

Towards language-friendly higher education: language policy development at the University of Aveiro, Portugal

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Abstract:

It is clear that language-friendly and language-skilled higher education institutions are essential if an internationalisation is to be achieved which promotes the well-being of the academic community as a whole and the inclusion and success of all students. However, this premise poses many challenges for institutions, particularly those which are not located in the mainstream of the Anglophone higher education sphere. In such contexts, an internationalisation strategy which relies on the adoption of English as the medium of instruction and research is not sufficient to meet local and international demands. Adding to a growing body of research carried out in a wide range of higher education contexts, this article explores the importance attributed to internationalisation and language strategies by the University of Aveiro in its institutional policy documents in the period 2010 – 2018. It finds that languages are an important consideration in the institution's internationalisation strategy which seeks a balance between two *linguas francas*, Portuguese and English, and recognises the contribution of languages to institutional life and graduate profiles.

Keywords:

higher education institutions; internationalisation; globalisation; language policy; inclusion and well-being.

Para um ensino superior amigo das línguas - desenvolvimento de políticas linguísticas na Universidade de Aveiro, Portugal

Resumo: É um facto que as instituições de ensino superior amigas das línguas e habilitadas para as línguas são essenciais para que se alcance uma internacionalização que promova o bem-estar da comunidade académica como um todo e a inclusão e o sucesso de todos os estudantes. No entanto, tal premissa coloca muitos desafios às instituições, particularmente àquelas que não se encontram na esfera predominante do ensino superior anglófono. Em tais contextos, uma estratégia de internacionalização que se baseia na adoção do inglês como meio de educação e investigação não é suficiente para dar resposta às exigências locais e internacionais. Associando-se a um crescente corpo de pesquisa realizado numa ampla gama de contextos de ensino superior, o presente artigo explora a importância atribuída à internacionalização e estratégias de língua da Universidade de Aveiro nos seus documentos de política institucional no período compreendido entre 2010 e 2018, tendo como resultado que as línguas são um aspeto importante na estratégia de internacionalização da instituição, que procura um equilíbrio entre duas línguas francas – português e inglês – e reconhece o contributo das línguas para a vida institucional e para os perfis de pós-graduação.

Palavras-chave: instituições de ensino superior; internacionalização; globalização; política linguística; inclusão e bem-estar

Hacia una educación superior favorable a las lenguas - desarrollo de políticas lingüísticas en la Universidad de Aveiro, Portugal

Resumen: Es evidente que las instituciones de educación superior que dan valor a las lenguas y a las habilidades lingüísticas son esenciales para lograr una internacionalización que promueva el bienestar de la comunidad académica en su conjunto, así como la inclusión y el éxito de todos los estudiantes. Sin embargo, esta premisa plantea muchos desafíos a las instituciones, en particular a aquellas que no se incluyen en la corriente principal de la educación superior anglófona. En tales contextos, una estrategia de internacionalización basada en la adopción del inglés como medio de instrucción e investigación no es suficiente para satisfacer las demandas locales e internacionales. Este artículo, que se suma a un creciente número de investigaciones llevadas a cabo en una amplia gama de contextos de educación superior, analiza la importancia que la Universidad de Aveiro atribuye a la internacionalización y a las estrategias lingüísticas en sus documentos de política institucional durante el periodo 2010 - 2018. Se considera que las lenguas son un factor crucial en la estrategia de internacionalización de la institución que busca un equilibrio entre dos lenguas francas, portugués e inglés, y reconoce la contribución de ambas a la vida institucional y a los perfiles de los graduados.

Palabras clave: instituciones de educación superior; internacionalización; globalización; política lingüística; inclusión y bienestar

Vers un enseignement supérieur favorable aux langues - développement des politiques linguistiques à l'Université d'Aveiro, Portugal

Resumé: Il est clair que les établissements d'enseignement supérieur qui valorisent les langues et les compétences linguistiques sont essentiels pour parvenir à une internationalisation qui favorise le bien-être de la communauté universitaire dans son ensemble, ainsi que l'inclusion et la réussite de tous les étudiants. Cependant, cette prémisses pose de nombreux défis aux établissements, en particulier ceux qui ne sont pas inclus dans le courant dominant de l'enseignement supérieur anglophone. Dans de tels contextes, une stratégie d'internationalisation basée sur l'adoption de l'anglais comme moyen d'enseignement et de recherche n'est pas suffisante pour répondre aux demandes locales et internationales. Cet article, qui ajoute à un nombre croissant de recherches menées dans un large éventail de contextes d'enseignement supérieur, analyse l'importance que l'Université d'Aveiro attribue à l'internationalisation et aux stratégies linguistiques dans ses documents de politique institutionnelle au cours de la période. 2010 - 2018. Les langues sont considérées comme un facteur crucial dans la stratégie d'internationalisation de l'institution qui cherche un équilibre entre deux langues francs, le portugais et l'anglais, et reconnaît leur contribution à la vie institutionnelle et aux profils des diplômés.

Mots-clés: établissements d'enseignement supérieur; internationalisation; mondialisation; politique linguistique; inclusion et bien-être

Introduction

There has been growing interest in the language issue in European higher education as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) seek to compete in what has become an increasingly globalised education market (e.g. Cots, Llorca, & Garrett, 2014; Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2013; Hu, 2018; Pinto & Araújo e Sá, 2016; 2018; Shimauchi, 2018; Soler-Carbonell, Saarinen & Kibbermann, 2017; Tange, 2010; Villares, 2019). Much of this attention has homed in on issues related to the use of English as Medium of Instruction (EMI), alongside or instead of the local or national language, and as the principal language of research and knowledge transfer. But these studies also reveal that what we refer to as the language issue is a more complex question than EMI, involving belief systems, educational goals, linguistic and cultural landscapes, geographical and historical settings, institutional ecosystems, among others, and is intimately linked to an institution's level of internationalisation and its goals in this domain.

In effect, these studies reflect a range of concerns and contexts, focussing on the roles and relationships between languages within institutions, the policies adopted, and the practices and perceptions of students, staff and policy-makers in non-Anglophone countries. Some are centred on bilingual and multilingual institutions, for example: the multilingual University of Luxembourg (Hu, 2018) and the bilingual University of the Basque Country (Doiz et al., 2013). Others have emerged from more monolingual contexts, but all recognise the strong relationship between languages and internationalisation in globalised HE and the complex relationship between languages in social relations.

In this article, I wish to explore the language issue on the basis of a case study undertaken at the University of Aveiro (UA)¹, Portugal, which examined the internationalisation and language strategies adopted in the official strategy documents of this institution. In this way, I hope to add to the growing body of research in this area, agreeing with Doiz et al. (2013) that 'by exchanging data obtained in research in different contexts, higher education's multilingual path will be more easily paved' (p. 1420).

Indeed HEIs face similar challenges: to become both language-friendly, multilingual environments where 'the needs of speakers of all languages are fully respected, the existing diversity of languages and cultures is used to good effect, and there is a healthy demand for and a rich supply of language learning opportunities' (CE, 2004, p.30); and language-skilled communities which use more than one language on a day-to-day basis and where those who study and work use multiple languages in their everyday contexts. Each institution, however, must find its own way depending on its institutional identity and vision, location and goals, linguistic and cultural profile and benefitting from the experience of others. From this starting point, I will address contextual factors impacting HEIs today, before looking at the particular case of the UA, a medium-sized, provincial university in a largely monolingual country.

Background

By recasting the higher education (HE) market as global rather than national, globalisation has driven the transformation of knowledge and HE into global commodities and the circulation of the student-consumer in the global market (Fenton, 2019). This has led to an emphasis on international branding and marketing, competition in global rankings, and the buying and selling of education beyond national frontiers as part of the drive to secure international recognition and attract international students, teachers, researchers and funding. The internationalisation of HE should be understood not only as a response to globalisation, a process whereby HEIs adapt to and take advantage of global economic and social conditions, but also as a facilitator of and a contributor to globalisation in a complementary and reciprocal process (Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012).

Defined by Knight as ‘the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions (primarily teaching/learning, research, and service), or delivery of HE at the institutional and national levels’ (Knight, 2013, p. 85), internationalisation is widely accepted as a purposeful and holistic process which informs all dimensions of institutional action. As globalisation has intensified, so has concern with the nature and impact of internationalisation. A focus on international rankings, status-building, the commercialisation and homogenisation of HE products, and excessive Englishisation, for example, are signalled by Knight (2013) and Altbach & de Wit (2018) as indications that internationalisation needs rethinking. It is argued that the international agenda must rediscover its core values of collaboration, mutual benefit, and broad educational objectives, including the integral value it should bring to all students and all institutions, repositioning itself as not merely ‘abroad’ but also ‘at home’. Knight, in particular, highlights the need to recognise internationalisation as an integral component of institutional strategic planning, rather than a mere marketing strategy and ‘promotion and branding exercise’ (Knight, 2013, p.89).

Clearly the language issue is highly relevant in this context and the need for language policies in HE has been widely recognised, not least of all in European policy documents (e.g. Beacco & Byram, 2007; CEL-ELC, 2013; EC, 2004). However, where such policies have emerged, their centrality in the processes of institutional internationalisation and social globalisation has not necessarily been explicitly recognised (Soler-Carbonell et al., 2017). Moreover, Spolsky’s extensively accepted definition of a language policy as involving, not only the planning strategies of a community, but also its attitudes and beliefs regarding languages and its linguistic practices and behaviours (Spolsky, 2004), has been adopted more as a theoretical tenet among language theorists than university policy makers. Indeed, a tension has arisen between the prominence afforded to *linguas francas*, particularly English, at institutional level, and resistance among staff and learners concerned about the perceived threat to local or national languages and language rights

(Cots et al., 2013; Pinto & Araújo e Sá, 2018). Villares (2019) also notes a mismatch between institutional expectations and ‘bottom-up realities’ regarding the implementation of institutional language policies and the role of English (p. 1).

Emerging as the language of globalisation, English has, seemingly ‘naturally’, become the language of global HE (e.g. Doiz et al., 2013). Not only is the Anglophone sphere overwhelmingly dominant in this context (Hughes, 2008), but Englishisation is recognised as an established and necessary route to global visibility and competitiveness in the non-Anglophone sphere. Installed as the primary language of research, its adoption as medium of instruction continues to increase (Extra & Yağmur, 2012) alongside the offer of English-taught programmes, and it plays a growing role as an alternative, or primary, language of communication and administration within HEIs and of publicity and marketing (inter)nationally. In fact, for many, including institutional decision-makers, quality assurance agencies and funding bodies, internationalisation *means* the use of English for teaching, research, and publication in highly ranked journals.

However, it is also widely accepted that a range of factors determine the capacity of institutions to internationalise and the manner in which they do so, and that the reduction of internationalisation to the use of English is by no means sufficient to ensure that this process is a healthy and sustainable one for institutions and, indeed, for languages. The impacts of the adoption of English as the language of HE are so far largely unknown, and concerns have been raised regarding such issues as access and equity, respect for and maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity, the quality of teaching and learning, the satisfaction of students and staff, and the impact on local language ecologies (e.g. Cots et al., 2014; Hughes, 2008; Phillipson, 2006; Pinto & Araújo e Sá, 2018; Shimauchi, 2018; Soler-Carbonell et al., 2017; Tange, 2010;).

So while the adoption of English may be a necessity for internationalisation, particularly for communication and mobility purposes, it cannot be confused with internationalisation itself. HEIs are faced with the challenge of internationalising while maintaining their roots in local and national networks and institutional cultures, finding a balance between global positioning and local and national identity and value (Kerklaan, Moreira & Boersma, 2008). A ‘coherent language policy’ (EC, 2004, p. 20) should contribute to this balance as part of an integrated strategy to develop inclusive HE communities where linguistic diversity and language learning are promoted and valued, and all students and staff can share an equal sense of belonging and the mutual benefits of internationalisation. As mentioned above, language policy is taken to comprise three interrelated components: language practices, language beliefs, and language management (Spolsky, 2004, 2016). This study focuses on institutional strategy documents with a view to understanding the intentions of policy-makers regarding internationalisation and the role of languages in the institution and shedding light on the beliefs and attitudes which underpin its goals.

Current climate for European HEI

Although the EU's commitment to multilingualism and linguistic diversity has been strongly argued, this position has not necessarily been translated into concrete pluralist language strategies across the HE sector. In effect, European level recommendations for HE emphasise the need for citizens to be appropriately skilled for life and work in global and internationalised communities (EC, 2013a, 2013b), with 'a sufficient command of English and a second foreign language and intercultural competences'. Language competences are associated both with international mobility and with the integration of an international dimension in curricula while proficiency in English is described as the 'de facto part of any internationalisation strategy for learners, teachers and institutions' (EC, 2013a, p.5/6). On the other hand, multilingualism 'should be encouraged in teaching and research throughout the higher education curriculum' (EC, 2013a, p. 6), and increasing 'the opportunities offered to students, researchers and staff to develop their language skills' is a priority (EC, 2013a, p. 8).

These guidelines provide a framework for developing a HE area, which, notwithstanding the intensification of internationalisation and cross-border collaboration, is located in a diverse and uneven landscape. In this space, factors such as language, economic strength, geographical centrality/periphery, employment opportunities, and educational culture comprise the capacity of institutions to compete internationally and determine the shape and design of their internationalisation.

The Portuguese HE context has followed the general trends, importing the European level principles into national guidelines for the internationalisation of Portuguese HE (MEC, 2014). The strategy document published by the Ministry for Education and Science in 2014 outlines the particular international context in which Portugal operates, identifying the EU and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) as spheres of international intervention, but also referring to the strong historical and cultural relationships with other parts of the world (MEC, 2014). The strategic recommendations focus on strengthening inter-institutional collaboration, particularly through the setting up of joint degrees and international consortia, increasing mobility flows and the percentage of foreign students enrolled in Portuguese HE, and internationalising the curricula (by increasing the amount of English taught courses and study programmes). Multilingual proficiency is recognised as an essential global competence for the insertion of Portugal in the global economy, and the increase in the use of English and the linguistic preparation of Portuguese students are instruments in this endeavour (p.12). The international relevance and potential of Portuguese is highlighted and a strategy outlined which values simultaneously the use of Portuguese as a language of work and knowledge and an increase in the proficiency in other languages, especially English (p.91).

At a time of considerable economic upheaval and demographic challenges for HE, these documents reflected an acute awareness of the importance of international funding and cross-border collaboration, of international students and increasing mobility flows, to the sustainability of national institutions. In short, they highlighted the need for strategic action at international, national and local levels to ensure, in changing, and risk-prone, times, that the benefits of internationalisation are made more accessible to more people.

Language policy and internationalisation at the University of Aveiro

It was with these considerations in mind that I undertook this study into the institutional strategies for internationalisation and languages included in the official strategy documents of the University of Aveiro for the period 2010-2018. My goal was to gain and share a deeper insight into the developing institutional policy in this field, identifying prominent strategies, and the interrelationship between them.

The documents selected for analysis are the UA's Strategic Plan 2012-2017 (SP, 2012) and the Rector's Action Plans for the 2010-2014 (AP, 2010) and 2014-2018 (AP, 2014) periods; these documents are accessible on the UA Web page. They are Portuguese language documents, and for the purposes of this analysis, key elements were translated by the author and presented in English. The documents were subjected to a key-word search to identify sections related to internationalisation and languages, which were then analysed separately and in combination, in order to determine the central threads of strategy regarding these domains and their alignment. A brief overview of this analysis follows, providing an insight into the internationalisation strategy of the UA over this period and of the inclusion of language policy dimensions. There is no separate language policy document or strategy at this institution.

The first thing to note is the importance attributed to internationalisation throughout the documents. It emerges as a key element in the institutional strategy for this period, a component of the UA's vision as it seeks to become 'a university of great prestige and international recognition', 'driven with reference to standards of international excellence' (SP, 2012, p.11, my translation). Further, internationalisation is recognised as a necessary element in the process of adapting to the changing context – a context impacted by globalisation, by economic instability and demographic challenges (SP, 2012, p.9). While alignment with international standards of excellence is recognised as a component of its vision and strategy (SP, 2012, p.13; AP, 2010, p.4; AP, 2014, p.6, p.16), the UA seeks not only to comply with international standards but also *to be* an international reference (AP, 2010, p.4), capable of attracting students, teaching staff, researchers, of competing for funding on an international playing field, of teaching in other languages and of promoting international events of significant relevance (AP, 2010, p.8).

In his Action Plan (2010-2014), the then Rector put forward the goal underpinning his internationalisation strategy: 'in ten years' time, international, global, cooperation will have become a natural component of all the main activities of the UA' (AP, 2010, p.39, my translation). This strategy included such aspects as: the recruitment of international talents, the creation of knowledge in collaboration with international partners, the definition of a policy of alliances and identification of priority geographical areas for cooperation, increased visibility events, presence and representation of the UA in supranational organisations and international meetings (AP, 2010, p.39/40). Regarding educational goals, the document specifies the 'development of the 'international' (linguistic and intercultural ...) skills of our students', to be acquired through or in addition to the completion of part of their degree abroad (AP, 2010, p.40, my translation).

These ideas form the background to a transformative approach to internationalisation which aims to engage the institution at all levels (AP, 2014, p.16). A strong correlation between the quality of the institution and its degree of internationalisation is recognised: 'all over the world, the quality of a HEI is measured by its degree of internationalisation'; 'it is not possible to claim to be a quality institution independently of the international, and, in particular, the European context' (AP, 2010, p.39, my translation). In addition, the presence of international staff and students is considered 'an important condition to ensure institutional excellence' (AP, 2010, p.39, my translation). Internationalisation thus plays a central role in the achievement of the institution's drive for excellence and attractiveness (AP, 2014, p.39).

Several key strategy lines can be identified and summarised, as follows:

- Attractiveness: strengthening the institution's capacity to attract international researchers, teaching staff, and students, to strike up international partnerships, and to compete successfully for international funding, all of which are taken to be crucial to institutional success (AP, 2010, p.13, p.40; SP, 2012, p.21).
- Alliances: establishing a refashioned partnerships policy involving: the reinforcement of European collaboration (academic mobility, R&D projects, joint degrees, benchmarking); the deepening of ties with countries and institutions within the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) (particularly in cooperation and development); and the establishment of wider, including new, links and partnerships with other parts of the world (Latin America, India, China) (SP, 2012, p.21; AP, 2014, p.40);
- Networking: expanding the already networked university, based on existing regional, national and international ecosystems (SP, 2012, p.8), through a policy of national and international partnerships, designed to meet societal challenges (SP, 2012, p.6). The regional role of the UA, as driver of innovation and development, and its international role are taken to be mutually reinforcing, denoting, in line with the reviewed literature, an understanding of internationalisation both as a reaction to globalisation and as a contributor to regional capacity-building, economic potential and social well-being, and global competitiveness (AP, 2014, p.20).

- Mobility: increasing student and staff mobility through expanding the opportunities for study and internships abroad (AP, 2010, p.39; SP, 2012, p.17, p.21; AP, 2014, p.39).
- International presence: with a view to increasing the international presence at UA, commitment is made to the development of curricular paths in English and the offer of courses in bilingual contexts, the extension of well-established reception and support mechanisms for European mobility students to students from Portuguese speaking countries (SP, 2012, p.17); ultimately, a successful internationalisation policy will reinforce the multicultural dynamics of campus life (AP, 2014, p.39) and strengthen the social dimension – reception, sports, support (AP, 2014, p.41).
- International education: guaranteeing the international competences of UA graduates, including their foreign language and intercultural skills is an objective: ‘more attention to the intercultural competences in foreign languages of UA graduates’ (SP, 2012, p.17, my translation; AP, 2014, p.40), including but not limited to English; also highlighted is the relevance of international recognition and accreditation of courses (SP, 2012, p.16).

Thus an expanded international presence, enriched by an increase in the international experience of students and staff, in the use of EMI, in academic and social support mechanisms and through the learning and teaching of languages on campus, contributes to the vision of the ‘model campus’ outlined in the Strategic Plan. Alongside its other ‘exemplary’ attributes, this campus will increasingly become ‘a meeting place of cultures and a bridge between continents’ (SP, 2012, p.25, my translation).

Regarding the inclusion of language policy strategies within its internationalisation plan, principles and actions were found interwoven through the documents analysed. These reflect the three broad spheres of international intervention identified in the documents: a European dimension, the CPLP sphere and the wider international field. Underlying these strategies are particular challenges, in short: the need to combine an increase in the use of English, fundamental to the UA’s goals of deepening and widening European cooperation and attracting non-Portuguese speaking students from other parts of the world, with local realities and those of the growing numbers and diversity of students from Portuguese-speaking countries.

Some clear strategies emerge. Firstly, there is a commitment to providing the conditions for a wider foreign population for whom the language of communication is English (AP, 2014, p.40). For this, an increase in tuition in English, both at discipline and study programme level, the use of English as language of communication, and the provision of bilingual teaching contexts are the primary instruments. It should be noted that English is not widely used for tuition at UA, especially at undergraduate level, and Portuguese is overwhelmingly the language of instruction. According to the 2014 Action Plan, ‘there is still much work to be done to provide a framework and support for students who choose to study at Aveiro but who do not master Portuguese’ although ‘almost 70% of Doctoral programmes, 45% of Masters courses and 30% of first cycle degrees use English for tuition to a greater or lesser extent’ (AP, 2014, p.40, my translation).

The increased use of English thus aims to attract, welcome and support many more non-Portuguese speaking international students (SP, 2012, p.17; AP, 2014, p.23, p.40). Besides being a strategy to increase the number of foreign students, the increased offer of EMI and English-taught programmes is a path to scoring well in rankings and institutional evaluation criteria, enhancing international visibility, and consolidating the institution's international position. Indeed, the correlation between the quality of the institution and its degree of internationalisation – seen as both a reflection and a driver of quality – is reinforced with direct benefits for the learning environment experienced on Campus and its multiculturality, and for its visibility and attractiveness (AP, 2014, p. 41).

Portuguese, on the other hand, is related to the 'strong cultural and historical relationship' (SP, 2012, p.21) between Portugal and the Portuguese-speaking countries across the world and to the past and present role of this international language in the country's and the institution's cooperation and development agenda. In this context, it should be noted that the largest groups in this university's international community are from Portuguese-speaking countries and from China, both of whom have based their decision to study at UA on the fact that they can study in Portuguese here.

So the University's aim to reinforce and renew its internationalisation agenda is met partly by the increased use of English and partly by the strengthening of its identity as a Portuguese language hub. The latter is expanded by the identification of the space occupied by the Portuguese and Spanish languages as a strategic element in the establishment of partnerships and alliances: 'one initiative could be to build and participate in an international network to compete in the sphere of Portuguese and Spanish speaking countries' (AP, 2010, p.42, my translation).

Regarding the internal dimension and the internationalisation of the educational community, this involves two main strategies. On the one hand, the Englishisation of the curricula; on the other, the relevance of the teaching and learning of other languages on Campus (AP, 2014, p.40), and the development of the 'international competences' of UA graduates (AP, 2010, p.40) and their 'intercultural competences in foreign languages' (SP, 2012, p.17). A vision emerges of a language-friendly Campus in which 'foreign' languages are both curricular and non-curricular, and open to the university and wider communities. There is an assumption that the overwhelming majority of students can function in Portuguese or English or both, and the teaching of 'other languages' is taken to be 'a factor which contributes and should contribute more to internationalisation' (AP, 2014, p.40). Russian is afforded particular mention as a language to be added to the menu of 'Chinese, Arabic and the other European languages already taught on Campus'. It is an example of 'an addition to the competences offered to our students, an opportunity to develop a new sphere of institutional internationalisation, in an as yet little explored geographical area which will become a priority in European programmes in the near future' (AP, 2014, p.40, my translation).

Concluding remarks

This study allows us to identify strategies which are aligned with the general literature, namely: that internationalisation is a priority for the institution and that its implementation will be achieved largely through enhanced mobility flows, increased cross-border alliances and networking, the attraction of international researchers, staff and students, and more English. It confirms a commitment to increasing EMI as a way of attracting a larger international presence, considered essential for its future, and as a solution for how to manage the consequently increased diversity. On the other hand, the documents acknowledge both the internationalisation of the staff and student body and the teaching and learning of foreign languages as added values for the institution. The learning and teaching of foreign languages includes not just English, but a range of languages, including non-European and less widely taught languages. Both international experience and language skills are recognised as a requirement in the profile of UA graduates.

Generally speaking, the outlook on internationalisation is framed by the local and national context and policy, visible in the relevance attributed to the European sphere, Portuguese Speaking Countries and the ‘wider’ world. The language policy dimension of this emerges in the balance sought between two *linguas francas* – English and Portuguese, preventing a totalising commitment to EMI. The idea of a competitive alliance within the Portuguese and Spanish speaking sphere adds a new dimension, recognising the cultural and linguistic proximity between these languages and the countries where they are spoken, as well as the size and potential of this language sphere as an alternative to the overwhelmingly dominant Anglophone sphere.

Looking to the future, HE language policies can only continue to develop as institutions meet the challenges and opportunities posed by globalisation and aim to positively impact its effects. Robust efforts are required on the part of institutions to include explicit and locally relevant strategies and actions to support a plural and inclusive approach to institutional language use and the development of fit-for-purpose multilingual learning and living environments. Studies into the ways in which institutions in different contexts are working in this domain can only support this objective.

Notes

- ¹ UA is a medium-sized Higher Education Institution (approx. 15,000 students), centred in the medium-sized city of Aveiro (approx. 75,000 inhabitants) in the centre region of Portugal. Founded in 1973, the UA is one of Portugal’s top universities, featuring highly in international rankings, and known for the excellence of its teaching and research, its strong relationship with the region and the architecture of its Santiago Campus.

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