

# Language education as a locus of struggle, support, and respect: decolonial praxiologies from the goiano cerrado

Barbra Sabota

Hélvio Frank

Universidade Estadual de Goiás (Brasil)

## Abstract

In this article, we consider critical language education as a locus of struggle, support, and respect to discuss our teaching and research praxiologies in the academy: undergraduate language teaching programs and graduate language programs. We present our embodied politics in the format of episodic autoethnographic vignettes (Ono, 2018) in order to push our knowledge toward a "redefinition and [a] resignification of life in conditions of dignity" (Achinte, 2008, p. 85, as cited in Mignolo; Walsh 2018, p. 3). From a post-critical perspective, we challenge ourselves to narrate who we are and to problematize what we do in our contexts, from our bodies, the epistemic places we occupy, and the social representations that all this evokes. In our writing, we question how we see ourselves as teacher educators and what colonialities we strive to break. Through these vignettes, we defend an engaged critical language education project, attentive to local demands, and which confronts the colonialities of being, knowledge, and power from praxiologies of becoming.

Keywords: Critical language education. Decoloniality. Teacher education. Praxiologies.

## Educação linguística como espaço de luta, acolhimento e respeito: algumas de nossas praxiologias decoloniais no cerrado goiano

## Resumo

Neste artigo, consideramos a educação linguística crítica como espaço de luta, acolhimento e respeito para discutir nossas praxiologias docentes e de pesquisas em Licenciaturas em Letras e em Programas de Pós-graduação *stricto*

*sensu*. Apresentamos nossas corpolíticas em formato de vinhetas episódicas autoetnográficas (Ono, 2018), a fim de movimentar nossos saberes em prol da “redefinição e ressignificação da vida em condições de dignidade” (Achinte, 2008, p. 85, *apud* Mignolo; Walsh 2018, p. 3). De uma perspectiva pós-crítica, desafiamos-nos a narrar quem somos e a problematizar o que fazemos em nossos contextos, a partir de nossos corpos, dos lugares epistêmicos que ocupamos e das representações sociais que tudo isso evoca. Em nossa escrita, mantemos constante o questionamento sobre como nos vemos formadoras de professoras e que colonialidades nos esforçamos para romper. Por essas vinhetas, defendemos uma educação linguística crítica engajada, atenta às demandas locais e que interponha enfrentamentos às colonialidades do ser, do saber e do poder a partir de praxiologias outras.

Palavras-chave: Educação linguística crítica. Decolonialidade. Formação docente. Praxiologias.

## **Educación lingüística como espacio de lucha, aceptación y respeto: praxiologias decoloniales desde el cerrado goiano**

---

### **2**

#### **Resumen**

En este artículo, consideramos la educación lingüística crítica como un espacio de lucha, aceptación y respeto, para discutir nuestras praxiologías docentes e investigativas en las Licenciaturas en Letras y en los Postgrados Stricto Sensu. Presentamos nuestra corpolítica en formato de viñetas autoetnográficas episódicas (Ono, 2018), con el fin de avanzar nuestro conocimiento hacia la “redefinición y resignificación de la vida en condiciones de dignidad” (Mignolo; Walsh 2018, p. 2). Desde una perspectiva poscrítica, nos desafiamos a narrar quiénes somos y a problematizar lo que hacemos en nuestros contextos, a partir de nuestros cuerpos, los lugares epistémicos que ocupamos y las representaciones sociales que todo esto evoca. En nuestros escritos, cuestionamos constantemente cómo vemos a nosotros como formadoras de docentes y qué colonialidades nos esforzamos por romper. A través de estas viñetas, defendemos una educación lingüística crítica comprometida, atenta a las demandas locales y que enfrente las colonialidades del ser, el conocimiento y el poder a partir de praxiologias otras.

Palabras clave: Educación lingüística. Decolonialidad. Formación docente. Praxiologías.

## Initial destabilizations

As teacher educators at a state public institution located in the Brazilian Midwest, we constantly ask ourselves how we have dealt with the dual challenge of teaching and researching language without turning this undertaking into a space of alienation and oppression. We have also questioned how we can incorporate aspects of race, gender, sexuality, identity, and performativity into our praxiologies in order to expand the possibilities of becoming within an embodied politics, which encourages us to persist, even in the face of adversity.

These questions have been present in our endeavor to understand critical language education as a locus of struggle, support, and respect at a public university in the Goiano Cerrado, where student access and retention policies fall short. This situation, combined with institutional challenges, has driven us to put considerable effort into maintaining a kind of teacher education, in language teaching undergraduate programs and graduate programs, that can resonate with our praxiologies.

We have done our best to welcome and support our students, so as to provide for their needs, and to foster their professional development in research, with a view to contributing to a more inclusive academy. For us, such actions will certainly be reflected in society later on, in the sense of making it more just and less unequal. We have resisted despite being faced with adversity, for we understand that language education is also a space of political, performative, and social activism.

In taking into account that in using, learning, or teaching language repertoires in the classroom, we perform speech acts (Austin, 1998; Butler, 2018; Derrida, 1990), issues of race, gender, culture, and identity become analyzable from a linguistic perspective, which arises from emerging sociopolitical and subjective circumstances in interaction. From there we can envision different perspectives; we have been guided by a critical view of these processes, always seeking to problematize the performances that constitute us

socio-individually and collectively: our repertoires in social life (Frank; Lima, 2023).

A path of language education that we have pursued, which requires urgent attention, is the intelligibility of our bodies in the social world. In educational spaces, bodies are assigned meanings in performative terms, according to the dynamics of negotiation involved. Simply existing and being present in spaces are mere conditions for social meanings to be attributed to them. Thus, we adopt the concept of *embodied politics* here, coined by Frank (as cited in Frank; Lima, 2023), who defines it as

[...] a political, discursive, and performative understanding of the body, encompassing issues of color, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, along with other intersectionalities/ social markers of colonial difference. This understanding is signified from a meaning-making process (and its effects) attributed to the body. The initial perception is based on its physical and sexual characteristics, but that is further extended by the body's symbolic orientation in terms of its perception in the world, its performances, and of how people generally see it in social practices and relations (Frank; Lima, 2023, p. 6).

## 4

The idea of embodied politics is necessary in our work with language education because we teach, advise, and supervise students from diverse and complex sociohistorical, economic, and cultural contexts. Such circumstances reverberate throughout their being and leave marks on their bodies, as highlighted by Louro (2018). More often than not, those underprivileged individuals, neglected by state public policies, are the ones who opt for a teaching degree in the countryside of Goiás. Many times, they are driven by the impossibility of choosing other degrees or lack of material conditions to pursue their desired degrees (Oliveira, 2013). Consequently, finding meaning in what we study and research, both for them and us, is the first obstacle to be overcome. Would this entail a coloniality of desire? Or is it just an indication that "[...] re-signifying life in conditions of dignity [...]" (Achinte, 2008, p. 85, as cited in Mignolo; Walsh, 2018, p. 3) requires one's self-perception as a body and a subject? In working with these questions as a mode of resistance, we have sought to better know and understand the life experiences of our students so

as to channel our decolonial efforts. As Frank (as cited in Frank; Lima, 2023) observes,

[e]mbodied politics presupposes, given that one actually experiences something, the value and existence or inexistence of the body as materialized in social life. It is seen under a discursive, performative, and iconographic focus, which includes desires, aspirations, suffering, marks, resistance, erasures, classifications, and segregations, experienced and produced from one's own and/or others' interpretations. These are potential meaning-making dimensions that, if actualized, will act upon this body/person under the same discursive, performative, and iconographic circumstances (Frank; Lima, 2023, p. 6).

In view of the prevailing colonialities and the embodied politics that constitute us, in seeking to promote critical language education, we have mobilized our embodied and localized knowledge from our field of teacher education. The aim here is to interlace and reflect on our praxiologies, defined by Pessoa, Silva, and Freitas (2021) as theoretical scholarship fused with practical actions, in order to gain critical understanding of our performances within these processes.

In the following sections, we contextualize and explain the construction of this study methodologically. Next, based on localized experiences, we discuss language as emerging repertoires of social practices and embodied politics issues involving identities and performances of race, gender, and other social markers of difference in language education. Finally, we present the transient considerations of this post-critical study.

## Context and contextualization of the study

In an attempt to challenge prevailing colonialities in language "teaching and learning", to problematize who we have become through our embodied politics, and especially to discuss our praxiologies in the light of critical language education, we opted for the post-critical research approach. Among the possibilities of this kind of research, Paraíso (2004) highlights that it favors significant shifts toward understanding different ways of being and living

in the world. As we see it, this perspective is aligned with decolonial efforts that have been made in contemporary education. For the author, post-critical research allows us to "[...] seek and find different paths to be followed, possibilities of transgressions in practices that we assume to be permanent" (Paraíso, 2004, p. 295, translated by the authors). The methodological approach of this study is combined with critical autoethnography, aiming at immersing ourselves in the narrative with a keen eye for contingent factors. According to Ono (2018, p. 53, translated by the authors), autoethnography helps to "[...] break epistemological and ontological patterns, understood as saturated and fossilized [...]", and proposes the construction of new meanings based on post-structuralist ontoepistemologies.

The empirical material informing this study consists of two vignettes – with narrative and problematizing descriptions – of teacher education praxiologies pursued by us, focused on critical language education in undergraduate language teaching programs and graduate programs where we work. These undergraduate programs are located in different geographical contexts – different municipalities in the countryside of Goiás – and the praxiologies mobilized in the vignettes concentrate on distinct target audiences and languages. The first case concerns English as an additional language, and the second one pertains to Portuguese as a first language.

However, we argue that, despite acknowledging these differences, our reflections have intertwined with each other, as we conduct collaborative research in the same graduate program. Specifically, in this article, we join our academic efforts around problematic issues that we see as requiring urgent attention: the colonialities that we strive to dismantle in our praxiologies, the embodied politics that mobilizes our existence in social spaces, and the conceptions of language and language education that we have noticed in teacher education in the state of Goiás.

In writing the vignettes, we aim to engage in a dialogue with our readers, after all, we believe that they might identify with the stories, praxiologies, and contexts presented. For Ono (2018, p. 56, translated by the authors), autoethnography becomes a viable option for intertwining knowledge *about* narratives, emotions, and bodies, which can certainly help us expand our understanding of "[...] self, praxis, and experiences." The crucial point is that

this mode of thinking and doing research allows us to construct scholarship while making our bodies present in the text.

Nevertheless, it is worth stressing that, like any kind of research, auto-ethnography does not lack rigor. According to Le Roux (2016), some of the factors that assist in perceiving the relevance of such an approach are: subjectivity (how the self makes themselves visible and intertwined with the narrative); self-reflexivity (the researcher's awareness of their historical and cultural responsibility in the research); resonance (how the reading audience receives and identifies with the text, the intertwining of the researcher's self and the reader's self); credibility (evidence of verisimilitude, plausibility, and reliability of the research); and contribution (how the study promotes knowledge, expands the understanding of the issue within its field, and contributes to social change). Our commitment to these criteria, therefore, is evident in the way that we organize this article.

## **Decolonial efforts to break away from the coloniality of being and knowledge**

7

The current globalized social context is heavily marked by the values of the system that sustains this phenomenon. In parasitic capitalism (Bauman, 2009), profit depends on the exploitation of precarious labor, monetization of digital content through likes, digital influence, and sometimes cryptocurrencies. There are currently several ways to study a foreign/an additional language that go with the flow of the system: specialized centers for teaching English, Spanish, French, among other languages, where individuals can attend classes either in person or remotely using various multimodal resources; ready-made online courses with pre-recorded lessons that people can follow from wherever and whenever they wish. As we can see, it did not take long for economic neoliberalism to impact language education.

English has been elevated to the status of a global language, the language of the market and the internet. Speed and convenience dictate the pace in these liquid modern times, when almost nothing is meant to be deeply studied, reflected upon, or thought about, as warned by Bauman (2009) and Chul-Han (2014). Increasingly, language learning deals distance those who

teach from those who learn, preventing them from building a meaningful relationship. It is as if there were no association and involvement between those individuals. The aforementioned options generally aim to sell the language in a static manner, crystallized into a set of rules and expressions presented in sequence, all encapsulated into a kit and offered to the customer as an easily accessible product, ready to be consumed. This commodified English is traded and made available for immediate consumption. Meanwhile, teachers act as propagators, sellers of this product, consequently not leaving their subjectivity in their work, and neither encouraging reflection.

Our praxiologies should counteract and break away from this current, as it represents a vision vastly different from what we believe and defend. For us, critical educators, language is a complex system of sociocultural relations, sensitive to changes in time, space, and power dynamics interwoven in the process (Canagarajah, 2018). Language is fluid and dynamic, a social practice that both shapes and is shaped by subjectivities, evolving from contingent factors that constitute and influence society and culture (Fabrício, 2006). However, in the classroom, language is often presented in its standardized form through books and teaching materials, making us believe that we do not know it, even though we are speakers of this language. Rezende (2015) alerts us to the fact that the introduction of Portuguese into Brazil was and has been imbued with violence and erasures, leading many of us to fear to express ourselves in standard language and feel insecure about performing in it. Language was and has been thereby a tool of oppression and silencing in modernity, used to enforce the coloniality of being and knowledge (Mignolo; Walsh, 2018).

In the context of foreign/additional language education, the pressure to conform to native speakers is still common in conventional classrooms, indicating that coloniality still lingers in this space. In order for a vision of deterritorialized language (Canagarajah, 2018) to reach schools, it is important that we, language educators, carry out the decolonial project. This project, in turn, is conceived along and entwined with ontoepistemic issues that help us better understand ourselves and position ourselves in and alongside the world. As Mignolo and Walsh (2018) maintain,



[s]uch questions take us beyond discussions about decoloniality *per se*. They also require considerations of our own explicit locations, of the questions of *from where*, *with whom*, and *how we* – the authors of this text, you the readers, and those (living and in spirit) with whom we walk (the relational I of which Édouard Glissant speaks) – act and move within, from, and with respect to the cracks. Similarly, they [the issues about *how we act*, *open* and *broaden* fissures] push reflections of our own cognizance of the cracks and our own participation in the crack making. The cracks, in this sense, enunciate, reflect, and construct another place and postulate of decoloniality in/as praxis (Mignolo; Walsh 2018, p. 83, emphasis in original).

Broadly speaking, this means that decoloniality is an ongoing project with no foreseeable end. We are immersed in coloniality, and that makes us part of it. Therefore, it is crucial to put effort into breaking away from it, while keeping in mind who we are, where we are, and alongside whom we stand in this endeavor. It is necessary to identify and widen the fissures, seeking new ways of perceiving our contexts, based on a new onto-episteme.

From an early age, I was fascinated by English. At that time, it was a fascination with what was different, with what sounded different. Nevertheless, I quickly understood that English was not for me because, although my body was socially read as white, I did not benefit from several privileges associated with whiteness. I was raised by a divorced woman in the mid-1970s in Goiás, Brazil. We lived under the Brazilian military dictatorship in a male-dominated, ruralist (i.e., supportive of landowners' interests), and traditionalist state. An underprivileged poorly educated single mother had much more to worry about than the verb "to be". Our personal history is also shared by many women in our country. However, because my mother is the daughter of a Polish refugee in Brazil, she is white and has light-colored eyes. "Good looks" were what led her to be able to secure a poorly paid secretarial job, which provided us with food, transportation, and other living expenses. I grew up under the care of my grandmother, a mixed-race widow with mobility problems, who did household chores and looked after a cousin and me while our mothers worked and studied, despite all difficulties. Those were women supporting each other to transform our and their realities. Years passed, financial crises and recessions followed, but the day to "study English" never came. Upon finishing high

school, without hesitation, I decided to take a B.A. in Portuguese and English language teaching and become an English teacher. Despite facing financial hardship, my skin color granted me privileges: I completed basic education at an average age, obtained a language teaching degree at a public university, and could dedicate myself to my studies while working part-time as a teacher. Many of our students do not enjoy these privileges.

It was at university where I had the opportunity to hear the first people around me speaking English. The professors shared their experiences and explained the content, and my classmates responded and interacted, while I still dreamed of sharing my own experiences in that language. It was in the undergraduate language teaching program where I understood that language can be much more than a code, that it can help us transform realities. Upon graduating, I already knew what I wanted to do: providing others with the same opportunity. After being an English teacher in different contexts for ten years, in 2004, I embarked on the career as a tenured professor for the position of English language teaching and supervised English language practicum at the institution where I am still currently working.

10 Since then, I have been working *with* language education and teacher education. Every semester, I am surprised by groups of students with varying degrees of fluency, repertoires, interest, and engagement. Each semester, I collect information from students through an online form<sup>1</sup>, which shows their diverse learning experiences concerning: how motivated and confident they feel about expressing themselves in the additional language, how they perceive their agency in their language learning process, and the time that they have to dedicate themselves to their studies. I also receive accounts of their language learning through media (podcasts, manga, music, TV series, free online videos, apps), which expose them to extensive and unsystematic language repertoires. I see many stories similar to mine, after all, for some, the university is the only place where they dedicate themselves to studying the language. Their reasons vary: sometimes it is due to a lack of interest, but for most it is simply a consequence of a lack of time and/or material and immaterial resources. Times have changed, and although there are more resources available nowadays, the working class attending teaching programs still does not have access to several of such resources.

Quite a few of our students who take their B.A.s in Portuguese and English language teaching are women, and several of them work off-college hours and juggle domestic, maternal, professional, and academic activities, as it also happens in many language teaching undergraduate programs across Brazil. Recognizing privileges is an important step toward the transformation we wish to see, but action is imperative to promote social justice. What strikes me the most is how, despite physical, mental, and emotional burdens of our experiences as women, we persevere, even while “bleeding”. Therefore, as a professor, I seek to be part of a support network by making every effort to embrace individuality, value plurality, and respect differences. I see that each one performs their roles from different spacetimes and driving forces to dedicate themselves to activities related to English as an additional language, but also that they are resilient individuals seeking opportunities to transform their lives (and those of their loved ones) through education. My initial decolonial effort is to avoid working as an agent of coloniality. I consciously strive to eschew using the power of teaching language as a tool of alienation, oppression, and silencing (hooks, 2013). Whether I am successful is something on which I reflect every day.

The next step is to create a space in which they can empower themselves and broaden their perspectives on language, which involves re-signifying what it means to study/know English in Goiás from the contingencies that influence our identity formation and our performances in the Cerrado region. I then discuss how the construction and expansion of repertoires in English, based on local interests, favor the constitution of subjects in and with the world. I have worked on this premise as a necessary condition for planning the classes I teach at the university. I argue that this praxiology has altered the relationship between learners and the language, for I have noticed an increase in self-esteem, confidence, and fluency in their use of languages, as demonstrated in the following paragraphs. I reiterate that I strive to remain keenly alert not to work as an agent of coloniality.

For some time, I have been researching the relation between learners’ engagement in pedagogical activities and their identification with themes proposed in class. In Sabota, Almeida, and Silva (2018), we notice that student participation increases when they see themselves in the themes, which boosts

confidence and their sense of belonging. This leads to a desire to participate in class in order to: express opinions, suggest ideas, propose problematizations, and interact with multimodal texts created by their groups (Sabota, Almeida, Silva, 2021). Currently, with a view to getting to know which interests that my students have, I usually include a series of questions about their reading habits and interactions with English in the aforesaid online form, which concentrate on what they like to read, what everyday topics capture their attention, how they stay informed, and about what they research and write. This allows me to map their social language practices, literacies, and interactions in the additional language and provide their classes with relevant discussions.

In reading the class in their individualities and finding common ground, I can understand the space-time that English occupies in their lives, the emotions tied to the language, and the connections that bind us together. I then prepare the teaching materials to be used throughout the English classes in that semester, in a way that local and contingent demands can be met, however, seeking to reconnect our strengths through collectivity.

12 Another decolonial effort that I have been trying to make in my Cerrado-based praxiologies is to provide access to a collection of (written, audio, musical, sensory, visual, etc.) multimodal textual resources with the intention of promoting the expansion of repertoires. As Canagarajah (2018, p. 36) explains, "[...] multimodal resources [...] combined with verbal resources [tend] to facilitate situated communication." For the author, this combination of elements can be responsible for the (re)articulation of meanings, which allow knowledge to be negotiated, despite language proficiency, since "[...] [f]rom this perspective, language works with an assemblage of semiotic resources, artifacts, and environmental affordances [...] to facilitate communicative success" (Canagarajah, 2018, p. 36). Gradually and collaboratively, students are able to expand their repertoires and feel that they can perform different roles (i.e., express opinions, narrate, refute, explain, ask questions, argue, formulate concepts, reaffirm their points of view, among others) in the additional language.

The subsequent work involves intertwining themes. By way of illustration, if the class (or a group of students) expresses an interest in discussing clothing and consumerism, or if films and series are mentioned as media

resources that spark their interest, I make a selection so as to find (or ask for suggestions of) a scene that depicts this theme and use it as an initial text. From there, we collaboratively draw connections between the material and the reality that surrounds us, intertwining lived experiences with the text. This is a way of bringing multimodality into the classroom and expanding the traditional concept of reading constructed throughout the schooling process. Consequently, this becomes a moment to broaden their modes of reading and perceiving texts, providing an opportunity to reflect, question, and interact with and from the text (Rojo; Barbosa, 2015).

Instigated by the discussions, learners begin to entextualize their experiences and to question the maintenance of power structures. Issues of race, gender, and class then organically start intersecting each other in the process of constructing meanings, leading new forms of resistance to emerge (Akotirene, 2019). This questioning often extends to their own realities, making them desire to transform them. In Sabota, Peixoto, and Faria (2021), for instance, we discuss how some students, who were working on creating multimodal texts for an anti-racist campaign at school, ended up constructing narratives in which their bodies were represented as agents that would interrupt racial violence. This highlights the power and scope of decolonial efforts. As in this example, the struggles that we face in life often merge with the issues discussed in class and, in this sense, we expand our repertoires and become with language, instead of simply using it with little regard to what it entails. From the perspective of decolonial efforts, we see that embodying experiences and allowing ourselves to be affected by social issues are onto-epistemic movements. As Ailton Krenak (2023, p. 65, translated by the authors) states, “we have been called upon to become involved” so that we can achieve reparatory social justice among human beings and sustain life on the planet.

By designing our own teaching materials, we embody our struggles, entextualize our experiences, and evince our spaces of resistance in the additional language class. As a result, this language becomes less foreign and more ours, insofar as we expand our intercultural, political, historical, and affective repertoires, among many others, beyond the structure of language, a transgression supported by hooks (2013). In this vein, we work with language as social practice to move toward broadening our repertoires (Fabrício, 2006)

and re-signifying it. And so, we press on with the construction of our English, while seeking to free ourselves from the silencing forces that have been imposed on us for so long.

This teaching approach causes a destabilization regarding the notion of spacetime: Are our concerns the same as in the past? How and why have they changed? Are they the same for people of different colors, creeds, and genders? Would one's rural, urban, or riverside context change the perception of this subject? These are some of the possible questions meant to create moments of unlearning (Fabrício, 2006), that is, moments when we are willing to denaturalize concepts and the given state of things in order to instigate transformations in our way of being and living in the world (Mignolo; Walsh, 2018). For me, thinking about language education as intertwined with the construction of subjectivities, with the interrelation between people (their bodies, thoughts, and emotions), is a way of working toward social transformation and promoting a less unequal world.

## 14

## **Embodied political issues in critical Portuguese language education**

The praxiologies problematized here are focused on Portuguese language education, which aims to be critical, ideological, political, reflective, activist, and based on decolonial efforts, through the sharing of a vignette. However, before addressing them, it is relevant to highlight my Cerradeiro embodied politics as a homosexual cisgender man in one of the states that commits most violence and causes most deaths as a result of LGBTQIAPN+phobia. As I am not black, I enjoy certain privileges of whiteness in a structurally racist and former slaveholding country. I work at a state university, which until recently prioritized teaching degrees and had as its mission and institutional hallmark of higher education its teacher education programs, despite severe funding challenges faced due to the state government inertia. I thereby consider myself a career employee with financial stability guaranteed by a public teaching position, which was secured through a civil service examination, in contrast to many of my students, who often do not have formal employment ties and/or a stable incomes. Nonetheless, this fact does not prevent them from seeing

themselves, as I once saw myself, as someone who might practice the teaching profession someday.

This preamble indicates part of my praxiologies related to Portuguese language teaching and research and language education in critical applied linguistics. They are based on experiences that I lived in public high schools, either as a supervisor in the mandatory teaching practicum and/or in the Institutional Scientific Initiation Scholarship Program (known as PIBID), where I have been in charge of assigning activities and evaluating them, or as a teacher educator in teaching courses and Portuguese language practicum courses at the undergraduate and/or graduate levels. All these geo-onto-epistemes (Rezende, 2022) are part of the context from where I denounce/enunciate grammatical prescriptions as a common praxiology in the universe of the "Portuguese class".

We have questioned this kind of teaching, which remains exclusively centered on writing and standard language as its ultimate goal, driven by an outdated conception of text, when compared to the new ways of languaging in the global and technological era (Frank, 2021; Martins; Frank, 2020). However, some praxiologies mobilized in schools – and this is also reflected in the university – still take place through reading and text production activities that do not integrate pragmatic, functional, multimodal, multisemiotic, and enunciative elements used by speakers of this language.

Since 1980, for example, linguistic analysis has been discussed in Portuguese language classes. However, specifically in public school contexts, teachers still try to convince themselves of and understand, in some cases, what it means to break away from such praxiologies, precisely because they lack opportunities for networked, continuous, and better planned and structured language education courses/projects. While establishing partnerships with schoolteachers in the practicum and in the Institutional Scientific Initiation Scholarship Program (PIBID) is a highly relevant initiative, this has not effectively translated into actions able to promote language education toward decoloniality and transformation in the classes taught in high school. We are, however, in the early stages of incorporating critical perspectives into teaching praxiologies in the field; and we know that this effort alone has served as an opportunity to ensure the continuous professional development of

schoolteachers and student teachers, an experience from which students from those high schools also benefit.

The central point is that this collaborative network of Portuguese language teachers serves as a form of resistance to issues that they normally tackle in basic education, while also providing support as they go through teacher identity crisis. We press ahead because we have established dialogues, promoted knowledges, and transformed how scholarship has been institutionalized through mediations, leading it to become more diverse. Most importantly, we keep doing this work because we have been able to untie knots of coloniality (Pessoa, 2022), both in initial teacher education, with our student teachers, and in continuing teacher education, with schoolteachers from partner schools.

My work with Portuguese language education, in this context, has been guided by critical and decolonial praxiologies (Frank, 2021). It has been aimed at disrupting this "language", which does not belong to Portugal and is pregnant with Brazilianness, despite being constantly named and legitimized by a Eurocentric hegemony and confined to an abstract notion of system (Saussure, 1999).

16 I endorse the decolonization of canons that insist on proclaiming Europe the cradle of Western literary culture and on upholding a singular and cultivated model of knowledge, in terms of language. In the face of the coloniality of writing and the prescription of standard Portuguese, I have chosen to combine and disrupt language and semiotic modalities by using contemporary productions from social media, video clips, among others. These are introduced following social literacies and multiliteracies promoted in the classroom with students, for example, to scrutinize the meanings and effects of current language practices.

The coming scene, materialized in a recent piece of research by Cardoso de Jesus (2023) and advised by me, provides us with clues about the urgency of changing our praxiologies in Portuguese language classes, pointing toward a path for critical language education in the 21st century. The author tells us what she experienced as a teacher researcher in a fifth-grade class in basic education:

[t]he first relevant discussion was held in a Portuguese language class in the 5th grade of elementary school. I was explaining



oxytones, paroxytones, and proparoxytones, and then I handed out some questions to check the group's understanding of the subject. When I was looking at the notebooks, I commented on the handwriting of a student (Julio, 5th grade). He had answered all the questions correctly, but his handwriting was awful. He asked me, "Teacher, why do you demand neat handwriting from me? I only write at school". (Cardoso de Jesus, 2023, p. 91, translated by the authors).

In the undergraduate Portuguese and English language teaching program, I have observed that working with the potentiality of language is something that has stimulated students to come to class. Consequently, this creates a great opportunity to provide students with an education in the Portuguese language that is closer to their realities. Language varieties can always be adapted according to communicative purposes and the cultural contexts of those involved. With this in mind, I have emphasized the importance of understanding discursive genres and conceptions of text/discourse, with a view to focusing on and analyzing linguistic, cognitive, sociopragmatic, and discursive aspects of social practices (Brasil, 2006).

Genres arise from social practices, and abandoning a supposed pedagogical "control" over how a discursive genre is configured and legitimized makes all the difference for critical and decolonial Portuguese language education. This perspective encourages concrete uses, originality, and creativity in textual productions under multiple perspectives, approaches, and modalities.

In order to do it, I have been working with the notion of "language" as repertoire, which justifies such mobilizations and its use to do things in the social world. From this work, students have perceived the integration of aspects when one mobilizes certain communicative arrangements. Here we thereby have a notion of "language" as social practice, but one that is specifically concerned with the positions taken by speakers and their negotiations in the world. As a result, we can no longer dissociate acts of language in the social world from the politics and ideologies underlying them. Power and knowledge relations consequently come to the fore in interpretation, negotiation, and meaning-making processes.

In the context of initial teacher education, the conception of living and dynamic repertoires makes a significant difference in how speech varieties are selected, analyzed, contested, reflected upon, and studied. Connections with other elements to establish meanings and effects of language praxes are then made visible.

By focusing on the intelligibility of the body in social spaces, on what it does through performances, and by observing language characteristics, I have gathered that embodied politics brings forth elements that could be subject to discursive analysis. Nevertheless, it is still not a widely explored notion, precisely because the body has been demonized throughout Western history for religious reasons.

The audacity to address the body in the classroom entails incorporating issues of difference that emerge from our social praxes into language education. These issues were previously neglected or inhibited in language teaching for pedagogical reasons, and the main ideas of such a view were to always focus on the mind and to favor homogenization.

18 The emphasis is that student teachers and students from public schools, where our graduates and undergraduates have been, have challenged the language taught in this context in connection with other perspectives. However, it is worth adding that they have done it without disregarding the classic and widely accepted question of Portuguese language classes: the formal elements of grammar in writing.

In language teacher education settings, pragmatic and linguistic aspects are always analyzed. We understand that, in the production and effects of meaning in interaction, when teaching, learning, or using language, what is mobilized becomes materialized through both oral and written verbal expression, but also equally through non-verbal means. These include multiple – visual, gestural, for example – modalities of language and semiotic processes, in conjunction with performances of the body, which is always politically and socially situated.

The fact is that we produce language from everything we have: our vocal apparatus, oral and visual ways of expressing ourselves, and especially from our bodies, which are culturally and institutionally located in society and feel and perceive the world in certain ways. All of this promotes, together with

the linguistic and enunciative context governing the communicative situation, specific effects of meaning. I have become more and more convinced that all of this must be present in language classes as part of the critical language education project.

In considering the sociopolitical language of bodies in the social world, we have worked with the understanding that we are genderized through language and culture, which construes bodies in certain ways rather than others. Thus, our performances are always read or interpellated in some manner, as the social field of action or condition already embodies in itself discursive but especially somatic, performative, and identity-based characteristics – and, it must be noted, these depend on the interactions that we have both in the classroom and in society. If language is a kind of training done to achieve successful communication, culture and the body, which amplify this articulation, are then a stylized form through which the emerging identities will be interpreted. What we always seek to do in the classroom is to highlight how this unfolds in terms of gender, language, performance, and identity.

From a poststructuralist perspective, language, performance, and gender are fluid, dynamic, and malleable constructs, whose effects of meaning emerge from social relations established within specific contexts. However, this observation is not easily accepted by those who view social life in the classroom exclusively through modern lenses. When we understand that, beyond Bakhtin's (2010) arguments, words can only make sense through the existence of intersubjective processes in the social arena, we are then able to grasp fundamentally social, and above all poststructuralist, aspects of language. In this sense, the meanings and effects of meaning established are conveyed just as a consequence of the synchronous nature of social interactions, where language, performance, and gender utterances merge to attribute meaning.

From this critical and pragmatic perspective, the language produced by a person in a communicative situation will never be "pre-formed", that is, it will never pre-exist the person who enunciates. Therefore, it will be performed, positioned, precisely because it will occur within the foresight of the interlocutory relation (who, to whom, where, when, with what intention, etc.), which will include perlocutionary strategies, so that meanings and effects of meaning resulting from the interaction can be refined and deduced. When student

teachers understand and promote this kind of praxiologies, the “Portuguese class” becomes more stimulating, as it connects language with students' life experiences in a concrete way.

There are several reports in teacher education which emphasize that other people, with whom we interact or whom we read, are the ones who assist us in interpreting language performances. This happens because such performances, especially those relative to aspects of embodiment, concern identity, cultural, and gender factors. For this reason, it is important to value the process of becoming, because from a poststructuralist perspective of language, the meanings conveyed are provisional, dependent upon the specific interactions that take place in the social world.

## Some transient considerations

In this study, we aimed to share and discuss our praxiologies as educators who have worked in the context of a multi-campus public university in the Cerrado region of Goiás, in Brazil. Our work has focused on the education of future language teachers and researchers. We demonstrated that our approach to teaching and researching languages is fraught with challenges and intimately connected with struggles for the dignity of life. In a similar way to the biome which we inhabit, we showed the strength of our praxiologies and how we have worked with the cracks from the Cerrado soil to sow hope for better days. Through vignettes interwoven with our praxiologies, we advocated for an engaged critical language education project, attentive to local and contingent demands and which can confront colonialities of being, knowledge, and power from the Cerrado region, our place of speech and praxis.

Throughout the text, we positioned ourselves in sociopolitical terms in relation to the modern, globalized, and controlling society in which we live, while remaining mindful of the identities that cut across our bodies, as marks of coloniality, with a view to promoting critical language education in the classroom. We had no intention of creating recipes; instead, our goal was to address repertoires for reflection on teacher education. We presented and discussed our praxiologies in pursuit of what has never been proposed, considered, from the strength of our embodied politics. The latter leaves no room for

neutrality; it has rather driven us to persevere in our fight against colonialities. May we have the strength to keep going!

## Notes

1. Access the following link to see the form: <https://forms.gle/4vFsEVhyVhZ1KYm9>.
2. Thanks to the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) (Coordination of Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) for its financial support for the translation of this article, Process N° 88887.691549/2022-00 PDPG - Strategic Post-Doctorate – funding resource.

## References

- AKOTIRENE, Carla. **Interseccionalidade**. São Paulo: Pólen, 2019.
- AUSTIN, John Langshaw. Performativo-constativo. In: OTTONI, Paulo. **Visão performativa da linguagem**. Tradução Paulo Ottoni. Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 1998.
- BAKHTIN, Mikhael. **Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem**. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2010.
- BAUMAN, Zygmunt. **Capitalismo parasitário**. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2009.
- BRASIL. **Orientações curriculares para o ensino médio: linguagem, códigos e suas tecnologias**. Secretaria de Educação Básica. Brasília: Ministério da Educação: Secretaria de Educação Básica, 2006.
- BUTLER, Judith. **Problemas de gênero: feminismo e subversão da identidade**. Trad. Renato Aguiar. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2018.
- CANAGARAJAH, Suresh. Translingual practice as spatial repertoires: expanding the paradigm beyond structuralist orientations. **Applied Linguistics**, v. 39, n. 1, p. 31-54, 2018. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx041>
- CARDOSO DE JESUS, Ludimilla Dadiane. **Professorar em tempos (pós)pandêmicos e de ensino (não) presencial: escritórias de uma professora-coordenadora de escola pública rural no interior goiano nos anos de 2020 a 2022**. 2023. 103f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Língua, Literatura e Interculturalidade) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Língua, Literatura e Interculturalidade, Universidade Estadual de Goiás, Cidade de Goiás, 2023.

CHUL-HAN, Byung. **Psicopolítica**. Belo Horizonte: Editora Ayiné, 2014.

DERRIDA, Jacques. **Limited Inc**. Paris: Galilée, 1990.

FABRÍCIO, Branca Falabela. Linguística Aplicada como espaço de desaprendizagem: redescrições em curso. In: LOPES, Luiz Paulo da Moita (org.). **Por uma linguística aplicada indisciplinar**. São Paulo: Parábola, 2006.

FRANK, Hélvio; LIMA, Valcy Corrêa de. Corpolítica de autoria de textos literários no livro didático “Se liga nas linguagens: Português”. **Revelli**, Inhumas, v. 15, p. 1-21, 2023. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.51913/revelli.v15i0.14326>

FRANK, Hélvio. A complexidade da linguagem e de seus usos: incitações a uma educação linguística crítica. **Humanidades & Inovação**, Palmas, v. 8, n. 43, 2021. Disponível em: <https://revista.unitins.br/index.php/humanidadeseinovacao/article/view/5873> Acesso em: 15 jan. 2024.

HOOKS, bell. **Ensinando a transgredir**: educação como prática de liberdade. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2013.

JORDÃO, Clarissa. ILA – ILF – ILE – ILG: Quem dá conta? **Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada**, v. 14, n. 1, p. 13-40, 2014. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1984-63982014000100002>.

KRENAK, Ailton. **Um rio um pássaro**. Rio de Janeiro: Dantes Editora, 2023.

LE ROUX, Cheryl. Exploring rigour in autoethnographic research. **International Journal of Social Research Methodology**, p. 1-13, 2016. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2016.1140965>.

LOURO, Guacira Lopes. **Um corpo estranho**. 3 ed. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora, 2018.

MARTINS, Stephany. Pikhardt.; FRANK, Hélvio. Formação inicial de professoras/es de língua portuguesa e descolonialidade. In: VICENTE, Renata Barbosa; DEFENDI, Cristina Lopomo. (org.). **Estudos de linguagem em perspectiva**: caminhos da interculturalidade. Recife: Editora UFRPE, 2020.

MIGNOLO, Walter D.; WALSH, Catherine. **On decoloniality**: concepts, analytics, praxis. Duke University Press, 2018.

OLIVEIRA, Hélvio Frank. de. **Esculpindo a profissão professor**: experiências, emoções e cognições na construção das identidades docentes de licenciados em

Letras. 2013. 301 f. Tese (Doutorado em Letras e Linguística) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Universidade Federal de Goiás, Goiânia, 2013.

ONO, Fabrício Tetsuya Parreira. Possíveis contribuições da autoetnografia para investigações na área de formação de professores e formação de formadores. **Veredas On-line** –Temática, v. 22, n. 1, p. 51-62, 2018. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.34019/1982-2243.2018.v22.27956>.

PARÁISO, Mar Lucy Alves. Pesquisas pós-críticas em educação no Brasil: esboço de um mapa. **Cadernos de Pesquisa**, v. 34, n. 122, p. 283-303, 2004.

PENNYCOOK, Alastair. Uma linguística aplicada transgressiva. In: LOPES, Luiz Paulo da Moita (org.). **Por uma linguística aplicada indisciplinar**. São Paulo: Parábola, 2006.

PESSOA, Rosane Rocha; SILVA, Kleber Aparecido; FREITAS, Carla Conti de. Praxiologias do Brasil Central: floradas de educação linguística crítica. In: PESSOA, Rosane Rocha; SILVA, Kleber Aparecido; FREITAS, Carla Conti de (org.). **Praxiologias do Brasil central sobre educação linguística crítica**. São Paulo: Pá de Palavra, 2021.

PESSOA, Rosane Rocha. Nós de colonialidade e formação docente. In: MATOS, Doris; LANDULFO, Cristiane. (org.). **Suleando conceitos e linguagens: decolonialidades e epistemologias outras**. Campinas: Pontes Editores, 2022.

REZENDE, Tânia Ferreira. Políticas de apagamento linguístico em contexto brasileiro. In: BARROS, Débora Magalhães de; SILVA, Kleber Aparecido; CASSEB-GALVÃO, Vânia Cristina. **O ensino em quatro atos**. Campinas: Pontes Editores, 2015.

REZENDE, Tânia Ferreira. Geo-ontoepistemologia decolonial. In: MATOS, Doris; LANDULFO, Cristiane (org.). **Suleando conceitos e linguagens: decolonialidades e epistemologias outras**. Campinas: Pontes Editores, 2022.

ROJO, Roxane; Barbosa, Jacqueline Peixoto. **Hipermodernidade, multiletramentos e gêneros discursivos**. São Paulo: Parábola Editorial, 2015.

SABOTA, Barbra; ALMEIDA, Ricardo; SILVA, Hermindo Sobre o que vamos falar hoje?! Educação linguística crítica em LE/LA e a escolha de temas para debate em aula de inglês. In: FERRAZ, Daniel; KAWACHI-FURLAN, Claudia Jotto. (org.). **Educação linguística em línguas estrangeiras**. São Paulo: Pontes Editores, 2018.

SABOTA, Barbra; PEIXOTO, Ariane; FARIA, Marielly. Narrativas multimodais e produção de sentido sobre racismo e preconceito: Agência discente em aulas de inglês. In: PESSOA, Rosane Rocha; SILVA, Kleber Aparecido; FREITAS, Carla Conti de (org.). **Praxiologias do Brasil central sobre educação linguística crítica**. São Paulo: Pá de Palavra, 2021.

SAUSSURE, Ferdinand. **Curso de linguística geral**. 25. ed. Tradução Antônio Chelini, José Paulo Paes e Isidoro Blikstein. Cultrix, 1999.

Prof.ª Dr.ª Barbra Sabota

Universidade Estadual de Goiás (Brasil)

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação Linguagem e Tecnologias

Grupo de Pesquisa Rede Cerrado de Formação Crítica de Professoras/es de Línguas (UFG/  
CNPq)

Orcid id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3100-259X>

E-mail: [barbra.sabota@ueg.br](mailto:barbra.sabota@ueg.br)

24

Prof. Dr. Hélio Frank

Universidade Estadual de Goiás (Brasil)

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação Linguagem e Tecnologias e Programa de Pós-Graduação em Língua, Literatura e Interculturalidade

Grupo de Pesquisa Rede Cerrado de Formação Crítica de Professoras/es de Línguas (UFG/  
CNPq)

Líder do Grupo de Pesquisa Diversidades em Âmbito Social (UEG/CNPq)

Orcid id: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0553-8075>

E-mail: [helvio.oliveira@ueg.br](mailto:helvio.oliveira@ueg.br)

Name and E-mail of the Translator

Fernanda Caiado da Costa Ferreira

[fernandaccferreira@gmail.com](mailto:fernandaccferreira@gmail.com)

Received on 8 Apr. 2024

Accepted on 11 June 2024



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.