

**Decoloniality and language teaching: perspectives and challenges for the construction of embodied knowledge in the current political scene/
*Decolonialidade e ensino de línguas: perspectivas e desafios para a construção do conhecimento corporificado no cenário político atual***

*Fernando da Silva Pardo**

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ABSTRACT

This article looks at the recent Brazilian public educational policies and the attempt to naturalize the ideology of dominant groups that are opposed to the legitimization of the epistemological diversity of marginalized groups and/or opponents of their beliefs. Based on the Freirean approach and decolonial theories (CASTRO-GÓMEZ; GROSFUGUEL, 2007; LANDER, 2005; MIGNOLO, 2009; MORENO, 2005; SOUSA SANTOS, 2010), I discuss the relationships of submission, subordination, and exclusion promoted by the recent educational policies in Brazil. Furthermore, I seek to problematize the role of education to develop critique and the construction of embodied knowledge, i.e. knowledge built by bodies that have different political, cultural, social, linguistic, racial and gender identities. I conclude by emphasizing the importance of rethinking the role of English in our contemporary society as well as the *ethos* of teacher education and the teaching of English itself as a political task which promotes inquiry, critical thinking, and respect to the epistemological diversity.

KEYWORDS: Decoloniality; Educational policies; Teacher education; Embodied knowledge; Language teaching.

RESUMO

Este trabalho tem como objetivo refletir sobre as recentes políticas públicas educacionais brasileiras e a tentativa de naturalização da ideologia dos grupos dominantes, em detrimento à legitimação da pluralidade epistemológica de grupos marginalizados e/ou contrários a tal pensamento uniformizador. A partir de uma perspectiva freiriana e passando pelas teorias de decolonialidade (CASTRO-GÓMEZ; GROSFUGUEL, 2007; LANDER, 2005; MIGNOLO, 2009; MORENO, 2005; SOUSA SANTOS, 2010), discuto as relações de submissão, subordinação e exclusão promovidas pelas políticas educacionais recentes. Em seguida, busco problematizar o papel da educação para o desenvolvimento da criticidade e da construção do conhecimento corporificado, isto é, construído a partir de corpos atravessados por diferentes identidades culturais, sociais, linguísticas, de raça e de gênero. Concluo, ressaltando a importância de se repensar o papel da língua inglesa na sociedade atual e o caráter fundamental da formação de professores e do ensino do idioma como uma tarefa política que desenvolva o questionamento, o pensamento crítico e o respeito à diversidade epistemológica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Decolonialidade; Políticas educacionais; Formação de professores; Conhecimento corporificado; Ensino de línguas.

* PhD - Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of São Paulo - IFSP - Cubatão, SP, Brazil. fernando.pardo@usp.br

Decisively rejecting any form of discrimination is part of thinking right as well. Racial, class, or gender prejudice offends the essence of human beings and radically denies democracy. How far from it we are when we face with impunity those who kill boys in the streets, peasants struggling for their rights, or those who discriminate against black people and women?¹

(FREIRE, 1996, p.17)²

1 Introduction

I begin this paper by emphasizing the feeling of indignation perceived in everyone engaged in fighting for free public education of excellence, social justice and equal rights and opportunities for all. Also, I could not help including the aforementioned Freire's epigraph. The author was (and still is) considered the cornerstone of some of the concepts that I will discuss throughout this article. His work as an intellectual, educator, and researcher cited and recognized globally, now becomes a threat for right-wing conservative politicians who frequently deny his theoretical and practical contributions to education. More than ever Freire's theoretical framework must be debated, spread and clarified for those who intend to erase the history and memory of class warfare in Brazil, especially the struggles of the working class, educators and minority groups, such as women, black people, indigenous people, and the LGBTQI+ community³.

I also need to take a stand and describe my *locus* of enunciation so that the reader can understand my point. For now on, I admit my non-neutrality, for there is no way to ignore that we all have a history since the ambition for neutrality would erase our subjectivity and we would become inhuman (JESUS, 2018, p. 97). Varghese and Jonhston corroborate this idea when they claim that “our interpretations, findings, and

¹ My translation as well as in all excerpts translated from Portuguese and Spanish hereafter.

² “Faz parte igualmente do pensar certo a rejeição mais decidida a qualquer forma de discriminação. A prática preconceituosa de raça, de classe, de gênero ofende a substantividade do ser humano e nega radicalmente a democracia. Quão longe dela nos achamos quando vivemos a impunidade dos que matam meninos nas ruas, dos que assassinam camponeses que lutam por seus direitos, dos que discriminam os negros, dos que inferiorizam as mulheres”.

³ LGBTQI+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex. The symbol + stands for other identities, such as Pansexual, Asexual, among others.

conclusions will be colored by and filtered through our subject positions, and therefore we believe it would be naïve to claim objectivity in our interpretations” (2007, p. 13).

I speak from the Human Sciences. I have a Bachelor’s degree in languages to be more specific. I am an English teacher at a Federal Institute of Science, Education and Technology, male, white, heterosexual, born in the biggest city in Latin America and I describe myself politically as a progressist⁴. It is noticeable that there are differences of wage, working conditions, psychological and sexual harassment suffered, and discrimination between a male-white-heterosexual worker born in São Paulo and a woman, a black person, an indigenous, a person born in the Northeast of Brazil or a transgender. Although I constantly fight against discrimination, sympathize with their suffering, and recognize the physical and symbolic violence they are exposed to, I emphasize that I belong to a privileged group, that is, I problematize exclusion from the position of the included (MORENO, 2005).

I take it for granted that I have never had to be careful choosing where to go, what time to go or the way I should dress. I have never had to be afraid of seeing a police car and do not know if it would be there to protect or chase me. I have never had to worry about my accent or the color of my skin. I have never had to be afraid of being assaulted or even killed for expressing my sexual orientation or my gender identity in public, among many other everyday situations. However, I highlight that, despite my privileges, I am subjected to experiment social relations of subalternity or coloniality, as I will show throughout this paper. I reaffirm that the analysis of the political conjuncture in this text consists of my interpretation of the current political scene and it is subjected to divergent opinions.

It is publicly known that, historically, there have been many obstacles for educators in Brazil. Besides, recently, the task of teaching and the development of free and critical thinking have become a daily challenge. The ultraconservative wave supported by the neoliberal ideal that arises worldwide (CHUN, 2013; HOLBOROW, 2012; HILGERS, 2011) seems to bring about the colonial, religious, and military

⁴ In the current political scene in Brazil, being a progressist, in my view, means to be against the conservative neoliberal project and be engaged in the struggle for social justice and equal rights for minority groups, such as women, black people, indigenous people, and the LGBTQI+ movement. It also means to defend the environment and Human Rights.

Brazilian heritage. This aspect also results in a political agenda that increases inequalities and ceases social justice achievements.

Considering this scenario, based on the Freirean approach and through decolonial theories (CASTRO-GÓMEZ; GROSFUGUEL, 2007; LANDER, 2005; MIGNOLO, 2009; MORENO, 2005; SOUSA SANTOS, 2010), this article looks at the recent Brazilian public educational policies and the attempt to naturalize the ideology of dominant groups that are opposed to the legitimization of the epistemological diversity of marginalized groups and/or opponents of their beliefs. My point is that the attempt to impose a uniform dominant thought, opposed to local or “subaltern” knowledge, prevents the emergence of diverse identities and different views as well as impedes the development of critique and the construction of embodied knowledge, i.e. built through bodies inhabited by different cultural, social, linguistic, racial and gender identities. I conclude by reflecting upon the construction of embodied knowledge, the role of teacher education and the teaching of English itself as a political task which promotes inquiry, critical thinking, and respect to epistemological, linguistic, cultural, social, ethnic, racial, and gender diversity.

2 The current political scene and its implications for educational policies

The first aspect I will discuss is related to colonial, religious, and military heritage in Brazil. First, we can observe that, even after the independence of Brazil, the colonial experience is maintained one way or another, such as the economic dependence of more “developed” nations or the adoption of imported sociocultural patterns considered more prestigious, i.e. in a first moment the European model and more recently the American (meaning the USA) one. The *return of the colonizer* (SOUSA SANTOS, 2010), described by the author as an indirect form of government that “implies to revive forms of colonial government” (p.44)⁵, is presented as a movement in which the state denies its responsibility of social regulation and delegates this task to private sectors by transferring the administration of services and public ownership, such as the control of health care, the land, potable water, the forests, and the environment to

⁵ “[...] implica o ressuscitar de formas de governo colonial”.

private enterprises. In Brazil, the establishment of a neoliberal project, allegedly to fight high inflation rates, reduce government spending, and attract foreign investments, has accelerated the reduction of the welfare state. This can be observed in several adopted measures, such as the Labor Reform⁶, the Pension Reform⁷, the unrestrained privatization project, the sale of the Amazon, and the delivery of national resources to private enterprises and foreign countries exploration (the Pre-salt layer, the Alcântara Launch Center, among others). It is remarkable to think that, initially, the profits of the Pre-salt exploration would be managed to fit education investments. However, after the 2016 Coup d'état, the state policies have changed dramatically.

Sousa Santos also acknowledges the concept of *contractual fascism* (2010, p. 46). According to him, the concept implies the legitimacy of social contracts of civil rights in which unequal power relations are clearly observed “since there is no alternative to the contract, the weaker side accepts the imposed conditions by the stronger side, however bad it may seem”⁸ (SOUSA SANTOS, 2010, p. 46). The recent Labor Reform in Brazil illustrates the relationship in which the weaker side (workers) is subjected to the interests of the stronger side (private corporations). The ongoing Pension Reform project along with the attempt to co-opt the population for its approval is another example of the turn to contractual fascism.

Secondly, the influence of religious groups of politicians in the congress has devastated measures that aim at maintaining human rights and protecting minority groups, such as women, black people, indigenous people, and the LGBTQI+ communities. In the third place, concerning the military heritage, since the end of the military dictatorship in Brazil, we have not witnessed such a large number of military officers occupying high positions in the government. Moreover, the positions they occupy frequently have nothing to do with their educational and professional backgrounds. Furthermore, an ongoing project to create new military schools is taking place in Brazil. The implications include implementing the basic military principles of

⁶ Law 13.467 – July 13th, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/especial/noticias/reforma-trabalhista-leia-integra-do-texto-sancionado/> Accessed: Aug. 13th, 2019.

⁷ Bill of Law – PEC 06/2019. Retrieved from: https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra?codteor=1712459 Accessed: Aug. 13th, 2019.

⁸ “a parte mais fraca, vulnerabilizada por não ter alternativa ao contrato, aceita as condições que lhe são impostas pela parte mais poderosa, por mais onerosas e despóticas que sejam”.

hierarchy and discipline in schooling. In Foucault's view (1999), the docile body is the one that "is manipulated, shaped, trained, and that obeys and becomes skilled or whose forces multiply" (p.117). This illustrates the implications of the education model based on military principles. Such a model rests on obedience, discipline, subordination, and does not give priority to the development of critical thinking. Conversely, it aims at creating subordinated, submissive citizens who embrace the interests of dominant classes.

A retrospective analysis of recent public policies that directly affect education includes the proposal of a constitutional amendment, namely PEC 55 (a.k.a. *the end of the world*). The proposal resulted in the approval of the constitutional amendment 95 that freezes public expenditures for two decades in Brazil. The constitutional amendment passed in 2016, still during the government of former President Michel Temer. Its consequences comprise the implementation of harsh austerity measures which culminated in the reduction of the education budget by the current President Jair Bolsonaro. Besides, the Ministry of Education (MEC) has launched the Program of Innovative and Enterprising Universities and Federal Institutes⁹ – *Programa Institutos e Universidades Empreendedoras e Inovadoras* (a.k.a. *FUTURE-SE*, in Portuguese, or *Future Yourself* roughly translated into English) and also the new National Literacy Policy (NLP) – *Política Nacional de Alfabetização* (PNA) in Portuguese (BRASIL, 2019). Both programs illustrate the model of education and society designed by the current government, as described below.

Despite government claims that the program *FUTURE-SE* will increase financial and administrative autonomy for the universities and federal institutes, in my view, the measure leads to the increasing dependence of educational institutions on financial resources from private enterprises. This can bring a series of consequences for the autonomy of universities and institutes since they risk being under the thumb of private corporations and their interests. Moreover, the enterprising bias presented in the proposal aligns with neoliberal principles (HILGERS, 2011), i.e. flexibilization, deregulation, less government interference, objection to collectivism, extreme focus on

⁹ Available only in Portuguese at <http://portal.mec.gov.br/component/tags/tag/52641> Accessed: Aug. 24th, 2019.

individual responsibility (of universities and institutes in this case), and the belief that growth leads to development.

Concerning the objectives of the National Literacy Policy manual (BRASIL, 2019), the guidelines state that the literacy process consists of learning to read, write, and solve mathematical calculations. Afterward, the manual presents five essential components to develop literacy: phonics awareness, systematic phonics instruction, fluency in oral reading, the development of vocabulary, and text comprehension. In general, the guidelines define literacy based on the concepts of the Cognitive Science of Reading, such as the teaching of reading and writing following an alphabetic system that resorts to phonics and phonemic awareness to decode and encode language. The choice of the phonics method brings political and ideological implications since it goes against the researches on literacy developed in the last decades in Brazil. From a linear and gradual structural view of literacy, from simpler to more complex structures, the NLP proposal moves away from the central question of language as a social and politicized practice, that is, the document is guided by phonics instruction as training and systematization of the language. To a certain extent, it ignores critical literacy practices and searches for so-called neutrality in the literacy process. Nonetheless, the very semantic choices in the document show its political and ideological bias, that is, non-neutral. An example is that the text proposes to define key concepts ‘to avoid misunderstandings by adopting terms like *literacy*¹⁰ (*literacia*) and numeracy, according to the terminology used in developed countries research’ (BRASIL, 2019, p. 40, my emphasis). In spite of extensive literacy (*letramentos*) research in Brazil (cf. MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2011a, 2011b; ROJO; MOURA, 2012, MONTE MÓR, 2013, TAKAKI; MACIEL, 2014, ZACCHI; WIELEWICKI, 2015, TAKAKI; MONTE MÓR, 2017, JORDÃO; MARTINEZ; MONTE MÓR, 2018), the document authors prefer to use the term *literacia* (more common in Portugal) instead of *letramento* (widely used by Brazilian researchers). In my view, the choice of the term *literacia* not only reflects a colonial experience of submission but also shows a political and ideological stand

¹⁰ In Portuguese, there is a difference between the terms *alfabetização* and *letramento*. However, in English, both terms are translated as *literacy*. It is important to remark that the former is understood as the ability of reading and writing, usually associated with encoding and decoding of letters and words. On the other hand, the latter is understood, from a Freirean perspective, as a social practice of ‘reading the word and the world’. In the NLP manual, the authors have chosen to adopt the term *literacia* (more common in Portuguese spoken in Portugal) instead of *letramento* (more common in Brazil).

against the Literacy Studies in Brazil, especially against the work of Paulo Freire who is considered to a great extent the precursor of such theories.

According to Lankshear and Knobel (2003), Critical Literacy research increased dramatically in the 1970s, especially after the work of Paulo Freire concerning the radical education movement in the late 1960s whose aim was to build critical social practices. Lankshear and Knobel argue that before the 1970s the term literacy was used to describe non-formal adult literacy education programs. By that time, those practices were based on the concept of reading as decoding the text in the first moment to encode it afterward. However, Freire's work promoted a new understanding of the term. According to Lankshear and Knobel,

Freire's concept of literacy as 'reading the word and the world' involved much more than merely decoding and encoding print. Far from being the sole objective of literacy education, learning how to encode and decode alphabetic print was integrated into an expansive pedagogy in which groups of learners collaboratively pursued critical consciousness of their world via a reflexive or 'cyclical' process of reflection and action. Through their efforts to act on the world, and to analyse and understand the results of their action, people come to know the world better: more 'deeply' and 'critically' (LANKSHEAR; KNOBEL, 2003, p. 5).

Freire's concept of reading the word and the world (FREIRE; MACEDO, 1990) is much more than the literal comprehension of texts. Neither is the sole ability of inference or reading between the lines. The concept is much wider since it embraces not only the critical reading of the text but also the relation between the social context of the reader and a continuous and cyclical process of critical reflection.

Hence, unlike the NLP guidelines, I claim that literacy understood as a contextualized social practice considers that individuals can make meaning of texts as agents in the world, especially starting from their knowledge. In this perspective, the meaning is not supposedly determined by its author, during the writing process, but is constructed during the reading process. Accordingly, my criticism of both educational policies mentioned lies in the ideas of Biesta (2010) who contends that for us to judge any policy or educational program as good, effective or successful, it is necessary to understand its purpose and which goals are at stake. Needless to say that I am not trying to impose my understanding of the aforementioned policies but it is important to take

their objectives into consideration, such as to reflect upon what kind of student and citizen they are trying to shape, what educational and literacy goals are being pursued, and what view of individual and society are presented in those policies.

3 Coloniality, submission, and subordination: disembodiment and exclusion of the other

From this point on, it is necessary to explain the connection between language teaching, especially the English language, and the concept of decoloniality. In Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel's view:

The concept of 'decoloniality', presented in this book, is useful to transcend the assumption of some political and academic discourses suggesting that, after the end of colonial administrations and the establishment of nation-states in the periphery, now we live in a decolonized and postcolonial world. Conversely, we assume that the international division of labor between center and peripheries, as well as the ethnic-racial hierarchy of peoples during several centuries of European colonial expansion, has not changed substantially after the end of colonialism and the establishment of nation-states in the peripheries. We have witnessed, in contrast, a transition from the modern colonialism to global coloniality. A process that certainly has changed the forms of domination implemented by modernity but not the structure of the center-periphery relations on a global scale. New institutions of the global capital, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), as well as military organizations like The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the intelligence agencies, and the Pentagon, all of them established after World War II and the supposed end of colonialism, keep the periphery in a subordinated position (CASTRO-GÓMEZ, GROSFUGUEL, 2007. p. 13)¹¹.

¹¹ El concepto 'decolonialidad', que presentamos en este libro, resulta útil para trascender la suposición de ciertos discursos académicos y políticos, según la cual, con el fin de las administraciones coloniales y la formación de los Estados-nación en la periferia, vivimos ahora en un mundo descolonizado y poscolonial. Nosotros partimos, en cambio, del supuesto de que la división internacional del trabajo entre centros y periferias, así como la jerarquización étnico-racial de las poblaciones, formada durante varios siglos de expansión colonial europea, no se transformó significativamente con el fin del colonialismo y la formación de los Estados-nación en la periferia. Asistimos, más bien, a una *transición del colonialismo moderno a la colonialidad global*, proceso que ciertamente ha transformado las formas de dominación desplegadas por la modernidad, pero no la estructura de las relaciones centro-periferia a escala mundial. Las nuevas instituciones del capital global, tales como el Fondo Monetario Internacional (FMI) y el Banco Mundial (BM), así como organizaciones militares como la OTAN, las agencias de inteligencia y el Pentágono, todas conformadas después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial y del supuesto fin del colonialismo, mantienen a la periferia en una posición subordinada.

Based on the authors' view, I recognize that unequal power relations that started during the colonial period between different groups, such as socio-cultural, political, economic, ethnic-racial, and gender/sexuality hierarchies established through binary classifications, i.e. developed/undeveloped, superior/inferior, civilized/uncivilized, center/periphery have not ceased with the end of colonialism. Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel contend that, especially after the end of World War II and the independence of several European ex-colonies in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia, the economic and political relations still maintain forms of domination in the countries of the global periphery. The former territorial and administrative colonization is replaced by coloniality through the implementation of the neoliberal capitalism which maintains the relationships of exclusion of countries treated as inferior. The neoliberal strand of global capitalism “provokes exclusions through epistemic, spiritual, racial/ethnic, gender/sexuality hierarchies implemented by modernity”¹² (CASTRO-GÓMEZ, GROSFOGUEL, 2007, p.14), that is, it still privileges white European knowledge and promotes “gender inequality, racial hierarchies, and cultural/ideological processes that favor the subordination of periphery in the capitalist world-system”¹³ (p. 14). Consequently, the logic of capitalism organizes ways of life, societies, and labor division in a way that “the ‘superior races’ occupy the highest-paying jobs while the ‘inferior races’ do the most coercive and lowest-paying jobs”¹⁴ (p.16). Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel claim that the first decolonization, after the territorial independence of colonized countries, maintained the unequal power hierarchies in the racial, ethnic, sexual, epistemic, economic, and gender relations. On the other hand, this second period of decolonization (still in progress) that the authors named *decoloniality* aims at breaking up crystallized paradigms in the socio-cultural, political, economic, ethnic, racial, and gender/sexuality relations. To my mind, in order to promote more equal power relations between different beings and pieces of knowledge, the decolonial theory

¹²“las exclusiones provocadas por las jerarquías epistémicas, espirituales, raciales/étnicas y de género/sexualidad desplegadas por la modernidad”.

¹³ “la desigualdad entre los géneros, a las jerarquías raciales y a los procesos culturales/ideológicos que favorecen la subordinación de la periferia en el sistema-mundo capitalista”.

¹⁴ “las ‘razas superiores’ ocupan las posiciones mejor remuneradas, mientras que las ‘inferiores’ ejercen los trabajos más coercitivos y peor remunerados”.

aims at identifying invisible and naturalized hierarchies that try to impose homogeneity over heterogeneity.

But what is the relationship between decoloniality and language teaching? First of all, as an English teacher in a public school, my everyday practice is permeated by the coloniality issue, expressly or implicitly. People usually ask me if I speak American or British English (assuming that there are only these two forms), or if I lived in the U.S. (a mandatory step to becoming an English teacher, according to common sense), and what my favorite British rock and roll band is (despite the fact that I prefer Brazilian popular music). These are examples apparently without connection that I observe in my everyday practice. However, if we pay close attention, they suggest how the coloniality issue currently takes place in English classes. Many times my students assume that I love everything coming from the USA and their culture just because I am an English teacher (although I have never saluted the U.S. flag, as Brazilian President Bolsonaro did). These misconceptions ignore the complexity, the non-totality, the incompleteness, and the multiple identities that pervade our unfinished bodies and minds constantly in (de)(re)construction.

The second aspect I would like to discuss has to do with the issues of submission and subordination. While I was writing this paper, I received an e-mail from the federal institute where I am currently teaching. The message was an invitation to enroll in e-learning teacher education courses at the *E-Teacher Global* program created by the *Regional English Language Office (RELO)*, an institution affiliated with the U.S. embassy. The objective of the program is to “qualify” teachers from the federal institutes of education by offering courses on Content-Based Instruction, Teaching Grammar Communicatively, Integrating Critical Thinking Skills, Using Educational Technology, TESOL Methodology, The Art of Everyday Classroom Assessment, among others. The e-learning courses are designed by U.S. universities and also by a private corporation called *World Learning*. In the website of *World Learning*, we can find some information about the initiatives developed by the corporation, such as the project *Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program (IYLEP)*. According to the website, the IYLEP program “brings Iraqi high school and undergraduate students to the U.S. for summer exchanges to explore themes of leadership development, civic rights and

responsibilities, respect for diversity, and community engagement”¹⁵. Considering the recent political and economic relations between the USA and Iraq, the objectives of the program are at least suspicious. It seems much more an attempt to create a team of missionaries to spread the neoliberal ideology and free-market values (i.e. competition, individual responsibility, liberty as self-realization, entrepreneurship, etc.) and influence their fellow citizens. This example reinforces the arguments of Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007) that the global coloniality has rearranged the forms of domination implemented by modernity, but still maintains the structure of center-periphery relations on a global scale.

The most intriguing aspect of the *E-Teacher Global* program for Brazilian teachers is that, although Brazil is reducing around 30% of the expenditures in education, the government invests money in courses offered by foreign institutions that are not aware of the contexts of Brazilian schools, teachers, and students. Those courses are usually conceived in the one-size-fits-all format, that is, designed locally to be applied globally without considering the different local contexts and the peculiarities of the subjects involved in the learning process. Would it not be more reasonable if the courses were designed by Brazilian universities that are usually more aware of the contexts of schools, teachers, and students, and also do a large amount of research in language teaching?

Besides that, seeing the native speaker (usually British or American) as someone to be imitated still takes place in English teaching and textbooks – especially the ones published in the U.S and Great Britain and exported worldwide – since this kind of material often does not consider epistemologies, culture, and English speakers from peripheries. Thus, such countries see themselves as “owners” of the knowledge and the English language as they reaffirm their epistemic privilege and the maintenance of the colonial logic. These aspects are tied to equivocal conceptions of language teaching. As Siqueira (2018) argues, it is necessary to break up with crystallized convictions that “only hegemonic countries represent English language target cultures and that the native

¹⁵ Available at <https://www.worldlearning.org/program/iraqi-young-leaders-exchange-program/>
Accessed: May 18th, 2019.

speaker model is superior, untouchable, and pursued” (p. 208)¹⁶. Furthermore, he points out that curricula have to encompass student’s needs in a meaningful way. After that, Siqueira defends

the decolonization of textbooks, the development of an intercultural sense, and the adoption of critical approaches that result in habitual discussions of subjects that can contribute to the development of students as critical citizens aware of the place they occupy in the world (SIQUEIRA, 2018, p. 208)¹⁷.

As Rocha (2012) makes clear, it means to break up with more traditional teaching approaches that privilege the native speaker as the “authentic owner”¹⁸ (p.170) of the English language. Such approaches use the language in idealized contexts that do not give priority to situated social practices. In this scenario, we often see “stereotyped characters that are quite different from the students’ identities”¹⁹ (p.170). This aspect corroborates the assumption of Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007) that the periphery elites pursue development models from the North and reproduce old modes of colonialism. Therefore, teachers need to develop a critical view of political, linguistic, and cultural aspects that are tied to language teaching approaches. Moreover, it is important to analyze how language ideologies are represented in educational policies and textbooks, as well as the social model they aim at establishing.

Besides that, the recent educational policies have culminated in social backlashes, censorship, lack of academic freedom, and ideological persecution that recall the dictatorship period in Brazil. Recently, we have witnessed cuts in education and research investments, the wrecking of universities, schools, the teaching career, and even the threat of extinguishing Philosophy and Sociology courses since they do not create many job opportunities or society improvements, according to some political discourses.

¹⁶ “apenas países hegemônicos representam culturas alvo de língua inglesa ou de que o modelo do falante nativo é intocável na sua superioridade e deve ser almejado a todo custo”.

¹⁷“a descolonização de materiais didáticos, o desenvolvimento de uma sensibilidade intercultural, a adoção de abordagens críticas, desembocando na inclusão e discussão regular de temáticas que possam contribuir para o desenvolvimento do aluno como cidadão plenamente consciente da posição que ocupa no mundo”.

¹⁸ “dono legítimo”

¹⁹“personagens geralmente estereotipados e bastantes distantes das muitas realidades e identidades vivenciadas pelos alunos”.

Actually, we have witnessed measures that give priority to the development of people's *qualification* and *socialization*, but do not focus on their individuality or *subjectification* (BIESTA, 2010). However, Biesta's concept of subjectification is unlike the neoliberal idea of individuality based on meritocracy that shifts the responsibility of success or failure to individual ability. According to the neoliberal logic, the individual is like an enterprise. The concepts of entrepreneurship, autonomy, competition, and efficiency are overvalued so that this model of society can explore individuals at a minimum cost and persuade them to make the best use of their bodies to improve productivity (HILGERS, 2011). According to the neoliberal thought, "there is no society, only individuals" (HOLBOROW, 2012, p. 26). On the other hand, Biesta (2010) states that subjectification consists in recognizing the individual *uniqueness*, that is, to create opportunities for the subject to embrace plurality and difference through the contact with *otherness*. Thus, the individual can recognize himself as unique in a necessarily heterogeneous world.

According to a message published in the *Twitter* account of President Bolsonaro, "the government has to respect the money of taxpayer citizens. Its function is to teach kids reading, writing, Maths, an occupation to make money and guarantee his family well-being, and contribute to the progress of society"²⁰. To a certain extent, the president statement is in agreement with the NLP manual and demonstrates that the recently adopted measures aimed at developing abilities and qualifying individuals to get a job (qualification) as well as introducing them in society (socialization), i.e. following norms, values and social patterns – as long as their attitude does not challenge the ideology of the dominant groups. Nonetheless, these measures eliminate the possibilities of promoting heterogeneity and subjectification, that is, chances of recognizing the *self* as a critical thinking individual. It is an attempt to construct a form of knowledge "*disembodied* and *decontextualized* [...] supposed to be objective and universal" (LANDER, 2005, p. 9)²¹. Subjectification consists in promoting different opportunities for students, based on the Freirean perspective, "to take over their social and historical identities as thinking beings that communicate, transform, create, make

²⁰ "a função do governo é respeitar o dinheiro do contribuinte, ensinando para os jovens a leitura, escrita e a fazer conta e depois um ofício que gere renda para a pessoa e bem-estar para a família, que melhore a sociedade em sua volta".

²¹ "*descorporizado e descontextualizado* [...] que pretende ser des-subjetivado (isto é, objetivo) e universal".

their dreams come true, capable of hating because they are also capable of loving” (FREIRE, 1996, p. 18)²². It is necessary to emphasize that the production of knowledge is always socially and historically situated. In short, it is impossible to conceive a form of disembodied knowledge. Based on the ideas of Mignolo (2009, p. 4), we assume that everyone who knows something (the knower) is geo- and body-politically implicated in that knowledge (the known). Likewise, it is also impossible to conceive a neutral detached observer that seeks the truth without being implicated in his subjectivity while in contact with the object of investigation. Therefore, we cannot conceive a neutral modality of education, no matter if it is A, B or C. The criticism towards some Brazilian educators accused of indoctrinating students relies on a false neutrality treaty from political, religious and military groups that in turn are not neutral either. Otherwise stated, in Brazil, politicians, religious leaders, military officers, judges, and even the press take sides in politics, however, teachers are supposed to be neutral.

The political demand for faculty members neutrality or knowledge *disembodiment* (LANDER, 2005) seems to try eliminating inherent human heterogeneity by excluding difference. In Moreno’s view,

to talk about exclusion is to talk about distance and closure. It has nothing to do with borders anymore, but walls instead. The person inside builds his wall, sets bounds and defends his territories. The wall is built by the person inside, not by the person outside (MORENO, 2005, p. 88)²³.

Even after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the advent of “globalization” – I write it between inverted commas for I understand that the end of territorial borders does not apply to everyone, e.g. Syrian, Mexican, Venezuelan, and several other immigrants – we continue to see symbolic (and even real) walls being built, such as Trump’s project to construct a giant wall on the United State’s border with Mexico. These are attempts of denying and excluding the *other* based on cultural and economic systems of domination, the European at first, and later the U.S. model. Sousa Santos points out that

²² “assumir-se como ser social e histórico, como ser pensante, comunicante, transformador, criador, realizador de sonhos, capaz de ter raiva porque capaz de amar”.

²³ “falar de exclusão é falar de distância e ao mesmo tempo de fechamento. Já não se trata de fronteira e sim de muralha, de fora e de dentro. O que está dentro constrói sua muralha e delimita e defende assim seu território. É o que está dentro que constrói a muralha, não o de fora”.

“the denial of part of humanity is sacrificial since it is a condition for the other part to become universal” (2010, p. 39)²⁴. In Brazil, the walls are not real but symbolic. They do not separate territories, but they segregate the oppressed classes promoting unequal human life conditions (MORENO, 2005).

The emergence of movements like *Escola sem Partido*²⁵ (school without political party) claims the extinction of difference and seeks to erase dissent, inquiry, critique, and knowledge diversity. Consequently, it prevents the plurality of thinking, cultures, races, and identities to develop a form of homogenizing education and the maintenance of an *interpretive habitus* (MONTE MÓR, 2018). Based on Bourdieu’s (1996) concept of *linguistic habitus*, Monte Mór (2018) postulates the concepts of *interpretive habitus* and *interpretive expansion*. However, in this analysis, I will focus on the former only. Monte Mór notes that Bourdieu understands communication as a *linguistic habitus* that relies on the linguistic market structures of institutions. The *habitus* compels individuals to communicate in a standardized way according to the requirements of several contexts and to “socially accepted and authorized concepts” (MONTE MÓR, 2018, p. 319)²⁶. Accordingly, the structures of the linguistic market regulate a consensus to erase communicative conflicts through the use of a discourse of neutrality and impersonality that aims at concealing the symbolic domination over the *habitus* and searches for a standardized convergence for language use and the maintenance of symbolic power. Based on her investigations, Monte Mór concluded that “people create and follow an interpretive habitus responding to institutional expectations that generate and regulate meanings” (MONTE MÓR, 2018, p. 320)²⁷. In other words, the *interpretive habitus* shapes individuals in a regulatory, limiting and disciplinary way. It compels convergent meaning-making and eliminates dissent, conflict, multiple perspectives, and thought diversity.

To my mind, if we shape individuals to follow a single *interpretive habitus* eliminating different forms of meaning-making, we take the risk of creating a whole

²⁴ “a negação de uma parte da humanidade é sacrificial, na medida em que constitui a condição para a outra parte da humanidade se afirmar enquanto universal”.

²⁵ Bill of Law. Available only in Portuguese at https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra?codteor=1707037&filename=PL+246/2019 Accessed: Aug. 15th, 2019.

²⁶ “conceitos socialmente aceitos e autorizados”

²⁷ “as pessoas formam e seguem um *habitus* interpretativo, respondendo às expectativas das instituições que geram e regulam os sentidos”.

upcoming generation of subordinated and apathetic citizens (and voters) without bodies and *corpus*: without bodies, because they could not express their cultural identities (FREIRE, 1996), according to their historical, political, cultural, and social experiences, neither their ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious belonging (HALL, 1998), especially if one follows religions originated in Africa that differ from the Judeo-Christian principles; without *corpus*, because a modality of education that restricts its goals to accomplishing reading, writing, solving mathematical operations, and learning a profession lacks the development of intellectual, cultural and philosophical thought. Consequently, it makes it impossible for individuals to take a critical stand towards the naturalized and uncontested truths in the world around them. In this analysis, I do not refer to the word *corpus* as understood by the Corpus Linguistics. Conversely, I use it as a metaphor that represents a collection of literacies and knowledge to be cultivated by individuals, including their critical, cultural and philosophical development. As Freire inquires:

Why not discuss the reality students should associate with the discipline taught? Why not discuss the constant violence in such an aggressive reality in which people have more contact with death than life? Why not establish a necessary ‘intimacy’ between the fundamental curricular knowledge to students and the social experience they have as individuals? Why not discuss the political and ideological implications of the dominant class indifference to the poor areas in the city and the ethics of class identified in this indifference? Because a pragmatic educator will say that school has nothing to do with this. School is not a political party. It is supposed to teach content and transfer it to students; and, once learned, the content will work by itself (FREIRE, 1996, p. 15)²⁸.

Freire’s inquiries are still up-to-date since they demonstrate that an excluding educational project denies thought and body diversity. This project, allegedly without a political party, ignores everyone who is unlike the white-patriarchal-heteronormative society model, i.e. aligned with moral conservatism and economic liberalism principles.

²⁸ “Por que não discutir com os alunos a realidade concreta a que se deva associar a disciplina cujo conteúdo se ensina, a realidade agressiva em que a violência é a constante e a convivência das pessoas é muito maior com a morte do que com a vida? Por que não estabelecer uma necessária ‘intimidade’ entre os saberes curriculares fundamentais aos alunos e a experiência social que eles têm como indivíduos? Por que não discutir as implicações políticas e ideológicas de um tal descaso dos dominantes pelas áreas pobres da cidade? A ética de classe embutida neste descaso? Porque, dirá um educador reacionariamente pragmático, a escola não tem nada que ver com isso. A escola não é partido. Ela tem que ensinar os conteúdos, transferi-los aos alunos. Aprendidos, estes operam por si mesmos”.

Considering that language and power are inseparable and the unequal power relations between oppressor and oppressed, Freire reminds us that our teaching practices have to “reinforce the students’ critical thinking, curiosity, and insubmission” (FREIRE, 1996, p. 13)²⁹. Following the ideas of Sousa Santos (2010), I agree that “political resistance has to be aligned with epistemological resistance” (p.49)³⁰ since “there is no global justice without cognitive global justice” (p.49)³¹. Moreover, it is necessary to foster counter-hegemonic movements that “fight against economic, social, political, and cultural exclusion implemented by the most recent phenomenon of global capitalism, namely neoliberal globalization” (SOUSA SANTOS, 2010, p. 50)³². To do so, educators and teacher educators need to be attentive to the incompleteness of their practice and aware of their unfinished condition as human beings in constant transformation, i.e. always suspicious of their pedagogical and epistemological certainties.

Conclusion

Regarding the objectives of English language teaching in Brazilian contemporary society, it is necessary to emphasize that, as a school subject, English has always occupied a supporting role in the curriculum. According to President Bolsonaro’s statement on *Twitter*, we assume that English is subordinated to more valued subjects, such as Portuguese and Mathematics, and considered a less important subject (as well as Sociology, Philosophy, Arts, and Physical Education) that has a narrower schedule. Furthermore, the assumption that individuals only need to learn how to read, write and solve mathematical operations ignores the importance of knowing how to deal with diversity through the contact with otherness, complexity, and heterogeneity in a world of social relations, work, and technology.

The objectives of learning English cannot be only connected to individual success just aiming at traveling abroad, participating in international student exchange

²⁹ “reforçar a capacidade crítica do educando, sua curiosidade, sua insubmissão”.

³⁰ “a resistência política deve ter como postulado a resistência epistemológica”

³¹ “não existe justiça social global sem justiça cognitiva global”

³² “lutam contra a exclusão econômica, social, política e cultural gerada pela mais recente encarnação do capitalismo global, conhecido como globalização neoliberal”.

programs, and getting a well-paid job. As Siqueira (2018) observes, the central question to be aware of is the political aspect of teacher education and English teaching, that is, to understand it as a political task that promotes inquiry, critical thinking and heterogeneity awareness (linguistic, cultural, social, political, ethnic, racial, and sexual/gender). In Siqueira's opinion, the biggest challenge for teacher education and language teaching is realizing that it is "an educational process, not only a utilitarian practice of transmitting a form of instantaneous pasteurized knowledge" (p. 205)³³. Consequently, to develop a political awareness of what means to teach and learn languages is to problematize teacher education concerning the theoretical frame that will ground classroom practices. Thus, studying and acknowledging different theories in initial and continuing teacher education is a central question for the perception and understanding of the educational beliefs and conceptions of teaching, language, and societies implied in different pedagogical approaches. Keeping this in mind, educators can choose among accepting, modifying, or transgressing curricula, as well as *when*, *how*, and *if* they think this is necessary to take actions that fit their educational contexts.

I suggest that, due to its transnational and transcultural scope, English has the potential to transgress its utilitarian role in educational curricula through contact with diversity and the other. Hence, English can catalyze critical thinking, tolerance, protagonism, and students' autonomy. Some alternatives for decolonial language teaching in Brazil and the construction of embodied knowledge include taking a critical stand against the misleading teaching goals mentioned throughout this paper. Undoubtedly, these alternative paths may follow Freire's ideas and consider the specific contexts, knowledge, culture, language, and people's bodies so that individuals could develop critical thinking and be aware of the unequal power relations involved in educational processes.

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³³ "um processo educacional e não apenas uma prática utilitária e tecnicista de passar um conhecimento pasteurizado e de uso instantâneo"

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