence other areas, particularly when they are mediated by the same technologies.

Figure 6.4 N: Undergraduate Studies Regulations.
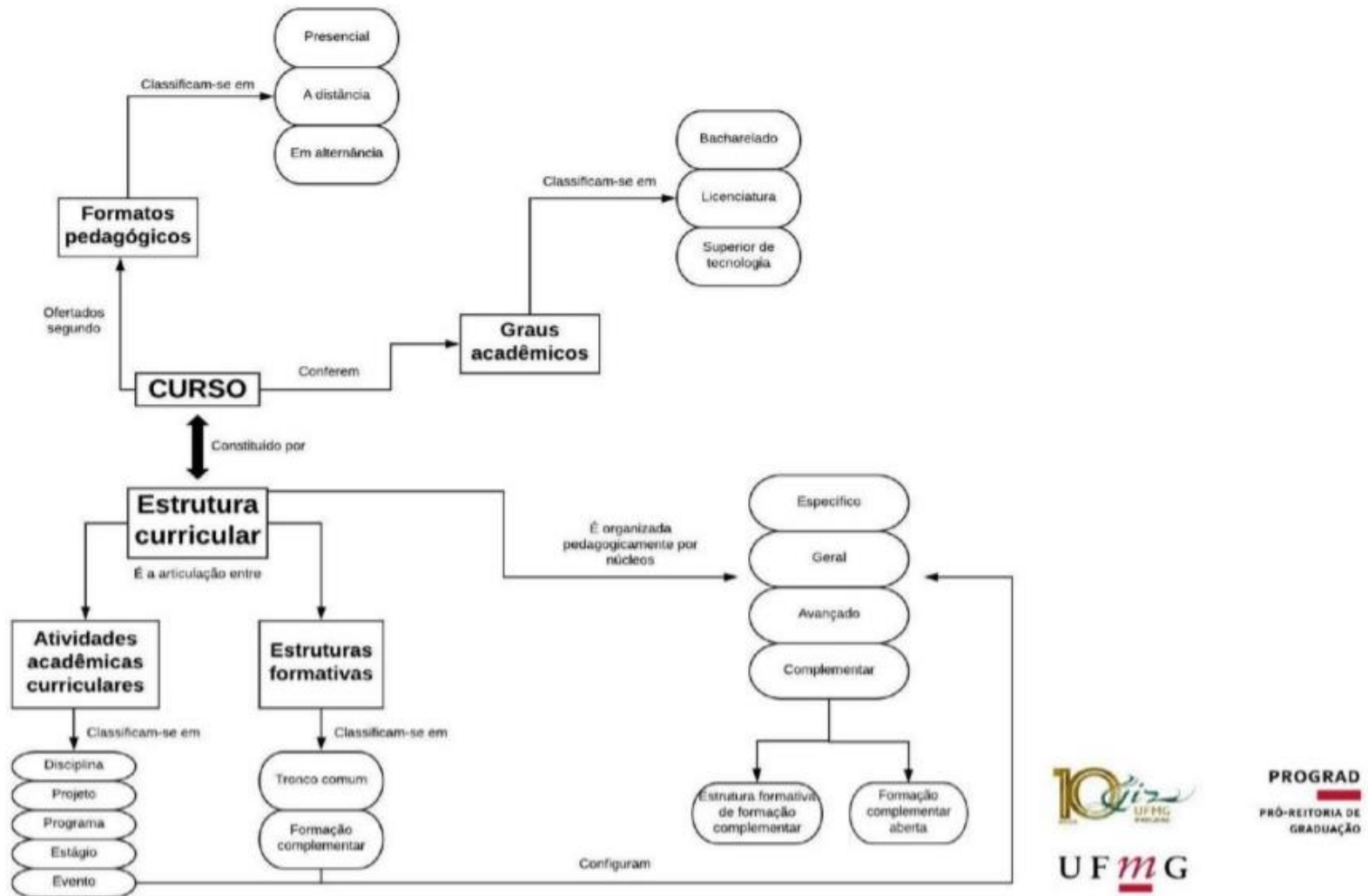
The diagrams from Figures 6.4 M and N were retrieved from Prograd's webpage, in the tab for undergraduate students, which means that these diagrams have been designed for UFMG students at the undergraduate level. To avoid the overtechnicality of an indeed complex (bureocratic?) system of HE, it may be more pedagogical to design diagrams and flowcharts in a way and with language more accessible to undergraduate students, similar to the maps reproduced in the beginning of this chapter.

Interestingly, the difficulty Noelle expressed was also shared by Syed on social media in early 2024, as reproduced in Figure 6.4 O, in which Syed comments: "*ufmg is unbelievable, if it's elective, then why is it mandatory?????*", displaying dumbfound confusion toward the elective and mandatory classes, as Noelle.

Figure 6.4 O: A post about mandatory and elective classes.
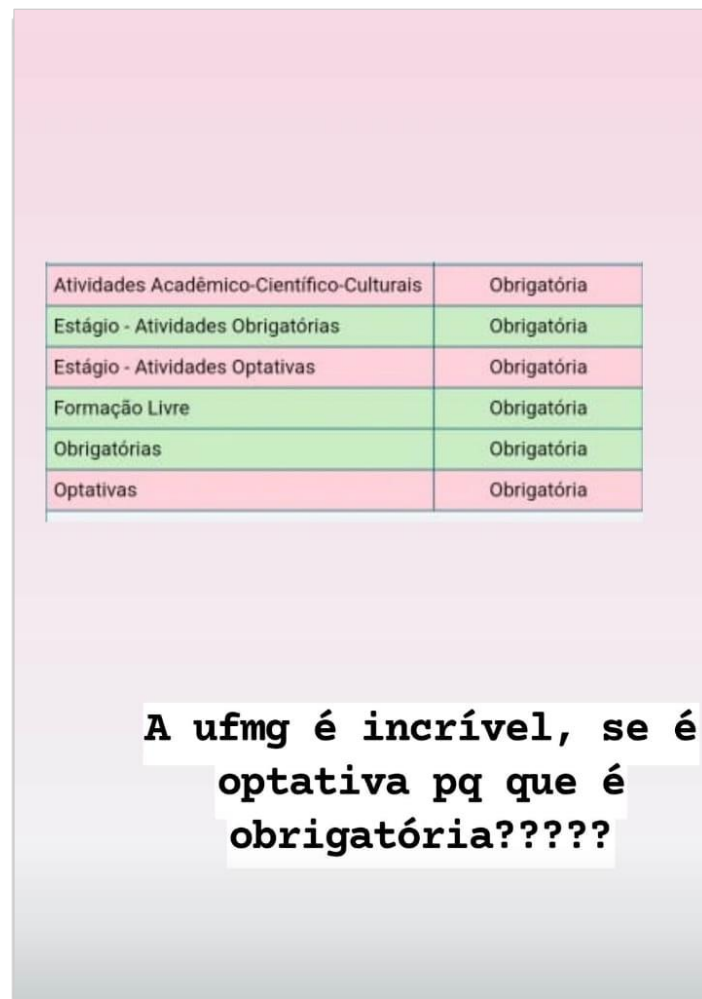
Source: Retrieved from Syed's social media.

6.5 Social Media and the Academic Grapevine

In this research, it has been agreed that academic literacy is not just about producing written and spoken texts to be circulated in academic circles. Just as central, academic literacy is also about engaging with the texts of others, in reading and listening, in formal and informal situations inside and outside university spaces. Moreover, given the ubiquitousness of digital communication and social media, we sustain that academic literacy is also developed through virtual exchanges in digital settings, such as WhatsApp text chains, messaging groups, or one-to-one online interactions, especially for students belonging to Generation Z.

The role of social media and informal, more horizontalized socialization has been defining in this research and throughout the participants' experiences at university. In addition to the more horizontalized/less structured approach of my interactions with the participants, conducted in virtual settings with digital technologies such as WhatsApp, the participants also reported interacting with their peers through WhatsApp groups in which they shared experiences and materials about specific classes. One example comes from Michelly: the images in Figure 6.5 A are screenshots of Michelly's WhatsApp group chat for her Health Sciences major, in which her classmates collaborate to answer a question, share a file with links for video classes, and an invitation for another group chat created for a specific class [142].

Similar exchanges were reported by the other research participants. For instance, Noelle mentioned using WhatsApp groups to receive updates and other information from Fump, the university's foundation, and her classes at UFMG, and to discuss coursework and tasks with her peers:

> *We have groups for each subject, actually. And normally what is discussed in this group, we discuss about some task that the teacher scheduled, deadlines, something that we don't understand, that someone else understood better, then we discuss something that bothers us, to vent... we use it vent. That's basically what we talk about in this group.*

(Noelle, *conversa* WhatsApp, Aug. 04th, 2023)

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[142] In Mattos (2021), I describe and discuss the use of WhatsApp in the emergency remote teaching (ERT) of an English for Academic Purposes course at UFMG, where the software was initially used as a means to reduce the transactional distance (Moore, 1993) between the learners and the learners and the teacher, later expanding its reach to student engagement and autonomy. Based on a mixed-method approach, the study showed that using WhatsApp in ERT not only brought learners closer (90.9% of the responses), creating a sense of communion and increasing engagement, but also facilitated communication and created opportunities for the learners to independently solve language and course-related matters.

Figure 6.5 A: Screenshots of Michelly's WhatsApp group.
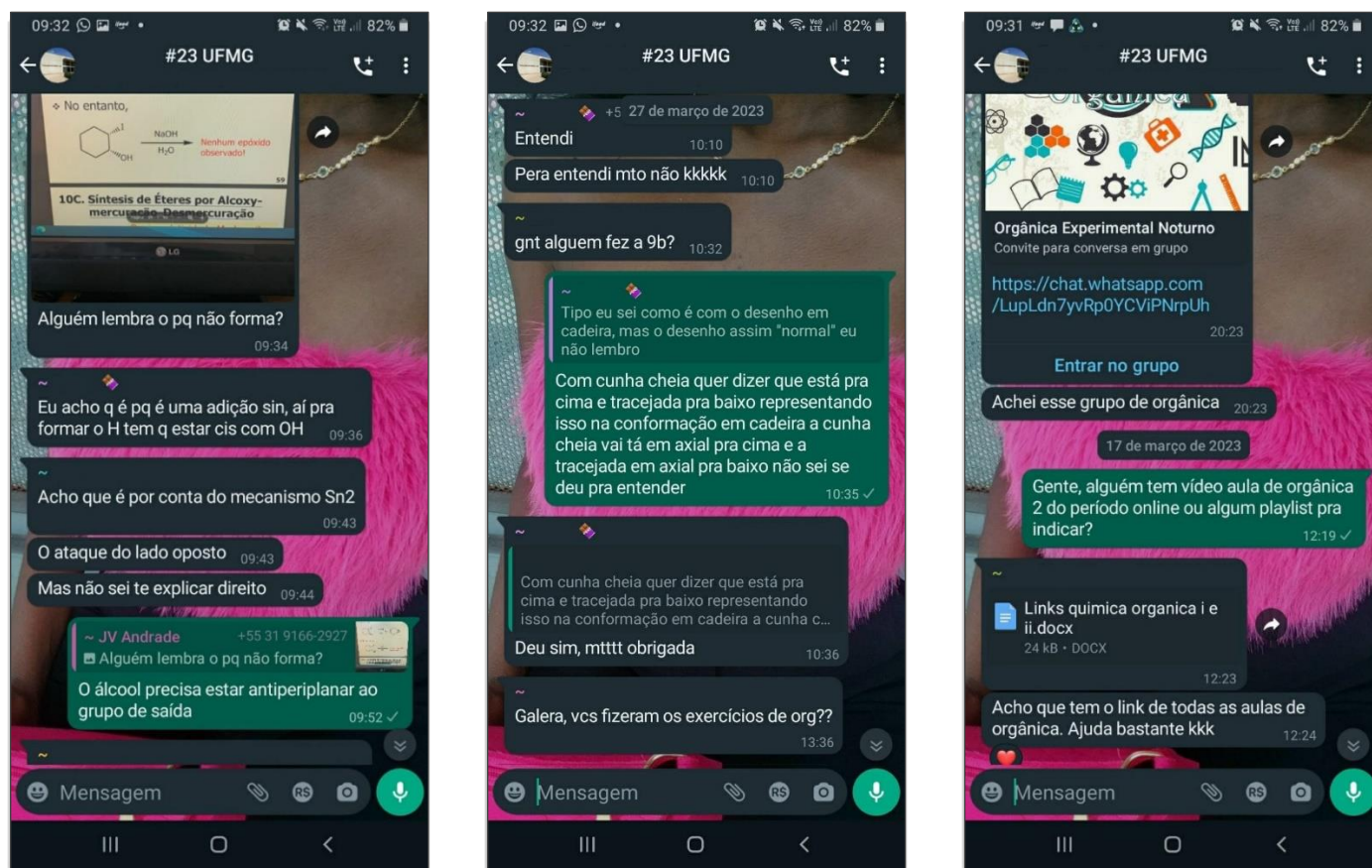
Similarly, Syed explained the WhatsApp group with which he interacts in his Health Sciences major is used for different purposes, but primarily to discuss coursework. He added that a WhatsApp group created for students of migrant backgrounds would be helpful in the extent to which more experienced migrant-background students could assist incoming ones:

> *To communicate, discuss, sell parties, discuss material, talk about material, things like that, there's nothing more to it. I think that, a group of immigrant students would be cool to pass on messages and information, for someone to ask for help (…) for example, a person says 'look at how this thing works at UFMG', and another person, who has [more] experience, for example, then [in this case] I can help the person, you know?*

(Syed, *conversa* WhatsApp, Oct. 11th, 2023)

Informal socialization at university is fundamental to the success of one's journey at and beyond the university setting, it is via socialization that students share expectations, frustrations, and advice, contributing to a stronger sense of community between the students and possibly creating networks that will last and be further developed when the students no longer physically occupy the same institutional space. Such socialization is also important to shed light into

potential future problems, as students discuss classes and lecturers and 'warn' newcomers about likely issues, making recommendations as to what to embrace and avoid. This was central in Amirah's journey. When she took the class discussed in Online Tutoring Session B, she had already heard very negatively about the professor from the '**academic grapevine**'. In a *conversa* face-to-face, she reported that:

> *People complained so much about this teacher… that… he doesn't explain things well, so everybody avoids taking his class […] I believe he's an old teacher because… there's a workshop he teaches, nobody takes the workshops, they all wait till the very end, the last semester, to take it… because we're waiting for him to leave so that another teacher can take over… it's a full semester, the entire semester, and just this one teacher, so you need good communication, you need to be able to learn from the teacher. It's a workshop, to work on real-life projects.*

(Amirah, *conversa* face-to-face, Sep. 27th, 2022)

The situation Amirah described suggests dissatisfaction among students with this professor's teaching style. The primary concerns raised include the perception that the professor does not explain concepts effectively, leading to an overall avoidance of his classes. As Amirah explained, students often delay taking the professor's workshops until the last semester, specifically to avoid him, further emphasizing the severity of the issue. Amirah also mentioned that the students have been waiting for the professor to leave so that another can take over, implying a long-standing desire for a change in instructors, likely due to the belief that a different professor would offer a more beneficial learning experience: "*they all wait till the very end, the last semester, to take it… because we're waiting for him to leave so that another teacher can take over*".

The importance of effective communication and the ability to learn from the teacher is highlighted in this excerpt, particularly in the context of a workshop focused on real-life projects that likely require guidance and instruction. When Amirah mentioned the length of the workshop, a correlation can be made with the class discussed in Online Tutoring Session B, which comprised 15 teaching hours. The workshop covers an entire semester, that is, 60 teaching hours, three times more. The longer length of the workshop likely adds to the students' concerns about how effectively the entire semester will be taken to fruition under this professor's teaching. Finally, the professor seems to be the only one teaching the workshop: "*and just this one teacher*", as Amirah stated, which implies that this is a more specialized class.

The aftermath of the issues Amirah reported in the above excerpt and in our Online Tutoring Session B is associated with the power of community in an educational setting. In a

combination of efforts through social media and the 'academic grapevine', a group of senior students from Amirah's Applied Social Sciences major produced and forwarded a letter in Google Forms inviting students to share their experiences and reflections on the professor's classes and workshops, as shown in Figure 6.5 B. The letter highlights the university's commitment to excellence and the centrality of continuous improvement in teaching in the Applied Social Sciences major, thus emphasizing the collaborative nature of knowledge-making between teachers and students.

Figure 6.5 B: A letter to the Amirah's Applied Social Sciences peers at UFMG.

> Prezados estudantes do Curso de UFMG
>
> A busca incessante pela excelência acadêmica e pelo aprimoramento constante do ensino são pilares fundamentais no ambiente universitário. Nesse contexto, lançamos um convite aos alunos para compartilharem suas experiências e reflexões sobre episódios que podem ter afetado o aprendizado ou algum lado pessoal, nas aulas de ministradas pelo professor do Departamento de
>
> Acreditamos que a construção do conhecimento é uma jornada próspera e colaborativa, na qual tanto professores quanto alunos desempenham papéis complementares. O intuito deste convite é proporcionar um espaço para que os estudantes expressem suas vivências nas aulas ministradas pelo Professor, analisando aspectos como a metodologia de ensino, a interação em sala de aula e a contribuição para o desenvolvimento intelectual e profissional dos discentes.
>
> Pedimos, gentilmente, que enviem seus relatos até dia 29/11 . Seu valioso feedback contribuirá para a contínua busca pela qualidade educacional em nossa universidade.
>
> Avisamos que os relatos enviados aqui não serão anônimos para podermos dar legitimidade às descrições.
>
> 23:52 ✓

Source: Shared by Amirah, identifying information concealed.

Overall, the letter is well-crafted, maintaining a respectful and encouraging tone while also conveying the purpose of the invitation and the impact on the continuous improvement of educational quality at UFMG. The request for non-anonymous reports adds a layer of accountability and legitimacy to the process, ensuring that the provided descriptions are attributed to specific individuals, likely enhancing the credibility of the feedback collected. This is important because, as Amirah said in a *conversa*, the professor had made several rude and racist remarks toward a number of students in the classroom. Amirah informed me that the

professor engaged in 'offensive conversation' ("*conversa ofensiva*") with her, but was not racist toward her.

The outcome of the above letter is yet to be seen, as it was sent to the Applied Social Sciences *Colegiado* in early December 2023. With the reach and visibility social media affords, whether Twitter/X, Instagram or WhatsApp, discrimination and abuse in academia and the university have been made public, revealing power imbalances, unfair treatment, and types of harassment pervasive in the academic world[143], situations that still go underexposed, given the hegemonically white male makeup of Brazilian HEIs[144] and the 'self-preservation instinct' prevalent in these institutions.

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[143] Students filed over 200 reports of sexual harassment against professors in federal institutions in Brazil; in the majority of cases, academics were neither investigated nor penalized (Hirabahasi, 2023). Data from the 'Profile of early and mid-career Brazilian scientists' (Brazilian Academy of Sciences, 2023, p. 44) revealed "an alarming result in relation to moral and sexual harassment, especially among those who identified as women. More than half reported having suffered sexual harassment; 99% declared having been harassed by men" (Original: "um resultado alarmante em relação a assédio moral e sexual, em especial entre quem se identificou como mulher. Mais da metade delas relataram terem sofrido assédio sexual; 99% declararam ter sido assediadas por homens").

[144] Data based on the report 'Profile of early and mid-career Brazilian scientists' (Brazilian Academy of Sciences, 2023, p. 39) shows "low diversity among young researchers in terms of gender and race/color – as seen in the low number of women and black persons in prominent positions in the scientific system" (Original: "baixa diversidade entre jovens pesquisadores quanto ao gênero e raça/cor – vide as ainda poucas mulheres e pessoas negras em posições de destaque no sistema científico". Men represent 73.1% of early and mid-career researchers in the sample analyzed for the report.

In the same way, the people whom I most abhor,
I abhor them for elements that I abhor in myself.
Shirley Geok-lin Lim (2014)

Words themselves are innocuous;
it is the consensus that gives them
true power.

Gloria Naylor (1986)

7. Stirring the Academic Pot | Other Emerging Issues

7.1 International Students: *de facto*

Interestingly, and because educational practices are situated, in some countries, students of migrant backgrounds are often "classified as regular international students when it comes to accommodating them into higher education organizations" (Arar *et al*., 2022, p. 2). In other countries, they apply to universities as domestic/local students. This means that, overall, in such countries (Australia, Canada, Germany, Turkey, and the US) students of migrant backgrounds are not discerned between 'full' international students, internationally mobile students, and domestic/local students, which may lead to a series of issues, as the specific needs of migrant-background students are neither identified nor addressed (Arar *et al*., 2022), likely reducing their chances of effective entry and/or permanence in HE.

Possibly reflecting more accommodating migration policies[145], Brazilian HEIs have taken a different approach: access to HE in many public and private HEIs may be done also via specific calls/selection processes for individuals of migrant backgrounds[146], such as Public Call 624/2020. These calls/selection processes have been seen as essential in creating more equitable opportunities for socially and economically vulnerable people of international migrant origin, despite potential elements of exclusion therein (e.g., language 'proficiency' requirements, cf. Rosa, 2018; Sigales-Gonçalves, 2019). In this regard, **Brazil seems to be at the forefront of policies for access to HE by immigrants and refugees**.

However, in many Brazilian HEIs, the status of such students remains undefined or rather inaccurately classified. At UFMG, for instance, migrant-background students join the university through Public Call 624/2020 based on meeting specific requirements, as reviewed in Chapter 3. One of these requirements is the individual's legal status in the country, as the call is addressed to "refugees, political asylum seekers, stateless persons, holders of temporary

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[145] Brazil has made important strides in updating its migration legislation, pioneering "the first comprehensive refugee law in South America" (Leo; Morand; Feitosa, 2015, p. 5), despite its late overhaul, in 1997, and further updates in 2017. Even when foreign nationals are not deemed 'refugees', as is/was the case of Haitian citizens, Brazil attempts to acknowledge their need for humanitarian assistance and protection through specific and temporary actions via normative resolutions. Despite this accommodating stance, the country has yet to develop a more articulated, comprehensive program/policy to assist immigrants and refugees *after* their entry into the country. As Fortunato (2019) verified, even with advances in the legislation, the lack of a public policy to receive refugees means these individuals are left to their own devices, which can be especially difficult, seeing that refugees often do not speak Portuguese, in the case of those migrating to Brazil, and are unfamiliar with the country's culture and legal procedures when they arrive in the country.

[146] For example, Flores (2023) analyzes public calls organized by federal universities in the South of Brazil, and Rocha, Azevedo, and Mendes (2021) analyze the selection processes/calls of 14 Brazilian universities associated with the CSVM, some of which overlap with Flores's study.

humanitarian visas, and holders of residence permits for humanitarian purposes" (UFMG, 2020, p. 1).

This means that **the applicants are international migrants**. On the other hand, the call also requires that the applicants take ENEM, an examination addressed to students who have undergone the entirety (or, at the very least the majority) of their basic education in Brazil. This requirement – however necessary, as discussed in Chapter 4, is at odds with a more inclusive approach that values linguistic and cultural diversity. Like conventional international students, migrant-background students bring to the university their **cultural and linguistic backgrounds** different from the host country.

Differently, however, students of migrant backgrounds may neither have similar levels of resources at their disposal nor the freedom to choose the country where they would like to study, as conventional international students do when they *choose* to study abroad. And yet, immigrant and refugee students fall within the category of international students due to their distinct migration experiences beyond the borders of the host country, and it is these very distinct migration experiences that also distinguish them from the typical international student.

Like conventional domestic students, migrant-background students are not joining a Brazilian (or Canadian, Turkish) university on a temporary basis contingent upon returning to their home country. Local students, like any student, may change majors, defer enrollment, or drop out of university, but they may do so as part of an initial long-term commitment with the HEI, a commitment to be fulfilled entirely or almost entirely in a single country: the student's country of residence. Conventional international students live in the host country and study in the host university temporarily *by design*, that is, the temporality is intentional and planned. In addition, there is often a welcoming system in place for such students, covering cultural aspects of the host country that would normally not be included in the welcoming of local students, as can be verified at UFMG.

In this dissertation, I understand that while the students of migrant backgrounds join UFMG with scores from a national exam tacitly designed for Brazilians, which includes being well-versed in written formal Portuguese, in several aspects, **the migrant students remain international**. Based on the data generated and discussed, they are a little bit of both, having spent part of their lives internationally, sometimes in more than one country, now living in Brazil. This means that even though the migrant students are registered at the UFMG system as 'regular students', they are not 'conventional' domestic students. On the other hand, they are not 'typical' international students either. **So where do they stand**?

To answer this 'tricky' question, I first verified the way the research participants self-reference in the data. On several occasions over our two years of interactions, all four participants referred to themselves based on their **nationalities**: Haitian and Syrian, that is, being Haitian or Syrian and coming from Haiti or Syria. They also referred to themselves as 'refugees', but only when discussing the public call or the circumstances of their migration. On other occasions, as will be addressed in Chapter 6, the participants used the word 'foreigner' ('*estrangeiro*') to talk about their feelings toward peers at the university, sometimes contrasting '*estrangeiro*' with 'Brazilian(s)', as if they were not part of this group. It seems that the participants self-identify more with their countries of origin, thereby remaining 'international'.

I prefer to use the word 'international', as opposed to foreigner/*estrangeiro*, given the etymology of '*estrangeiro*'. As Rezende (2013, p. 363) explains, *estrangeiro* is the antonym of *nacional*, deriving from Latin "through the French *étranger*, from *étrange*, which corresponds to the Latin *extranèus*, meaning "coming from the outside, strange"[147]. As the author clarifies, "*International* is not a synonym for *foreign*, nor an antonym for *national*, as has been employed lately in the medical literature, in the media and on Internet sites"[148] (p. 364). In this sense, as Rezende (2013, p. 363) elucidates, "*National* designates 'what is specific to a nation, which characterizes it and distinguishes it from other [nations]'", semantically "This adjective has a connotation alluding to the homeland where we were born and live", and "*International* refers to two or more nations at the same time; it is [about] everything that is present, takes place, or is developed simultaneously in several countries, whether in regard to people, companies or institutions."[149]. This is precisely how I conceptualize and approach **individuals not from Brazil**: **as international**, not foreign.

My second approach was to understand the way the participants **self-present** beyond the data generated. To this end, I turned to their social media. As I had expected, the element of internationality is visible in their posts through code-mixing (cf. Chapter 6 for a discussion) and the content they choose to post, with photos and videos about their home countries and

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[147] Translated from the original: "A palavra estrangeiro nos vem do latim através do francês *étranger*, de *étrange*, que corresponde ao latim *extranèus*, *a*, *um*', o que é de fora, estranho. É antônimo de *nacional*." Etymologically, *foreigner* "was used of a person from a different colony or state" and "as a noun in English was simple foreign (early 14c.), probably from Old French, which used the adjective as a noun meaning "foreigner;" also "outskirts; the outside world; latrine, privy.": https://www.etymonline.com/word/foreigner. Access: Jan. 16, 2024.

[148] Translated from the original: "*Internacional* não é sinônimo de *estrangeiro*, nem antônimo de *nacional*, como vem sendo usado ultimamente na literatura médica, na mídia e em sites da Internet."

[149] Translated from the original: "*Nacional* designa 'o que é próprio de uma nação, que a caracteriza e a distingue das demais" (...) este adjetivo tem uma conotação alusiva à pátria onde nascemos e vivemos" and " *Internacional* refere-se a duas ou mais nações ao mesmo tempo; é tudo que está presente, realiza-se, ou desenvolve atividades simultaneamente em vários países, sejam pessoas, empresas ou instituições".

families. More notably, the element of **internationality** is seen in the participants' Instagram biographies, shown in Figure 7.1. To avoid overexposing the participants, I have chosen not to reproduce the posts from the participants' personal social media accounts and removed any identifying information from their biographies.

Figure 7.1: Amirah's, Noelle's, and Syed's Instagram bios.

Source: Retrieved from the participants' Instagram profiles, identifying information concealed.

In the biographies reproduced in Figure 7.1 above, we can see that Amirah lists Syria and Yabroud (her hometown), two dots (as if it were a continuation), a black heart, then the initials SP for 'São Paulo' followed by the Brazilian flag. In the second 'line', she lists her major (the name is concealed), the university where she is undertaking her studies – UFMG, and two emojis associated with the major. In the third line, Amirah included her date of birth followed by an emoji of a tongue, possibly indicating childhood or 'baby'. The fourth a last line is written in Arabic: "ابن نفسك بنفسك لنفسك..", which may be translated as "Build yourself for yourself". Michelly's biography is not included because she does not use Instagram.

In Noelle's biography, we can see the Haitian, Dominican, and Brazilian emoji flags side-by-side, in the first line, followed the quote in Portuguese "*O segredo é, olhar pelo lado bom da vida*", which translates into "The secret is to look on the bright side of life", and an emoji of two people hugging. Noelle then included what seems to be two lines from a dialog: "*Tudo que é bom dura pouco? Não, dura para sempre*", which translates as "Good things don't last long, do they? No, they don't – they last forever", followed by a glowing heart emoji. The last line in Noelle's Instagram biography is a link to the Jehovah's Witness official website in English.

In Syed's biography, we first see his name written in Arabic[150] followed by the Syrian, Brazilian, and US flag emojis and the countries' initials or initial letters: SYR, BR, EUA (USA in Portuguese). In the third line, Syed included his major (concealed) and linked the UFMG Instagram account, doing the same for his former universities and majors (concealed), in the sixth line. In the non-edited bio, Syed included two emojis representing his major. Syed then added the Latin quote "*sapientia est potentia*", which translates as "knowledge is power", using lightbulb emojis as quotations marks, followed by three finance-related emojis and "crypto dealer" to indicate work with cryptocurrency. In the seventh and eighth lines he included an emoji of his astrological sign (Scorpio) and the initials SEP next to a green emoji (SEP stands for *Sociedade Esportiva Palmeiras*, the Brazilian professional soccer club based in the city of São Paulo, and green is the club's color).

In the Instagram biographies above, the element of internationality is visible verbally, iconically through flag emojis or both. Genre-wise, Instagram biographies are a section where users can insert self-presentations or relevant information, including links to other social media and external content. An essential part of one's Instagram profile, bios act "as a way to get to know the account owner", much like a first impression (Rahman *et al*., 2021, p. 164), adding "to the overall atmosphere of an individual's Instagram page as well as give more insight into that individual's personality" (Hill; Denman, 2016, p. 11). This means that the element of internationality in the participants' bios is a key aspect of their identities and subjectivities.

Within the context of European and North American HE, Arar *et al*. (2020) call the immigrant and refugee students "atypical students" and "an atypical student group" (pp. xxi-xxii). In Arar, Kondakc, and Streitwieser (2020, p. 197), for the same HE contexts, the term "atypical group of international students" is employed. Within the context of US universities, Lee and Castiello-Gutiérrez (2019, p. 120) adopt the term "atypical international students"[151] to refer to "refugees, asylees, Jay treaty, and DACA students (…) Some of them are, for many purposes, (…) 'domestic students' since they do not need a student visa; however, they share many of the challenges faced by international students", which is also one of my arguments. Lee and Castiello-Gutiérrez (2019, pp. 120-121) add that some of these students might know "how to navigate the higher education system just as any other domestic student. However, in many other cases, these students may struggle" and face challenges such as "language barriers,

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[150] I edited the image, replacing Sye's real name in Arabic with the pseudonym and a last name, also in Arabic.

[151] I refrain from using the term 'atypical' due to its association with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

discrimination, isolation, and so forth.", some of which are not part of a domestic student's reality.

Based on the above, I would say that the students of migrant backgrounds at UFMG (and perhaps at other HEIs in Brazil) are *de facto* **international students**: the students join the university via a public call explicitly addressed to conflict-induced international migrants and refugees, with scores from a national university entrance examination in which language proficiency is assessed indirectly. Once approved, the students are registered in the UFMG's system as regular students – not temporary, not international – but that does not 'undo' the fact that students who join UFMG via Public Call 624/2020 are not of Brazilian origin, and hence do not share cultural knowledge and cultural practices developed throughout one's life in Brazil, in settings and with friends and family who also share such practices.

In addition, choosing to use the term *de facto* **international students** alludes to the counterpart *de jure* **international students**, implying that the HEI has 'official' students of international origin, meaning the students registered and accounted for at the university as international students: "*estudantes internacionais*". On the other hand, 'extraofficial' students of international origin are not registered and accounted for at the university as such, but they keep *being* of international origin(s). Moreover, by favoring the term *de facto* **international students** we further acknowledge that the HEI has a body of students "who do not fully fall under **the binary of domestic or international students**", as argued in Lee and Castiello-Gutiérrez (2019, p. 120, emphasis added). This underscores the fact that many binaries can no longer (or have they ever?) explain and more comprehensively describe the many realities and intersectionalized identities of individuals experiencing a highly fluid, mobile, fragmented late-modern world, at university and elsewhere.

Recommended Actions

➔ *Invite the students of migrant backgrounds to take part in the* **orientation week** *for international students*.

De jure international students at UFMG are received by DRI with a program during their orientation week[152]. This includes explanations about the university, the Portuguese classes the students can take at UFMG, and the buddy program. We hence recommend that the

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[152] https://www.ufmg.br/dri/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-1_-arte-final-programacao-SOEI-PT-EN.pdf. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

de facto international students be invited to the orientation week. Such invitation can be made for the whole program or specific parts of it, as the orientation week activities often vary from year to year. What is important is that the migrant-backgrounds be included in this initiative. The research participants not only expressed their desire to participate but also had expected a welcoming action of this type.

➔ *Implement a buddy program (apadrinhamento) for migrant students*.

As of the writing of this dissertation, the buddy program (*apadrinhamento*) at UFMG covers only *de jure* international students. It would be a good idea to either extend the buddy program to *de facto* international students or implement a buddy program for these students. Buddy programs are initiatives designed to support the integration and well-being of new or international students by pairing them with more experienced peers or 'buddies'. Third-year students usually have enough academic experience for this role, which is typically assumed on a voluntary basis. We suggest that the hours spent in the buddy program be added to the students' CAA, perhaps encompassing 45 to 60 hours for the entire semester.

Buddy programs aim to facilitate a smooth transition into university life and foster a **sense of community** and social support. The specific features of buddy programs can vary depending on the HEI, but they generally involve one-on-one or small group relationships between new and experienced students, who are matched based on factors such as academic interests, cultural backgrounds, or shared hobbies, to enhance compatibility – a key element, as buddies maintain regular communication with the incoming students, checking in on their well-being and addressing any challenges they may be facing. This ongoing support helps to foster a trusting and supportive relationship.

The students of migrant backgrounds could take on this role, especially if/when the newcomer is undertaking the same major, offering guidance on academic matters and sharing their experiences navigating the academic landscape. This can help the incoming students in their adaptation to the university, particularly with specific administrative processes, such as registration, accessing campus services, and understanding university policies. With time, the newcomers become more acclimated to university life and can decide on whether they would like to take on the role of 'buddy'. This means that the program length is not fixed – it may vary from one to two semesters, depending on the availability of the students.

The buddy program may be helpful in providing social support to students of migrant backgrounds, particularly those joining the university with limited experience in the Brazilian school system, as was the case with Noelle. Such program can help these students to adjust to new cultures at the university: different processes and ways of communicating often more specific of university settings. This is important, as stark cultural differences may result in aa sense of isolation and difficulty in integrating into the university community and tasks, which affects the students' overall well-being and academic performance. When we factor in trauma and financial constraints – challenges not exclusive but perhaps heightened in this particular group of students – we see just how relevant social support can be.

➔ *Implement targeted support programs for students of migrant backgrounds*.

Targeted support programs can help to creating an environment that recognizes and responds to the specific needs of migrant students, potentially contributing to their academic success and retention and yielding positive academic experiences. Supportive actions may include counseling, language assistance, academic tutoring, and resources that address the challenges faced by these students. Establishing supportive, strong social networks and an inclusive campus culture is crucial for a positive university experience. The absence of such networks can negatively impact one's journey, likely hindering retention and motivation.

Seeing that the minimum essay score has been reduced to 300 points in Public Call 624/2020, and considering that the essay is likely used as an indirect method of confirming the applicants' language proficiency, language assistance may be particularly helpful. UFMG's primary language of instruction and communication is Portuguese. Limited proficiency can be a significant barrier for migrant-background students and potentially impact their ability to understand and engage with course materials, participate in class discussions, and complete assignments, leading to academic struggles and potential dropout. Ideally, a more plurilingual or perhaps less monolingual academic setting should be fostered. However, not all faculty would adhere to plurilingualism.

7.2 Fleshing Out Expectations

We have argued elsewhere (Mattos; Diniz, 2024) that academic practices require an understanding of the different ways of interacting in academic settings, be it with texts, peers, professors, staff, or content. Academic practices also demand that university students engage with and constantly reflect upon new ways of socializing knowledge(s) (Komesu, 2012); some

ways and some knowledge(s) are more general, while others are more discipline-specific. This is done through oral and written practices that 'mimic' future academic or professional tasks and interactions (e.g., a report, a consult), in exchanges between peers, professors/tutors and students, and students and staff – in more formal (e.g., a lecture, a laboratory discussion, an email inquiring about an internship) or more informal fashion (e.g., a chat after class).

These instances of academic literacy mobilize a variety of language-bound actions in the articulation between newly constructed and previous knowledge related to one's discipline; and in doing so, linguistic knowledge is also updated and added upon, in the sense that students learn, develop, and practice *language* when reading, listening, writing, and speaking at diverse university settings – from the classroom and the coursework required for their majors, to online exchanges through the so-called academic grapevine, as discussed in the following subsection. Viewed this way, participation in university academic and social events and extracurricular activities can provide opportunities for networking, socializing, and expanding academic and social circles, which is particularly important for first-year and first-generation university students.

In terms of using language academically, and we see language as a social practice, understanding it "as **an activity rather than a structure**, as something we do rather than a system we draw on, as a material part of social and cultural life rather than an abstract entity" (Pennycook, 2010, p. 2, emphasis added), academics usually interact and approach students' academic productions based on their own expectations, that is, assumptions that often reflect implied shared literacies, behaviors, and cultural knowledge(s). In other words, academics expect students to *know certain things* and *act in certain ways*, whether in reference to the students' (mostly) written productions (academic writing) or in regard to the way the students behave in the classroom and other academic settings, and the way they engage with the subject matter and the academic practices at university – almost as if the students were expected to know how to navigate these spaces and practices.

While such understanding is usually expected when entering university, it is generally neither openly discussed nor explicitly taught – therefore culminating in what Street (2010) calls 'hidden features' of academia and the university. As discursive spaces that overlap and are inherently intertwined, despite their singularities, the academy and the university are anchored in cultures and practices permeated by tacit understandings and knowledge. To those familiar with the academic world(s), navigating these spaces and **appropriating** the knowledge built therein may be easier. Making the university one's territory might be easier when access

to this space has been alluded to in family gatherings, conversations at school, discussions about one's future *career* – as opposed to one's need for a *job*. Concepts, practices, behaviors, and career pathways are part of the conversation when interacting with those who share the same aspirations and expectations – whether a parent, a classmate, or a teacher.

Under this light, we see that the hidden features and 'unspoken rules' of academia and the university, also mirror the often unequal opportunities and the unequal design of a country's educational system, spotlighting (inadvertently?) macro and micro-power structures of society. In this space, professors expect the students to *know* how to write academically and how to 'scientifically' engage with texts, concepts, and practices as if writing academically and working scientifically had always been 'in the mix' of students' topics and practices throughout their schooling and literacy processes. With a diversified student body, as the result of decades-long affirmative actions and democratization policies, it is naïve and/or disingenuous to expect university students to share academic practices, knowledge, and behaviors.

In this regard, one of the primary challenges faced by the research participants is the mismatch between expectations and reality and the hidden features and 'unspoken rules' of academic and university cultures and production. The macro and micro-power structures of the academic world(s) are manifested in academic hierarchies and in language use and style 'choices', as Windle (2017) argues. When expectations and norms are presumed, rather than 'fleshed out', reproducing the conventional power plays of the academy (Bourdieu, 2001), the bottom is expected to 'assimilate' with the top, under no guidance and, more importantly, frequently uncritically replicating these very same structures. As asked elsewhere (Mattos; Diniz, 2024): how much of these hidden features are not also hidden privileges? This lack of explicitness might as well be intentional, as it ultimately means the one 'holding onto the knowledge' is also holding on to power and privilege; however minuscule this power may be in the grand scheme of things.

Hence, when expectations, norms, and behaviors need to be 'read between the lines', as opposed to being out there, *fleshed out*, roles, hierarchies, asymmetries, and power imbalances are oftentimes not seen as imbalances, presumed and treated as natural, as a 'given' under the banner of 'but it has always been like this!'. Pinpointing imbalances and inequalities is made more difficult on both ends: for those holding onto the (little) power and privilege they have, failing to self-acknowledge unfair entitlements and advantages, as well as for those 'under their thumbs', individuals who may not have realized the existence and the pervasiveness of such

power and privilege structures and imbalances, as much of this structural imbalance is so deep-rooted it runs invisibly as if it were part of the blueprint of society.

Recommended Actions

➔ *Organize academic literacy workshops and online roundtables, covering not only academic writing but also socialization into academic communities*.

As Carlino (2017) aptly notes, at university, students read and produce academic texts of various 'types', for several reasons: to understand the ongoing conversations and debates within their disciplinary field, to grasp and show comprehension of concepts, to gain insight into theoretical frameworks and previous scholarship, and to develop their own stance and on such matters. Engagement with academic texts, in reception (reading and listening) or in production (writing and speaking), needs to be *fleshed out*, if we want students to interact more effectively with their respective academic communities. On this note, reading and writing strategies, research procedures, scientific communication, publishing, academic hierarchies and the politics of knowledge-building and research-making should not be privileged information of a few. This means addressing academia and university-specific practices more openly, also as a way to equip students and novice researchers to improve and advance these practices – not simply reproduce them, often uncritically.

Based on our decolonial lens of academic literacy, workshops and roundtables could be organized to promote a smoother socialization into academia. These should be part of ongoing initiatives – not isolated actions. Workshops about academic literacy could be carried out by GIZ: Prograd's Board of Innovation and Teaching Methodologies, in-person or remotely in association with an existing initiative: the University Student Roadmap[153] (USR – '*Percurso Discente Universitário*'), focusing on academic literacy not as a skill but primarily as the process of embodying what we do in academia and the university (Li, 2022). This means moving away from looking at academic literacy as a transferrable skill to viewing it as a social practice closely associated with disciplinary epistemology and identity (Gee, 2015).

In regard to academic writing, more specifically, workshops such as the one offered by DRI in 2018 'The World at UFMG' extension project[154] could and should be promoted on a regular basis. This can be helpful for students – domestic or international. For instance, Amirah

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[153] https://www.ufmg.br/giz/percurso-discente-universitario/. (In Portuguese. Access: Feb. 05, 2024)

[154] https://www.ufmg.br/dri/noticia/minicurso-sobre-escrita-academica-na-extensao-oferecido-pelo-projeto-de-extensao-o-mundo-na-ufmg/. (In Portuguese. Access: Feb. 05, 2024)

mentioned that while the professors typically inform the students of topics they are supposed to study, no guidance is provided as to how the students should research and present the topics, no course about scientific research or academic writing is given. This is different from Michelly's experience, as the Health Sciences lecturers provide the students with genre samples to be used as references/models and guidelines and useful information about the conventions of research and academic writing in general terms (e.g., the importance of finding reliable sources, citation and referencing, and plagiarism).

The inconsistency in how academic writing is approached likely reinforces the long-held autonomous view: academic writing is a transferrable skill that does not require explicit instruction, as one uses the writing skills learned in high school at university, as if the contexts and circumstances were the same, as both deal with formal writing in an educational setting. Such ideas have been challenged in the literature (e.g., Carlino, 2017; Lillis, 2001), but remain alive at university, perhaps due to a lack of specialized training, as academics join the university, professionally, not necessarily based on their skills but on their qualifications and publications, and possibly favor this autonomous view of academic literacy and knowledge-making, one in which the surface features speak for content and background process.

Moreover, the need to desmystify academic practices and academic writing is urgent. The call for academic transparency is not exclusively associated with socialization of findings and publishing. The entire process of scientific communication and navigating academia can be made more transparent, from the initiation into one's disciplinary area to the hurdles of developing research past the achievement of one's qualifications, that is, once the doctoral degree is finalized. Discussing both the academic writing and the research processes may be a good start. In the EAP classes I taught at UFMG from 2018 to 2023, these processes were approached side-by-side with language use, because the use of academic language is first and foremost situated within larger contexts from which its specificies emerge. In addition to the discussion about the research process, prompted by the Research Wheel (illustrated in Figure 7.2 A), the students in the EAP class were guided into reflecting about methodologies and their own research, current or future, as some students had not engaged with research before. Such an approach can be easily incorporated as either part of undergraduate classes or in a specific workshop or webminar directed at undergraduate students.

As for *fleshing out* academic writing, an important step is to **openly discuss the writing process**: its stages and recursive nature, strategies and techniques, preferences, challenges, as well as software applications that can be employed to assist with writing academically – and

perhaps most importantly an ongoing **demystification of writing** as something only a very few can achieve. While this is not exclusive to academic writing – much of literate culture is erected and cemented on (imbalanced) power dynamics – it may be more heightened in academic writing, this mysterious institutional practice, Caffarella and Barnet (2000) and Lillis (1999) so insightfully reflect.

It may be true that writing is particularly challenging for undergraduate students and novice academics. But that is not because more senior academics have somehow been awarded the great gift of writing. It is because novice academics and/or undergraduate students have limited experience in writing academically (cf. Cameron; Nairn; Higgins, 2009) and scarce changes of **reflective practice**. They may also not have had the chance to discuss the writing process openly – and the challenges therein, and probably engage with academic writing as they would with school assignments.

Figure 7.2 A: The Research Wheel.
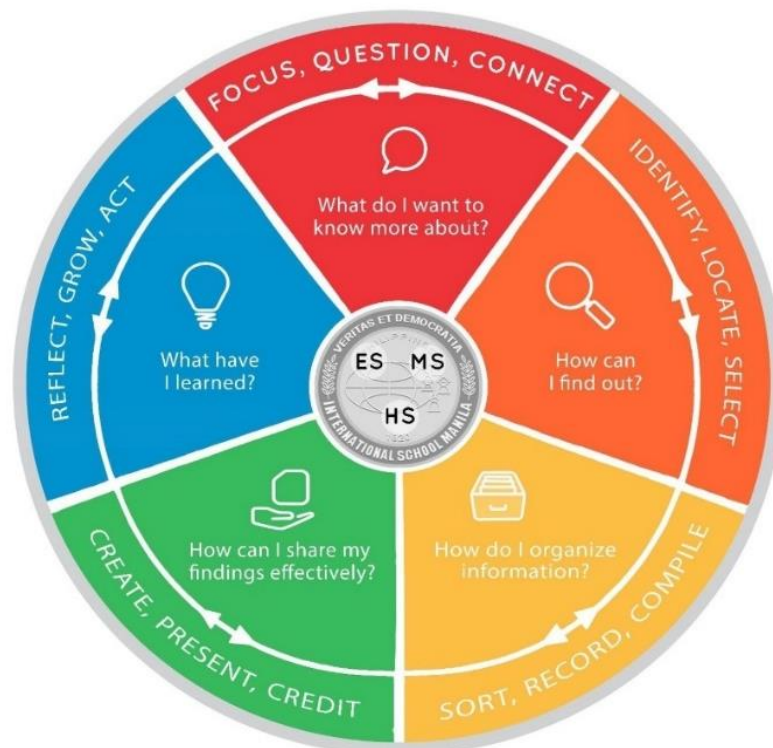
Realistically speaking, writing academically involves practice and drawing from other language-related experiences built over one's lifelong literacy practices and literate cultures, reframing and associating such experiences with new knowledge and languaging practices forged at the university. This means that we start 'writing academically' much before entering

university, not because we have had prior formal education in a specific discipline or because we had grammar lessons in school – that really is just the surface. We start 'communicating academically', in terms of arguments, when we begin understanding the important role of reasoning and evidence: when negotiating with a parent about a curfew, or with a teacher about a better grade, when training for the ENEM essay, when reading a newspaper article about a world issue, when giving an oral presentation classroom; even when reflecting on our place in the world and contemplating the meaning of life!

Helping university students and novice academic to demystify academic writing and writing, more generally, may be achieved by understanding the process of writing at university, as shown in Figure 7.2 B, and the genres with which the students are supposed to interact. This means developing a greater understanding of **how different disciplines conduct research and communicate findings** and requires addressing presentations as well, as they are fundamental in scientific communication.

Figure 7.2 B: The writing process.

Source: https://ericdrown.uneportfolio.org/2016/09/30/the-writing-process/
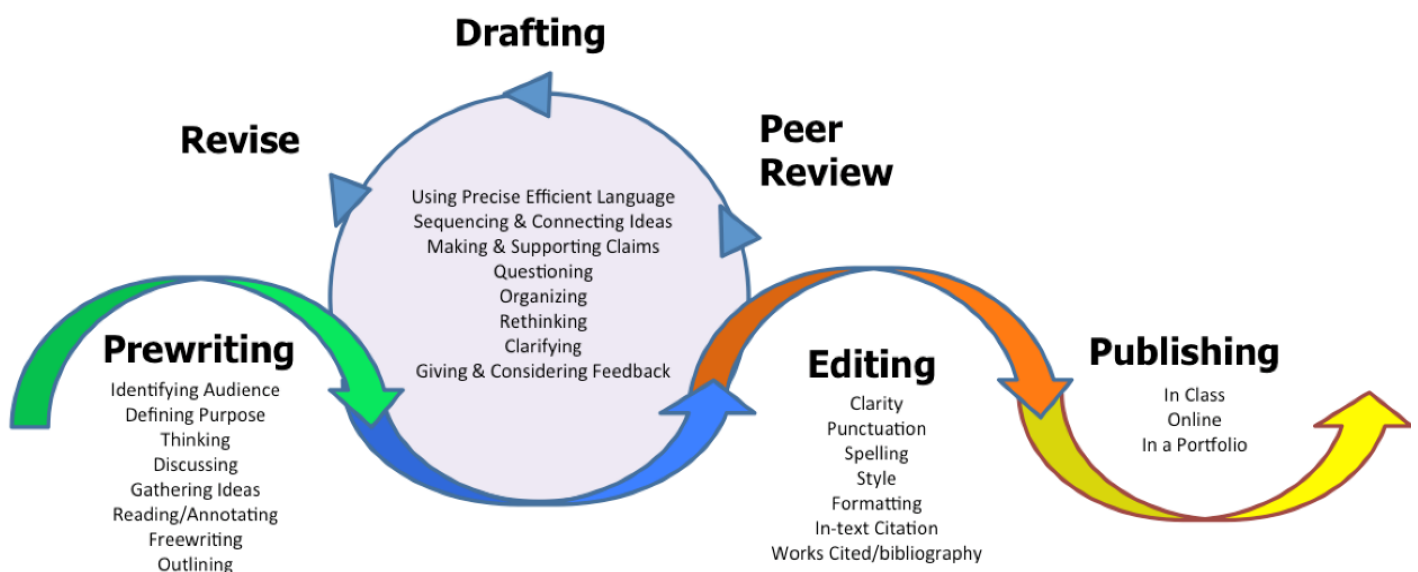
As Gee (2001, 2015) argues, one's introduction to and effective participation in social practices is also contingent upon familiarization with the conventions and/or specificities of these activities. Becoming an 'insider', as the author puts it, requires active socialization associated with these practices. Developing academic writing, for example, requires regular contact and consistent opportunities for learning and reflection related to the process of writing,

more generally, and writing for academic purposes, in particular. **One does not enter HE knowing how to navigate the sometimes unruly 'waters' of academia** and the university, as many experienced academics often expect (Lillis, 1999). Becoming an expert in one's discipline may also not happen by simply 'mirroring' the works produced in a given knowledge domain. Such endeavor requires practice – perhaps most importantly, reflective practice.

➔ *Organize roundtables and talks for incoming students, focusing on sharing and reflecting upon experiences and promoting the students' well-being.*

To help the students adapt to the university, especially for those relocated to Belo Horizonte to undertake their studies at UFMG, initiatives such as the talks organized and promoted by the Languages faculty, should be replicated. The general purpose of these talks is to provide emotional support to first- and second-year undergraduate students. Mediated by a psychologist, the idea is to have students talk about issues, challenges, and concerns faced in their academic journey. The talks are held in-person, but they could be conducted through roundtables online, which can facilitate access. Talks and roundtables exclusively/specifically addressed to students of migrant backgrounds might yield more positive results for this group, given the specific needs these students may have. Hence, connecting with other people who share similar experiences can be helpful in the students' adaptation to university.

7.3 Power and Privilege in Academia

Based on our discussions so far, we can see that **much of academia**, as a culture born from the wretched soils of colonialism (Ekeh, 1983; Grosfoguel, 2013), **reiterates colonizing attitudes, behaviors, practices, and policies**, particularly when it comes to knowledge-making – what counts as knowledge and what does not, *whose* knowledge, what theories and methods are more valued in the **commodified/commodifying world of academic production and socialization**. It would be naïve to assume that academia can escape the machinations and mechanisms of the neoliberal late capitalism world under which we exist. The so-called 'ivory tower' from where academics sit and marvel at the outside world is not really disconnected from it: as Gani and Marshall (2022, p. 9) argue, it is these very universities and intellectuals that often reiterate and "systematize racism, scavenging the disorganized and reactionary fears of society and refining them in such a way that they appear rational".

As it turns out, ideology really is embedded in everything we do – perhaps even more so when it is systematically dealt with under the guise of impartiality and rationality dressed in

'matte neutrality'. As argued in Gani and Marshall (2022, p. 9), when we do not exempt academia from its (multifaceted) role in society – for good and not so good, we can see more clearly just how much "academic knowledge production has acted as a supplier of racial, civilizational and imperialist discourse, ideology and 'logic' that were (and are) disseminated through research, teaching and broader public intellectualism". This is because "academic production is heavily constrained by the accumulated weight of macro-power structures", as Windle sustains (2017, p. 357), meaning that the power structures from the 'outside' world are not only very present in academic production but are also the fabric from which academic production is made.

Effectively, what this means is that while speaking of inclusivity and/or diversity, the university and the academia – as heterogenous bodies of groups of people – may also impose non-inclusive and non-diverse elements that reiterate precisely what institutional actors are trying to change. In other words, calls for inclusivity and diversity in academia and the university are not unanimous, and neither is promoting transparency and dialog – either because academia and the university are also part of superseding structures (the Nation-State, the Rule of Law), despite enjoying the principle of autonomy, or because inclusivity, diversity, dialog, and transparency may eventually translate into those in places of power and privilege losing (some of) their privileged positions of (little) power.

Lack of clarity and historicity may prevent the 'dominated' from joining the ranks of the academically (and socially) dominant, where the subaltern can effectively use their power to exert actual change. ***Sustainable* change can only be achieved and maintained by a constant examination of the *situated* power and privilege dynamics and nuances within a given context**, including one's own, based on the intersections of our identities in the mostly neoliberal world(s) of late-stage capitalism under which academia and the university operate.

Recommended Actions

➔ *Map and analyze the profile of the university's professional and student bodies, translating the analysis into annual webinars or face-to-face talks for academics, administrative staff, and students*.

Initiatives such as mapping and analyzing the profile of the HEI's incoming students[155] should be extended to the academic and administrative staff, and the students enrolled at the university. I should then be systematized into department-specific talks at the beginning of the academic year/semester. This means information should go beyond institutional news (e.g., the UFMG Newsletter)[156]. Webinars or face-to-face talks could be conducted by interested parties already involved in the profiling and analysis initiatives, possibly with the mediation of GIZ: Prograd's Board of Innovation and Teaching Methodologies and academics invested in related research at the university (e.g., Nonato *et al.*, 2020).

➔ *Promote* **workshops focused on interculturality**, *across the board: for academics, administrative staff, and students*.

For this particular actionable recommendation, it may be useful to adopt and adapt the following frameworks:

- The Wheel of Privilege and Power (cf. Figure 7.3 A), and adaptations-iterations, reproduced in Figures 7.3 B and 7.3 C;
- The Web of Privilege, Power, Access, and Resources, shown in Figure 7.3 E;
- The Academic Wheel of Privilege, illustrated in Figure 7.3 F;
- The Social Identity Wheel reproduced in Figure 7.3 D.

The Wheel of Privilege and Power, as adapted from Sisneros *et al.*'s (2008, p. 87) Web of Privilege, Power, Access, and Resources, is a visual representation of power dynamics and marginalization. In the center of the wheel is the overarching concept of 'power', toward the periphery we find the label 'marginalized'. Sisneros *et al.*'s Web of Privilege, Power, Access, and Resources was created for social workers to examine their identities and experiences of privilege and marginalization. The Wheel has since been adapted to numerous contexts, with added categories, such as 'literacy' (cf. Figure 7.4 B), and 'indigeneity' (cf. Figure 7.4 C). The various categories within the wheel each represent **dimensions of identity**, and their placement over the spectrum from center to margins signifies the 'distribution' of power and privilege. An explanation of each category and dimension is provided in the following.

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[155] For a full list of analyses/reports about the profile of incoming students at UFMG, covering the period of 2011 to 2022: https://www.ufmg.br/prograd/relatorios-sobre-o-perfil-dos-estudantes-de-graduacao-da-ufmg/. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

[156] https://ufmg.br/comunicacao/publicacoes/boletim/edicao/2043/e-a-cara-do-brasil. (In Portuguese. Access: Feb. 05, 2024)

- **Body Size:** *The placement of 'overweight/obese' on the outer margins and 'thin' in the center reflects societal norms and biases about body size; those conforming to a slimmer ideal are positioned closer to the locus of power.*

- **Physical Location:** *'Rural/inner-city' are located at the periphery of the wheel and 'city' is at the center, with 'suburbs' mid-way, indicating a societal bias toward urban locations, which tend to be more valued.*

- **Mental Health:** *The positioning of 'vulnerable' on the outer margins, 'mostly stable' somewhat in the middle, and 'robust' in the center suggests a stigmatization of mental health challenges, with those perceived as mentally robust being closer to the center.*

- **Neurodiversity:** *The placement of 'significant neurodivergence' on the margins and 'neurotypical' in the center indicates societal preferences/biases towards neurotypical individuals, reinforcing the dynamics of power in this context.*

- **Sexual Orientation:** *The placement of non-heteronormative sexual orientations at the periphery, covering 'lesbian, bi, pan/asexual', contrasts with the more privileged position of 'gay men' and the central position of heterosexuality.*

- **Ability:** *'Severe disability' is positioned at the periphery, while 'able-bodied' is in the center, reflecting societal tendencies toward privileging able-bodied individuals while marginalizing those with significant disabilities.*

- **Level of Education:** *The placement of 'elementary education' on the margins of the wheel and 'college or university' in the center suggests a hierarchy, where higher levels of education are associated with greater proximity to power.*

- **Skin Color:** *The positioning of 'dark' on the margins and 'white' in the center of the wheel illustrates the dynamics of race, racial privilege, and marginalization, echoing historical and systemic inequalities particular of the modern World/System.*

- **Citizenship:** *'Undocumented' individuals are placed on the margins, highlighting the power differentials associated with citizenship, with 'citizens' positioned centrally.*

- **Gender:** *Marginalization is represented through the placement of 'trans', 'intersex', and 'non-binary' on the margins of the wheel, contrasting with the central positioning of 'cisgender', reflecting gender-based power dynamics.*

- **Language:** *The model indicates the privileging of English speakers by placing 'non-English speaking' on the margins, 'English speaking' somewhere in the middle, and 'English native' in the center, reflecting linguistic dynamics that still favor an idealized native speaker model.*

- **Social Class:** *'Poor/working class' is placed at the periphery, while 'wealthy' is at the center, reflecting economic power differentials, societal biases, and wealth control.*

- **Housing Status:** *The wheel showcases the power dynamics related to housing by positioning 'houseless' on the margins and 'property owner' in the center*

Figure 7.3 A: The Wheel of Power and Privilege.
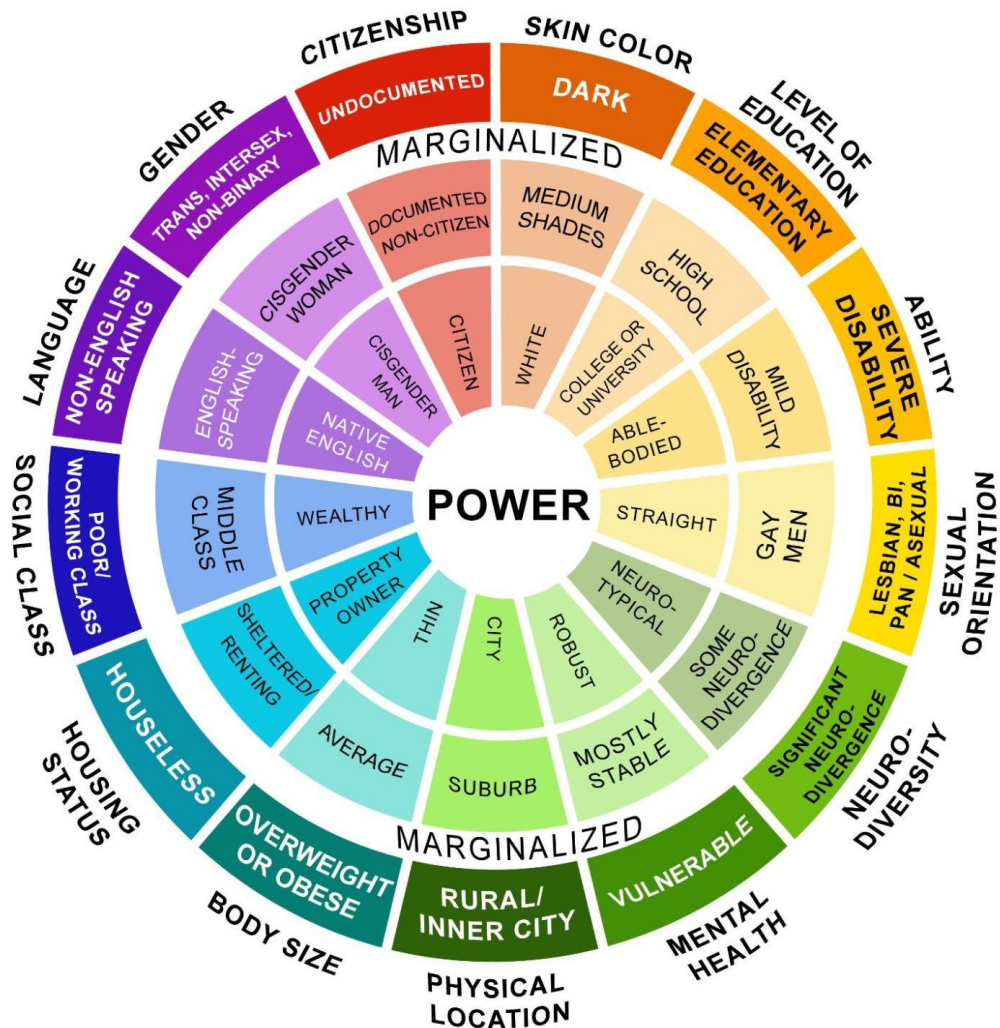
Source: Puttman (2024) with the Open Oregon Educational Resources Targeted Pathways Project.

From the different iterations of the wheel, we can see that the dimensions included are contingent upon the context where the wheel is to be applied – and to what purpose. This means that depending on the purpose and context, dimensions may be altered, added or excluded. The original diagram was designed for social workers in the US (cf. Figure 7.4 E), with the content of some categories and dimensions expanded upon, labeled, and geared toward the particular context. For instance, in some wheels, 'wealth' and 'social class' are labeled differently, while in the 'original' wheel these are 'Socioeconomic Status', a dimension that includes different categories ('welfare', 'working poor'). The dimensions and categories are presented differently as well, with some 'merged' into a single group (e.g., 'National Origin/Language').

Figure 7.3 B: The Privilege Wheel.
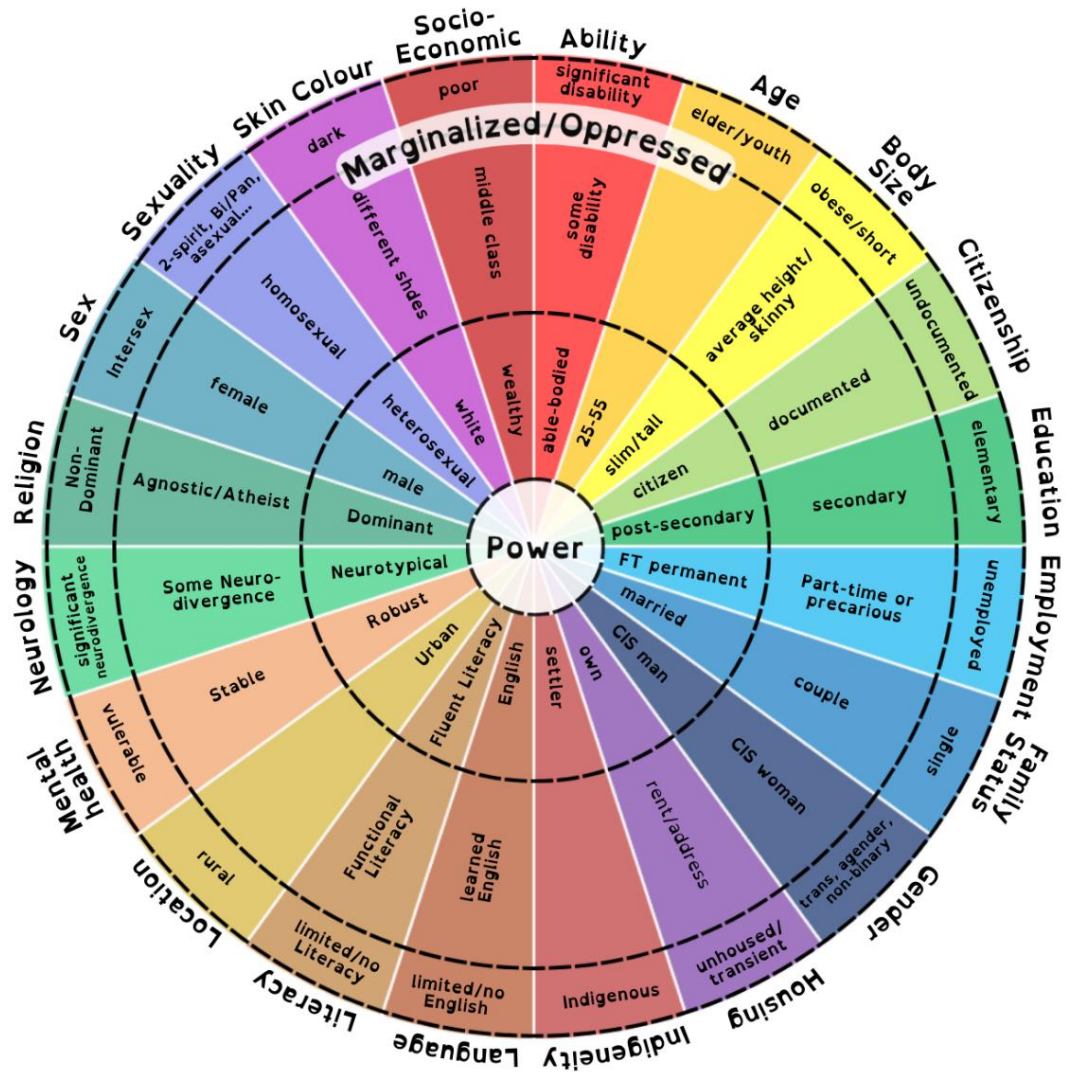
Likewise, categories and dimensions such as 'physical/geographical location' are highly dependent upon how space is distributed and territory is occupied. For instance, in Brazil, this dimension would look differently from the one reproduced in Figure 7.4 A. For the Brazilian reality, 'inner city' would correspond to the metropolitan area of large urban centers such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte, *as well as* to the *favelas* located within the city, at the very center.

Ultimately, what this shows is that the wheel *must* be customized and contextualized to prompt questions about the dynamics between different categories/dimensions and yield a more realistic picture of power and privilege. This also shows just how malleable privilege and power can be, meaning that neither the categories and dimensions nor the phenomena under which

they are understood (power, privilege, oppression, subjugation) should be viewed as static and monolithic.

Figure 7.3 C: The Wheel of Power and Privilege expanded.
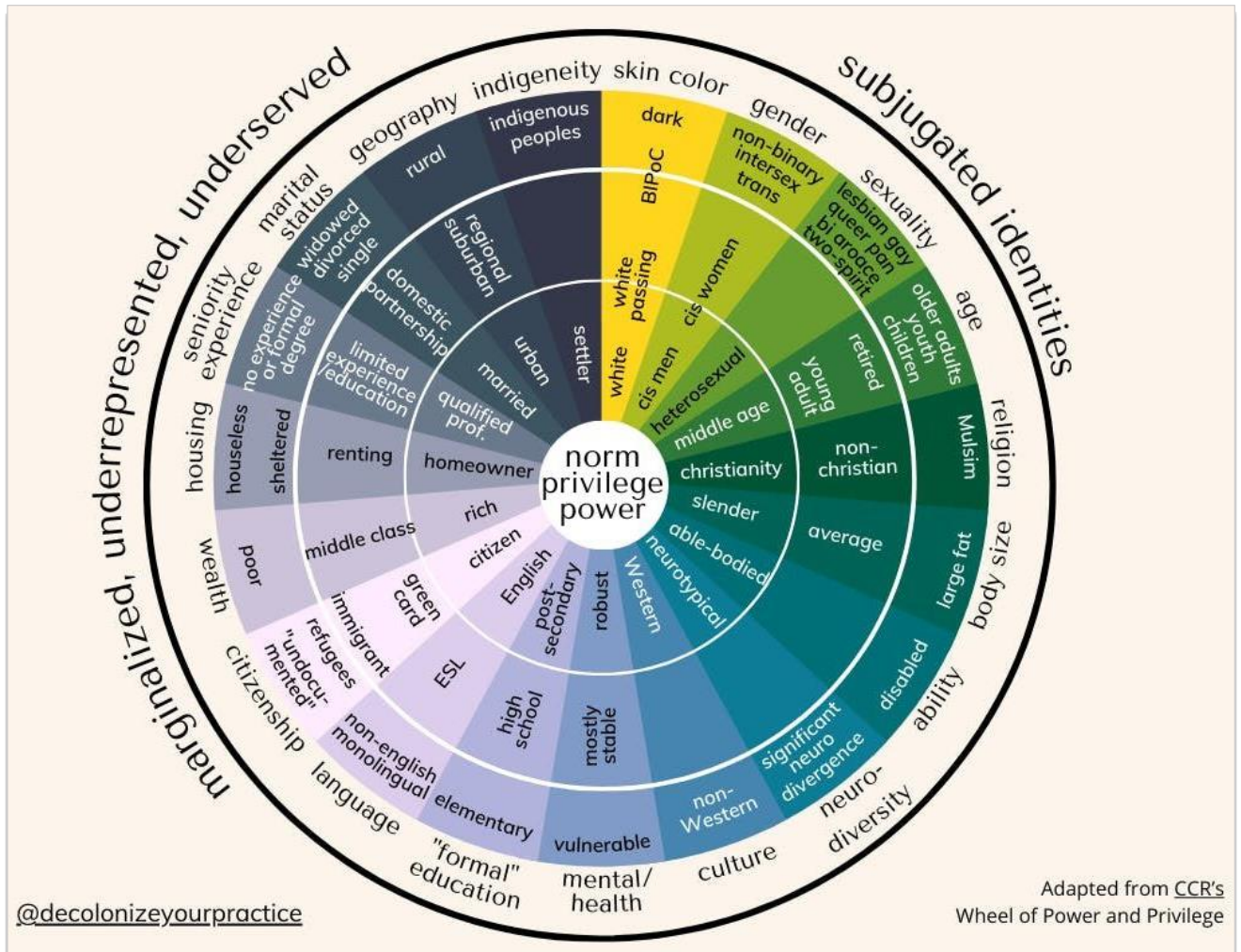
In addition, the importance of addressing **the other side of privilege – oppression –** should not be understated, as they are deeply intertwined. When looking at the intersections and the way the categories and dimensions interact, we can see that **privilege and oppression can be experienced simultaneously**. The understanding of oppression at stake here is nuanced and sensitive to changes in social dynamics[157]. A helpful avenue to address oppression is through

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[157] For instance, I am a ciswoman racialized as White in Brazil. From a race/color perspective, despite being mixed, as my mother was White and my father is Brown ("*moreno*" is what his birth certificate says), my visuality is that of a white person. However, when looking at gender, I am on the more – not most – oppressed side of the wheel. When I travel to most countries of the Global North, I am definitely not white – I am racialized as Brown ('Latina' in the US). Yet, when it comes to communication, being a highly proficient speaker of English puts me in a more advantageous position. I still cannot do certain things (e.g., work abroad) because of my nationality, but I can

Anti-Oppression and Citizenship Education[158] (cf. Vinson, 2006), which has been employed in several international crisis migration and refugee-related scenarios worldwide. The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) created its anti-oppression policy, using the following definitions as a foundation:

Discrimination
The treatment or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit and that can be used to privilege (special treatment in favour of) as well as disadvantage (special treatment against) a particular group or individual
Oppression
The use of power or privilege by a socially, politically, economically, culturally dominant group (or groups) to disempower (take away or reduce power), marginalize, silence or otherwise subordinate one social group or category.
Systemic Oppression
Practices, policies, laws and standards that disadvantage a particular group or category of people.
Individual Oppression
Demeaning and oppressive behaviour towards and treatment of a particular group or category of people, expressed through individual attitudes, beliefs and values.
Anti-Oppression
The work of actively challenging and removing oppression perpetuated by power inequalities in society, both systemic oppression and individual expressions of oppression.

Source: CCR (2009), online: https://ccrweb.ca/en/ccr-anti-oppression-policy (access: Feb. 05, 2024).

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access international spaces more independently, since I can speak for myself in a language that has become so global it sometimes seems like it is nobody's and everybody's language [*which is unrealistic*]. I access international spaces more easily not just because I navigate well linguistically, in English, but also due to not having a heavy 'foreign' accent. These are some of my layers of privilege. The layers of oppression usually spring up in racist comments such as "you'd definitely pass as Spanish", or when someone is surprised by my color: "oh, you're brown!", remarks I have heard from Anglo-Americans and European people in my travels abroad. This tiny bit of oppression does not compare to the experience of being a woman, in Brazil and around the world, but especially in Brazil, a conservative country with highly patriarchal social dynamics.

[158] Vinson (2006) discusses anti-oppression and citizenship education and offers important alternatives for both research and classroom practice, drawing from Paulo Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1970) and Young's (1992) 'Five Faces of Oppression' (*exploitation*, *marginalization*, *powerlessness*, *cultural imperialism*, and *violence*). The powerlessness element of oppression is associated with Freire's notion of Culture of Silence, meaning that those oppressed are made so powerless that they do not even address their oppression (Freire, 1970). Graham (2004) expands on Young (1992) and includes *indifference* as a key element of oppression. As explained in Luchies (2014, p. 102), anti-oppression "draws from multiple resistance discourses to reinvent social movement praxis", in close association with intersectionality and feminism, from more grassroots initiatives to "activist writing and workshopping" that have "facilitated the development and spread of anti-oppression principles and practices".

Figure 7.3 D: The Social Identity Wheel.
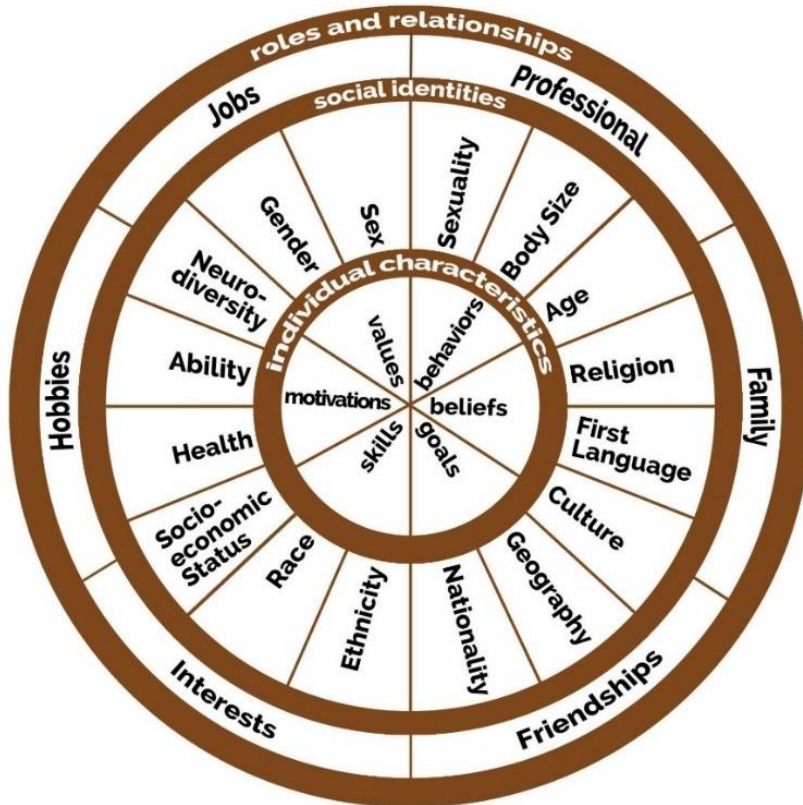
Source: Pierce and Hooper (2024) with the Open Oregon Educational Resources.

**Figure 7.3 E**: Dimensions of Intersectionality.

Source: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/universaldesign/chapter/positionality-intersectionality/
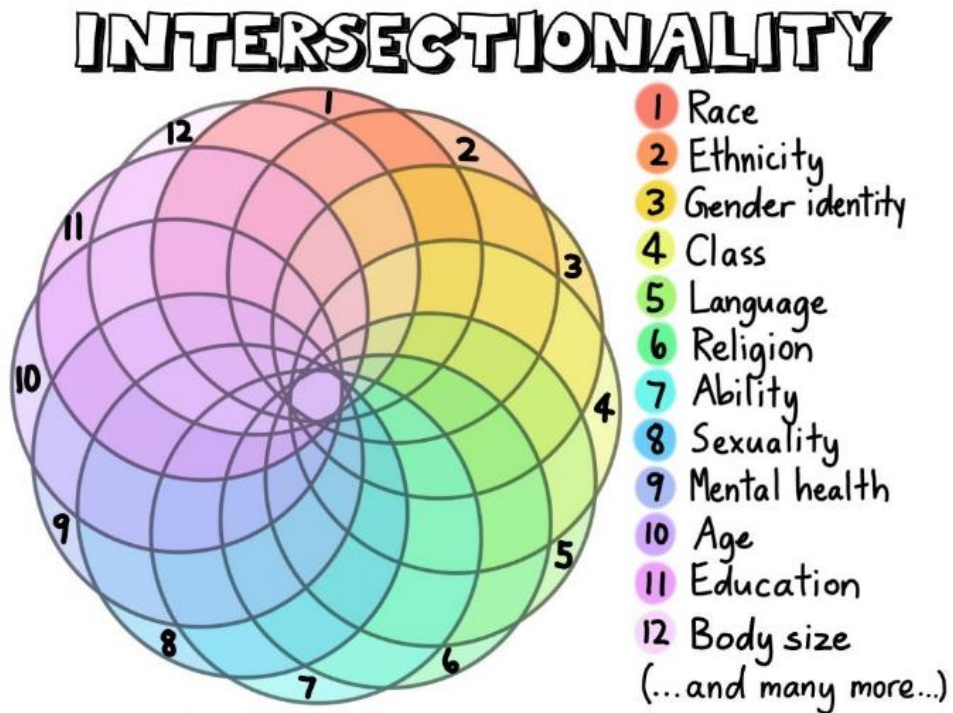
Figure 7.3 F: The Web of Privilege, Power, Access, and Resources.
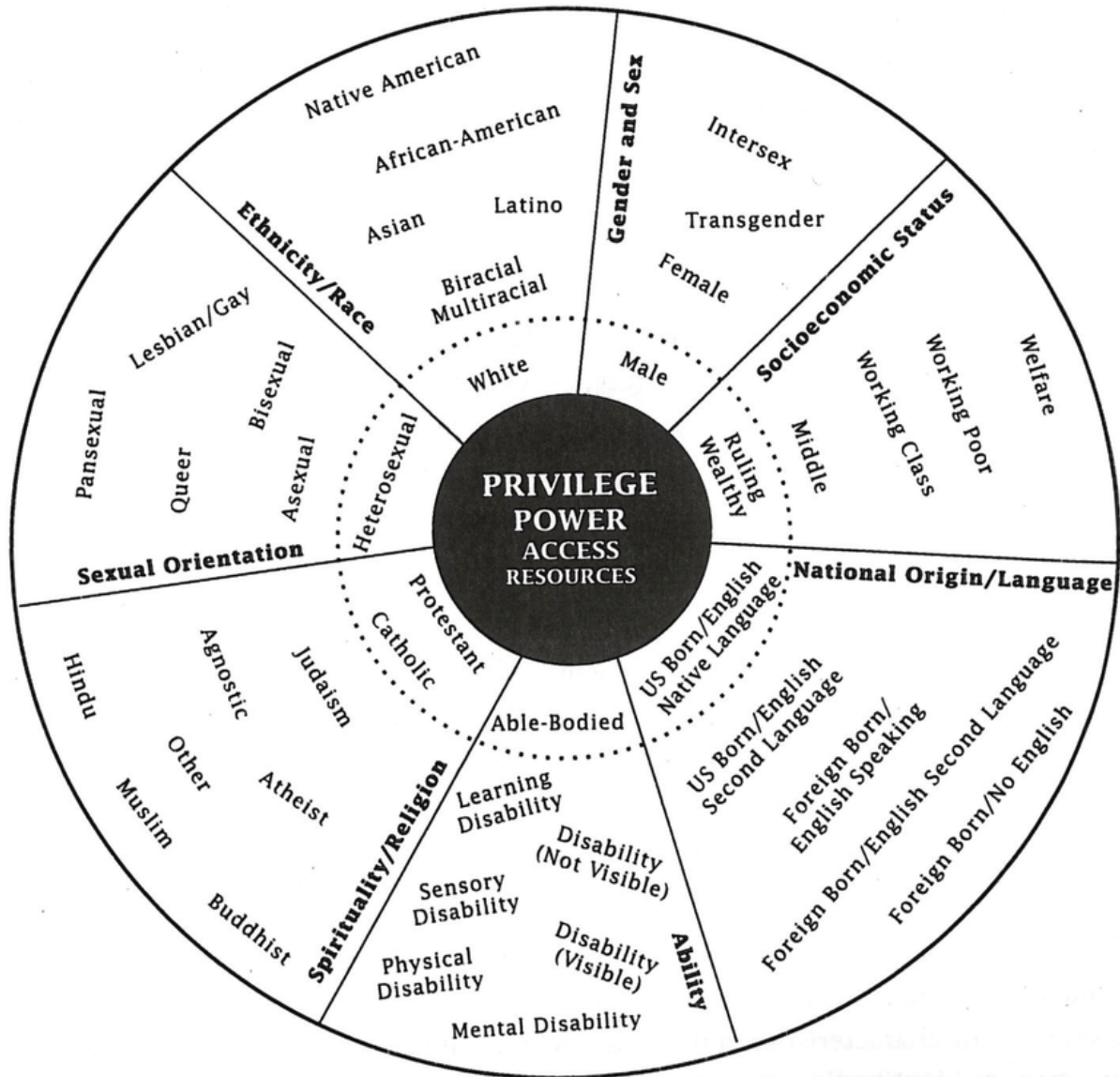
Source: Sisneros *et al*. (2008, p. 87).

The concept of **the Academic Wheel of Privilege** is a comprehensive framework that incorporates dimensions of identity into a visual representation. It is an adaptation of the Wheel of Privilege and Power to the realities of the university and academia. Like the more general wheel, the use of concentric rings in the academic wheel suggests a **layered understanding of privilege**: the outer rings represent lower levels of privilege, the inner rings indicate increased privilege. The Wheel resembles a funnel, an analogy that adds depth to the visualization, as it conveys the idea that individuals can move towards the center and are likely to experience a compounding effect of power/privilege. The Academic Wheel of Privilege encompasses twenty

identity types distributed across seven categories and illustrates the interconnectedness and intersectionality of privileges.

Figure 7.3 G: The Academic Wheel of Privilege.
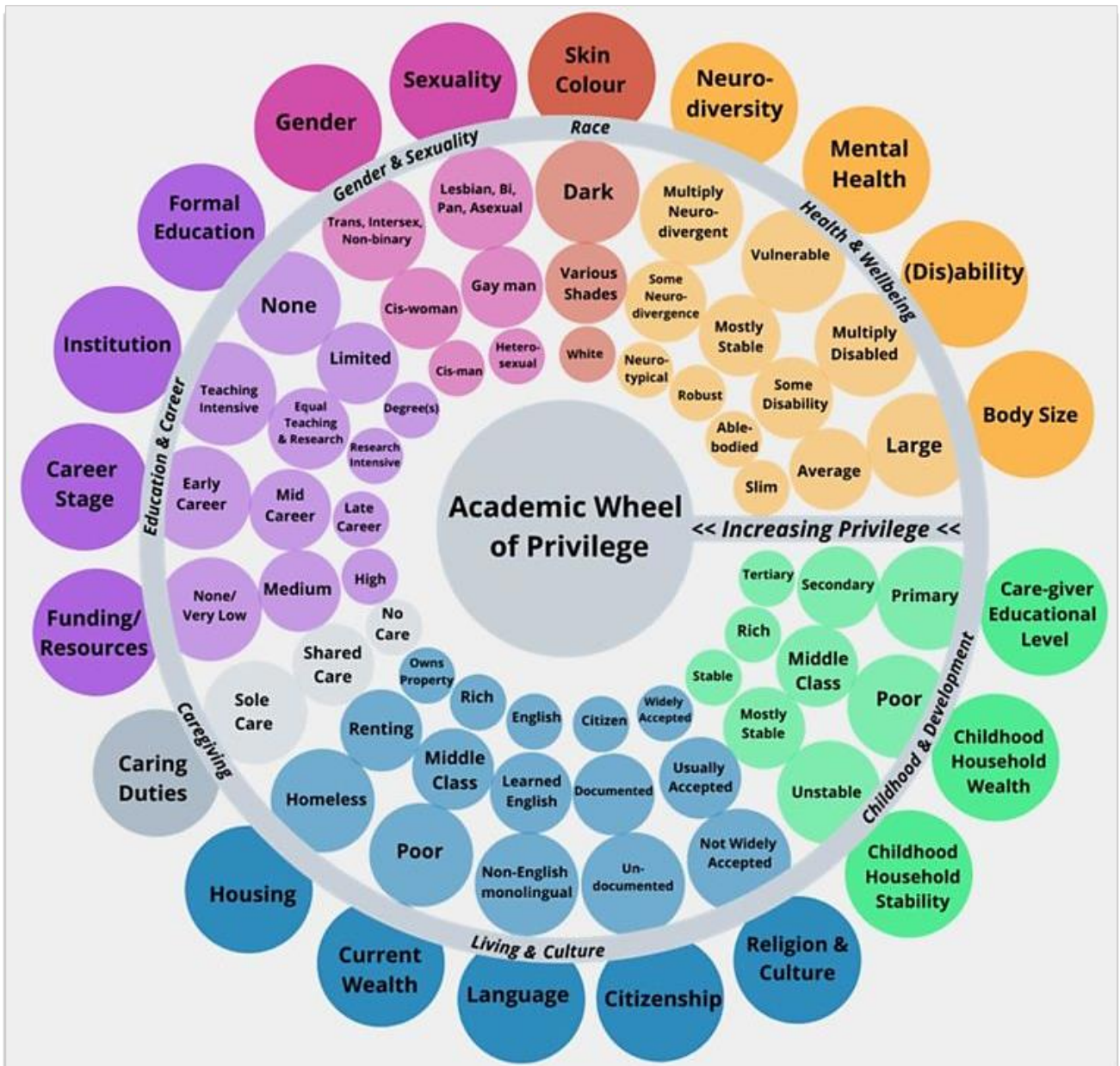
What is left to do now? Find ways of operationalizing the wheels. In this regard, I take a similar stance as that of Riitaoja *et al*. (2022, p. 126) and understand that the wheel(s) should be apprached "as a pedagogical tool of understanding interconnected inequalities more than a universal model" and in a non-exhaustive way. Pedagogically, the wheels can be incorporated

flexibly into professional development and continuing education workshops at the university, as part of an intercultural component or module. The wheel can be used to examine critically identity categories in relation to power and privilege in academia, and how privilege and oppression are operationalized within one's context(s), be it more generally via the Wheels of Power and Privilege, or academically specific with the Academic Wheel.

The expanded wheels reproduced in Figures 7.3 B and C can be associated with self-reflective journals in workshops conducted across the board at the university. Training' should include all involved actors, not just academics. University classrooms are characterized by diversity in terms of students' backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles. This diversity can create challenges for students who may have been accustomed to more 'homogenous' academic environments, for "classrooms and schools mirror the oppressive contingencies of society (…) since schools (and classrooms) are fundamentally social institutions, institutions that have been explored previously as reproductive of social injustices and inequalities", as Vinson (2006, p. 56) observes.

It could be helpful to conduct interculturality workshops addressing expectations and intersections, as part of a welcoming initiative during orientation week, which usually covers only campus tours and introductions to academic departments and buildings via on-site visits, lasting just one day, at UFMG. Interculturality workshops centered around these wheels can be helpful in training faculty, administrative staff, and students for the challenges that affirmative actions can bring to the HEI, be it quotas for low-income students or public calls for migrant-background students. In addition, such workshops may address **generational differences and specificities**, an aspect that remains largely understudied beyond the Marketing, Psychology, and Advertising.

Along with CRT, Black Feminisms, and other decolonial and critical approaches, the Anti-Oppression framework helps "to demonstrate the multiplicity of ways in which people engage anti-oppression" (Kumsa *et al*., 2014, p. 34), and take part in challenging and changing oppressive situations and academic and institutional spaces. This is particularly important in present times, seeing the (re)flourishing of far-right politics and/or right-wing extremism[159] in Brazil and in other countries. Moreover, with HE becoming more neoliberal and commodified (Wagner; Yee, 2011, p. 90), as "universities are affected by and mirror the power hierarchies

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[159] The "core ideological traits of the Far Right" are discussed in Golder (2016). As the author explains, despite a lack of consensus as to what constitutes the Far Right, most scholars concentrate on four traits: nationalism, radicalism, extremism, and populism (pp. 480-485).

in which they are embedded", courses in critical interculturality addressing decolonial and anti-oppression practices are even more essential.

Team-teaching[160] may be useful when designing and conducting workshops focused on interculturality and anti-oppression practices. First, **it can remind academics that they are also educators**, a role often forgotten or cast aside perhaps due to other academic commitments such as researching and publishing, or maybe because teaching is seen as less prestigious than other academic work. To the academic staff, team-teaching may cast a much-needed light on their practice, as it requires both collaboration and self-reflection (Minett-Smith; Davis, 2019). It can also lead to interdisciplinary collaborative prospects, cross-major partnerships, and inter-faculty dialog, helping to blur the between disciplines and promoting inventive approaches to teaching (Minett-Smith; Davis, 2019).

To university students, team-teaching courses and/or workshops may be more engaging, because "Differences in teaching approach can often be convincingly argued to enhance the student experience" (Minett-Smith; Davis, 2019, p. 586), meaning that there is more variety and variation in teaching approaches, lecture styles, and interaction patterns, which could be particularly interesting for Gen-Z students. As for topics addressed in anti-oppression and intercultural workshops through team-teaching it is "critical that instructors bring **a dialectical understanding of how the content can unearth feelings and ideas germane to students'** experiences with power and privilege and the advantages they have received from their social identities" (Garran *et al*., 2015, p. 812, emphasis added).

For instance, in an interculturality workshop, we may ask students about the different categories and dimensions of their social identities interact: are there instances where privileges in one category mitigate or exacerbate disadvantages in another? In more discipline-focused classes, it is also possible to find links between one's discipline and the contemporary issues and challenges students face or will likely face when they start working in the field. Naturally, as the teachers, we must first answer and reflect upon the questions ourselves – having a peer to discuss topics and share such complex reflections is one of the primary advantages of team-teaching.

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[160] Team-teaching is an approach in which two or more teachers/instructors work together to teach a module or course, sharing the responsibility for a group of students (Wenger; Hornyak, 1999). It is operationalized via different models (cf. Ford; Gray, 2011; Minett-Smith; Davis, 2019). Team-teaching has been adopted in several HE contexts, with different purposes, from developing undergraduate research (cf. Montgomery, 2020) to the teaching of classes by challenging historical imperialism (cf. Evangelista, 2020) and critiquing architecture and monuments (cf. Phillip, 2020). For a review on team-teaching in HE, see Newell and Bain (2018).

When discussing power and privilege, we are not advocating for 'empowerment'. This is because, despite its widespread use, or perhaps precisely because it was made so mainstream and trivialized (Tolentino, 2016), empowerment and its associated renderings have been co-opted and entangled within the web of commodification, receiving criticism across disciplines. For instance, in AL in Brazil, Maher (2007) has rightfully pointed out that empowerment alone does not bring **sustainable change** to groups that have been historically minoritized, such as Indigenous peoples: "without those around them learning to respect and coexist with different linguistic and cultural manifestations, even if politically strengthened and legally supported, [...] the groups who are on the margins of the mainstream will not be able to fully exercise their citizenship" (p. 257-258) [161].

Moreover, in the area of Community Psychology, Riger (2002 [1993]) made objections to the notion of 'empowerment' for its increasingly individualistic and traditionally 'masculine' stance, which relegates more traditionally 'feminine' approaches based on "communion and cooperation" to the background, potentially resulting in "unmitigated competition and conflict among those who are empowered" (p. 395). As the author notes:

> *Underlying empowerment ideology is a conflict model that assumes that a society consists of separate groups possessing different levels of power and control over resources (...) The outsiders compete with the insiders – and with each other – for control of resources. (...) The underlying assumption of empowerment theory is that of conflict rather than cooperation among groups and individuals, control rather than communion. The image of the empowered person (or group) in research and theory reflects the belief in psychology in separation, individuation, and individual mastery.*

(Riger, 2002 [1993], pp. 400-401)

While it is true that capitalism does promote competition for resources (and pretty much anything else that can be commodified), it is not competition that will lead to representation or acknowledgement. Genuine visibility and representation lie in the true recognition and acceptance of difference, in the search for a more equitable existence, which can be a daunting endeavor, given the current tendency of overaccumulation, overconsumption, and 'selective peculiarity'.

In other words, what was once a quest for civil rights, fair treatment, and justice, in the fight against oppression mostly driven by grassroots movements and situated praxis (Solomon, 1976) in relation to discriminative, hegemonic practices, discourse, and laws has since been

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[161] Original: "sem que o entorno aprenda a respeitar e conviver com diferentes manifestações linguísticas e culturais, mesmo que fortalecidos politicamente e amparados legalmente, [...] os grupos que estão à margem do mainstream não conseguirão exercer, de forma plena, sua cidadania."

made into a neatly packed product that, co-opted by the capital(ists), displays iterations in a diversity of colors and shapes, wrapped in glossy bows of shallow discourse and empty actions. The powerlessness that floods the experiences of invisibility and discrimination of those on the margins, at verge of collective stigmatization, remains feeding the foundations of privilege.

Effectively, this means having caution when implementing these recommended actions. It is not simply about acknowledging the diversity of one's identities, where one's privileges and oppressions rest. Our recommendations involve **an exercise of self-reflection within our collectivities**, the ongoing conversations we must have, deep in our subjectivities, to face and gain insight into the singularities and multiplicities within our layers of power and privilege (and oppression). This should not mean ranking differences and overjudging the validity of the experiences coming from the margins. On the contrary, it should be about understanding and accepting our differences in pursuit of *equity*, not in competition with each other.

7.4 Advancing Internationalization and IaH

Internationalization and IaH in Brazilian HEIs *should* be made more inclusive through **deliberate strategies, actions, and initiatives that prioritize equity, cultural diversity**, and broad participation. While this is somewhat linked to interculturality, IaH has more to do with the **internationality potential** of the university. This means looking at what is international in the more immediate context(s) of the university, going **beyond** the idea of promoting training in hegemonic languages, based on hegemonic cultures and practices. We understand the role these types of initiatives have in making the university more global, in establishing important partnerships with international HEIs. However, we also think that IaH should not be *solely* focused on these actions.

As Mawani (2015) points out, HE internationalization has been characterized by **power imbalances**, with universities from the Global North wielding significant influence over the universities in the Global South. This is done particularly by exploiting academic labor and privileging Western-based content and research, as well as gearing linguistic policies toward hegemonic languages and cultures (e.g., the use of standard English as a dominant language of instruction and publication – the present dissertation included) and the differential access to resources and funding that often disadvantage universities in the Global South.

In the realm of IaH, this imbalance is also seen in the space hegemonic languages occupy in comparison to less globally prestigious languages, at the university. For example, when language courses are offered, when actions seem more economically-driven by rankings… all

of this contributes to perpetuating inequalities. Inclusive IaH should be about developing ways "to enhance the quality of education and research and **make a meaningful contribution to society**" (de Wit, 2019, p. 12, emphasis added).

To counter such imbalances, as mentioned in Chapter 2, internationalization and IaH must recognize these unequal power dynamics and the need **to shift towards more equitable relationships between universities in different countries**. This critical look at IaH is not meant to underestimate the policies and initiatives undertaken at Brazilian HEIs; rather, it situates them within other social, historical, and economic processes that preceded and enabled such actions (Vergara-Figueroa, 2018). This serves to unveil the colonial lens through which much of internationalization and IaH emerges, in Brazil and elsewhere. A critical (historicized, decolonial) view of internationalization may lead to more inclusive practices, as opposed to uncritically replicating or assimilating hegemonic dichotomies and geopolitical asymmetries.

Recommended Actions

➔ *Create plurilingual cultural exchange programs*.

Cultural exchange programs aim at encouraging interactions between domestic and international students: *de facto* and *de jure*. These programs can include conversation clubs and language exchange events, intercultural fairs, and collaborative projects to promote cross-cultural understanding. At UFMG, such actions may be headed by DRI, CENEX, and Pró-Imigrantes, associated with graduate programs and related courses from specific majors. One way to promote participation is to recognize participants' engagement and accomplishments in cultural exchange program through certificates to be added as AAC, for undergraduate students. This helps to motivate students and showcases the value of their cross-cultural experiences.

Institutionalizing such actions also means access to **institutional resources** that can be translated into initiatives aimed at fostering student permanence at the university. Cultural exchange programs could be included in small grant schemes and scholarship programs from the university, with the participating students receiving a supplementary scholarship/stipend ('*complementação de bolsa*'), granted to students engaging in internships, co-op programs, and other experiential learning opportunities. This is done with graduate scholarship programs at UFMG[162], where graduate students work 12 hours per week under the supervision of a more experienced academic. The program could be extended to undergraduate students.

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[162] https://www.ufmg.br/prograd/arquivos/bolsas/NormasProcGeraisBolsasFomento.pdf. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

➜ *Promote inclusive events and community engagement*.

Inclusivity can be fostered with local events that celebrate and promote diversity, such as cultural festivals, awareness campaigns, and international speaker series. These events can provide platforms for diverse voices and help to develop a sense of belonging, particularly for underrepresented groups. For instance, the Libras Saturday workshop[163], held at Espaço do Conhecimento UFMG, aimed at discussing the history of writing and its connection with deafness. It provided the workshop participants with an introduction to the SignWriting system, with explanations about how to use it for Libras. Espaço do Conhecimento UFMG is more centrally located, which can attract more diverse audiences as well, especially when the events are not held on week days, as was the case with the Libras Saturday workshop.

Figure **7.4**: Haitian Creole workshop promoted by Pró-Imigrantes.

Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/CsUM44cxbhG/. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

Another example is the Intercultural Picnic organized by Pró-Imigrantes and CSVM as part of the Sunday on Campus (*Domingo no Campus*)[164], a community program headed by the Pro-Rectorate of Extension and held at the Pampulha campus. As indicated in Figure 7.4, short courses such as the Haitian Creole workshop organized by Pró-Imigrantes for the 2023 DRI Internationalization Fair run is another example. Such workshops can be extended to the local

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[163] https://www.ufmg.br/espacodoconhecimento/sabado-com-libras-escrita-de-sinais/. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

[164] https://www.ufmg.br/proex/gallery_video/domingo-no-campus/. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

community through partnerships between UFMG and the Municipal Cultural Foundation of Belo Horizonte, or with other municipalities in the RMBH.

Such initiatives can bring many immigrant populations to spaces they typically do not occupy in our society. It is a feasible way of providing said populations with (more) visibility, spotlighting underrepresented groups in this process. Programs and actions aimed at supporting immigrant students can lead to higher enrollment and participation in schools and universities. This not only benefits local and international students but also enriches the educational environment with diverse perspectives. In addition, encouraging immigrants to engage in local community activities, cultural events, and public forums can lead to a more inclusive society. Their participation helps break down social barriers and promotes mutual understanding.

Finally, when immigrant populations are visible in various societal roles – from students and professionals to community leaders – it challenges stereotypes and broadens the public's understanding of these groups. It also helps raise awareness about the unique challenges and contributions of immigrant populations. This can lead to more informed and empathetic public policies and social attitudes. Positive representation in influential positions can provide role models for younger generations within immigrant communities and spaces, inspiring them to pursue their goals and **contribute actively to society** – for instance, by accessing HE.

Onde a gente não se vê, a gente não se pensa.

Bárbara Carine (2023)

A memória é a consciência crítica.

[Ailton Krenak (2020)

[CODA]

Recapping the Research

      To conclude this PhD dissertation, we recap the research by returning to the research questions and objectives introduced in Chapter 1, commenting on our research as it unfolded throughout this dissertation. To this end, listed below are our research questions, organized in two bundles, followed by our objectives.

Bundle 1:

→ **What are the call's main provisions for access to HE?**

    o What are the entry requirements?

→ **What specificities can be identified in each entry?**

    o What do these specificities entail? Have there been changes?

→ **What is the overall profile of the applicants in each entry?**

    o What conclusions can be drawn from their participation?

Bundle 2:

→ **What 'routes' have they taken in their journeys to university?**

    o Who and/or what has influenced this process?

→ **What are their academic literacy practices like at UFMG?**

    o With what academic genres and situations do the participants engage?

→ **What are their academic demands and challenges at UFMG?**

    o What is the nature of these demands and challenges?

→ **What is their intercultural potential at UFMG?**

    o What actions can be proposed to develop this potential?

Objectives:

    ✓ Analyze Public Call 624/2020 and related legislation;

    ✓ Analyze the entries and the applicants' participation;

    ✓ Unearth the participants' journeys to university;

    ✓ Gain insight into the participants' academic literacy practices;

    ✓ Offer actionable recommendations centered on interculturality.

A question I ended up asking myself as I interacted with the participants and the call throughout the research was: *are the students of migrant backgrounds national or international, at UFMG, and what are the implications of this*?

To the fullest extent possible over the two years of interactions with the four research participants, we believe we managed to uncover some **facets** of their academic literacy practices at UFMG, addressing their demands and difficulties in the process. As discussed in Chapter 6, the four research participants' academic literacy practices are embedded in in their engagement with more and less prototypically academic genres and situations, with social media playing a central role in their successful accomplishment of academic tasks and socialization within academic communities at UFMG.

The demands and difficulties they shared involve a wide range of situations, once again, **both more and less prototypically academic**. For instance, in Chapter 6, we could see that familiarization with Brazilian academic culture(s) – or lack thereof – impacts the students of *international* migrant backgrounds in their adaptation to the university, which may lead to further difficulties and frustration. This is why, in Chapter 7, we suggested that the students of migrant backgrounds be included in the **orientation and reception** activities planned for international students at UFMG, based on the understanding that while students of *international* migrant backgrounds may not be international students officially, **they are international students *de facto***. This was verified in their accounts narrated and discussed in Chapter 5, when we addressed their migration journeys and schooling experiences in Brazil. Likewise, the entry requirements and legal provisions of Public Call 624/2020 place these students as international, not domestic, as analyzed in Chapter 4. This alone should be enough of a reason to include the students of migrant backgrounds in IaH initiatives at the university.

The internationality of the four participants and other students of (international) migrant backgrounds is seen in the trans-/inter-national experiences before immigrating and resettling in Brazil. This means that, regardless of how well they speak and write Portuguese, regardless of their ENEM essay scores, and how long they have lived in Brazil, the four participants have spent their formative years *not* in Brazil. Just as their identities are marked – but not defined – by the reality of their migration to Brazil. This is reflected in the existence of a call specifically addressed to immigrants and refugees (acknowledging the impact of hardships that migrant-background students may have experienced), so are their academic journeys. Amirah, Michelly, Noelle, Syed, and other students of international migrant background, at UFMG and elsewhere, do not stop being *not* from Brazil, in the sense that they likely do not share the same academic

cultures and practices as their Brazilian-born and raised peers, as we have seen in the research participants' accounts in this dissertation.

Given the colonial history of education in Brazil (cf. Bittar; Ferreira Jr., 2016; Gondra *et al*., 2014), the internationalization and IaH of HEIs requires actions that reflect the often-cited interculturality many internationalization 'projects' are aiming to achieve. In particular, **internationalizing HE cannot be just about reproducing what is done internationally**, in alignment with the highly neoliberal agendas of academic capitalism (e.g., teaching hegemonic languages to Brazilian students so they can take part in academic mobility programs abroad). This means developing and promoting initiatives that are not guided primarily by economic motivations such as breaking into university rankings and collecting badges of globalization. In IaH, this *must* be done by promoting plurilingualism and multiculturalism across learning spaces, recognizing the multilingual reality of Brazil and therefore valuing its rich linguistic and cultural diversity, which certainly includes the languages of migrant-background students.

Finally, when addressing our questions and goals, we could not help but look outward to the broader global context of international crisis migration and conflict-induced displacement as present consequences of historical processes of exclusion and exploitation brought about by Western European colonialism and Anglo-Euro-American imperialism, as reviewed in Chapter 2 and brought to light in the contextualization of the four participants' migration experiences in Chapter 5. The images selected for display in Chapter 2 aimed to illustrate just how deliberate, exclusionary, and violent these systems have been, physically, materially, and symbolically, culminating in the (neo)colonialism of today, the most sophisticated form of colonialism, as it does not require the physical presence of the (neo)colonizing body in this process (N'krumah, 1965).

Reflecting on Key Themes

Challenging Academia

Engagement in academic literacy practices mobilizes identities and experiences, linguistic and cultural repertoires, revealing potentialities, demands, challenges, and, possibly, conflicts with academic practices and the university. One of the purposes of academic literacy should be to facilitate the learning of conventions, rituals, and activities developed and expected in academic settings. However, learning to navigate these spaces and appropriating them as territories of one's journey with and throughout education entails critically reflecting on the

various pieces that make up the 'puzzle' of academic practices – an exercise that can be useful for novice and experienced academics alike.

On this note, in academic literacy practices, linguistic and cultural diversity should be valued by adopting a critical and more historicized outlook, taking into account the ideological drives of knowledge-making. This implies an ongoing critical reflection about the different ways of constructing knowledge, and the 'origins' of the academic practices often taken for granted, identifying and challenging, when needed, what the academy and society traditionally validate as 'knowledge', and why some knowledges are not deemed knowledge at all. This is less about surface-level features and more about the ontology of knowledge-making.

[Where do these academic rules and conventions come from? Who decided that a dissertation cannot spotlight some subjectivity, that objectivity should be the only goal?]

Socializing Academic Literacy

Of note, the socialization aspect of academic practices remains largely overlooked in the research and literature on academic literacy, despite socialization being decisive to one's positive academic experiences and professional success (Pascarelli; Terezini, 2005; Teixeira, Castro, Zoltowiski, 2012). In addition to developing new academic practices and knowledge, academic life demands adjustment to this context and autonomy to build new relationships in considerably less 'structured' environments, when compared with high school (cf. Teixeira, Castro, Zoltowiski, 2012). This integration to academic life is even more critical in the first year of studies, in particular for students from minoritized and/or marginalized backgrounds (Hausmann *et al*., 2009; Gómez, 2019) or students unfamiliar with academic culture in Brazil. **Socialization is a way of fleshing out expectations**.

We see **socialization as an element of academic literacy** because the interactions it entails are often centered around university matters and academic production. It is also in these more informal situations beyond the classroom (and oftentimes the university physical space) that students can build partnerships with their peers; connections that can eventually help them to better navigate their academic practices, as was seen in the research participants' accounts. Additionally, we acknowledge that academic literacy does not begin *when* students join university – it is a lifelong process that feeds from previous literacy and education practices, formal and informal.

Socialization has traditionally not fallen under the purview of academic literacy, even within the academic literacies model, because it does not subscribe to conventional notions of

academic practices. In a way, we still look at academic literacy following the conventional, academically validated practices. However, **the world of academia and the university does not exist in a vacuum**, it is also informed by social practices outside its gates and walls. As in a circuit, a fluid interconnectedness flows and feeds the university in **multilayered and multidirectional ways**, much like our 4M Framework presented in Chapter 3. Knowledge is never exclusively made within the gates and ivory towers of academia. It has never been, and literacy – academic or of other modalities – is only "meaningful to the extent that it enables people to understand better and shape their world", as noted in Auerbach (1992, p. 72), based on Freire and Macedo (1987).

Sharing (Inter)Nationality

As illustrated in the participants' accounts throughout this dissertation, internationality is very much a part of their identities – not simply because Brazil is not their country of origin or birth and Portuguese is not their first language/mother tongue. The international element runs deeper than surface-level aspects such as the 'nation' of one's birth or the 'motherhood' of one's language. I use simple quotation marks for these words – *nation* and *mother* – because the imagery we cultivate from these concepts and their corresponding semantic fields is that of legitimacy and belonging, of *being* (and, by token, *not being*), that is, in our still colonized collective imagination/imaginary, we belong to/in a country/nation also because we speak that nation's language/mother tongue: as that nation's children, **we are enveloped in that nation's language**, the 'visceral' link to our motherland.

But the opposite correlation is not true, as nobody is seen as a 'stepchild' of a country or a language – no one has a nation and language as their 'step-parents' or their 'step-family'. Refugees and immigrants are often considered the 'Other', the ones who do not belong to/in the nation, who are not entitled to join the family, as if they were illegitimate children longing to become full-blooded citizens of an imaginary nationhood. The nation-state is a fabrication of so-called modernity – itself a fallacy, in many aspects – and I cannot think of anything less 'modern', in the inclusive, diverse sense of the word/concept, than sharp divides still in place, the **sense of entitlement** that may come from national symbols such as passports, languages, flags; the idea that a real citizen has some sort of magical connection with their place of birth – *jus sanguinis* to the extreme.

I happen to think this 'stepchild' connection is precisely the bond international migrant students might form: in the research participants' case, Brazil is not their country of origin, their

original 'homeland', and Portuguese is not their mother tongue. The four participants will always have that 'visceral' connection with their places of birth and early childhood: Haiti and Syria. In keeping with this analogy, perhaps Brazil is their 'second home', maybe an 'additional residence' where Amirah, Michelly, Noelle, and Syed have carved new experiences/cultures with their families, with whom they share a 'mother' tongue, a homeland, and deeply-rooted affective memories. International migrant students, crisis migrants, immigrants, refugees… whatever they may be called… **they are not the 'other'**: they are *new* residents, they are our step brothers and sisters sharing the invisible lines of a 'nation', making this 'shared space' a dynamic landscape of new memories, of reframed and reimagined realities, appropriating the territory and making it theirs, part of their identities – just like we do.

Final Words and Further Questions

When spotlighting the concepts of colonialism, coloniality, and modernity, we aimed to stress the interconnectedness between these practices and systems and the current realities of crisis migration, internationalization of HE, and academic literacy. We recognize the ever-lasting impacts of colonialism, in particular, and choose to resort to a *decolonial studies* as part of our critical outlook to migration, internationalization, and academic literacy. However, we are also very much aware that decolonization may be virtually impossible, as we are born into a world whose structures are pre-made; structures built so strongly, they are the foundation of the collective world as we know it – we do not seem to be willing to part ways with it. Yet, as Adébísí (2019, online) deeply reflects: "Decolonisation is impossible, but we must make her possible, if we wish to survive this wretched night that this wretched earth has been plunged into by humanity. We must make her possible", channeling Fanon (1961).

Hence, we understand that, in spite of this, or perhaps *because* of it, we have a vital responsibility to uphold, should we accept to take it: to challenge unequal, unfair, 'naturalized' exploitative, and (symbolically, materially) violent situations and the state of things, aiming at somehow changing the current structure, 'brick by brick', remodeling it, lest we engage with decolonial studies for 'trendiness', without truly aiming to exert meaningful and sustainable change. If a complete overhaul is indeed impossible – as it is certainly *unlikely* – perhaps our aim should be to make this overarching idea of 'decoloniality' indeed **contra-colonial** (Bispo dos Santos, 2015; 2023; Zalis, 2023) and **anti-colonial** (Dei, 2006; Dei; Imoka, 2018; Dei; Lordan, 2016), not shying away from recognizing our own privilege in this process. We should be against the colonialities that permeate our daily lives and practices.

Assuming such a stance is made even more urgent at present, because "it would seem that the worldview of liberalism, which has truly become global today, tends to socialise us into conformity, if not also complacency" (Kho, 2018, p. 134). This is why, despite the 'hype' of decoloniality and decolonial studies in the past decade, we must 'stick' with it and improve it as a practice of contrary to (neo)colonization and against (neo)colonization, seeing that the residual effects of colonialism were never extinguished.

Decoloniality has its place in this scenario, but its realization is not mine to take. I am not as affected by colonization as are Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian peoples, nor do I have 'original'/native rights to claim in this landscape, even if part of my ancestry has been erased. The oppressions I feel are not positioned on those points of the spectrum. My oppressions taste of coloniality, sure, but they do not run as deep, since I am racialized as White, have not been denied the right to education and dignified living conditions, have not been denied access to what this magic so-called modernity has to offer – these are, in fact, my privileges. I have had enough means to make choices millions of other women will likely never experience. *This* is the unfortunate part – and this is what needs to be changed.

Understanding **where one is situated socio-historically and globally** is paramount in the quest for decolonization, against colonization and (neo)colonialism, for a variety of reasons. First, because (neo)colonialism – (ultra)modernity is marked by increasingly high levels of specialization, as reflected in the identity dimensions discussed in Chapter 7, meaning that the particularities of one's experiences need to be treated under very particular lens. Second, we must not confuse 'anti-colonial critique' with 'decolonizing framework', or equate oppression and social justice with colonization and decolonization, as they are not the same: "anti-colonial critique often celebrates empowered postcolonial subjects who seize denied privileges from the metropole. This anti-to-post-colonial project doesn't strive to undo colonialism but rather to remake it and subvert it" (Tuck; Yang, 2012, p. 19), which I is what I often see myself doing in my practice and research. Third, as Dei (2006) notes, because there are limits to what we can effectively accomplish through our anti-colonial negotiations. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, because "for colonized peoples decolonization involves a reclamation of the past, previously excluded in the history of the colonial and colonized nations. They must identify the colonial historical period from the perspectives of their places and their peoples" (Dei, 2006, p. 1).

Specifically in academia and the university, in my professional practice, and in both my professional and personal relationships, what I *can* do is question my realities, challenge the

status quo of my practice, and engage in ongoing self-reflection to improve it, making it more equitable and inclusive within the matrix of oppression from where it operates: I teach *English* of all languages! And I work with academic writing, one of the most elitist forms of 'self-expression'. In this scenario, moving toward equity and inclusivity means helping to bring to the fore practices, knowledges, languages, systems, and philosophies that have been relegated to the periphery and dismissed as unscientific and unsophisticated for not conforming to the normative, hegemonic, and neoliberal academic status quo – a system that invariably rewards high productivity and ruthless competition over meaningful connections, being 'right' over being vulnerable to accept that what we do, as researchers and educators, is always somehow unfinished. **We are indeed always somewhat limited and unfinished in everything we do**.

As this process of going and being **against coloniality** unfolds in academia and the university, we may benefit from asking reflective questions to gain insight into the extent to which what we do in these spaces is inclusive or exclusive: *are our academic practices reproducing, reinforcing, or reiterating naturalized unequal, unfair, exploitative, and violent situations and status quo? Are they dismissive of diverse knowledges and ways of being and knowing? Have we engaged with and spotlighted non-hegemonic epistemologies, moving away from the imposition of arbitrary Eurocentric standards, or are we still unwilling to break such unnecessary protocols?* In this regard, a fundamental question we must always ask ourselves, regardless of our position in academia and the university is:

> When the "*current theorizing is predicated upon past knowledge, it becomes apparent how biases may become further entrenched. If the system is premised on always working from racist, colonial foundation of scholarship, how is meaningful change introduced, in a way acceptable to gatekeepers, many of whom are credited with establishing the existing knowledge*?"
> (Wagner; Yee, 2011, p. 93)

The resistance, resilience, and reflection involved of **anti- and contra-colonial** moves means understanding that the **critical consciousness** so invaluably foregrounded by Freire (1970) must not be taken as an individual pursuit. It needs to be historicized and situated within one's web of oppression and coloniality, as part of a 'collective', that is, collective resistance, resilience, and reflection. Fundamentally, the transformation that critical consciousness can be bring about acts on an individual level, naturally, but does and should not rest on the individual. This would be a form of 'capitalist criticality': the commitment to 'self-improvement' (as opposed to transformation) with an overfocus on individuality detached from collectivity. Sustainable change lies in the articulation of an individual's critical and reflective practice within the collective, refracting from the inner and outer workings of engagement.

Often paradoxically, such reflective, revolutionary, and transformative work may be done on and through social media, where gatekeeping tends to be less about keeping a watch on the gates and more about what one does when the gates are open and people *are* watching. Many have joined the digital 'arena' of social media not to (only) cheer and watch gladiators fight each other. They have carved their territory in this space to create communities. This is transformative. Social media that challenges inequalities, denounces injustices, and provokes reflection is where an abundance of historically marginalized and minoritized persons have found echo. It is where an Indigenous Pataxó shows he can be high-tech[165], a Black academic woman can challenge and educate beyond academia[166], a Dominican multimedia producer can openly criticize her country[167]; it is where a Cuban migrant can share her stories about life in Brazil[168], and a healthy life in the *barraco* is just another day[169]. It is where those who were made unseen for so long can be powerfully portrayed and where they speak for themselves. This is also what we should aim to bring into academia.

Intercultural stories by Janys Cubanita Okoye
(https://www.instagram.com/p/C2uuVHBOo9D/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
. Access: Feb. 05, 2024)

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[165] https://www.instagram.com/tukuma_pataxo/?g=5. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

[166] https://www.instagram.com/uma_intelectual_diferentona/. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

[167] https://www.instagram.com/lamenteopen/?g=5. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

[168] https://www.instagram.com/janys_cubanita_okoye/. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

[169] https://www.instagram.com/thallitaxavier/. Access: Feb. 05, 2024.

Art from: https://www.instagram.com/p/CDFysawJQHW/ (Access: Feb. 05, 2024)

O que diz a variedade de tradições africanas sobre conhecer o mundo em que vivemos?

Como você é esse universo em miniatura, será melhor começar a conhecê-lo partindo de você mesmo(a).
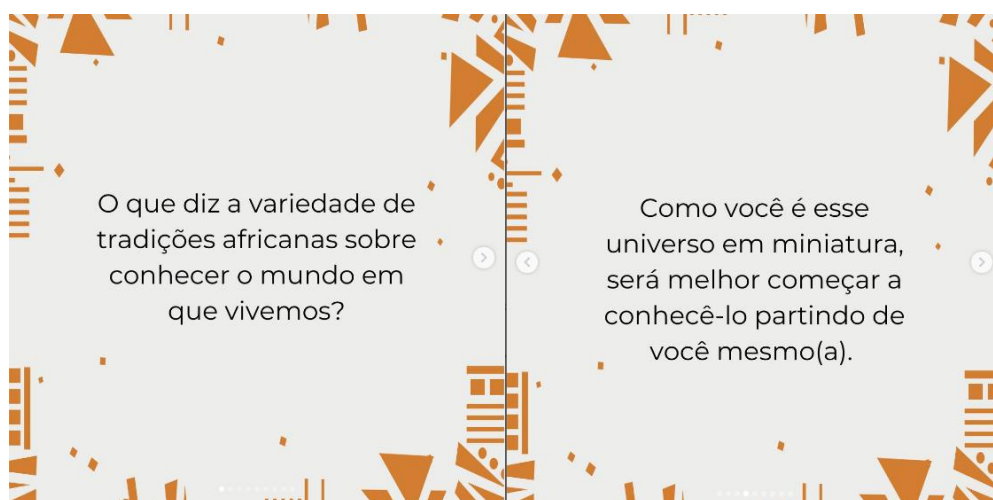
Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/C3V5GToBJep/?img_index=1

Art by Olivia Irons (https://scientificslug.com/2021/06/08/anti-colonial-science/. Access: Feb. 05, 2024).
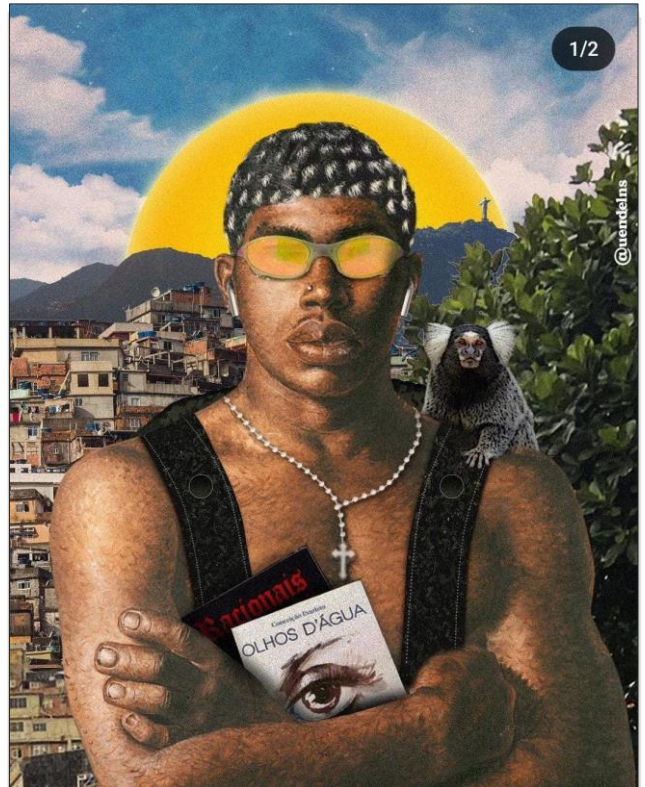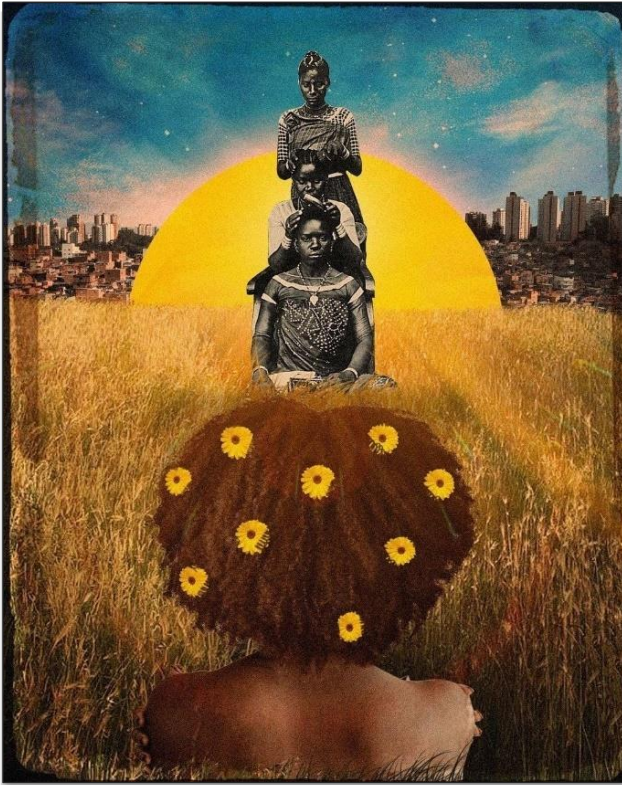
Art by Del Nunes (https://www.instagram.com/uendelns/. Access: Feb. 05, 2024).

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