

Latin America, internationalization, and academic reciprocity

América Latina, internacionalização e reciprocidade acadêmica

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to stimulate a reflective and analytical analysis of actions that have been developed by the Latin American Communication Researchers Association, taking as reference its purposes of being an institutional support for internationalization and the imbalances and challenges in the development of the internationalization of the field. The text sought to systematize the main actions and conceptual, political and academic bases that have guided the institution's cooperation actions. It is concluded that there is an effort for greater dialogue inside and outside Latin America based on the idea of horizontality, academic reciprocity through initiatives that promote the circulation of content in face-to-face activities and that increasingly use information technologies and contemporary communication.

Keywords: ALAIC, cooperation, dialogue, communication

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RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é estimular uma análise reflexiva sobre as ações da Associação Latino-Americana de Investigadores da Comunicação, tomando como referência seu propósito de ser um suporte institucional para a internacionalização e os desequilíbrios e desafios da internacionalização do campo. O texto procurou sistematizar as principais ações e bases conceituais, políticas e acadêmicas que têm guiado as ações de cooperação da associação. Conclui-se que existe um esforço de maior diálogo dentro e fora da América Latina, pautado na ideia de horizontalidade e reciprocidade acadêmica, por meio de iniciativas que promovam a circulação de conteúdos e que utilizem as tecnologias de informação e comunicação contemporâneas.

Palavras-chave: ALAIC, cooperação, diálogo, comunicação





THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS ARTICLE is to stimulate a reflective and analytical observation of actions that have been developed by the Latin American Association of Communication Researchers (ALAIC), taking as a reference its purpose of being an institutional support for internationalization and the imbalances and challenges in the development of the internationalization of the field.

To this end, we took into account the activities that ALAIC has put into practice inside and outside Latin America by its governing body, its events (such as congresses, seminars, and summer schools), its thematic and interest groups, its publications, and other scientific and academic exchange and cooperation efforts in partnership with researchers, national associations, and international entities. Along with the balance of actions, vital issues are presented for internationalization practices and academic reciprocity with the aim of strengthening teaching, research, and extension in communication.

It is understood that both higher education institutions and academic entities play an important role in the internationalization of knowledge due to important similarities, functionalities, and epistemological, political, and social purposes, according to principles pointed out and systematized by authors such as Fernando Seabra Santos and Naomar Almeida Filho (2012) and José Camilo dos Santos Filho (2020).

ALAIC AND PROMOTION OF COOPERATION IN LATIN AMERICA

The Latin American Association of Communication Researchers was officially founded in 1978 as a result of efforts by researchers in the region to create an environment for greater scientific and academic cooperation. For this, it was essential to have pre-existing national associations such as the Brazilian Society for Interdisciplinary Communication Studies (Intercom) and the Mexican Association of Communication Researchers (AMIC), present respectively in Brazil in 1977 and Mexico in 1979 (Fuentes-Navarro, 2019), and the activities of other international entities, with a more global dimension, such as the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), founded in 1957, and the International Communication Association (ICA), also with origins in the 1950s.

It is noteworthy that, over time, researchers have made presentations and participated in national and regional associations, in complementarity with researchers working in national organizations and in ALAIC.

Among the founders of the IAMCR, driven by the support of organizations such as UNESCO, was, for example, a Latin American: Danton Jobim (Marques

de Melo, 2005), who combined his academic experience as a professor at the then University of Brazil with his practice as editor of the *Diário Carioca*.

Over the years, Latin Americans have participated in the history of the entity and, based on the mobilization of researchers from the region, accompanied by colleagues from other countries, the IAMCR incorporated Spanish as one of its official languages in 2002, contributing to greater conditions for production and access to content developed outside the countries with larger structures and stimulating actions carried out at the entity's scientific congresses (Paulino, 2013, 2023).

It is also worth noting the historical meeting points between ALAIC's work as an entity for the representation and direct or indirect participation of researchers, the Latin American Federation of Faculties of Social Communication (FELAFACS) which, as its name suggests, holds the institutions as its base of support and action, and the International Center for Higher Studies in Communication for Latin America (CIESPAL), promoted in the 1950s by UNESCO.

In the article "*Cuatro Décadas de Internacionalización Académica en el Campo de Estudios de la Comunicación en América Latina*," Raúl Fuentes-Navarro (2016) describes that the Latin American identity in communication studies holds an inevitable historical reference, and his perception of broad identity is manifested in the publications, projects, and academic meetings institutionalized by ALAIC and FELAFACS. Maria Cristina Gobbi (2008) provided an important history of the first 30 years of ALAIC and its members' efforts to exchange and propagate communication research in Latin America, highlighting the role of the entity's events and publications.

Following a necessary institutional and notarial reorganization in 1989, ALAIC has been able to maintain regularity in the organization of seminars and congresses every two years. ALAIC's congresses have brought together hundreds of people, including and promoting interactions between renowned researchers and young graduate or undergraduate students. These events are mostly based on major conferences, panels, debates, or seminars in the mornings, thematic groups (TG) and interest groups (IG) during the afternoons.

As a result of the congresses, the organizing committee of each event and the ALAIC board of directors have sought to publish the annals ("*libro de actas*," in Spanish) of the texts presented, provided they have the authorization of the people who attended directly or remotely.

Seminars are held in the intervals between the biennial congresses, with a format similar to that of the congresses, but with two substantial differences. The first is that they usually gather a smaller number of participants, and the



second is that the seminars hold a more established experimental environment, allowing researchers to propose and consume IG activities.

To select IG (complementary to the TG during congresses and essential for seminars), the ALAIC board of directors opens a call to its members. Interested people submit proposals. Those selected are open to the public, who often end up discovering the event from the contact between their interests and the topics on the TG and IG lists.

The proposals, selection, and creation of IG hold an important power of thematic and, why not, epistemological renewal. Over the last ten years, for example, we can highlight the proposal and approval of groups linked to topics such as gender, digital technologies and freedom of expression, and the right to communication as a direct result of the working method described above.

An important challenge for the established TG and the experimental IG is to maintain contact and production beyond the congresses and seminars. Another relevant point is to establish coordination bases and procedures that allow rotation, participation, and accountability in the conduct of the groups, both for those who participate and for ALAIC's directors.

It is common and understandable that the TG and IG coordinators manage to gather more adherence and interest in the periods immediately before or after the events. However, increasingly, and driven by current communication and information technologies, participants have been able to hold events (especially remotely) and publications with more fluid interaction.

To streamline this reality, ALAIC is reforming its website (www.alaic.org) to provide more spaces and conditions for interaction for each member of its (Thematic or Interest) Group and also to increase the intersections and cooperation actions between the groups, which can often be strengthened by contact with initiatives that are already consolidated or in the process of being consolidated (Figure 1).

Figure 1
ALAIC website



In addition, ALAIC has promoted two important academic cooperation initiatives within and outside the region: the first is the publication of the *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias de la Comunicación*, created in 2004 as a vehicle capable of:

exposing the richness that exists in the scientific production in the area of communication at the Latin American and international level, in an attempt to understand this new context in the communication field. It intends to be a plural instance that safeguards an environment for the debate of the great themes of the communication sciences. (Kunsch, 2011, p. 7)

In 2011, ALAIC also established its *Journal of Latin American Communication Research* (JLACR), which has been an instrument with the main objective of establishing bridges with colleagues from outside the region, also due to the greater possibility and larger number of texts in English, a language with wider scientific¹ capillarity in the global environment.

In recent years, both the ALAIC board of directors and the editors responsible for the publications have sought greater interaction with the aim of strengthening the association’s editorial policy by exchanging information, editorial and text themes, and optimizing the production and registration processes of the published texts.

The academic environment has been required to catalog and include published articles in databases that increase, at least in theory, readership and visibility in metrication and evaluation rankings of scientific production.

¹ Studies on linguistic diversity in the scientific environment have shown that a significant number of academics have prioritized the production of content in English. A report on linguistic diversity shows that more than 8 out of 10 Ibero-American researchers write in the Anglo-Saxon language and not in their mother tongues and that, present in 95% of scientific articles, English creates a kind of “language dictatorship” with only 1% of texts in Portuguese and Spanish (Bonilla, 2021).



To this end, ALAIC and the editors of its publications organized an effort to register the DOI (Digital Object Identifier) of all published articles.

SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGES AND COOPERATION ACTIONS WITH INSTITUTIONS AND RESEARCHERS FROM OTHER REGIONS

As pointed out above, the flow of research, teaching, and extension actions has been fueled from both inside and outside Latin America. Thus, over time, the region has not only organized events aimed at the regional academic community and participated in congresses in different countries, but has also hosted important global congresses, such as the events organized by the IAMCR (<https://iamcr.org/congress/annual-conferences>) with the support of local organizations, in 1972 in Buenos Aires, 1980 in Caracas, 1992 in Guarujá, 1997 in Oaxaca, 2004 in Porto Alegre, 2009 in Mexico City, and 2017 in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia.

Within the scope of the IAMCR, it is worth highlighting ALAIC's role as an associated entity, which allows its members to pay a reduced registration fee for events of the global entity, but also enables the realization and insertion of panels in the program of the congresses of both entities.

Since 2011, ALAIC and IAMCR have had members from both sides at tables in the program of events, promoting cooperation, exchange of experiences, and scientific and political exchange.

This ongoing activity contributed to greater interaction among the Latin American association and its partners in other regions of the world, particularly with its European counterpart. The European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) was created in 2005 with the merger of the then two main associations of communication researchers, the European Communication Association (ECA) and the European Consortium for Communications Research (ECCR).

Interaction at events, coupled with the growing use of the internet as an increasingly centric communication technology, also led to cooperation at more continuous events with different formats.

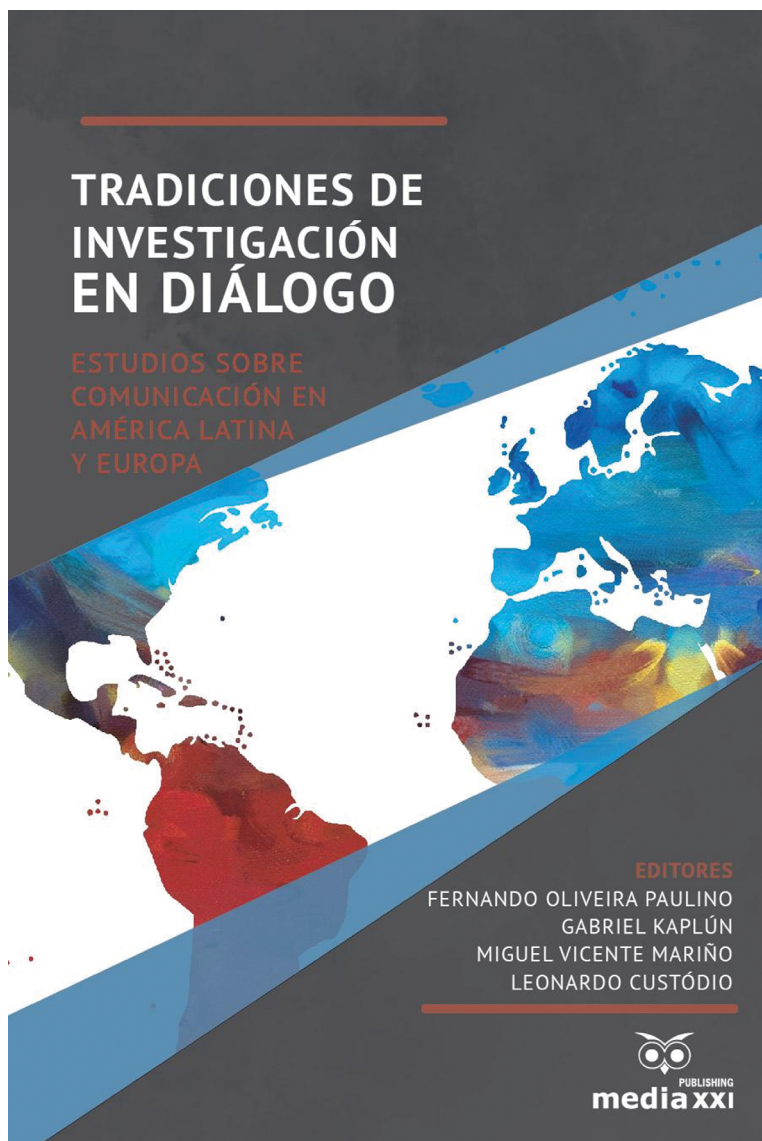
Among the cooperation actions established directly or indirectly with ECREA, IAMCR, the International Communication Association (ICA), and other national and regional entities around the world, it is worth noting the tables at the conferences of the entities, the exchange in the realization of summer schools, and the joint publication of works aimed at a closer epistemic and methodological approximation.

With versions in English and Spanish, the book *Research Traditions in Dialogue. Communication Studies in Latin America and Europe* (Paulino et al.,

2020) brings together a wide range of researchers who sought to intersect communication areas on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean in a dialogic method (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Cover of Tradiciones de Investigación en Diálogo [Research Traditions in Dialogue], a book resulting from the cooperation and internationalization actions between ALAIC and ECREA





The work resulted from the cooperative relationship between ALAIC and ECREA and was presented and debated before, during, and after its launch with the support of the associations. Its format can be useful for actions with other regions of the globe. With the reduction in the incidence of COVID-19, there is hope that this method will be useful for actions with African, Asian, and Oceania colleagues, especially in the environment called the Global South.

Another important result of the relationship with ECREA was the creation of the Summer School (SS) “*Pesquisa em Comunicação na América Latina*” [Communication Research in Latin America] in 2014. The initiative resulted from the will of ALAIC’s board of directors and the stimulus and exchange of ideas promoted by ECREA.

The first three editions of the Latin American SS took place in Brasilia and were followed by the reception of colleagues from Montevideo, Córdoba, Lima, La Paz, and Barranquilla. In each edition, graduate students and researchers had the opportunity to interact in formal and informal meetings that enable more dialogue, exchange of ideas and experiences, in addition to the publication of texts produced by those responsible for the editions and by master’s and doctoral students.

The main challenge of the above initiatives is obtaining the financial resources to carry out the planned actions. However, along with the material conditions, it is worth mentioning some non-material difficulties that arise and can be greater obstacles than logistical problems.

Over time, it has been possible to perceive difficulties related to direct or inverted ethnocentrism that make, in some situations and at some moments, the ability to listen lower than the willingness and inconvenience of speaking. Below we present real or hypothetical circumstances and situations that exemplify these challenges.

INTERNATIONALIZATION AND ACADEMIC RECIPROACITY: BASES AND APPLICATIONS

To a large extent, the governments of countries inside and outside Latin America have been seeking and/or announcing actions that put into practice a professional diplomacy that is more careful with the speeches made and the practices carried out, encouraging a reorientation of official diplomacy and also stimulating public diplomacy actions (Cull, 2008) that include non-governmental organizations, such as scientific entities.

The internet and the greater possibilities for producing, distributing, and accessing audiovisual content have been decisive in ensuring that, at least in terms of appearances, governments take care of their images and the repercussions of acts that could harm their interests and business.

Thus, in addition to the traditional training courses that exist in countries like France, the United States, and Brazil, there has been the publication of booklets and online information aimed at guiding citizens so that they are better able to know how to behave in order to, in a minimalist view, avoid noise, cultural clashes, and risky situations.

The concern with the phenomenon of public diplomacy should and could be more present in the training and practice of people interested in cooperation between researchers and scientific institutions, promoting more productive dialogues, based on what we have called *academic reciprocity*, inspired by *diplomatic reciprocity*. In summary, in foreign relations, it is essential to create mechanisms to reduce the chances of economic and military asymmetry completely or almost completely guiding the results of academic, cultural, and/or social² exchanges.

By analogy, it seems increasingly essential to encourage academic and scientific cooperation to be reciprocal, and for the researchers and institutions involved to share, have access to, and be identified by the provision of “raw material,” the processing of data, the publication of results, and the citation of the shared effort. This sequence can even prevent the perpetuation of the economic maxim of the export of academic “commodities” (raw data as raw material) by people from countries with lower purchasing power and the import of processed data, or “industrialized products,” by colleagues linked to universities or institutions in places with a higher degree and possibility of work.

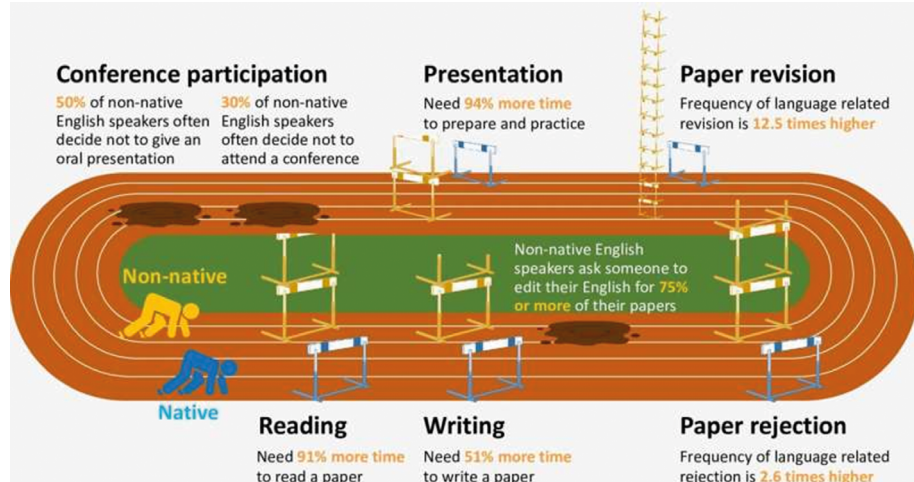
Another important point to note is the need to not only see, understand, or “offer” the region as a place to hold events or prospect for partners for other organizations. The growth of English as a *lingua franca* has brought challenges both in creating channels such as the Journal of Latin American Communication Research, mentioned above, and in holding debates and events that understand the language beyond the idea that English would be “the Esperanto that worked.”³ As can be seen in Figure 3, people who were born in non-native English countries find it more difficult to give oral presentations or participate in scientific events, read, write, and revise content, making it difficult to access and circulate materials.

²By way of illustration, at the XIII Congress of ALAIC, held by the entity in Mexico in 2016, I was questioned by a Brazilian colleague who demanded that the entity's board of directors included around 50% of Brazilians in its scientific program, given that Brazilians represented half of the association's membership. I argued that it was necessary to consider other variables when defining the program of a scientific event, not just the proportion of members. I also had the opportunity to say that, if this rule were followed to the letter, colleagues from smaller countries would be even less able to speak and be heard and, at the global level, there would be few spaces for participation at the tables due to the greater number of inhabitants and members of IAMCR and ICA entities from countries such as China and India. I believe that the interlocutor understood and accepted the arguments, but I also believe that there is still a lot to discuss about this in order to increase the flow of ideas and people.

³Phrase used by Rita Lee in an interview given in 1991.

Figure 3

The cost of not being a native English speaker in science



Note. Public Library of Science (2023).

The need to promote more spaces for exchange in an environment more conducive to the use of Portuguese and Spanish was one of the reasons for ALAIC's involvement and participation in the foundation, in 2009, of the Ibero-American Confederation of Scientific and Academic Associations of Communication (Confibercom). The concern with a more dialogic and horizontal communication has guided the work of THE ALAIC board of directors and is present in important guiding documents. Among them should be mentioned the "Letter of La Paz", signed by members of the boards of directors of Latin American entities who agreed on the need of:

⁴In the original: "La coexistencia de variadas configuraciones culturales y económicas, no pasibles de ser subsumidas a un principio totalizador y jerarquizante, pone en cuestión los saberes hegemónicos, evidenciando la existencia de otras matrices de otras matrices epistemológicas, a las cuales es preciso escuchar.

El conjunto de categorías derivadas de la reflexión sobre el papel, no más periférico, ocupado por América Latina en el modo de reproducción ampliada del capital y de las nuevas sociabilidades y sensibilidades allí accionadas, se convierten, pues, esenciales para comprender mejor la realidad global". This and other translations by the author.

The coexistence of various cultural and economic configurations, which cannot be subsumed to a totalizing and hierarchical principle, calls into question the hegemonic knowledge, evidencing the existence of other epistemological matrices, which must be listened to. The set of categories derived from the reflection on the role, no longer peripheral, occupied by Latin America in the expanded mode of reproduction of capital and of the new sociabilities and sensitivities brought into play there, thus become essential to better understand global reality⁴. (Alaic, 2013, our translation)

In order to materialize the principles that guided its elaboration, the "Letter of La Paz" prescribed the need for the collective production of a repository of Latin American communicational thinking, which holds the objective and power to promote the communion of efforts of different associations and other

paradigmatic institutions in the field of communication in a common effort of short, medium, and long term.

The ALAIC website has sought to be part of these efforts, providing connections and availability of content related to the memory and history of Latin American communicational thinking, as well as sharing news about actions of regional relevance and impact. In this aspect, it is also worth highlighting the efforts related to the use of social media, especially ALAIC's channels on Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/alaicorg/>), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/alaic.org/>), and YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/@alaicorg221>), which have enabled greater circulation and visibility.

This text highlights the need to promote memory, as we understand that such data sharing can strengthen the idea of reciprocity and cooperation on the bases in which the Latin American community holds even more bibliographic and bibliometric conditions to know the production developed in the region.

Applying what is known inside and outside the region could be equally fundamental for an exchange in which Latin American authors are perceived as people with the capacity not only to deal with and evaluate what is happening in Latin America, influencing—why not?—in reflections that are concentrated or spread mainly from the denominated central countries.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning the need for a greater deepening of the debates, productions, and reflections on the part of institutions and associations in relation to the knowledge economy. It is still an important challenge to promote more ways of circulating the production developed in Latin America within and outside the region, by creating repositories and holding events such as those mentioned above.

To this end, a permanent debate on the flow of information and editorial communication⁵ and the construction of regional channels is essential, but also on the workings of bibliographic companies which sometimes offer services that are, unfortunately, not accessible to those doing the research or to the contracting institutions, contributing to authors not only not being paid for texts published in an open or closed way, but also having to pay to access their own content in foreign publishing houses or journals. In contrast, colleagues from countries with better economic conditions work in institutions that subscribe to databases with greater access capacity.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This text sought to systematize the main actions and conceptual, political, and academic bases that have guided ALAIC's actions of cooperation. As can

⁵ A key reference for this issue is still the MacBride Report (1980). Much of what the then International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems pointed out remains relevant in proposing a New World Information and Communication Order. In the publishing, academic, and scientific environment, there is still an unequal and disjointed flow on both regional and global scales. Denying this reality or wanting to transform it by force can not only maintain, but strengthen inequities.



be seen, there is an effort for greater dialogue, both within and outside the region, based on the idea of horizontality and academic reciprocity.

To this end, the aim is to create and consolidate initiatives that promote the circulation of content in face-to-face activities and that make increasing use of contemporary information and communication technologies.

The article prescribes the need to deepen the debate on the knowledge economy so that more measures for the production, distribution, and access to content produced in Latin America can be devised and put into practice, also helping to ensure that the role of researchers from the region is not merely accessory or inferior.

Knowing the production developed over time, in books and in ALAIC's publications, can be a key element in avoiding or at least reducing situations of inferiorization and changing these practices for a relationship of respect and greater interaction and participation, understood as opportunities for sharing influence and power.

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