

ELF *feito no Brasil*: reflecting glocally about knowledge validity in the epistemic Global South

ELF *feito no Brasil*: reflexionar glocalmente sobre la validez del conocimiento en el Sur Global epistémico

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Abstract

This article explores the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) *feito no Brasil*, critically reflecting on knowledge production and the criteria that determine what is considered valid knowledge. By analyzing ELF *feito no Brasil* as an epistemic stance, this paper seeks to challenge Eurocentric knowledge production and explore alternative epistemic positions that arise from the Global South. Through a glocal lens based on decolonial ideas, the paper highlights how local and global dynamics intersect, questioning dominant paradigms and advocating for more inclusive and diverse approaches to knowledge validation concerning the English language. This reflection not only expands the understanding of ELF in other parts of the world, but also contributes to the broader endeavor of decolonizing knowledge from the epistemic Global South.

Keywords: ELF *feito no Brasil*, knowledge validity, epistemic Global South, glocal perspective, decolonizing knowledge.

Resumen

Este artículo explora el concepto de Inglés como Lengua Franca (ILF) *feito no Brasil*, reflexionando críticamente sobre la producción de conocimiento y los criterios que determinan lo que se considera conocimiento válido. Al analizar el ELF *feito no Brasil* como una postura epistémica, este trabajo busca desafiar la producción de conocimiento eurocéntrica y explorar posiciones epistémicas alternativas que surgen desde el Sur Global. A través de una perspectiva glocal basada en ideas decoloniales, el artículo destaca cómo las dinámicas locales y globales se intersectan, cuestionando paradigmas dominantes y abogando por enfoques más inclusivos y diversos para la validación del conocimiento en relación con el idioma inglés. Esta reflexión no solo amplía la comprensión del ILF en otras partes del mundo, sino que también contribuye al esfuerzo más amplio de decolonizar el conocimiento desde el Sur Global epistémico.

Palabras clave: ELF *feito no Brasil*, validez del conocimiento, Sur Global epistémico, perspectiva glocal, decolonización del conocimiento.

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Introduction

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has been established as a field of inquiry (Rosa & Duboc, 2022) throughout the years, especially after the work of Jennifer Jenkins (2000, 2006, 2015) in the United Kingdom and Barbara Seidlhofer (1999, 2001, 2009) in Austria. After the 2000's, the initial concept of English as a Lingua Franca “as the function of English in communication between speakers of different first languages” (Rosa & Duboc, 2022) proposed by Jenkins in 2000 has been spread worldwide. As Jenkins analyzed (2015), the concept has faced changes, moving from phase one to what could be defined as a third phase. In Brazil, the English as a Lingua Franca has developed from the initial thoughts, but because of a tradition with a Freirean critical education (Freire, 1987) and more recently, a decolonial take (Escobar, 2007; Grosfoguel, 2011; Mignolo, 2007, 2011; Quijano, 2000; Walsh, 2014a), the concept and field of inquiry has been broadened, encompassing political, social and ideological impacts of English (Jordão, 2023). Brazilian scholars (Duboc, 2019; Duboc & Siqueira, 2020; Jordão, 2023; Gimenez et al., 2015) have termed this critical perspective ‘ELF *feito no Brasil*’.

This article aims to explore the concept of ELF *feito no Brasil*, critically reflecting on knowledge production and the criteria that determine what is considered valid knowledge. By analyzing ELF *feito no Brasil* as an epistemic stance, this paper seeks to challenge Eurocentric knowledge production and explore alternative epistemic positions that arise from the Global South. Through a glocal lens based on decolonial ideas, the paper highlights how local and global dynamics intersect, questioning dominant paradigms and advocating for more inclusive and diverse approaches to knowledge validation concerning the English language. This reflection not only broadens the understanding of ELF in other parts of the world but also contributes to the broader endeavor of decolonizing knowledge from the epistemic Global South.

I start this text showing how coloniality produces non-existence by legitimizing white bodies as unmarked and excluding alternative languages and forms of knowledge. Also, I assert my locus of enunciation to express how my embodied experience shapes the knowledge I produce. Throughout the text, I show how ELF *feito no Brasil* can be an interesting way of thinking glocally about English and its colonial implications, while establishing language as a site of resistance. Finally, I present some decolonial strategies that aim to deconstruct oppressive colonial foundations, demonstrating how the articulation of language and identity can pave the way toward more inclusive epistemologies.

Coloniality and the production of non-existence

The Global North/South binary shows how the production of knowledge and the ways of being occur worldwide. This separation is not necessarily geographical, though it starts from the assumption that white Eurocentric knowledge and culture were established as the correct and universal ways of inhabiting the world after the colonization processes. Even when colonization as a systemic and political organization ends, people who went through this process in the colonized lands still live with coloniality, i.e., an epistemic imposition of white Eurocentric values that maintains the status of the Global North as more “developed” and even “better” than other places.

Even if we still talk in binary terms, specifying the positionalities North/South helps us to understand how one perceives the world and whether or not they take organizational structures such as globalization, capitalism and modernity for granted. It is important to highlight that North and South are being used not only as geographical positions but also as a

metaphor (Guilherme, 2019). There are North/South tensions in the geographical Global North and the geographical Global South, but the metaphor expresses the idea that is disseminated in which the North would be a depiction of all that is good, whereas the South is relegated to *not being*. Additionally, unveiling one's locus of enunciation, that is, the location (geopolitical and body-political) from where the subject speaks, may be a way to break with the idea that there is such a thing as universal knowledge (Figueiredo & Martinez, 2019).

As a Brazilian white man who lives in the southern part of the country, I see all of the privileged opportunities I was given during my life even if I was not part of upper-class groups. Being born and raised in the countryside, but not far from the state capital, I was able to access university and break with a cycle of prejudices that are common to the location where I come from. At the same time, I see that the process of understanding how coloniality (de)forms me (Walsh, 2015) is a constant exercise, since deconstructing it is challenging the imposed white Eurocentric ways of being that still take place in the way I act/am in the world (Freire, 1983).

This deconstruction is necessary to enable the production of knowledge *otherwise* (Escobar, 2007), and to change the terms of the conversation (Mignolo, 2009), i.e. to subvert the white Eurocentric logic that not only inhabits us but that is also spread as the 'correct' and 'universal' way of thinking and acting in the world. Once we start this exercise, we speak from the Global South, resisting the hegemonic ways of being and producing knowledge. In doing so, we resist epistemic arrogance (Medina, 2013) while seeing how it is somehow embedded in us. Being epistemically arrogant is believing you are "cognitively superior" than others (Medina, 2013), and coloniality plays a role in developing this arrogance in each of us colonized people. Changing these epistemic patterns is what Gordon (2011) calls "shifting the geography of reason". According to Alcoff (2011), when we shift the geography of reason, not only do we see the different identities created by colonialism, but also how certain identities were dehumanized and disauthorized while others were put on a pedestal.

But how do we shift the geography of reason in English, a named language which is usually linked to the colonizer? English has been forced as the universal language in a colonial process; however, expressing ourselves in English is a way to bring our localities to the fore. ELF has also provided the floor for different dialogues to be established. Thinking about ELF as a "specific context of language use that produces language forms and ways of interacting and communicating markedly different from those expected from traditional interaction contacts (those taking the construct 'native-speaker' as an absolute reference)" (Jordão & Marques, 2018, p. 55), it is possible to see how powerful English may become due to the fact that instead of bowing to it, we are able to express local inequalities and injustices to a global scale. Minoritized groups in different parts of the world who would not know about each other's struggles may also be aware of each other and their ways of resisting a cosmology that tries to erase them, thus establishing dialogue and expanding notions of onto-epistemic violence that are present in colonized lands.

Speaking from the Global South is resisting the unjust colonial processes that are present in society by exploring epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies *otherwise*. Both knowledge and being, as well as their validation are encompassed in this process. One way to speak and be heard is by expressing ourselves in English, since it is a manner of reaching people in different contexts from ours. It is a way of subversively doing what we are told to while denouncing what needs to be denounced. At the same time, it is to pay attention to political, social and ideological implications of English, i.e., taking an ELF *feito no Brasil* stance (Jordão, 2023).

ELF *feito no Brasil* (Duboc, 2019) is an expression that "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). It brings “um olhar crítico e transdisciplinar para o ILF por vezes ausente em outros *loci*”² (Duboc, 2019, p. 13). Through ELF *feito no Brasil*, we try to transform our colonial reality by problematizing aspects such as neutrality in interactions, and lack of political agenda or criticism involving ELF.

A possibility of transforming colonial reality is “to recuperate the spatial/geographic aspect of the coloniality of knowledge” (Souza & Duboc, 2021, p. 879). In other words, to show that knowledge is never universal or produced from nowhere, but local and embodied. Souza and Duboc (2021) point to the decolonial pedagogy formed by the interconnected triad Identify-Interrogate-Interrupt as a way to stop coloniality. That means that after identifying colonial processes, we should question and stop them. In ELF *feito no Brasil*, this process may be carried out through the establishment of dialogues and criticism of imposed structures. It is to show that knowledge in English may be produced in different parts of the world with their specificities and that this knowledge is valid.

For Souza and Duboc (2021), manners of identifying-interrogating-interrupting coloniality (at least in a micro level) involve the notions of bringing the body back and marking the unmarked. We may develop both strategies by making loci of enunciation clear, since we show who is speaking, and where one speaks from. In this way, it is possible to observe that knowledge is always local, produced by certain bodies in certain places. We see how the so-called “universal” knowledge is also produced by bodies that are positioned somewhere. In ELF *feito no Brasil*, this awareness is an important factor, since we show that knowledge produced in English that is usually taken for granted does not happen to be bodiless and spaceless, but that it is imposed in such a fashion. Also, it opens up to different possibilities of expressing ourselves in English, since it is valid to speak with certain accents and even certain structures that would have been condemned by standard forms.

The material aspects of our bodies and the racialization processes we suffer establish a hierarchy that positions bodies with certain characteristics in a privileged space while relegating others to marginality. In English, we see how these hierarchies organize society into groups such as the ones who are educated vs. the ones who are not; the ones who know vs. the ones who do not; the ones who speak well vs. the ones who do not; the ones who are something vs. the ones who are *non*-something, just to name a few. Once we mark the privileged bodies, we reveal the production of non-existence, i.e., when bodies that do not conform to the privileged norm are deemed irrelevant or non-existent. Souza (2023) affirms that “reality cannot be reduced to what exists” (p. 228), which is comprehensible, given the fact that a great number of bodies is not included in the realm of existence.

We could say, for example, that the hierarchies established regarding English leave certain bodies out. When we take *the ones who are educated vs. the ones who are not*, we form two groups with different power relations in tension between them. *The ones who are not* are characterized by not being the unmarked *ones who are educated*. They are all homogenized as *the ones who are not*, reinforcing the existence of *the ones who are educated*. The realm of existence encompasses only *the ones who are educated*, relegating *the ones who are not* to non-existence. How is it possible to discuss non-existence? It is not. That is why it is always necessary to pay attention to who is being forgotten in our discussions.

The production of non-existence, which is itself a violent act, leads to several other violent actions. Tazzioli and Walters (2019) illustrate this by showing how solidarity has been criminalized in Italy, with citizens facing penalties comparable to those imposed on smugglers.

² The citations in Portuguese and Spanish will be preserved in their original language rather than translated to mitigate potential semantic loss and ensure the integrity of their meaning.

Another violent aspect of the production of non-existence is pointed by Cuttitta (2018) the problem of depoliticization of migration. Depoliticizing migration is violent because it absolves the state of responsibility for it, leaving it to other institutions such as NGO's. When the state assumes the role of supervision, migrants are seen as a problem rather than as human beings. Their lives cease to be important, leading to indifference, exoticization, and even what Helm and Dabre (2018) identify as "fear of the other" (p. 145), which occurs in Italy and other European countries.

This "fear of the other" may be observed in English when certain accents are exoticized, with the idea that "correct" English is closer to standards. The discussion that is left out is that these standards are white. They are represented into a general unmarked white body that excludes others. When you take a stance based on ELF *feito no Brasil*, not only do you try to comprehend the details involved in the tensions caused by the production of non-existence, but you also make visible what is invisibilized. It is a constant exercise of identifying-interrogating-interrupting coloniality to find the cracks or fissures (Walsh, 2014b) and work on them.

The production of non-existence is a dangerous discourse which impacts people's existence in the world. Take the example of migration movements nowadays. The feelings created by depoliticization that are directed toward migrants generate the idea of tolerance instead of integration. According to Helm and Dabre (2018), "though the transformation of urban centers through increased migration in recent years may have led to an increase in cultural contact, this remains in many cases superficial contact, 'tolerance' rather than engagement in dialogue" (p. 154). Coloniality produces non-existence and, along with it, what Friedrich and Bertoldo (2022) describe, drawing on Fanon, as dehumanization. Migrants are dehumanized, for this reason feared and their lives do not matter.

Dehumanization, however, may be observed in different spheres of produced non-existence. Apart from the migration context, the Gaza circumstances are displayed by Refaat Alareer (2022) when he asks the question "when shall this pass?". Alareer (2022) narrates the horrors posed by the war Palestinians have undergone, as well as their strong hope that "it shall pass" (pp. 16, 17, 18, 19 and 26). When someone is dehumanized, their bodies are considered wrong, and the knowledge they produce, as well as the languages they speak and the accents they have, end up being invalidated.

Language as a site of resistance

Anzaldúa (1987) asserts that "language is a male discourse" (p. 76), yet I would include that valid language is a white European male discourse. It is the discourse that produces dehumanization, embedded in colonized peoples all around the world. It is through it that the great narratives of history are told and disseminated. She claims that "history is a fiction because it's made up, usually made up by the people who rule" (Anzaldúa, 2000, p. 242). An example of the way these narratives are imposed is the Palestinian context, in which the Israeli government portrays Palestinians as terrorists, dehumanizing them and justifying their acts of violence and domination toward the community.

Reflecting upon the concept of domination, hooks (2015) suggests that:

For the oppressed, the exploited, the dominated, domination is not just a subject for radical discourse, for books. It is about pain - the pain of hunger, the pain of overwork, the pain of degradation and dehumanization, the pain of loneliness, the pain of loss, the pain of isolation, the pain of exile - spiritual and physical. (pp. 3-4)

Domination is justified through this male Eurocentric discourse that dehumanizes marked bodies and diverts attention from the locality in which this discourse is produced. Speaking from an ELF *feito no Brasil* perspective exposes the colonizer's positionality, dismantling the fiction of universality created by his own speech. hooks (2015) delves deeper into the relationship between those who dominate and those who are dominated:

Those who dominate are seen as subjects and those who are dominated objects. As subjects, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, name their history. As objects, one's reality is defined by others, one's identity created by others, one's history named only in ways that define one's relationship to those who are subject. (pp. 42-43)

In this context, all which is imposed as universal is always subject, narrating the reality of non-hegemonic bodies who are simply dehumanized and treated as lesser beings. From a Global South perspective, we recognize that it is possible to interrupt this process by marking the unmarked, localizing the universal and making use of structures previously made non-existent by the colonizer. hooks (2015) gives us an example linked to language in which she explains that "to deny ourselves daily use of speech patterns that are common and familiar, that embody the unique and distinctive aspect of our self is one of the ways we become estranged and alienated from our past" (pp. 79-80). Accepting that our language is incorrect and that we should change who we are by denying our own ways of speaking strengthens the colonial imposition of their ways as universal. It distances us from our past and contributes to its erasure, reinforcing the hegemonic narrative as non-fictional.

In English, being dominated would be to accept standards as the correct ways, erasing our identities as speakers and fitting ourselves into the unmarked white way. When fitting in is not possible in this context, we run the risk of accepting a position of inferiority, always thinking that our knowledge is less important due to our ways of speaking that "deviate" from the "ideal", or the "correct". Interrupting this process takes time, but once we see ourselves in this condition, it is possible to find ways to work on this decolonial fissure.

Decolonial praxis and accented thinking

Cusicanqui (2016) presents a notion called future-past, which, in my view, could be a way to overcome processes of erasure of our past. Based on Aymara epistemology, she explains that the past is actually ahead of us, since we have lived it, whereas the future is in constant change. We live the present, but from it, we simultaneously live the past and the future. Not only do we see the future-past, but we also live it. Our memories weave with our present actions, which may also be influenced by our desires. Resisting colonial impositions means living the present while simultaneously living the past and the future. It is a decolonial crack in which we allow ourselves to think while we identify coloniality within us.

Khosravi (2024) proposes another strategy to interrupt coloniality which he terms accented thinking. He takes advantage of the unmarkedness of standards to disobey epistemically. While explaining different possibilities for migration studies, he asserts that "accented thinking aims to build new relations to theories and concepts that are not articulated in the mainstream processes of knowledge production" (Khosravi, 2024, p. 2354). Associating processes that extend beyond the mainstream is a way to take an ELF *feito no Brasil* position. It is to refuse established structures while we produce knowledge *otherwise*.

Khosravi (2024) also states the importance of paying attention to our white ears. White ears have the tendency of not really listening to anything except for their own terms. Having white ears is to refuse accent, closing one's ears to any possibilities that escape from colonial ways of operating. It is to turn speech into noise, or subjects into objects, such as affirmed by hooks (2015). Khosravi (2024) explains Fanon to develop his concept of white ears when he observes that:

Spoken words always are grounded historically and culturally, hence racialized. Speech is not fixed and coherent but always dialectically in relation to the epidermal racial scheme. Bodies frame speech and affect how that speech is perceived. If the other's face is unseen, then her words are also unheard. (p. 2348)

Speech is neither disembodied nor universal, just like knowledge. Individuals always speak and produce knowledge from somewhere, but the colonial abstraction of valid speech or knowledge produces the non-existence of certain bodies. When bodies are non-existent, they are only capable of producing noise, not "real" and "relevant" speech. Paying attention to how white ears play a role in the way we see the world helps us to identify-interrogate-interrupt the colonality within us. Refusing standardized accents is resisting the white ears, sharing the responsibility in communication. It is to recognize that there exist various ways of speaking, being, and producing knowledge. In other words, it is accented thinking, a relational process. Once again, it is to take an ELF *feito no Brasil* position, a position that emerges from the Global South.

Interpreting Khosravi (2024) when he states that "if the other's face is unseen, then her words are also unheard" (p. 2348), it is possible to say that he points to the direction of the production of non-existence and the dangers it brings. Disconsidering the ones who are marked as different, and not hearing them because "they can only produce noise" emphasizes the unmarked universal white body as the only one capable of producing valid knowledge and communicating properly. It makes every other body that differs from it non-existent, because they should adapt to what is "right". The problem is that bodies are never going to adapt completely to the "universal", which creates a tricky situation. Colonial structures impose the unmarked universal white body (and the language, accent and knowledge it produces) as the correct one, but whoever falls for this violent process will be in an eternal quest, never achieving the goal, since it is impossible to change completely. You might speak closer to standards, as well as you might physically express yourself in a way that does not deviate from colonial impositions, but your body will always bring characteristics that could either put you in a privileged position or in a subaltern one.

Following the same logic brought by Khosravi, hooks (2015) points out that "true speaking is not solely an expression of creative power; it is an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless" (p. 8). As racialized bodies and objectified beings, colonized individuals are denied the chance to speak for themselves. As they are not seen as capable of producing "coherent" knowledge, or communicating "properly", they end up finding themselves in a position of repetition of the colonizer's words. They speak "incorrectly", but they need to see that "in the incorrect usage of words, in the incorrect placement of words, was a spirit of rebellion that claimed language as a site of resistance" (hooks, 1994, p. 224). In this last passage, hooks (1994) was talking about the way black communities used English. She shows how language is resistance when it does not bow to standards.

Developing from it, I agree with Anzaldúa when she says that “Chicano Spanish is not incorrect, it is a living language” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 77). Different individuals speak in different ways, therefore their languages are alive, in constant change. Languages are part of the future-past, as we live them in the present simultaneously with the past and the future. Taking an ELF *feito no Brasil* position encompasses this resistance while accepting differences and contradictions. English does not belong to one body who dictates the rules, but to anyone willing to learn and incorporate it to their linguistic repertoires (Blommaert & Backus, 2013).

Mestiza consciousness and *ch'ixi*

When Anzaldúa (1987) talks about being a mestiza, she points out that “not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else” (p. 101). She affirms that “the work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 102) and moves on saying that la mestiza “is willing to share, to make herself vulnerable to foreign ways of seeing and thinking” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 104). We could say that this mestiza consciousness is a way of resisting hegemonic knowledge, since it embraces contradictions while completely open to the *otherwise*. It is to realize our position in decolonial fissures and work through them. Regarding English, it is to interrupt the idea that it is not possible to make a creative use of language if you were not born in the communities that standardize the language. It is to strengthen the existence of the ones who are made non-existent.

By embracing contradiction, we may affirm what Cusicanqui (2016) calls *ch'ixi*, this color that becomes gray due to the distance, but that is formed through intertwined black and white patches. According to the author, “las entidades *ch'ixis* (...) son poderosas porque son indeterminadas, porque no son blancas ni negras, son las dos cosas a la vez” (Cusicanqui, 2016, p. 229). She goes on saying that “es necesario trabajar dentro de la contradicción, haciendo de su polaridad el espacio de creación de un tejido intermedio (*taypi*), una trama que no es ni lo uno ni lo otro, sino todo lo contrario, es ambos a la vez” (Cusicanqui, 2016, p. 231). The notion of *ch'ixi* defies hegemonic colonial structures showing that it is possible to both be and not to be, an accurate way to describe racialized bodies in the modern-colonial world.

We are and are not at the same time. Modernity-coloniality (de)formed us (Walsh, 2015), so we are in a way, a product of the violent processes imposed by it. On the other hand, we are not, since our ways of existing are not completely global, but local. The intertwinedness of global and local forms a glocal consciousness that might be contradictory at times. Accepting the contradictions within ourselves leads us to an interruption of coloniality, as we embrace *ch'ixi*. It is a way of working ourselves through decolonial cracks, not being afraid of our identities.

As individuals in the Global South, it is important for us to remember that “moving past fear to speak is a necessary gesture of resistance” (hooks, 2015, p. x). Living with the notion of *ch'ixi*, not being afraid of contradiction, accepting that there is knowledge and being otherwise, assuming an accented position, and acting in the cracks are just some strategies to identify-interrogate-interrupt colonial processes, but we should never be afraid of speaking. Even if we are told that our voices and feelings do not matter, they do, and they are capable of producing valid English, speech and knowledge. As hooks (2015) sharply stated, “as we work to be loving, to create a culture that celebrates life, that makes love possible, we move against dehumanization, against domination” (p. 26). Fighting dehumanization is connected to constant change, to the future-past in which we act in the present simultaneously with the past and the future. It is part of the ELF *feito no Brasil* stance, in which we keep resisting colonial

configurations. Speaking from the Global South may not be easy, as it is such an epistemic endeavor, but it sure is one that can be carried otherwise.

Concluding remarks

This article has attempted to critically deconstruct some aspects of colonial epistemologies by revealing how white Eurocentric norms impose hierarchical structures that marginalize non-hegemonic bodies and produce non-existence. It has shown how these processes permeate language, especially in the realm of English, where current standards legitimize an unmarked white norm while dismissing alternative, localized forms of language and knowledge. Drawing on the insights of hooks, Anzaldúa, Khosravi, and Cusicanqui, the discussion has demonstrated that a decolonial praxis can emerge through strategies such as speaking courageously, embracing mestiza consciousness, employing accented thinking, and recognizing *ch'ixi* as a dynamic interplay of contradictions. Finally, by insisting on the reclamation and valuation of diverse languages and knowledge through an ELF *feito no Brasil* stance, the article argues that accepting these contradictory identities offers a powerful means to identify, interrogate, interrupt, and transform the colonial structures that have long shaped our understanding of knowledge and being.

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