

Plurilingual scholars in (predominantly) monolingual higher education institutions

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Agenda

- 1 Introdução, introduction, Einleitung, introducción, introduzione
- 2 Um caso... not so far from here!
- 3 Let's talk about... me! Vamos falar de... mim!
- 4 Não é só sobre mim ;)
- 5 Discussão e conclusão

1

**Introdução, introduction,
Einleitung, introducción,
introduzione**



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“Es gibt Kleinigkeiten, z.B. in der Aussprache oder Grammatik, die auffällig sind, aber es ist nicht wirklich negativ, sondern eher authentisch.”

("There are little things, e.g. in the pronunciation or grammar, that are noticeable, but it's not really negative, it's more authentic.")

Where am I speaking from?

- Portuguese
- Academic expatriated to "one of the countries of Northern Europe" (Germany)
- Plurilingual (French, English, Spanish, German &... Italian);
- An expatriate academic who speaks the language of the host country with mistakes, deviations and accents... Therefore: immediately perceived as “not German”.



<https://www.significados.com.br/mapa-da-europa/>

Some initial considerations

- Possible **misunderstandings** when implementing internationalisation strategies:
 - The “international scholar”;
 - Collaborations dictated "top down": collaborations desired by institutions sometimes seen as "imposed" by researchers;
 - Asymmetries in North/South international partnerships;
 - Institutional language policies "in tension": "English pathos" vs. "Multilingual ethos" (Melo-Pfeifer, 2023);
- **Creation of essentialising dichotomies**: northern and southern countries, western and eastern countries (with increasing stigmatisation or, on the contrary, overvaluation of some **academic identities**);

2

Um caso... not so far from here



The text: the X-University's internationalisation strategy

- "A special achievement of University X is its **wide range of foreign languages**. It is possible to study around 100 languages at Univ X, **so the goal of multilingual education can be achieved** in a special way. This offer from the Language Centre is complemented by a specific specialised language offer, which **aims to make studying [in the name of the country] or in English easier for both foreign and [national] students**. (p.7)
- "Increasing attractiveness does not only include the visibility of the university, but also the possibility of attending the courses. **The university management has therefore established incentives for the creation of more English language courses** as part of the objectives and **performance agreement** with the faculties." (p. 9)
- "At Univ X, there are **no appointments of university professors without international experience** (...) A chair is only publicised by the university administration if a faculty can appoint foreign scientists who have expressed their desire to apply" (p. 10).
- "Administrative staff also place special emphasis on international experience. When hiring them, **systematic emphasis is placed on foreign language skills**. Existing staff are strengthened internationally through training courses, stays abroad and visits to partner universities."

My reading: the X-University's internationalisation strategy

- **Monolingual perspective on plurilingual education:** The emphasis on the study of around 100 languages indicates a dedication to providing students with opportunities to explore and learn languages beyond the typical offerings, but at the same time, the concentration on the "study of English", as specified, seems to be the intended expectation: 100 FL + German + English = German + English
- **Academic blackmail:** the incentives associated with offering more courses in English "are part of an agreement on objectives and performance", which can be seen as a measure leading to a loss of academic freedom.
- **The global-local tension:** international candidates (for academic and administrative positions) may be more desirable than national ones;
- **Capitalism and liberalism:** experiences of internationalisation and plurilingual competences as commodification, exchange goods in the university economy; hiring practices made dependent on internationalization experiences (elitism?).

(Yanaprasart & Melo-Pfeifer, forthcoming)

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“Multilingualism is not neutral, but rather intrinsically embedded in social processes that inform who and what counts as a legitimate speaker, language, and practice. As such, multilingualism represents a site of struggle for access to and distribution of knowledge, resources, and status.”
(Duchêne, 2020, p. 93)

3

Let's talk about... me!
Vamos falar de... mim!



The context & the data

- Binational project: “Students’ Social Perceptions of Plurilingual Nonnative Teachers: Bridging the Gap Between Monolingual and Multilingual Views of Multilingualism” (Yanaprasart & Melo-Pfeifer, 2017, 2019 and 2021).
- German context: Module Foreign Language Didactics (French and Spanish);
- Portuguese teacher (German 4th LE, after French, English and Spanish);

The context & the data

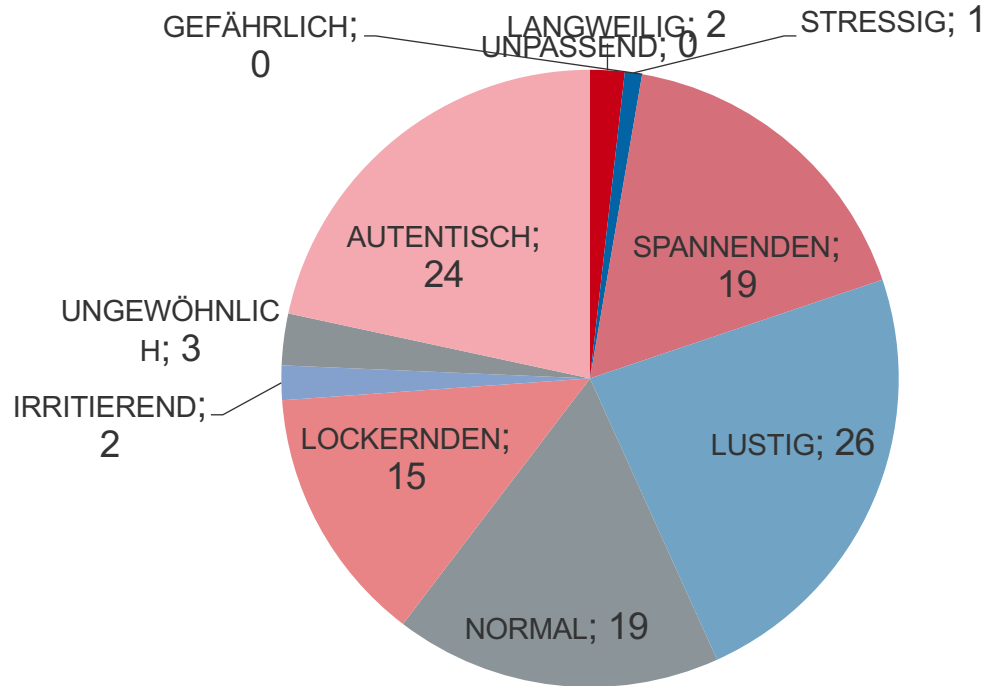
- Semi-open questionnaire;
- 60 Students: most of whom consider German to be a foreign language (questionnaire and language biographies at the beginning of the semester);
- Data in both sites:

	Questionnaires	Interviews	Total
Geneva	31	9	40
Hamburg	60	6	66
Total	91	15	106

Data analysis

- Content and discourse analysis of open-ended questions:
 - CDS (Wodak & Meyer, 2016)
- Analysis categories:
 - Lexical choices;
 - Structure of the argument (choice of discourse intensifiers and softeners);

Evaluating the course

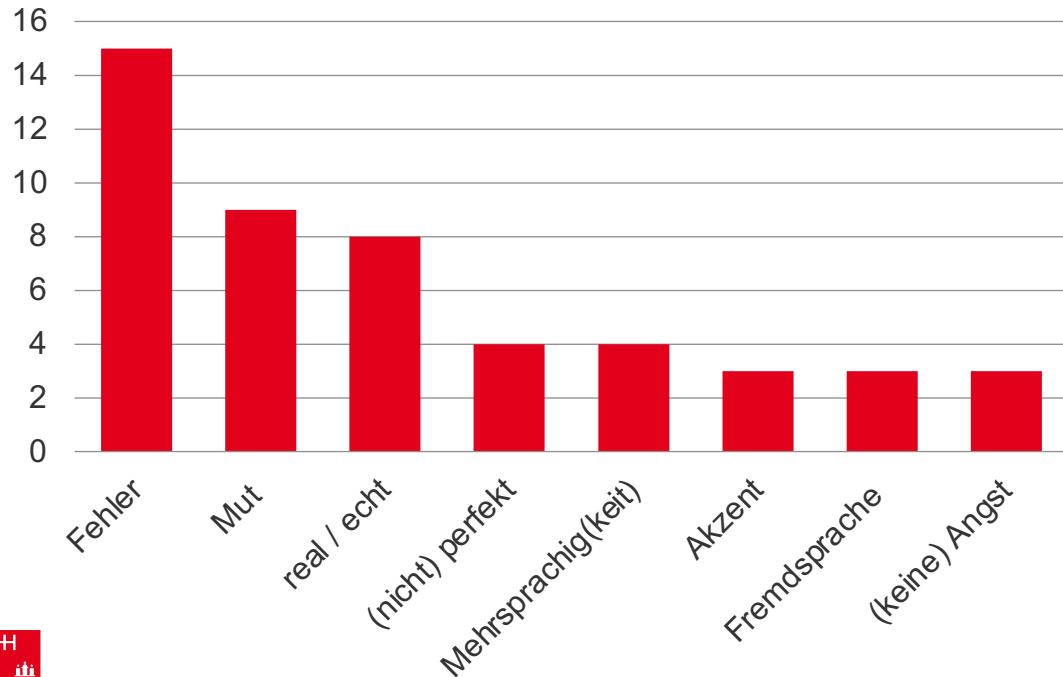


- Bereichernd (2)
- Interessant (3)
- Bewundernswert
- Lehrreich
- Tolle Methode** um ein Thema zu verstellen
- Unstrukturiert
- Inspirierend
- Interkulturell
- Manchmal erschwertes Verständnis
- Ermutigend
- Abhängig vom jeweiligen Dozenten

Being an authentic plurilingual teacher means...

German original	English translation
<p>Fachdidaktik von jemandem zu hören, der selbst mehrere Sprachen beherrscht, ist sehr authentisch. Kleine Versprecher lockern die Atmosphäre auf und machen Mut, selbst die Fremdsprache zu sprechen.</p>	<p>Hearing specialised didactics from someone who speaks several languages themselves is very authentic. Small slips of the tongue lighten the atmosphere and encourage you to speak the foreign language yourself.</p>
<p>Das wird dadurch "erfahrbar" gemacht, lustig und locker ist die Sprechart der Dozentin, die auf eine unkomplizierte Art auf Deutsch als FS unterrichtet :)</p>	<p>This is made "tangible", the lecturer's way of speaking is funny and relaxed, and she teaches in an uncomplicated way in German as FS :)</p>
<p>Es bedeutet, Inhalte darzustellen auch ohne eine Sprache akzent- und fehlerfrei mächtig zu sein.</p>	<p>It means being able to present content even without being able to speak a language without accent or errors.</p>

Lexical analysis of... being an authentic plurilingual teacher



Plurilingual authenticity is linked..:

- to the norm: 'making mistakes' and 'having an accent' are salient features of what is considered an imperfect command of the language;
- the characteristics of the speaker: it takes courage to express yourself to native speakers in a foreign language with mistakes and an accent;
- the context: teaching about plurilingualism and language didactics with mistakes because you are plurilingual is acceptable, real and 'vorbildlich'.

“

“We are shown that, in order to be understood, not everything has to be perfect and dominated. When it comes to a language, it’s a question of speaking it and not being ashamed of making mistakes, otherwise you can't make progress” (German student on the teacher).

The case of... „Fehler“

- The introduction of the "error" theme is always made "softer" with the help of:
 - neutralisers: "**mit wie auch ohne** F.", "**egal ob** mit Fehler oder nicht";
 - discourse softeners:
 - the frequency of errors in expression: "**ein paar** Fehler", "**eventuelle** Fehler", "**mal** Fehler passieren,,"
 - the seriousness of the error: "**kleine** Fehler";
 - intensifiers:
 - the **value** of errors in the acquisition of subject content: "gerne reden und von einen Themen begeistern können";
 - the **inevitability** of errors as part of LE skills: "die gehören auch dazu".

Efforts to protect the face:

- Teacher's face: students avoid adding to the burden of error in communication;
- Students' face:
 - they show that they have fully understood the processes involved in acquiring a foreign language, the role of error, its inevitability, etc.
 - they 'allow' themselves to make mistakes as future teachers of a foreign language;

4

Não é só sobre mim ;)



**KEEP
CALM
AND BTW**

**ITS NOT M
ITS YOU**

”

“L’enfer, c’est les autres” (J.-P. Sartre)

The plurilingual teacher/scholar

- A subtle mainstream academic and institutional ideology:
 - "One country, one language" means "one language of instruction" (by teachers who should ideally master it);
- The acceptability of the plurilingual teacher is based on the construction/ mobilisation of a rhetoric of the **acceptability of the fault**, or even its **productivity**, around (Melo-Pfeifer, 2017):
 - the transmission of subject content, promoting student teachers' interpersonal, communicative and didactic knowledge and skills;
 - the creation of a less tense, more open and 'fun' academic environment;
 - the 'exoticization' and legitimization of the plurilingual individual;

5

Discussão e conclusão



Academia as a site of linguistic struggle

- The glocal paradox: global competitiveness and innovation (pressure for universities to position themselves on the global stage, compete internationally, and strive for excellence and innovation in research and education) vs. local attractiveness and diversity (maintaining a strong connection to the local context, language(s), cultures, and communities):
 - Teachers' /scholars' plurilingualism as an institutional commodification?
 - Teachers should be international and master the language of instruction (plus English)?

Academia as a site of linguistic struggle

- Although scholars' plurilingual repertoires do not constitute an insurmountable barrier to communication in an academic environment, they are still perceived as deviating from the norm (Melo-Pfeifer, 2017).
- The evaluation of the plurilingual teacher (and researcher) reflects a monolingual rhetoric:
 - Essencialized vision of languages;
 - Idealization of the native teacher;
- The use of politically correct words and expressions reveal **a benevolent and even paternalistic linguistic domination.**

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Academia is “less overtly discriminatory and instead reproduce dominant language ideology in subtle ways”
(Subtirelo, 2015, p. 35).

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Perguntas e discussão



Contacto



Prof. Dr. Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer

Didaktik der romanischen Sprachen

Universität Hamburg

Fakultät für Erziehungswissenschaft

silvia.melo-pfeifer@uni-hamburg.de