

Plurilingualism at risk: the status of Spanish in Brazilian language and educational policies

Plurilinguismo em risco: o lugar do espanhol nas políticas linguísticas e educacionais brasileiras

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ABSTRACT: This bibliographic research, with a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach, highlights the crucial importance of preserving the teaching of the Spanish language in Brazilian schools, especially after its transition from a mandatory to an optional subject in the basic education curriculum. The study discusses the challenges arising from this change, emphasizing the need for its inclusion to foster integration among Latin American peoples and to enrich students' linguistic and cultural development. It also addresses the influence of political and power dynamics that sustain the predominance of English over Spanish. The literature review encompasses studies in Applied Linguistics and Language Policy, highlighting the removal of Spanish through a provisional measure and actions that contributed to maintaining its teaching in some states. The studies cited include authors such as Malta (2013), Moita Lopes (2015), and Grees (2019), among others. The results reveal several factors that contributed to the marginalization of the subject in the curriculum, including the emphasis on entrepreneurship and capitalist values in education, the lack of cultural representation, and the persistence of a homogeneous culture. Regarding the research objectives, the study sought to carry out a theoretical analysis of Spanish teaching in Brazil, identify the reasons for its removal as a mandatory subject, highlight the main consequences of this change, list arguments that emphasize the importance of Spanish in Brazilian basic education, and investigate actions and movements aiming to reverse the current situation of Spanish teaching in the country. Finally, it presents actions and proposals to strengthen the presence of Spanish in the Brazilian educational context, concluding that the permanence of its teaching depends on coordinated efforts among various sectors. It is necessary to engage the educational community in campaigns to value the language, strengthen movements and associations, encourage academic support from universities, and promote partnerships and exchanges with Spanish-speaking countries.

KEYWORDS: Spanish teaching. High school. Applied Linguistics. Language Policies. Plurilingualism.

RESUMO: Nesta pesquisa bibliográfica, de abordagem qualitativa e interdisciplinar, destaca-se a importância crucial de preservar o ensino da língua espanhola nas escolas brasileiras, especialmente após sua transição de disciplina obrigatória para optativa no currículo da educação básica. Discutem-se os desafios decorrentes da transição do espanhol de disciplina

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obrigatória para opcional, enfatizando a necessidade de sua inclusão no currículo para fomentar a integração entre os povos latinos e enriquecer o desenvolvimento linguístico e cultural dos alunos. Também é abordada a influência de questões políticas e de poder que promovem a predominância do inglês sobre o espanhol. A revisão bibliográfica abrange estudos de Linguística Aplicada e Política Linguística, destacando a remoção do espanhol mediante uma medida provisória e algumas ações que corroboraram na manutenção do ensino da disciplina em alguns estados. Os estudos mencionados incluem autores como Malta (2013), Moita Lopes (2015), Grees (2019) etc. Os resultados destacam uma série de fatores que contribuíram para a secundarização da disciplina no currículo, incluindo a ênfase no empreendedorismo e valores capitalistas na educação, a ausência de representatividade cultural e a persistência de uma cultura homogênea. No que diz respeito aos objetivos da pesquisa, buscou-se realizar uma análise teórica do ensino de espanhol no Brasil, identificar as razões para sua remoção como disciplina obrigatória, destacar as principais consequências dessa mudança, listar os argumentos que enfatizam a importância do espanhol na educação básica brasileira e investigar as ações e movimentos que visam reverter a situação atual do ensino do espanhol no país. Finalmente, são apresentadas algumas ações e propostas destinadas a fortalecer a presença do espanhol no cenário educacional brasileiro e conclui-se que a permanência do ensino de espanhol na educação básica brasileira depende de ações articuladas entre diferentes setores. É necessário envolver a comunidade escolar em campanhas de valorização da língua, fortalecer movimentos e associações e incentivar o apoio acadêmico das universidades e promover parcerias e intercâmbios com países hispânicos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ensino de espanhol. Ensino Médio. Linguística Aplicada. Políticas Linguística. Plurilinguismo.

Received: 20 July 2024

Accepted: 15 October 2025

1 Introduction

The teaching of Spanish in Brazil has faced numerous obstacles throughout its trajectory, mainly due to the constant attempts to eliminate it as a mandatory subject in the Basic Education curriculum. Nevertheless, research in the field of languages, particularly studies conducted by Spanish teachers, has emphasized the importance of this discipline. Through the teaching of Spanish, it becomes possible to foster integration among Latin American peoples, as well as to promote students' linguistic, communicative, literary, and intercultural development, thus enabling them to understand other cultures and broaden their worldview.

It is important to highlight that the teaching of foreign languages (FLT) in Brazil has always been intertwined with political and power-related issues. According to

Grees (2019, p. 105), "The curriculum is also a tool used in forms of representation; however, it is tied to meanings of a hegemonic power that have predominated throughout our history, discriminating against various social classes and excluding those who are different." A clear example of this dynamic is the persistent tendency to impose English as the only mandatory foreign language in the curriculum, while Spanish remains in a secondary position. According to Resolution CNE/CEB nº 3/2018, which regulates basic general education, English is established as a compulsory component, while other languages may be offered on an optional basis "preferably Spanish, depending on the availability of the institution or school network (Art. 11, § 4º, IX)."

Moreover, this document represents the only instance in which the Spanish language is mentioned, as it implicitly assigns a secondary status to the discipline. Consequently, it emphasizes only the skills to be developed in the English language. This situation clearly reveals that Spanish occupies a subordinate position in relation to English within the Brazilian educational context. In light of this, an important question emerges: what is the status of Spanish in Brazil's language and educational policies?

Reflecting on this issue leads us to consider the notion of curriculum. The concept of curriculum is intrinsically connected to power relations, as it goes beyond a mere collection of contents, skills, and competences to be developed by students. It also encompasses the selection of which knowledge is taught in order to achieve specific objectives, which are often tied to the political, social, and economic context of each locality. According to Malta (2013, p. 343), the curriculum involves relations of social class, as well as racial, ethnic, and gender issues, and therefore cannot be reduced solely to the transmission of content.

Thus, it is essential to reflect on who is responsible for making decisions in the educational field and for what purposes they act. Frequently, we observe that such decisions are driven by capitalist demands and by the imposition of what is considered

superior. Consequently, other languages and cultures are often disregarded. Yet, these languages and cultures are fundamental to our identity as Latin Americans, contributing to the holistic development of individuals and fostering transversal skills and competences.

In this sense, multiple approaches within the field of linguistics have focused on investigating this issue, which exerts a direct influence on our ties with neighboring nations. This is due to the fact that language functions as a vehicle for strengthening relationships, both in interpersonal interactions and within the educational sphere. The latter is particularly significant, as many students are denied the opportunity to broaden their linguistic and cultural competences as a result of the unilateral imposition of a single language.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that interaction with foreign languages in Brazil has experienced considerable expansion, largely as a result of the arrival of immigrants, particularly Venezuelans. Political and social circumstances have compelled these individuals to migrate in search of better living conditions, and this movement has contributed to the enrichment of the country's linguistic landscape. Contact with the Spanish language, previously restricted mainly to border regions and tourism, has now acquired a broader and deeper dimension due to daily interactions between Brazilians and Spanish speakers.

Considering all these aspects, as previously mentioned, different areas of linguistics have shown growing interest in this topic, especially within the domains of Applied Linguistics and Language Policy studies. Among their key concerns is the current situation of Spanish within the curriculum. This debate reveals concrete threats and setbacks to Brazil's linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as to education itself and to students and professionals trained in this field.

In light of this, the following questions emerge: What are the main drawbacks and consequences for Brazilian society and education resulting from the shift of Spanish teaching from a mandatory to an elective subject in the basic education

curriculum? What are the key arguments supporting the continuation of this subject in the curriculum? And what actions have been undertaken or could be implemented to raise awareness among those responsible for curriculum design regarding the importance of guaranteeing the inclusion and mandatory status of Spanish?

These questions seek to deepen the understanding of the negative impacts resulting from the change in the mandatory status of Spanish teaching, as well as to highlight the arguments that emphasize the importance of maintaining this subject within the curriculum. It is worth noting that the legal requirement regarding its mandatory status referred to the obligation of educational institutions to offer Spanish in high schools, not to compulsory student enrollment, which has always been optional (Law nº 11.161/2005). Furthermore, this study aims to examine the initiatives currently being implemented to ensure the permanence of Spanish and to identify possible strategies that may contribute to changing the mindset of curriculum designers, thereby guaranteeing both the provision and the mandatory inclusion of this subject.

There is no doubt about the urgency and necessity of discussing the role of the Spanish language in the school curriculum. It is worth noting that, like Spanish, other subjects, particularly those within the humanities, also face the threat of being excluded. Interdisciplinarity plays an essential role in the learning process; however, it has often been used as a justification to overlook specific and fundamental areas of knowledge. In the attempt to teach everything, we run the risk of teaching nothing. This situation can be observed, for instance, in the structure of the new textbooks organized by areas of knowledge and supposedly aligned with the new high school curriculum.

As a teacher in Basic Education, I have noticed that these textbooks do not include the Spanish language as a subject in any section. Restricting access to knowledge also means restricting rights, as observed by Grees (2019, p. 104), who emphasizes "the importance of better understanding who we are, our history, our

language, and our culture," and continues by highlighting our political and social commitment as educators, stating that "it is up to us to claim discursive freedom so that students may have access to all types of knowledge and thus recognize and represent themselves."

As a Spanish teacher, I feel compelled to reflect on this issue and to analyze the findings of studies, especially those conducted after Provisional Measure 746/2016, which made Spanish an elective subject, regarding the consequences and damages resulting from its exclusion from the curriculum and from the broader devaluation of foreign language teaching in Brazil. Therefore, beyond clarifying the current situation of Spanish in the Brazilian educational context, this research contributes to a reflection on the importance not only of teaching Spanish but also of teaching foreign languages in general as essential knowledge for fostering plurilingual education and promoting a sense of Latin American integration.

Furthermore, this study provides access to relevant knowledge about linguistic studies in general, Applied Linguistics, and Language Policy, allowing for a deeper understanding of their scope and directions. It also enables us to comprehend how these areas contribute to the understanding and reflection of the phenomena under analysis.

It also intrigues us, as foreign language teachers, to understand the importance of teaching this language, as well as the growing student demand for it, motivated by various factors, including the National High School Exam (ENEM), in which, according to data from the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), 60% of candidates choose Spanish.

Given this context, the overall objective of this research is to understand the reasons that led to the removal of mandatory Spanish language teaching from the school curriculum, as well as to analyze the main consequences resulting from its transition to elective status. It also seeks to reflect on the aspects that justify the importance of teaching Spanish in Brazil and to examine both the contributions and

the drawbacks resulting from the marginalization of this discipline. In addition, this study aims to identify the main actions undertaken to ensure the permanence of Spanish in the curriculum. Regarding the specific objectives, we aim to:

- Examine the main political and educational factors that led to the exclusion of Spanish as a mandatory subject.
- Discuss the implications of this change for the linguistic, cultural, and educational diversity of students.
- Identify initiatives and movements aimed at ensuring the permanence and promotion of Spanish in the school curriculum.

2 Beyond linguistic boundaries: Applied Linguistics, Language Policies and the scenario of Spanish in Brazil

In the previous sections, we discussed the influence and contributions of several disciplines that also address the issue under examination. This highlights that the debate has attracted the attention of a significant number of researchers. Among these fields, we initially focused on Applied Linguistics (AL) as a representative example.

Applied Linguistics emerged as a field of study in the twentieth century in English-speaking countries such as the United States, England, and Australia, primarily in response to the need to teach English to foreigners. As noted by Moita Lopes (2015, p. 12), AL has traditionally focused on language teaching and learning processes, mainly in the context of English, and to some extent, continues to be associated with it. Nevertheless, the author observes that the field has become increasingly interdisciplinary. According to Rampton (1977, 2006 apud Moita Lopes, 2015, p. 12), "It is becoming an open space with multiple centers, where we encounter different ways of doing language learning (LL)."

Thus, we can mention, as examples, studies within Applied Linguistics on topics such as bilingualism, discourse analysis, multilingualism in society, language

policy and planning, second language acquisition, sign languages, literacy studies, teacher education, and language teaching methodologies, among others.

Language Policy, in turn, is a discipline intrinsically related to Applied Linguistics, as stated by Severo (2013, p. 452). Its origins date back to the United States and Europe, much like Sociolinguistics, which reached an important milestone with the event organized by William Bright in 1964 at the University of California. The author emphasizes that the concept of Language Policy is complex and polysemous, encompassing a heterogeneous range of theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Moreover, Severo underscores the influence of different social and political contexts on the constitution of this discipline, as each society, whether American or European, had distinct priorities and approaches in theoretical and methodological terms. He identifies three perspectives in Language Policy studies within post-colonial contexts: (1) Official, concerning decisions about the official status of languages; (2) Educational, related to language teaching; and (3) General, referring to the use of languages in mass communication, business, and international relations (Noss, 1971 apud Severo, 2013, p. 454).

This diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches in Language Policy highlights the complexity of the discipline and its close relationship with the social and political context in which it operates. Understanding these perspectives allows for a broader and more contextualized analysis of Language Policies adopted in different societies, taking into account aspects such as the official status of languages, language teaching, and the use of languages across diverse spheres of communication.

Within the scope of these disciplines addressing the exclusion of Spanish from the curriculum, Paulino's master's thesis (2021), entitled "*Law 11.191/2018 and its Creation Process: A Political-Linguistic Analysis*", stands out. In addition to reviewing language policies and planning, the thesis examines the development of the law that guaranteed Spanish language teaching in the state of Paraíba, addressing the arguments that supported the prevailing legislation.

We also cite the research conducted by Cervo, Martins, and Petri (2018), entitled *“Contradiction, Struggle, Resistance: Reflections on the Exclusion of the Spanish Language from the Brazilian High School Curriculum”*, which analyzes the presence of Spanish in MP 746 and its impacts. In the study by Amaral et al. (2022), *“Movements of APEMG for the Reintroduction of Spanish into School Curricula”*, the activities of the Association of Spanish Teachers of Minas Gerais (APEMG) and the #FicaEspanhol Movement are examined through the lens of language policy studies, highlighting their struggle for the reintroduction of Spanish into the school curriculum. It is important to note, however, that these are not the only available studies in academic repositories, journals, and publications; nevertheless, they are highly significant for exemplifying the topic under discussion.

In Paulino (2018), despite focusing on Spanish-related legislation, the researcher traces the historical trajectory of Spanish teaching, which warrants further commentary. He notes that the teaching of Spanish in Brazil, since its inception in 1919 at Colégio Pedro II in Rio de Janeiro, has faced significant challenges. In his words, the Spanish discipline was introduced as a response to Uruguay's reciprocity policy, which had already incorporated Portuguese into its educational system.

Paulino further observes that Law 3,674/1919 established the subject at Colégio Pedro II, but its initial impact was limited due to optional enrollment and a reduced course load. As social and economic changes expanded universal access to public education, the “Roach Vaz Law” was enacted, dividing secondary education into ginásio and colegial levels and granting State Councils autonomy in curriculum development. Consequently, disciplines such as mathematics and Portuguese were mandated by the Ministry of Education, while foreign languages, including Spanish, were determined by the State Councils.

The scholar also notes that the economic and cultural integration of Latin American countries spurred more than ten proposals in the National Congress supporting Spanish language education. Nevertheless, English gained prominence in

education, even without a national mandatory status. The 1961 Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education removed the compulsory status of foreign languages in high school, which contributed to the growing preference for English and the proliferation of private courses, as observed by Araújo and Montañéz (2010).

We agree with Paulino (2018) in stating that the hegemony of the English language reflects Brazil's economic dependence on the United States. Therefore, the teaching of Spanish in Brazil, marked by historical challenges and shifting linguistic priorities, continues to be shaped within a landscape of educational choices and international influences. According to some authors, these influences align with notions of entrepreneurship and the formation of a capitalist individual. In this regard, Guimarães (2017) asserts:

We observe that the political gesture of valuing English to the detriment of Spanish is, perhaps, underpinned by an imagined notion of the individual who should be prepared for a labor market dominated by the idea of entrepreneurship. In the case of the capitalist form of subjectivity, one cannot fail to consider the production conditions of a globalized world (Guimarães, 2017 apud Cervo; Martins; Petri, 2018, p. 322).

Paulino further argues that the Spanish language re-emerged in basic education later on, due to the creation of the first language centers in Niterói and the establishment of Mercosur in 1991. He also highlights the Darcy Ribeiro Law of 1996 and mentions Spain's political interest in this process. Finally, he analyzes Law 13.415/2017, which, in his words, was frustrated by the "parliamentary coup" of 2016. This episode, which marked the transition from then-president Dilma Rousseff to Vice President Michel Temer, resulted in Provisional Measure 746, leading to changes in the basic education curriculum and turning Spanish into an elective subject.

In the research conducted by Cervo, Martins, and Petri, we are led to a deeper understanding of this transitional process that sought to reformulate the high school model. According to the authors, this process aimed to create "a training less focused

on general knowledge and more oriented toward specific areas, with flexibility guided by the vocational interests of the students" (Cervo, Martins, & Petri, 2018, p. 320). The authors also point out that this new arrangement made only Portuguese, Mathematics, and English compulsory subjects. This discussion is reinforced by Grees (2019), who emphasizes that:

An example of this is the 2017 High School Reform, which removes the mandatory status of certain subjects in students' basic education, with the curriculum acting as a form of resistance by making them choose some knowledge over others. Without the decisive participation of the school community, it certainly represents the continuation of cultural homogenization (Grees, 2019, p. 103–104).

This new setting brought profound changes to secondary education, and part of society initially reacted with remarkably negative acceptance. At this point, Cervo, Martins, and Petri denounce that "there is a false appearance, in the name of the national and the official, which leads citizens to the idea of consensus, of equal rights for all" (2018, p. 323). Yet, this resistance did not prevent the gradual implementation of these transformations, which, over time, were effectively introduced into the school environment. Among the criticisms that had the greatest impact, the lack of effective dialogue with society stood out, particularly considering, as the authors point out, the fragility of infrastructure in Brazilian public schools and the devaluation of teachers (2018, p. 320).

We cannot forget that, amid this scenario of adjustments, the Spanish language discipline was not alone in facing the threat of complete exclusion from the school curriculum. Nevertheless, from our perspective, it appears to have received less attention during the process of curricular reconfiguration compared to other subjects that, as noted by the authors, were later reintegrated into the curriculum. According to Cervo, Martins, and Petri:

Subjects such as Spanish, Arts, Physical Education, Sociology, and Philosophy were arbitrarily excluded from the list of what should be taught and, in some cases, forcibly reinstated in the document following public reaction, thus updating, in the thread of discourse, a historical debate on educational and science policies. This reveals much about the pragmatic way knowledge production is managed in Brazil: which subjects should be taught in schools and for what purpose (or for whom) they serve? (Cervo; Martins; Petri, 2018, p. 321).

In a nutshell, we can emphasize that the profound changes in high school education, beyond having clear consequences for knowledge, lead us to question the lack of effective dialogue in constructing a curriculum that is more critical, democratic, and socially committed. In this context, the discipline of Spanish, along with other subjects, underwent a process of curricular reconfiguration that prompts reflection on broader questions regarding the purpose of education and the need to include rather than exclude. This scenario encourages us to continue reflecting on the evolution of the educational system and its implications for the development of society and future generations, particularly concerning the promotion of plurilingual education.

3 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach to investigating the shift in the status of Spanish from a mandatory to an optional subject within the Brazilian basic education curriculum. The methodology consists of reviewing articles, dissertations, and other relevant sources in order to discuss the situation of Spanish in the Brazilian context, thus characterizing the study as bibliographic research. In this process, we incorporate our perspective as teachers of Spanish and express our concerns regarding these issues. It is also worth noting that we draw upon legal instruments, such as the Provisional Measure and state laws, to contextualize the policies and guidelines that led to the change in the mandatory status of Spanish within the curriculum.

To achieve the proposed objectives, our investigation adopts a qualitative approach, as defined by Sampieri et al. (2014, p. 376), who emphasize the in-depth

understanding of phenomena from the perspective of participants situated in a specific context. Qualitative research seeks to deepen the comprehension of viewpoints, opinions, experiences, and meanings inherent to the participants involved. Moreover, it encompasses a range of objectives, often expressed through verbs such as describe, understand, analyze, and discover. This research also explores the underlying motivations behind the phenomena studied, providing a deeper and more contextualized understanding.

This study focuses on the Brazilian educational context, specifically basic education, from an interdisciplinary perspective encompassing Language Policy, Education, and Applied Linguistics. Our work is dedicated to understanding the reasons behind the transition of Spanish to an elective status, examining its consequences, and identifying arguments that emphasize the importance of teaching this language. Furthermore, it investigates the ongoing initiatives aimed at ensuring the permanence of Spanish in the school curriculum. Some of these points are further developed in the following sections.

4 Spanish language in basic education: an alliance for regional integration and cultural growth

Drawing on the ideas presented so far, we have reached some results that allow us to deepen the discussion and better understand the different aspects related to the exclusion of Spanish from the school curriculum. Considering the texts discussed, as well as our understanding of the attempts to eliminate the discipline within this new Brazilian curricular scenario, we identify several factors associated with the threats faced by the teaching of Spanish. One of the main factors relates to the persistent emphasis on promoting an educational approach centered on entrepreneurship and the training of individuals aligned with capitalist principles.

Moreover, the linkage of the school curriculum to issues of hegemonic power, reflected in the lack of representation of diverse cultures and the exclusion of social class experiences, further contributes to the marginalization of this discipline. The

ongoing reproduction of homogeneous culture also plays a significant role in this context.

Additionally, we observe the dissemination of an erroneous conception that perceives Spanish as an “easy language” to learn and, therefore, unnecessary to study. Lastly, among other factors, we highlight a new, misguided idea that has been propagated: the notion that offering Spanish in the basic education curriculum could lead to the exclusion of English, as if the two were mutually exclusive, rather than recognizing the importance of maintaining them in a complementary manner.

Having said that, it is crucial to emphasize that the consequences of removing Spanish from the curriculum, as previously discussed, entail several significant impacts. Firstly, the elimination of Spanish limits Brazilian students' access to linguistic and cultural knowledge that could enrich their understanding of their identity as Latin Americans. This is fundamental, since Brazil shares a variety of cultural, historical, and linguistic elements with its neighboring countries, and the exclusion of Spanish undermines the development of a broader regional perspective.

In addition, linguistic diversity restriction is a concerning factor, as it restricts students to have the opportunities of achieving proficiency and more than one foreign language, an essential skill in a globalized world. The Spanish language plays a fundamental role in diplomatic and commercials relations in Brazil with other Latin Americans countries, and its exclusion has a potential to harm these strategic partnerships.

The limitation of cultural understanding is also a relevant implication, as Brazil shares many cultural and historical aspects with other Latin American countries. Thus, the exclusion of Spanish could lead to a lower appreciation of cultural diversity. Furthermore, in a globalized world, knowledge of multiple languages is a valuable and distinctive skill in the labor market.

Therefore, the absence of Spanish in the curriculum could place Brazilian students at a disadvantage when seeking professional opportunities. Among other

aspects, the exclusion of Spanish from the school curriculum not only restricts access to linguistic and cultural knowledge but also has implications for diplomatic relations, cultural understanding, linguistic diversity, and the professional prospects of Brazilian students.

4.1 Keeping the flame of Spanish alive in schools: The importance of maintaining Spanish Language as a subject in the Basic Education Curriculum

It is essential to emphasize the importance of maintaining Spanish as a fundamental component of the Brazilian school curriculum. This initiative fosters integration with neighboring nations, encourages collaboration, and strengthens inter-American relations. Openness to the Spanish language promotes not only trade and tourism but also academic mobility programs, enriching educational experiences and expanding opportunities for collaboration among Latin American countries.

Moreover, knowledge of Spanish empowers students to communicate effectively in various spheres of daily life. In addition to facilitating international communication, studying a foreign language such as Spanish enhances metalinguistic awareness of the mother tongue, deepens linguistic proficiency, and refines the understanding of nuances in one's own language. This linguistic development contributes to intercultural education, transforming individuals into social agents capable of engaging in dialogue with different cultures with respect and tolerance, essential skills for interacting in a globalized and diverse world.

Preparation for the labor market is another crucial dimension to be considered. In an increasingly global and competitive professional environment, proficiency in foreign languages is a determining factor in recruitment processes, business negotiations, and participation in international programs. This not only broadens career opportunities but also responds to the needs of a country that continually welcomes visitors and foreigners. In summary, maintaining the teaching of Spanish in the Brazilian curriculum not only strengthens international connections but also

enriches education, improves linguistic competence, fosters intercultural understanding, and prepares students for a global and diverse labor market.

Additionally, some arguments in favor of maintaining Spanish, as highlighted by Vale et al. (2017, p. 5), support the idea that its inclusion enriches the educational process and constitutes “a factor of social inclusion,” allowing students to access more opportunities in both cultural and professional spheres. This is particularly relevant considering the presence of numerous “Spanish and Latin American enterprises” that could open their doors to these students.

5 Final considerations

Taking into consideration all that has been discussed so far, this section presents some concluding remarks, revisiting and reinforcing comments related to proposals and attitudes that may contribute to the ongoing struggle to preserve the Spanish language discipline. In this sense, we emphasize that this study has addressed some of the obstacles faced by this subject due to its transition from a mandatory to an elective status, highlighting that its permanence must be pursued, among other reasons, to foster Latin American integration and to promote students' linguistic, communicative, literary, and intercultural development. We also discussed the influence of political and power relations on foreign language teaching, particularly the predominance of English at the expense of Spanish.

In the bibliographic review section, we referred to some disciplines within the broad field of Linguistics that investigate issues related to Spanish language teaching in Brazil, such as Applied Linguistics and Language Policy. One of the most notable studies discussed was Paulino's (2021) master's thesis, which provides an overview of Spanish language teaching in Brazil and, through the lens of Language Policy, analyzes the law that ensured the teaching of Spanish in the state of Paraíba, as well as the process leading to its removal through Provisional Measure 746/2016.

We also brought to light the work of authors such as Cervo, Martins, and Petri (2018), who examined the exclusion of Spanish from the school curriculum and its implications within the broader reform of secondary education. This reform also affected other disciplines, such as Arts, Physical Education, Sociology, and Philosophy, which were initially threatened with exclusion and later reintegrated. These changes were part of a larger high school reform that continues to receive criticism for its lack of dialogue with society and the devaluation of educators. In this context, we outlined a scenario that highlights the need for continuous reflection on the education system and its impact on society and future generations.

Regarding the results of this research, we identified that the main aspects addressed are related to interconnected reasons contributing to the challenges faced by Spanish language teaching in Brazil. These include the emphasis on promoting entrepreneurship and capitalist values in education, the lack of cultural representation, and the continued reproduction of a homogeneous culture. The mistaken perception of Spanish as an “easy language” was also discussed, as well as the misconception that Spanish and English are mutually exclusive in the curriculum—when, in fact, both together contribute to plurilingualism.

Furthermore, we pointed out the consequences of excluding Spanish from the curriculum, noting that such exclusion limits students’ access to linguistic and cultural knowledge that enriches their understanding of their Latin American identity, restricts linguistic diversity, and places students at a disadvantage in a globalized labor market. Additionally, we highlighted the negative impacts on diplomatic relations and the appreciation of regional diversity.

We conclude this section by emphasizing that preserving Spanish in Brazilian schools is essential to strengthening integration with neighboring nations, developing communication skills, and preparing students for a globalized labor market. We also highlight the importance of resistance movements such as the Association of Spanish Teachers of the State of Paraíba and the #FicaEspanhol movement in Rio Grande do

Sul, which have played, and continue to play, a crucial role in raising awareness and promoting Spanish language teaching. Moreover, the engagement of higher education institutions and the ongoing efforts of Spanish teachers are vital elements in keeping the flame of Spanish alive in Brazilian schools.

We conclude this study by underscoring that ensuring the permanence of Spanish teaching in Brazilian basic education requires the adoption of diverse strategies. First, it is essential that the educational community, including teachers, students, and families, engage in awareness campaigns about the importance of Spanish, highlighting its value for regional integration, cultural diversity, and professional opportunities.

It is equally necessary to strengthen the mobilization of Spanish teachers' associations and resistance groups, such as the #FicaEspanhol movement, to pressure politicians and educational authorities to value the discipline. The involvement of universities and higher education institutions is also crucial in this endeavor, as they can provide academic support and promote research that demonstrates the benefits of teaching Spanish.

It is also important to highlight initiatives that showcase the positive impact of the discipline, such as exchange programs and collaborations with Spanish-speaking countries. In the political sphere, it is crucial to advocate for the inclusion of Spanish in the curriculum, seeking support from legislators and educational leaders.

In conclusion, promoting Spanish as a tool for social inclusion and cultural enrichment must be emphasized in order to raise public awareness. These actions and attitudes can significantly contribute to strengthening Spanish language teaching in Brazilian basic education and ensuring its rightful place in the national curriculum.

Translated by Luan da Silva Santos

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