



A Decolonial Approach in English Language Teaching as a Lingua Franca: Problematizations and Implications

Fernando da Silva Pardo¹

Abstract: Language is a social practice and, therefore, is embedded within social, cultural, political, and economic relations. According to Benesch (2001), language is a site of struggle, a range of discourses competing for legitimacy in specific social contexts where power is unevenly distributed. Due to its transnational and transcultural scope, English is increasingly understood as a Lingua Franca that challenges the ideology of the supposed superiority of the native speaker, as well as the concept of the nation-state and the interrelations between language, territory, and culture. Furthermore, since the establishment of the Modernity/Coloniality group (Castro-Gómez; Grosfoguel, 2007), theories of decoloniality have been widely discussed in various academic fields, including Applied Linguistics and English teaching and learning. For this reason, Souza and Duboc (2021) argue in favor of a more performative decolonial praxis in order to identify, interrogate, and disrupt coloniality in different spheres of contemporary social relations, including language teaching and learning. In this sense, this article aims to reflect upon the role of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in teacher education as a key concept for promoting a decolonial approach to English language teaching from the Global South.

Keywords: Teacher Education; English Language Teaching; English as a Lingua Franca; Decoloniality; Global South.

Resumo: A linguagem é uma prática social e, por isso, está inserida nas relações sociais, culturais, políticas e econômicas. Para Benesch (2001), a linguagem é um local de luta, uma gama de discursos que competem por legitimidade em contextos sociais específicos nos quais o poder é desigual. Devido ao seu âmbito transnacional e transcultural, o inglês é cada vez mais entendido como uma Língua Franca que desafia a ideologia de uma suposta superioridade do falante nativo, bem como o conceito de Estado-nação e as interrelações entre língua, território e cultura. Outrossim, desde a criação do grupo Modernidade/Colonialidade (Castro-Gómez; Grosfoguel, 2007), as teorias de decolonialidade têm sido amplamente discutidas em diversas áreas acadêmicas, incluindo a Linguística Aplicada e o ensino e aprendizagem de língua inglesa. Por esta razão, Souza e Duboc (2021) argumentam em favor de uma práxis decolonial mais performativa, a fim de se identificar, interrogar e interromper a colonialidade em diferentes esferas das relações sociais contemporâneas, inclusive no ensino e aprendizagem de línguas. Nesse sentido, este artigo pretende refletir sobre o papel do Inglês como Língua Franca (ILF) na formação de professores como um conceito-chave para promover uma abordagem decolonial no ensino da língua inglesa a partir do Sul Global.

¹ Instituto Federal de Educação Ciência e Tecnologia de São Paulo: São Paulo, SP, BR

Palavras-chave: Formação de professores; Ensino de Língua Inglesa; Inglês como Língua Franca; Decolonialidade; Sul Global.

Resumen: El lenguaje es una práctica social y, por lo tanto, está inserto en relaciones sociales, culturales, políticas y económicas. Según Benesch (2001), el lenguaje es un lugar de lucha, una gama de discursos que compiten por legitimidad en contextos sociales específicos donde el poder está desigualmente distribuido. Debido a su alcance transnacional y transcultural, el inglés se entiende cada vez más como una Lengua Franca que desafía la ideología de la supuesta superioridad del hablante nativo, así como el concepto de Estado-nación y las interrelaciones entre lengua, territorio y cultura. Además, desde la creación del grupo Modernidad/Colonialidad (Castro-Gómez; Grosfoguel, 2007), las teorías de la decolonialidad se han discutido ampliamente en varios campos académicos, incluidos la Lingüística Aplicada y la enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés. Por esta razón, Souza y Duboc (2021) argumentan a favor de una praxis decolonial más performativa, con el fin de identificar, interrogar e interrumpir la colonialidad en diferentes esferas de las relaciones sociales contemporáneas, incluida la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de idiomas. En este sentido, este artículo tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre el papel del Inglés como Lengua Franca (ILF) en la formación de profesores como un concepto clave para promover un enfoque decolonial en la enseñanza del inglés desde el Sur Global.

Palabras-clave: Formación de docentes; Enseñanza del idioma inglés; Inglés como Lengua Franca; Decolonialidad; Sur Global.

Introduction

Today's global world is characterized by a series of profound changes in the personal and professional lives of educators and learners. Laval (2019) explains that the school is more and more seen as a corporation, obliged to monitor economic developments and comply with market demands. The neoliberal wave has strengthened and legitimized forms of deregulation whose general characteristic is to open more space within the school for private interests and private financing. He argues that the irreversible decline of schools is due to three main tendencies: deinstitutionalization, devaluation, and disintegration. Firstly, Laval claims that the school is conceived as a producer of services that progressively loses its stability and relative autonomy. This factor is directly linked to the school model as an educational company obliged to present results and innovations. In this sense, the institution is urged to transform itself into a flexible organization and this process leads to its progressive deinstitutionalization.

Secondly, despite the discourses of education as crucial for human development, Laval points out that the devaluation of schools is translated as a process of progressive transmutation of all educational values into mere economic values since the classic goals of emancipation and personal development that were entrusted to the institution were replaced

by the imperatives of efficient production and professional placement. Thirdly, the introduction of market mechanisms in schools, through the promotion of a consuming conception of individual autonomy, leads to the disintegration of the institution. Consequently, this new school model reproduces and naturalizes social inequalities in several ways (Laval,2019).

For Giroux (2003), under pressure from conservatives, educators are influenced to define their roles in the language of business culture, strengthened by the appeal to a discourse of objectivity and neutrality that separates political issues from cultural and social ones. Within this discourse, educators are being pressured to become servants of corporate power, multinational operatives who function primarily as disinterested experts, dedicated to the imperatives of academic professionalism. The author's criticism is directed, above all, at the failure of politics as a progressive force that offers few spaces to strengthen a form of teaching articulated with changes, that is, a teaching that is not reduced to simplification and that does not submit to an instrumentalist logic guided by neoliberal doctrines.

Concerning learners, Laval (2019) argues that “good education” appears as an investment, that is, attending a good school or university and choosing a prosperous area have become the essential factors for academic success and social advancement. Accordingly, people search for the best educational institutions, and the school, more than ever, becomes a great competition ground. For Laval, neoliberalism did not create this phenomenon. Still, neoliberalism aggravates and justifies it ideologically since the competition to have access to this rare good is, at the same time, more acute and more uneven.

Following this rationale, speaking English has also become a valuable good in the current neoliberal society. According to Ferraz (2015), foreign language teaching, especially in technical/technological education, can be connected to neoliberal education, since it focuses on technique, linearity, and the job market, assuming that language is a tool. Furthermore, the market of English language certifications, through language exchanges and numerous applications for international proficiency exams, is ratified by neoliberal education as an important aspect of self-development.

However, for Monte Mór and Morgan (2014), the assumption spread by globalization studies that the English language foment advantages and opportunities for those who speak this language does not take into account the multiplicity of social and cultural contexts where the English language is spoken. Several challenges emerge in this scenario, for example, the

need to investigate not only the opportunities but also the obstacles that the English language imposes to promote social justice. Therefore, it is paramount to analyze cultural, political, and economic practices involving English teaching and learning, as well as the power relations that emanate from the formal environments where the language is taught and the linguistic ideologies that permeate the educational processes.

In this scenario, what is the role of the English language in the university curriculum in contemporary times? What are the new roles and challenges for teacher educators and future English language teachers? What knowledge, strategies, and skills should be valued in the globalization era? In the last decades, we have seized on some changes in how educational policies understand English Language Teaching (ELT) in Brazil. English is no longer taken from structuralist and functional perspectives (at least in theory) to assume its formative role. In this sense, the contemporary English classroom is no longer restricted to linguistic objectives but focuses on developing varied knowledge, skills, and strategies. After the release of *Orientações Curriculares para o Ensino Médio*² - OCEM (Brasil, 2006) and the *Brazilian National Common Core Curriculum*³ - BNCC (Brasil, 2018), the English language started to be gradually understood as a social practice as the focus has changed from structuralist views to the understanding of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF henceforth). In this sense, the focus on the development of segregated or single skills (such as reading) has been replaced by the focus on language as discourse, that is, as a social practice that deals with different semiotic supports and consequently with a varied collection of multimodal texts in the globalized and digital era.

Historically, according to Leffa (2012), language teaching trends have evolved from an emphasis on the linguistic code to an emphasis on meaning and language as action. In terms of methodology, there has been a move from the concept of method, seen as a universal solution, to the concept of post-method (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), with emphasis on the learning context. Regarding teachers and learners, their roles have changed, as concepts of language and method have changed too, moving from subservience to method to the exercise of autonomy (Leffa, 2012).

In terms of globalization, English is increasingly understood as a Lingua Franca that challenges the nation-state concept and the interrelationships between language, territory, and culture due to its transnational and transcultural scope. Since globalization has

² National Curriculum Guidelines for High School (roughly translated).

³ In Portuguese: *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (BNCC).

transformed how people learn and interact, 21st-century teacher education programs cannot neglect this debate. For many decades, academic curricula prioritized a series of homogeneous and objective knowledge, far from the reality of many students. Now, it faces the challenge of accommodating heterogeneity, subjectivity, and contextualization, aiming to construct more inclusive, democratic, and, consequently, more relevant educational practices to current demands, assuming that English is a critical element for social justice in various cultural practices, including those involving unequal ontological and epistemological power relations promoted by coloniality. Ferraz (2015) contests the utopian view spread by the neoliberal thought that the world is a harmonious global village. In this sense, the decolonial theory might be helpful for us to contest totalitarian discourses as decoloniality “denies essentialist views of culture, language, and knowledge by embracing heterogeneity, fluidity, hybridity” (Duboc;Siqueira, 2020, p. 234).

Hence, in the following pages, I seek to problematize the relationship between decoloniality and English teaching from an ELF perspective. Furthermore, I will discuss the implications of ELF in framing English teaching and learning processes as well as English teacher education. To do so, in the next section, I will briefly conceptualize decolonial theory. After that, I will explain the relationship between ELF and the concept of decoloniality in English Teaching as a Lingua Franca.

Colonialism, coloniality and decoloniality

According to Ashcroft et al. (1989), more than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism. Consequently, the experience of being colonized shapes our identities in multiple forms. Regarding British colonization, Ashcroft et al. (1989) perceived two types of former British colonies. Firstly, settlement colonies were those in which colonizers had the intention to permanently establish themselves and form a new nation. The United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were settlement colonies. Secondly, conquest colonies, such as South Africa, Nigeria, the Caribbean, and India, among others, served as places for extracting natural wealth, ports, and cheap labor for the colonizers, with no intention of settling there. According to the aforementioned authors, one of the characteristics of the literature produced by the former settlement colonies was the desire to distinguish themselves from the literature of the

metropolis. Despite being written in English, they have a vast corpus of literary histories, thematic studies, and critical studies that distinguish them from canonical English literature. Concerning former conquest colonies, the British created a local elite who spoke English, and the English language and literature were used by the colonizers as weapons of conquest to better control the colonized. In turn, one of the ways to justify the British presence in those territories was to propagate the idea of cultural superiority, passed on to the colonized through the imposition of their national language and literature. In this sense, reading British literature implied, on the one hand, learning the English language and, on the other hand, having access to the values of a culture that imposed itself as superior. Thus, language and literature were paramount in the process of domination. As for the English language, a privileging norm was imposed as a template to subdue the value of the varieties spoken by the colonized (Ashcroft et al., 1989).

Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007) explain that, even after the independence of several European former 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 South. The former territorial and administrative colonization has become a form of coloniality, i.e., a type of political, economic, ontological, and epistemic colonization in which neoliberal capitalism maintains the relationships of exclusion of peoples and cultures treated as inferior. Nevertheless, a second period of decolonization (still in progress), named decoloniality, aims at breaking up crystallized paradigms in the socio-cultural, political, economic, ethnic, gender/sexuality, and racial relations between the colonizers and the colonized.

From a decolonial perspective, Latin American and Caribbean authors such as Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007), Dussel (2000), Lander (2005), Walsh (2021), Mignolo (2009), Quijano (2005), among others, argue that we should relativize the Eurocentric knowledge produced in the Global North and assume our ontologies and epistemologies from the Global South. The decolonial theory points out the dehumanization of colonized people, in terms of epistemologies, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and the impact of the creation of inferior identity categories of the colonized when the world population was deliberately classified by the European as superior or inferior, rational or irrational, civilized or barbarian, modern or traditional, human or sub-human (Quijano, 2005). For Mignolo (2009), the colonial difference establishes a hierarchy of human beings ontologically and

epistemically. Ontologically, it is assumed that there are inferior human beings. Epistemically, it is assumed that inferior human beings are rational and aesthetically deficient. Hence, the decolonial theory aims to identify invisible and naturalized hierarchies that try to impose homogeneity over heterogeneity and promote more equal power relations between different human beings and epistemologies.

Since the establishment of the group Modernity/Coloniality (Castro-Gómez; Grosfoguel, 2007), the decolonial theory has been widely discussed in several academic areas, including Applied Linguistics and English Language teaching. For this reason, Souza and Duboc (2021) argue in favor of a more performative decolonial praxis to prevent decoloniality from universality. In this sense, this paper aims to reflect upon the role of ELF as a key concept in fostering a decolonial approach to English Language Teaching (ELT) from the Global South.

First and foremost, Souza and Duboc (2021) propose a decolonial exercise that seeks to identify, interrogate, and interrupt coloniality in different linguistic and educational settings. According to the authors, the first step is to identify colonial practices and situate oneself in terms of colonial difference (Mignolo, 2009, Lander, 2005), i.e., our locus of enunciation. In other words, as critical analysts, are we taking the Eurocentric epistemologies for granted, or are we “analyzing from a locus of enunciation that has been othered, negated, invisibilized and racialized?” (Souza; Duboc, 2021, p. 881).

Let me give some examples that I have identified as an English teacher and English teacher educator since my everyday practice is permeated by colonial issues, expressly or implicitly. Firstly, throughout my career, I have been frequently asked if I speak American (meaning the U.S.A.) or British English. I hypothesize that this is because the average person assumes that only these two forms of English are spoken worldwide. Secondly, I have been asked countless times if I lived in the U.S. or the U.K. – a supposedly mandatory step to becoming an English teacher, according to common sense. Thirdly, as an English teacher working in language institutes at the beginning of my career, I did not experience the same respect and recognition as native-speaker teachers. Although I held a university degree in ELT and they did not, native-speaker teachers used to teach advanced groups while I was always designated to teach basic or intermediate groups only.

In this regard, Duboc and Siqueira explain that

since the Imperial times (1822-1889), English classes in the early years of Brazilian Higher Education programs used to be in the hands of native

speakers of English. Not any native speaker, but only those coming from England, whose pure and standard Received Pronunciation (RP) made any pedagogical expertise unnecessary (2020, p. 236).

Those vignettes, apparently without connection, that I have identified in my everyday practice, account for discourses on the marginalization of non-natives (Kumaravadivelu, 2016). They show how the coloniality issue is currently imbricated in English language teaching and learning processes. Those assumptions ignore the complexity, the non-totality, the incompleteness, and the multiple identities that pervade our unfinished bodies and minds in constant (de)(re)construction.

The second step, according to Souza and Duboc (2021), is to interrogate those assumptions as a decolonial exercise. When it comes to ELF discussions centered around native-speakerism, that is, privileging native speakers and marginalizing non-native speakers in matters related to language use, language learning, and language teaching (Holliday, 2005), Souza (2020) interrogates: who decides what is English, whose English and what are those 'Englishes' used for? We can point out several examples of ELT colonial projects implemented worldwide and in Brazil. The role of institutions such as the British Council, Fulbright, and Cambridge Language Assessment is undoubtedly one of them. Concerning the British Council, according to the information on its website, it works with people in over 200 countries and territories and is on the ground in more than 100 countries. Besides, its objective is to

work directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK. We support them to build networks and explore creative ideas, to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications. We work with governments and our partners in the education, English language and cultural sectors, in the UK and globally. Working together we make a bigger difference, creating benefit [sic] for millions of people all over the world.⁴

Regarding Fulbright, through international education and cultural exchange programs, the U.S. institution claims that its "diverse and dynamic network of scholars, alumni and global partners fosters mutual understanding between the United States and partner nations, shares knowledge across communities, and improves lives around the world"⁵. However, besides apparent neutrality, the role of these institutions reinforces the arguments of Castro-Gómez

⁴ Retrieved from <https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us>. Accessed April 11th, 2024.

⁵ Retrieved from <https://eca.state.gov/fulbright/about-fulbright>. Accessed April 11th, 2024.

and Grosfoguel (2007) that global coloniality has rearranged new forms of domination implemented by modernity, but still maintains the structure of center-periphery power relations on a global scale. Usually, those institutions are not aware of the multiplicity of learning contexts of universities, schools, teachers, and students all over the world. When it comes to teacher training courses and proficiency exams offered by Cambridge Language Assessment (especially Delta and Celta), they are usually conceived in the one-size-fits-all format, i.e., designed locally to be applied globally without considering the different local contexts and the peculiarities of the subjects involved in the teaching and learning processes (Pardo, 2019). In addition, they reproduce the idealized native speaker's model as a superior provider of the norm to be imitated and the allegedly successful teaching approaches to be applied worldwide, despite economic, cultural, and social differences.

Subsequently, the third step proposed by Souza and Duboc (2021) is to interrupt colonial practices. In my view, an alternative to interrupting the hegemony of native-speaker linguistic ideologies in ELT is to promote more situated local practices. We observe that, despite the vast experience of Brazilian universities in developing pre-service and in-service teacher education courses and their large amount of research in language teaching, foreign institutions such as the British Council are still the reference for many Brazilian teachers and students. By and large, considering that Brazilian universities are aware of the contexts of schools, teachers, and students, it would be more reasonable that they take care of teacher education in pre-service and in-service programs.

Besides that, the native speaker model (usually British or American), as someone to be imitated, is still dominant in English textbooks – especially the ones published in the U.S and U.K. and exported worldwide – since this kind of material often does not include epistemologies, cultures, and English speakers from the peripheries (Kumaravadivelu, 2016). Thus, such countries see themselves as the “owners” of 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. Siqueira (2018) argues that to interrupt colonial practices in English teaching it is paramount to contest the idea that only hegemonic countries represent English language target cultures and that the native speaker model is superior, untouchable, and pursued by learners. In addition, Siqueira (2010) also defends the deconstruction of the ‘plastic world’ of textbooks, i.e., to recognize that textbooks frequently create the image of a world of make-believe that is different from the reality of most students.

Thus, considering all the aforementioned aspects, in the next section, I will problematize the concept of decoloniality in English teaching as a Lingua Franca.

Implications of English teaching from an ELF perspective

ELF has emerged as a way of referring to communication in English between speakers of different first languages who share neither a common native language nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen language of communication and most of the time the only option (Seidlhofer, 2011, Jenkins, 2011). First and foremost, the concept of ELF challenges the idea of a nation-state and the interrelationships between language, territory, and culture due to the transnational and transcultural scope of the English language today. Gimenez et al. (2015) explain that ELF should be defined as a function of the English language around the world rather than a linguistic variant. The aforementioned authors emphasize that ELF is not a linguistic variant of Kachru's concentric circles of World Englishes, nor a prestige variety adopted as an international language in Mackay's (2002) terms. Despite attempts of pioneering works to systemize and compile ELF, according to Gimenez et al. (2015), it is a communicative linguistic resource that is dynamic and co-constructed. Hence, its uses are unpredictable and impossible to systemize. Jenkins (2015) herself admits that her initial works on ELF research focused almost exclusively on form. However, she recognizes that, over the years, another understanding of the area has blossomed as the focus on ELF research has changed to its users since ELF is seen as a social practice.

For Pennycook (2010), the debate on the assumption of language as a system or countable entities to be accessed for communication has been questioned through the lens of ELF which suggests that language emerges from the local where it is spoken and the activities it performs. For him, "[...] language emerges from the activities it performs. To look at language as a practice is to view language as an activity rather than a structure, as something we do rather than a system we draw on, as a material part of social and cultural life rather than an abstract entity" (p. 3). In this sense, language is seen as a part of society rather than an abstract entity or just a body of linguistic elements. In other words, the focus has shifted towards the local. The notion of language as a system is challenged in favor of a view of language as doing (Pennycook, 2010).

Canagarajah (2008) also proposes a parallel rationale for language learning in which

languages are always emergent and not predefined. For him, we need to understand that language is a social practice and, in this sense, it is not language form that governs the speakers of the language but rather the speakers that negotiate what potential language forms they want to use for what purposes, i.e., the capacity to use different semiotic items across integrated media and modalities.

According to Duboc and Siqueira, ELF is

a function of the English language, not a variety, ELF questions and challenges NS [native speakers] hegemonic norms, it legitimizes variation, it belongs to all those who use it in daily interactions, it is not inextricably linked to a national culture, it encompasses both native and non-native users from the most diverse linguacultural backgrounds (2020, p. 241).

Seidlhofer (2011) claims that English is being shaped at least as much by its non-native speakers as by its native speakers. This has led to a somewhat paradoxical situation: on the one hand, for the majority of its users, English is a foreign language, and the vast majority of verbal exchanges in English do not involve any native speakers of the language at all. On the other hand, there is still a tendency for native speakers to be seen as custodians of what is considered acceptable usage. From an ELF perspective in English teacher education, it is necessary to break up with more traditional teaching approaches that privilege the native speaker as the ‘authentic owner’ of the English language. Such approaches use the language in idealized contexts that do not prioritize situated local English uses. Therefore, English teacher education should foster a critical view of political, linguistic, and cultural aspects 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 linguistic ideologies they perpetuate.

In Brazil, Duboc and Siqueira (2020) advocate in favor of the dissemination of the recent Brazilian academic production on ELF compared to the tradition of studies already established in the so-called Global North. For the authors, it is necessary to give visibility to ELF *feito no Brasil* (made in Brazil) which “attempts to stress the expanding notion of ELF by contemporary Brazilian scholars who have put greater emphasis on the critical and political nature of English and the process of learning and teaching the language in the Brazilian context” (Duboc; Siqueira, 2020, p. 234). However, this article does not aim to present the state-of-the-art concerning ELF research in Brazil, as several authors have already done it so

masterfully (cf. Calvo; El Kadri, 2011, Bordini; Gimenez, 2014, Gimenez;El Kadri; Calvo, 2018a, Gimenez;El Kadri; Calvo, 2018b; Duboc; Siqueira, 2020).

Along with several authors (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins, 2015;Gimenez et al. 2015, Duboc; Siqueira, 2020), we believe that the emergence of the concept of ELF is crucial to the debate about what it means to be proficient in English in a globalized world. Accordingly, our understanding of language proficiency strongly influences how we conceive English language teaching and assessment. Concerning the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), Shohamy (2007) points out the powerful position it occupies in educational decision-making and how problematic it represents the notion of proficiency that institutionalizes and reifies a single form of language. For Shohamy, the CEFR rating scales

are detached from a variety of contextual variables such as the purpose of the assessment, the specific uses of the language, the context in which the language has been learned, the age of the learners, the learning conditions, the specific languages learned and assessed, and especially the multiple functions of different languages in different contexts, and tend to view language learning in homogenous terms that can be generalizable from one domain to another (Shohamy, 2007, p. 125)

In addition, as Pennycook and Makoni (2020) argue, if students could be tested multi-or translingually, they would get much better results, and the tests themselves would be seen as fairer and more valid. Therefore, the emergence of subjectivity and singularity in the processes of teaching and learning a foreign language can trigger significant changes in pedagogical relationships in the classroom and the way teachers assess the knowledge produced by students, making them more socially just.

This aspect is directly related to our ontologies of English (Hall; Wicaksono, 2020), that is, the ways that we, as researchers and teachers, conceive English teaching and learning and how these ontologies underpin our educational ideologies and professional practices. To illustrate this idea, Hall and Wicaksono contend that if we believe that “‘Standard English’ only exists as an ideal, which not even native speakers can know and use” (2020, p.4), why should we teach and test English according to unreal standard patterns? In this sense, the authors argue that ontologies of English are closely linked to epistemologies since different epistemologies lead to different ontological commitments, and different ontological commitments underpin different ideologies.

Assuming a decolonial perspective, Guilherme and Menezes de Sousa (2019) explain

that “North” and “South” are not used as ontological or geographical reference points but as epistemological sites involved in hegemonic relations of power, both regionally and globally. Following this rationale, in terms of epistemological production, there are local souths within a global North and local norths within a global South (Guilherme; Menezes de Sousa, 2019). In this sense, English teacher education programs in Brazil must be attentive to not become a local North within a global South, i.e., to promote idealized patterns of native-speakerism and ignore situated local practices for English teaching and learning in their contexts.

In this sense, teaching ELF might promote a more humanistic teacher education project in the current globalization era of constant dislocation, mobility, and fragmented social identities. It might be a mechanism to problematize the fragmentation of multiple social identities in the globalization era, with special attention to how linguistic ideologies underpin linguistic practices and social inequalities. Moreover, globalization and immigration waves have had a significant impact on the area, leading to the emergence and development of specific language courses for immigrants or refugees aiming at resettlement and work purposes. For Kubota and Chiang (2013), this is a remarkable phenomenon that needs to be addressed in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) research.

According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), traditionally, ESP focuses on practical outcomes so that learners are prepared to communicate effectively and perform tasks in their field of activity. Hence, this pragmatic approach frequently assumes that classes and learners are homogeneous since the course and materials development allegedly revolves around shared and common needs. However, from a postmodern perspective that interrogates assumptions in which learning, learners, teachers, language, and culture are conceptualized in neutral, objective, and universal ways regardless of differences, ESP’s pragmatism becomes an important issue to be addressed in ESP teaching and research. Thus, my point is that when it comes to ESP courses for immigrants and refugees, to what extent does ESP’s pragmatism erase issues of gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and other social categories implemented by coloniality?

Kubota and Chiang (2013) argue that the limited attention to gender, race, and other social identity categories in ESP is linked to its strong emphasis on pragmatism. According to her, the critical turn in ESP rejects “the understanding of learners as autonomous or homogeneous; instead, it takes into account heterogeneous backgrounds of individuals in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual identity, and other social categories’ (2013, p.

481). Furthermore, she questions the assumption of fixed identities and universal discourses regarding language learning, and linguistic and social ideologies. In the postmodern world, the 'crisis of identity', as explained by Stuart Hall (1998), has changed how we understand social identities. The idea of a stabilized, unified, and fixed identity was replaced by the concept of decentered identities that give rise to fragmented identities that dislocate the modern subject as a stable individual.

Benesch (2001) also criticizes ESP's pragmatism and contends that ESP's instrumental focus overlooks the political nature of content knowledge, language, and culture. She also criticizes the needs analysis framework proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) since it considers learners' needs as neutral pre-existing elements and, in this sense, learning is aimed at external demands. Kubota and Chiang (2013) suggest that instead of assuming the neutral view of the learner, teachers should analyze how students' identities are shaped as well as power relations that affect students' unequal statuses. For instance, for an immigrant or refugee to effectively learn English for resettlement and/or finding a job, it takes more than just acquiring specific vocabulary or language and literacy skills. It also takes critical awareness of how social categories, such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, and sex, might influence not only communication but also power relations involving discrimination and unequal opportunities for different groups. Inequalities related to employment opportunities, access to healthcare and social services for men or women, heterosexuals or homosexuals, and black or white people are at the heart of this debate. For this reason, we must problematize the intersectionality of identities since many of these social categories are intertwined. In this sense, being a woman is not the same as being a black homosexual immigrant woman. These social identities may have a significant impact on social justice, such as accessing services and opportunities fairly.

Kubota and Chiang (2013) highlight some issues to be problematized such as what racial and gender stereotypes are constructed about service providers/recipients and how they affect communication. What identities do ESP learners have and how do these identities influence their learning and professional experiences? How should ESP teachers and learners be prepared for sociolinguistic and institutional complexity? By ignoring these questions concerning ideological power, ESP teachers reproduce discourses that limit the participation of immigrant and refugee students in community-based activities. This factor may lead to an unintentional perpetuation of colonial practices.

As for the use of ELF by non-native speakers, Kubota and Chiang (2013) emphasize that speaking in a non-native or non-standard accent “disadvantages the speaker in converting his or her cultural capital into economic and/or symbolic capital. Furthermore, perceived accent is not just a linguistic matter; it is intertwined with the speaker’s race/ethnicity as perceived by others” (p. 489). Given this, non-native varieties of language and non-native speakers are frequently seen as illegitimate. As a result, their access to services and job opportunities as well as their participation in community-based activities may be biased, depending on their gender, race, and the social context they belong to. Also, social identities related to non-native and non-White speakers can lead to unequal access to professional contexts. Hence, Kubota and Chiang assert that it is essential to raise ESP teachers’ and learners’ awareness of these challenges and explore strategies to overcome them.

Besides, it is necessary to consider how the uniform nation-state model and the interrelationships between language, territory, and culture continue to be deconstructed in the present due to globalization and other issues (civil wars, political persecution, poverty, unemployment, and even starvation), particularly in cultures that were former European colonies, in which citizens continue to be forced to move and assume a new identity in a country that perhaps rejects them and, due to their ethnicity, the color of their skin and/or their name/surname, will always have the ‘stamp’ of immigrant and will never be fully integrated. In the globalization era, dislocation and displacement are current issues that shape and transform the identities of immigrants and refugees all over the world. In sum, when approaching English Language Teaching in different cultural contexts, educators should not consider linguistic phenomena in isolation. Rather, it would be necessary to look at the relation between the individuals and their social context in particular, since social contexts are sites of cultural and political struggle where power relations are always in dispute.

Final Remarks

It is important to note that language is a social practice and, for this reason, is embedded in social, cultural, and political relations. In this sense, as Benesch (2001) declares, language is a site of struggle, a range of discourses competing for legitimacy within particular social contexts in which power is unequal. Despite the claims for the benefits of globalization, it has posed many issues to be dealt with such as the need for a critical perspective to English

teaching to promote greater access to rights, opportunities, and informed choices for all. Language itself is a key factor that plays an important role in shaping social identities, thus English language classes have the potential to explore how language may be used as a tool to shape different social identities as well as to examine power relations implemented by coloniality involving imperial and subaltern languages.

I suggest that, due to its transnational and transcultural scope, English can potentially transgress its utilitarian role in educational curricula through contact with diversity and the Other. Hence, fostering an ELF approach may have the potential to interrupt colonial practices and catalyze critical thinking, tolerance, protagonism, and students' autonomy. Some alternatives for critical language teaching in Brazil include creating alternative paths that consider the diversity of ontologies, epistemologies, cultures, languages, and social identities so that individuals can develop critical thinking and be aware of the unequal power relations involved in educational processes.

Hence, studying and acknowledging different theories during pre-service and in-service teacher education is a central question for the interruption of colonial practices as well as the perception and understanding of the educational beliefs and conceptions of teaching, language, and society models 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 it is necessary to take action to transform their educational contexts.

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