

Teaching English to Children Up to the Age of Six: Reports on South America and Brazil

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Abstract:

This paper presents different realities concerning the practices of teaching English to children up to 6 years old, with examples from different parts of South America, Brazil and its states. It is originally part of a master's degree dissertation interested in the scenario of Guarapuava, a city from south Brazil, which explains the presented data tending to this region. This is a bibliographical review, developed based on previously elaborated materials, with the purpose of understanding the theme from different perspectives. It is understood that, by having common characteristics, the countries (also states and cities) involved in the study can structure themselves as a support network, sharing their achievements and failures. Because of the scarcity of the offer and studies about this topic, it has sometimes become necessary to address language teaching for older children. The knowledge gap reinforces the need to discuss the topic and the bias of the results, which point to the private education network as the main scenario for this practice, bringing to light the relevance of the implementation of public policies for the democratization of access.

Keywords:

English teaching. Early childhood education. Educational policies.

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INTRODUCTION

The present production is related to the teaching of English in Early Childhood Education (ECE) in South America and in Brazil. This bibliographic review was originally elaborated to compose a dissertation¹ covering the topic in Guarapuava, a city belonging to the state of Paraná, in the south part of the country. Because of the interest in a specific territory the information collected tends to be biased to it, although a general perspective of Brazil is brought into consideration.

It is understood that the application of this methodology is especially indicated in the case of the proposed study, as it allows a greater comprehensiveness of the facts – a survey that would be practically unfeasible to be carried out by the same researcher (GIL, 2016). As the paper gathers data about several contexts of English teaching at ECE, it becomes an important source to compare the offer, improve and expand it. When reflecting about the path other countries, states and cities have been through to establish this type of education, one may find inspiration to trace its own way towards teaching this language to more students (which includes starting at early ages) and for a higher weekly number of hours.

Before moving on to the referred immersion, it may be relevant to anticipate the discussion of some concepts that could possibly be noted through the report of these contexts. We begin by presenting Kachru's model (1985 as cited by FARIAS *et al.*, 2008), which represents the English-speaking populations through three circles of progressive sizes. In the innermost layer are the countries where the language originated from, where it is the mother tongue for the majority of the population, as in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom as a whole. Next, the middle circle involves countries such as India and Singapore, former British colonies that use the language in national institutions or as an L2. Finally, in the outermost layer of this expanding circle system, English emerges as a foreign or international language, exemplified by the author through Russia, Japan and Egypt – but that nowadays would involve a significantly larger number of countries, which is precisely Kachru's proposal, showing circles that continue to grow.

In European and North American countries where immigration is an important marker, English is often taught to foreigners as a second language – English as a Second Language (ESL). This denomination refers to the formal teaching of a language in institutions in countries where this language is also fundamental for everyday life. One of the striking characteristics of these contexts is the fact that children generally have some previous understanding of the language, however simple, and attend schools with the aim of polishing the knowledge they already have, as well as continuing this learning. The alternation between languages is commonly observed, since people usually identify with more than one language – L2 as an additional to L1 (GRADDOL, 2006).

¹ BORTOLOTTI, Fernanda. S. **O ensino de inglês na educação infantil: práticas pedagógicas em escolas do município de Guarapuava - PR.** Dissertação (Mestrado em Educação) - Unicentro, Guarapuava, Brazil, 2020. Available at: <http://tede.unicentro.br:8080/jspui/bitstream/jspui/1490/2/Disserta%c3%a7%a3%a3o%20de%20Mestrado%20-%20Fernanda%20Seidel%20Bortolotti.pdf>. Accessed on: 15 Apr. 2022.

On the other hand, in Brazil and other South American countries, English is generally presented as a foreign language – English as a Foreign Language (EFL) – placing the learner in an external position, or, as the definition itself states, a foreigner. However, this approach has been criticized precisely because of its role of placing the student as someone who strives to acquire a language that will never be his or her official language. Although it has been refined over the years, many educators continue to perceive this approach as one destined to fail in the learning process (GRADDOL, 2006).

Unfortunately, the history of Foreign Language teaching in Brazil has been marked by hegemonic ideals². The characteristic of English as a FL has been reinforced since the time when it was taught exclusively for the elite, the only part of the population that could supposedly make use of it, since most of the society would be quite distant from the possibility of international travel (GRADDOL, 2006). Although Brazil has been a territory of great migratory movements, foreigners who moved here were not favored by bilingual incentive policies. The bilingualism that unfolded in our lands was defined as subtractive, leading foreigners to lose the language they brought from their lands. Impositions by the government favored the decline of other languages to give way only to Portuguese (ALTENHOFEN, 2013).

In contrast, especially in Europe where countries experience non-restrictive borders with various nations and thus intense contact with other languages, the usual practice is additive bilingualism. The two or more languages involved are usually regarded as being of equal respect, and their respective cultures are also valued. Thus, the L2 does not appear to take the place of the L1 – it is added to the speakers' repertoire (MÖLLER; ZURAWSKI, 2017). Along the following lines the discussion will be traced from a broader perspective of South America to a closer one of Brazil and then its south region. The aim is to explore characteristics the language may assume at the educational system according to the role English represents in each community.

1. THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOUTH AMERICA

The purpose of this section is to present English teaching practices, whenever possible in kindergarten, that have been registered in some of the 12 South American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela). Before turning to the analysis of some nations in particular, with the support of Gentili (2009), the issue of access to schooling is portrayed, which has grown significantly throughout the world, when compared to half a century ago. Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, however, there has been a growing innovation in terms of forms of educational exclusion and vetoes of school opportunities, so that the denial of education has found more complex and diffuse ways to perpetuate itself. This transformation has also occurred in South America, where, not unlike what happens in other territories, it is understood that the right to education, which is fundamental, cannot be built on half terms. In other words, education must be guaranteed equally for all of society; otherwise, democratic principles would be violated.

Gentili (2009) also explains the homogeneity in the access to education as a mechanism against the commodification and privatization of the sector, opposing the neoliberal discourse that has taken great proportions and reached education. Neoliberal ideals make school systems unequal and educational goods crystallize, as commodities that can be bought and sold, which can be granted to the population, by the government, or denied, with the petulance of the elite that aims to strengthen and expand its power.

The teaching of English exemplifies a knowledge that ended up becoming a commodity in South America, due to the proportion that the use of the language took, and the influences of the new liberal administrations that placed the State in an increasingly omissive position. There is still much to be discussed in terms of educational policies that guarantee equal access to this kind of knowledge, all over the world, since the expectation placed on English is not exclusive to Europeans, South Americans, Brazilians, or any other people.

² This article has no intention to discuss the choice to teach English around the world. However, we agree on the importance of the language boosted mainly by globalization.

Leffa (2009) understands that the internet and technology themselves are responsible for, besides awakening and/or broadening interest, enabling the use of other languages. There are countless possibilities of interaction, for countries with absence of tradition, that allow their people to act as spokespersons to express themselves, as long as their inhabitants have two characteristics: what to speak and how to speak (in the case of the latter, that they express themselves in English).

Assis-Peterson and Cox (2007) point to Chile as the most iconic case in South America, as policies were developed for the country to become bilingual in a bold timeframe: 15 years. The British Council (2019) presents in detail the English Opens Doors Programme, created in 2004 with the aim of increasing the proficiency level of students in the school years equivalent to the US middle school, up to high school. This Chilean policy included parameters for English learning, professional development for teachers, and support in the classroom. Older students and teachers were also able to undergo an internationally recognized language assessment, the Cambridge Placement Test. Although the initiative of this country is noteworthy, it is noticeable that again kindergarten is not encompassed in the measures adopted.

The panorama published by the British Council (2019) also addressed the National Bilingual Project in Colombia, which also began in 2004, and also does not cover children up to 6 years of age. It covers the period that, in the country, encompasses their first year of school up to the eleventh – in the US, it encompasses the period from elementary school up to high school. In short, three strategies were adopted: teacher training and development; curriculum updates and creation of appropriate teaching materials; and student and teacher evaluation. In the case of Colombia, student learning in the language was monitored by a national test, while teachers responded to a test administered by the Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education, and another one by the British Council, the Aptis for Teachers test.

In a booklet published by the Ministry of National Education (COLOMBIA, 2006), it can be noted that the concern with bilingual education began at that time, with goals set for each grade. From first to seventh grade, children were expected to advance from beginner to basic, A1 to A2, according to the Common European Framework (CONSELHO DA EUROPA, 2001), and from eighth to eleventh grade they should already be pre-intermediate students, B1.

Another example would be Buenos Aires and the more than 40 bilingual schools that serve children in the city (ASSIS-PETERSON; COX, 2007), a situation that can later be compared to that of São Paulo. FARÍAS *et al.* (2008) write about the three countries above (Chile, Colombia, and Argentina) and add researchers from Brazil in a panel discussion where seven questions are answered by representatives of the four countries. Presented here are the answers to the question that concerns the States' benchmarks for English language teaching in the three countries, and the situation in Brazil and its states is also included in the sequence.

Following the order in which the previous contents about the territories were placed, the response from Chile, Colombia, and Argentina, respectively, is presented. FARÍAS *et al.* (2008) portray the effects of the resumption of democracy in the 1980s reflected in a reform of Chilean education, led by the teachers themselves, who were given the chance to develop references for their work and training. One of the main changes was observed in the teaching method, which used to be grammatical, although the books provided had a communicative orientation. Regarding this aspect, the Minister of Education himself defended a prevalence of the students' receptive abilities to the language (reading and listening), without, however, belittling the issues of speaking and writing. As for the didactic material, there are still some adjustments to be made. Currently, books and audio materials are distributed to students and teachers for free, however, as much as teachers did not usually follow the approach of the books they used before, there was a certain contentment since they were from international reference publishers. Among the new measures in the scenario of resuming democracy, there was the adoption of public bidding, with the dispute for the sale by even smaller national publishers.

It is interesting to note the difference that characterizes Chilean language teaching in public and private schools. Similar to what is seen in Brazil, there is a tendency to introduce language knowledge for younger and younger children in the private sector, and also with a larger number of hours than in the public sector. In Colombia (FARÍAS *et al.*, 2008) there is a discussion regarding national references for teaching

addressing theoretical principles, while the practice at the primary level is being hampered by a lack of human resources. In high school in Brazil, the situation becomes more favorable, with one teacher per classroom, since the subject becomes mandatory.

Third, the reports on Argentina by Fariás *et al.* (2008), despite describing a turbulent moment that has already been overcome, speak about remarkable historical characteristics. Between the years 1996 and 1999, experts, teachers, and technicians in the area fostered heated debates about the process of educational transformation in the country. These discussions culminated with the Common Basic Contents in 1998, a matrix for teaching English in which issues of linguistic and cultural diversity, age group, and language acquisition process were included, as well as the notion of interlanguages. However, despite the document establishing the teaching of FL for at least 9 years of school life, this approach started late, only after the age of 12.

Less than a decade later, the National Law on Education (ARGENTINA, 2006) was published, with article 87 specifically addressing the teaching of at least one foreign language as compulsory in all primary and secondary schools in Argentina. However, the visualization of this measure in practice becomes difficult, as no further details are provided for primary; as for secondary, it basically talks about the development of language skills with the aim of understanding and expressing themselves in another language besides the mother tongue. After a qualitative analysis of this teaching, Pozzo (2009) problematizes the statements expressed in the law, stating that it is necessary to channel conditions of implementation of English teaching, either to solve or, at least initially, minimize the difficulties of educators in the area.

In addition to the countries already mentioned, we also mention the case of Uruguay, where the British Council (2019) specifies that, in addition to compulsory English in the entire public network, German, French, Italian and Portuguese are also offered through the Foreign Language Centers Program. Sene and Lira (2017) address the realities in Uruguay and Argentina, which have already been mentioned above, but are addressed by them from the perspective of kindergarten education, and not necessarily language teaching.

Regarding Argentina, Sene and Lira (2017) explain that the main objectives of Law No. 2,206 (ARGENTINA, 2006) are to promote significant learning, provide interactions, develop a sense of solidarity, respect, care, and trust in the child towards themselves and others. The learning situations, in turn, should be planned to develop creativity and pleasure for learning through games, songs, dances, physical and artistic expressions. This means that there is an expectation to employ the use of various languages, also socializing with the diverse, addressing issues of social inequality and inclusion.

Among the similarities found in the Argentinian kindergarten compared to the Brazilian, one can mention the professional devaluation. Although a four-year degree in university is required, it is noted that those with the best qualifications choose to work in other stages. Another problem common to both countries is the tendency to bring ECE closer to the next stages of the formal education system, mischaracterizing what would ideally be provided for children up to 6 years old. Finally, another point in common would be the even more limited attention to children under 4 years old, who are usually overshadowed by children between 4 and 5 years old.

Now, the General Education Law No. 18,437 (URUGUAY, 2008), treats early education in the country as entrusted with the mission of stimulating affective, social, motor and intellectual development, in a comprehensive manner and also contemplating the student's social inclusion. The great similarity between Uruguay and Brazil appears in the history of early childhood education – in both countries, it was divided between care and education. This dichotomy arose for many families when mothers entered factory work during the Industrial Revolution, which led to a large increase in early childhood and care institutions between the 1960s and 1990s, since mothers could no longer care for their children on their own (SENE; LIRA, 2017).

Bruscato (2016) also discusses the reality of ECE in these three countries and concludes about the similar development of public policies, enabling dialogue in favor of quality ECE for Argentinean, Uruguayan, and Brazilian children. The author recognizes that discussions about this stage of education are on the rise, either by government authorities, researchers, or the community. However, there is a demand for more concrete actions, especially to ensure development and learning for everyone, addressing issues such as social and educational inclusion.

For now, the discussion on ECE in South America closes with Sene and Lira (2017) and the issue of education as mandatory. The authors group some of the countries in this region into four groups: where ECE is not a compulsory stage of education (Chile); compulsory only starting at age 5 (Argentina, Colombia, and Paraguay); compulsory starting at age 4 (Brazil and Bolivia); and compulsory starting at age 3 (Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay). The data becomes relevant to this research to the extent that it provides evidence of the values of this stage for the education in each country.

Focusing on the language itself, regardless the age of the students, measures have been adopted to pursue evolution of bilingual education in South America. Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) cite the encouragement of teacher training in Colombia, Panama, and Peru to aggregate English teaching in these countries. They also highlight the initiative taken by Chile and Uruguay to offer the language in Basic education, attitude subsequently inspired the same steps in Colombia, Mexico and Costa Rica. At that time, Brazil and Argentina did not have any learning standards for language teaching – the Common Core Curriculum (in Portuguese: Base Nacional Comum Curricular - BNCC) was about to be published. It is likely that, as ECE gains recognition, its policies, the curriculum itself and even the teachers' training will gain more visibility – possibly, the teaching of English will reap the same benefits.

2. THE PERSPECTIVE OF BRAZIL

Following the logic of narrowing down the scenarios discussed, this topic will portray the reality of Brazil, with any legislation that applies differently or created specifically by certain states and municipalities. Again, as much as possible, since it is known that examples are scarce, the aim is to bring practical examples that have been occurring as exceptions to the rule, showing that there are possible paths for the teaching of English in kindergarten.

In 2013, Passoni and Luz (2016) conducted a survey identifying and registering the Brazilian states regarding the existence of specific guidelines for FL teaching regardless the age of the students, having found 13 documents in total, these distributed in the Northeast (1), North (2), Midwest (4, i.e., all including the Federal District), Southeast (3) and South (3, i.e., all). Due to the extension of the national territory, the authors respected the division of the five regions for the choice of a representative state of each, to be further analyzed. Here, the decision was made to detail the state chosen by the authors to elucidate the question in the South region: Rio Grande do Sul (RS).

Passoni and Luz (2016) comment on the RS guidelines from 2009, present in a series entitled *Lições do Rio Grande* (in English, *Lessons from Rio Grande*) where, specifically in the volume “languages”, there is the teaching of English. The state benchmark presents the idea of this teaching related to L1 and the notion of “additional languages” – as opposed to “foreign (modern) languages”, like the other states do. This would be the first major differential of RS, defending English as a language to be added to the students' repertoire and with a role in forming citizens, strengthening the ties of the learners with the hitherto “foreign languages”. Secondly, it also highlights the proposal of language teaching as an opportunity for linguistic education, which takes place amid the different languages and means of communication present in school education, addressing, for example, additional languages, Portuguese language, and literature mutually.

Despite the lack of information in the study by Passoni and Luz (2016) on kindergarten in each federative unit, it is understood that state initiatives are extremely relevant, facilitating the contextualization of the curriculum. As discussed during the preparation of the BNCC, only 60% of the curricula would be strictly following the official document, while the 40% that is left would rely on local demands. The outstanding issues of citizen formation and language education in the RS guidelines could be expanded and worked with the kindergarten public.

This local complementation could be part of the structuring of the whole teaching process, starting with the choice of content and materials, inviting children to talk about their own reality and interests. The target audience should be considered first, considering the children's world beyond the classroom and school, and then structuring pedagogical practices in search of meaningful learning (BRITISH COUNCIL, 2015).

State curricula have the power to mirror what is possible to happen in that space and time, which varies from capitals to medium or small cities, from urban to rural. In a recent investigation, the British Council (2019) listed the Brazilian states with their own curriculum and the occurrence of specific grounding for FL. Only in Rio Grande do Norte there is no elaborated curriculum, and, regarding the rationale directed to FL, besides Rio Grande do Norte, it does not occur in Maranhão, Amazonas, and Rio de Janeiro. It was not possible to obtain answers from two states during the research, so the information above does not include Pará and Mato Grosso. Additionally, right after the publication from British Council, the state of Rio de Janeiro (2019) has agreed on implementing its own curriculum.

The most remarkable presence of English in Brazilian education today is undoubtedly in private schools, an issue that makes the teaching of the language accessible to a portion of society, rather than all of it. Möller and Zurawski (2017) invite us to think about the occurrence of bilingual immersion and international schools in the city of São Paulo, which houses approximately 80% of Brazilian bilingual schools. The distinction between the two educational models is quite clear, because, while in the first, the culture associated with the L1 and its fluency are maintained, in the second, there is already a restriction, and the values of the L2 prevail. Thus, in the case of immersion bilingual school, the child may be exposed to the new language until age 8 (initial immersion), until age 10 (median), or from middle school on (late). The amount of time of exposure to the L2 was also analyzed, and it may vary from total or partial initial to late. The authors affirm that it is common for Brazilian professionals to be part of the teaching staff, but excellence is expected from them in the use of English, and it is suggested that they should have foreign cultural experiences to share as well. (MÖLLER; ZURAWSKI, 2017).

From other perspectives, international bilingual schools are emerging with a stable curriculum around the world, mainly to meet the needs of families who migrate frequently, preventing the children's school situation from being affected. With very high tuition fees, they are the most expensive schools today, and are usually used as a springboard for Brazilians with the ambition of studying or working abroad. Portuguese, the language of the nation where this type of institution is located, is not required for admission, but learning it is usually a consequence of the educational process. However, the L2 (in this case, English) has a preponderant role and is one of the factors that enable the frequent transfer of children from one school to another when families need to move between countries – usually due to a work-related issue of the parents.

Selbach (2014) presents the reality of a private school serving the upper-middle class in the center of Porto Alegre (RS), still in the process of transition to the bilingual curriculum. The school, which offers from kindergarten to high school, had started the implementation from elementary school, and included even the 8th grade in this new format. However, kindergarten and other classes not yet affected by the change already had English in their curriculum. For children up to 6 years old, there was already a significant workload of 3 weekly periods working with English, in which teachers identified as their responsibility that it was time for children to be citizens with rights and seek experiences related to their own interests, rather than aspirants to the mastery of grammar content.

The work of Barcelos (2010) was developed in the same city, Porto Alegre, and on the same type of study object: private kindergarten schools offering English. Through questionnaires answered by teachers from two different institutions (which had been working for more than 10 years with this public and type of knowledge), the study investigated, among other issues, the methodology, workload and teaching material adopted. The first teacher explained that the school where she works was said to be based on social discourse, but was instead based mainly on constructivism, with the support of various other methodologies. The children had meetings with this teacher twice a week for one hour, and the work was project-based, not having a specific material to be adopted. In the second case, when asked about methodology, the teacher mentioned the use of songs, dances and games for language teaching related to gross motor skills, as well as drawings, paintings, play dough, cutting, and pasting for fine motor skills. She also mentioned the frequent use of stories and the work with everyday school language, whether related to activities proposed by other teachers or linked to routine activities (such as drinking water or going to the bathroom). The workload was referred to as 45 minutes per meeting, with the frequency oscillating according to age: for children from 2 to 4 years old, once a week; from

4 to 5, twice; and from 5 to 6, three times. For the last class, preschool, the use of an activity book and other materials provided by the teacher was mentioned, but with the younger ones no material is usually applied.

Moving on to the northeast of the country, Barros (2019) presents her work with children aged 4-5 years in a private school in João Pessoa (PB), which, in this case, does not claim to be bilingual, since the English teacher stays with the children only 45 minutes per week. This work aimed to propose, apply, and reflect on activities that build a bridge between the knowledge of the English language and the BNCC for kindergarten, having playfulness as the main pedagogical resource. It was concluded that English can be linked to other activities in the kindergarten curriculum. Although this is not seen as an easy task, the development altogether with other kinds of learning seems to be the best choice.

The reality of bilingual schools, especially international ones, is usually reflected only in those willing to afford private education. In the case of bilingual public schools, the number decreases significantly due to the non-mandatory offer for young children, as already mentioned here. Lima, Borghi and Souza Neto (2019) cite two examples of public initiative, from the state of São Paulo and the municipality of Rio Claro (SP). In 2013, the São Paulo State Education Department implemented the offer of FL with two weekly classes for students from 1st to 3rd grade in 10 schools, to be taught by teachers with a degree in Modern Languages. In the following year, 2014, the number of schools involved increased to 56, and in 2019 it was still in progress – however, the authors did not provide updated numbers, and the searches carried out did not provide this information. It is important to mention that, in addition to the benefits to students, teachers have been educated through training courses, although this only involves a one-week course as soon as they join the project.

In Rio Claro, the municipal initiative also occurred in 2013, but with a smaller workload, only one class per week, and an older audience, children in the 4th and 5th grades. After one year of implementation, there was an expansion of the workload to two weekly classes for 5th grade students (LIMA; BORGH; SOUZA NETO, 2019). Another initiative at the municipal level was observed in Rio de Janeiro, again in 2013, with the experimental bilingual program Programa Rio Criança Global (in English, Rio Global Child). However, the responsibility wasn't only based on the public sector but also held by a private school – partnership that is analyzed as harmful or, at least, polemic (OLIVEIRA, 2017).

It is important to clarify that the emergence of such similar programs all in the same year is not merely a coincidence, since the FIFA World Cup had Brazil as its host in 2014, and attempts were made to bring the Brazilian people closer to the tourists expected for the period of the games. In 2019, after the competition, considerable and continuous progress was observed. Bilingual schools in the communities of Alemão and Complexo da Maré – areas of social vulnerability with heavily populated favelas – had already reached 28. Finally, the program was designed from kindergarten to 5th grade, precisely the stages that are outside the national legislation for teaching FL – this is the only example presented in this section that involves kindergarten by public initiative. Most of the Rio Criança Global schools offer English, but some also offer Spanish, German and French. Teachers are hired taking into consideration their oral competence, which is the focus of the classes (LOPES; ANDRADE, 2018).

Besides offering English as part of the curriculum, there are some public language centers, which function as an extracurricular strategy for teaching. In Distrito Federal, public school students enrolled between the 6th grade and the 3rd grade of high school can attend English courses, as well as Spanish, French and German courses. In Espírito Santo, the positions are restricted to public school students, also from the public school system, for English and Spanish courses. In Pernambuco and Paraná, the offer is intended for middle school, high school and the community in general – the latter, as much as possible – in English, Spanish, French and German classes. Additionally, in Paraná students can also attend Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Polish, Ukrainian, Brazilian Sign Language and Portuguese (for speakers of other languages). Such initiatives deserve recognition, given the opportunities they provide for the lives of many young people; however, kindergarten is not contemplated by them.

Aiming the scope of the paper, the following table represents the data collected along this bibliographic review. The purpose of organizing the content in this format is to clarify the relation between South America and Brazil based on the selected categories (displayed on top of the table). The main criteria to include the

references in the table was finding the expected information available on them, which means not all the results previously discussed in this text were inserted. The category launch year was the only one understood as optional, reason why the references without this type of information are shown, but with a “not available” label. Due to the objective established only the offer of English was registered, so findings regarding other languages weren’t covered unless they came along with the language in focus. The data reflect special offers, surpassing the minimum curriculum adopted by the time the project or initiative was registered at the specified city, state or country.

Table 1 - The offer of English Language.

Reference	City, State or Country	Project name or school type	Launch year	School level
South America				
British Council (2019)	Chile	English Opens Doors	2004	Middle and High school
British Council (2019)	Colombia	National Bilingual Project	2004	Elementary, Middle and High school
Brazil				
Selbach (2014) and Barcelos (2010)	Porto Alegre (RS)	Basic Education	Not available	ECE, Elementary, Middle and High school
Barros (2019)	João Pessoa (PB)	Basic Education	Not available	ECE
Lima, Borghi and Souza Neto (2019)	São Paulo (state)	Basic Education	2013	Elementary school (partially)
Lima, Borghi and Souza Neto (2019)	Rio Claro (SP)	Basic Education	2013	Elementary school (partially)
Oliveira (2017) and Lopes and Andrade (2018)	Rio de Janeiro (RJ)	Rio Global Child	2013	ECE and Elementary school
British Council (2019)	Distrito Federal	Language Center	1975	Middle and High school
British Council (2019)	Espírito Santo	Language Center	Not available	High school
British Council (2019)	Pernambuco	Language Center	1989 (approximately)	Middle and High school
British Council (2019)	Paraná	Language Center	1986	Middle and High school

Source: Authors.

Firstly, the references were inserted in the table as a tool that enables the reader to check for further information about it. One could also make use of it in case no launch year was registered, being provided with an idea about the time the offer could have been launched. The second item situates the context of the offer. For Brazilian territories at least the state was pointed but the name of city was also included when available, followed by the initials of the corresponding state. Then, the third column describes the project name or type of school. When classes were related to regular schools they were classified as an offer from Basic Education, meaning a few schools or a single one was found (it does not cover the whole system). On the other hand, language centers are conceived as addition education, usually situated at a different address than regular school. Location could be one of the reasons just a few students would enroll and the number of vacancies another

one. It is understood that once these courses go beyond the minimum curriculum students engaged could decrease, so the ideal scenario would be the offer of English in the standard curriculum. Fourth, three clusters were identified based on the launch year. Adopting a timeline, the offers started happening linked to language centers in Brazil, then some international programs were created (in Colombia and Chile) and, lastly, Brazil registers some in school programs (mostly as a preparation for the World Cup the country would host).

A separated discussion must be traced in respect of the age this paper intended to cover. The initiatives verified along the research hardly ever included ECE children. As EFL becomes more popular in South America and Brazil it is expected the target of the policies would be students from Higher education (graduate or undergraduate) and the ones depending on another language to develop a better career. However, a language wouldn't be precisely described as merely a content or another school subject. The offer in High, Middle and Elementary schools has a potential to affect the human formative process and so does the teaching of English in ECE. The understating of the earlier children start approaching the language the further they would go motivated this bibliographic review, but the results reveal a reality where there is still a scarce offer at this age.

CONCLUSIONS

Educating people and specially children in another language could be considered mandatory in a globalized world and English is usually the target language. In European countries, for example, this is a well established education policy. The present paper intended to gather data about this teaching at early ages in South America, based on the principle Basic Education is an important opportunity to start while students are young and speaking English could connect this continent to others. Even so, the overview above reveals gaps, but also hints at possibilities. The road in search of opportunities for kindergarten is long. Until now, little has been published, and probably little has been done in relation to the teaching of this language for kindergarten students in South America. In some sources, it is possible to read about the teaching of FL, and in others about the practices with children up to 6 years old, but rarely are these two situations simultaneously in focus. To speak of Brazil is not to speak of homogeneity, for better or for worse, as each reality has its specificities, which deserve to be considered. Some large centers provide education for a portion of the population, but in the outskirts the reality can be in stark contrast. However, in the countryside and smaller cities, other facets of Brazil are displayed.

This article ends without presenting the desired data in terms of quantity and quality of public education focused on the teaching of English in kindergarten. Further studies could go deeper and wider exploring qualitative data about the offer. Upcoming offers could lead to new opportunities. For example, other research could understand the course loads and the methodology of this teaching and cross data among several courses.

The number of opportunities registered on the covered scenarios and their frequency (hours of study a class has got per week) both deserve some incrementation in the entire South America. For a moment, there was a reflection regarding the distance of the practices presented here in relation to the specific theme of this study (other languages and age groups were brought, for example), and there was the question of whether the data presented here should be omitted, since it does not bring what was expected from this study. However, the non-existence of greater examples of English teaching practices in kindergarten, preferably not the one offered in private schools, ends up being a result of the research by itself. Democratizing teaching is an urgent need, and the way to reach that is by breaking the boundaries: public versus private, capital versus countryside, center versus periphery.

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