OBSTACLES TO A DECOLONIAL EDUCATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE OF A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN CEARÁ

ENTRAVES PARA UMA POLÍTICA LINGUÍSTICA EDUCACIONAL DECOLONIAL NO CURSO DE "LETRAS – INGLÊS" DE UMA UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL CEARENSE

OBSTÁCULOS PARA UNA POLÍTICA LINGÜÍSTICA EDUCATIVA DECOLONIAL EN EL CURSO DE INGLÉS DE UNA UNIVERSIDAD PÚBLICA EN CEARÁ

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ABSTRACT: Language policies enhance the understanding and the struggles for necessary changes in educational contexts and are essential nowadays, as processes of globalization and the use of technological resources are increasingly rendering conservative ideas disconnected from the demands of contemporary society. Through procedures of dialogic discourse analysis (Bakhtin, [1920]2010; 2016), this study explores the importance of educational language policies (Shohamy, 2006) in the training of English language teachers. Data analysis considers previous researches (Lins Jr., 2019, Lins Jr.; Moraes, 2023) conducted at the Universidade Estadual Vale do Acaraú, and the results point to a colonized/colonizing curriculum and its implications on the teaching practice of the teachers graduating from this institution.

KEYWORDS: Decoloniality. Linguistic Policies. Curriculum. Teacher Training.

***RESUMO**: Políticas linguísticas potencializam a compreensão e as lutas por mudanças necessárias em contextos educacionais e são essenciais nos dias atuais, em que processos de globalização e de utilização de recursos tecnológicos tornam, cada vez mais, obsoletas ideias conservadoras e pouco contextualizadas com as demandas da sociedade contemporânea. Através de procedimentos da análise dialógica do discurso (Bakhtin, 2010; 2016), este estudo explora a importância de uma política linguística educacional (Shohamy, 2006) na formação de professores de Língua Inglesa. A análise dos dados considera pesquisas anteriores (Lins Jr., 2019, Lins Jr.; Moraes, 2023) realizadas na Universidade Estadual Vale do Acaraú e os resultados apontam para um currículo colonizado(r) e suas implicações na formação dos futuros professores egressos dessa instituição.*

***PALAVRAS-CHAVE**: Decolonialidade. Política Linguística. Currículo. Formação Docente.*

***RESUMEN**: Las políticas lingüísticas potencian la comprensión y las luchas por los cambios necesarios en los contextos educativos y son esenciales en la actualidad, cuando los procesos de globalización y el uso de recursos tecnológicos hacen que, cada vez más, las ideas conservadoras y poco contextualizadas con las demandas de la sociedad contemporánea queden obsoletas. A través de procedimientos del análisis dialógico del discurso (Bakhtin, [1920]2010; 2016), este estudio explora la importancia de una planificación lingüística educativa (Shohamy, 2006) en la formación de profesores de inglés. El análisis de los datos considera investigaciones previas (*Lins Jr., 2019, Lins Jr.; Moraes, 2023*) realizadas en la Universidad Estatal Vale do Acaraú, y los resultados apuntan a un currículo colonizado(r) y sus implicaciones en la formación de los futuros docentes egresados de esta institución.*

***PALABRAS CLAVE**: Decolonialidad. Planificación Lingüística. Curriculum. Formación Docente.*

Introduction

At the outset of this text, readers may wonder why quotation marks are used when referring to the "Letters" (Letras) degree program. I respond by drawing on Bagno (2013, p. 16, author's emphasis):

> To begin with, the very name—Letters—reveals an attachment to conceptions of education and of citizen formation (in the masculine sense indeed) that prevailed in the nineteenth century and that, after so many revolutions in the sciences and in human societies, no longer have any serious justification for continuing to exist. […] The study of "Letters," or "Fine Letters," as it was also called, was governed by highly elitist and aristocratic ideas and ideals (as well as sexist ones, since women were not included), by outdated criteria of elegance and good taste, which is already evident in the use of the adjective "fine."

With this introduction, I not only justify but also claim the reader's attention to the importance of discussing educational language policies within programs devoted to the study of language, especially with regard to initial teacher education—one need only note that the concept of "Letters" does not appear in translations, whereas language itself does. I do so by posing a question: how are language teachers actually being trained in their undergraduate licensure programs?

Language policy, as a field within sociolinguistics, should be concerned not only with the maintenance of Indigenous and endangered languages, but also with language teaching and with the education of language teachers. Hence the relevance of educational sociolinguistics (Bortoni-Ricardo, 2025) and educational language policies (Shohamy, 2006).

Educational language policies—like any other public policy proposal—may be formulated and implemented by bodies that exercise some form of institutionalized power, in this case educational institutions (top-down policies), or enacted within classrooms and other educational settings by teachers and teaching assistants (bottom-up policies). Accordingly, these "micropolitics" carried out by English teachers in their classrooms reflect ideologies and values that significantly affect how this language operates in Brazilian society, whether in terms of its importance and/or perceived necessity, or in terms of its use.

Language teacher education raises a debate that is not new, yet continues to persist in most undergraduate licensure programs in Letters: to what extent are these programs disconnected from what is expected of Basic Education (Bagno, 2013), considering the national

Basic Education curricula, whether the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) or the specific guidelines of each state.

If we look back to the past—specifically to colonial Brazil—we observe the imposition of the European colonizer's language over the Indigenous languages found here. These languages were used at home and in child-rearing, but formal education was preferably undertaken on the European continent, where Portuguese was not considered "barbaric" or "uncultivated," nor seen as a language that demanded "difficulty and effort" to be learned (Vieira, 2001, p. 608, our translation). In English classrooms today, we still see teachers prioritizing the pronunciation of one region over another, or, worse, requiring students to imitate such pronunciation—understood here as a variety. Even today, many school and university teaching practices reproduce a model that mirrors this ideology of a "correct" language, grounded in a normative grammar "alien to linguistic variation," which promotes the devaluation of everyday spoken language, of communication on social media, and of interactions in online games with participants from multiple countries.

In contrast to such practices, the BNCC emphasizes, both in its introductory text and in the specific area of Languages and Their Technologies, the need to distance education from contexts of imperialist linguistic domination and to consider the diverse communicative contexts fostered by the use of digital information and communication technologies. This is the primary purpose of the present study: to highlight the need for a new—and necessary—educational policy that contributes to a decolonial curriculum in the education of English language teachers; a curriculum—understood here both as document and as praxis—that does not disregard the theoretical content of linguistic and literary components, but instead renders them genuinely applicable to the aims of a licensure program; and that prepares language teachers who are aware of and equipped for linguistic education, that is, teachers who recognize and actively distance themselves from linguistic prejudice.

Why and for whom is an educational language policy necessary in a "Letters" program?

In the formation of nation-states, the establishment of a specific language was a factor that ensured national unity, as clearly stated in the introduction to the first Spanish grammar (Nebrija, 1992), presented to Queen Isabella I as a weapon for the unification of the Spanish

colonies. To this day, Spanish "grammar"[2] does not display as many syntactic variants as, for example, Brazilian Portuguese and European Portuguese (Bagno, 2001). As attested by the author of the first Spanish grammar, "language has always been the companion of empire, and in such a way has it accompanied it that together they began, grew, and flourished"[3] (Nebrija, 1992, p. 20, author's translation).

Colonial ideology—as seen in Nebrija (1992)—favored monolingualism and ensured Spain's sovereignty over the territories conquered in the New World. However, when discussing linguistic education in the first half of the twenty-first century, we cannot think, act, and teach in the same way as during the period of national grammar construction. Processes such as globalization, migration, and transnationalism render the idea of a monolingual nation an abstraction, or at best a purist aspiration (Lopes, 2008). Ethnic and linguistic diversity gains visibility, making multilingualism—with all its nuances—an essential characteristic of contemporary societies. One need only watch the various international franchises of *RuPaul's Drag Race* to observe that, in many countries, English is used in a non-dominant and non-dominating manner—not in phonetic, phonological, lexical, or syntactic terms—but rather locally, to represent concepts that are universally recognized by a specific community that may inhabit any part of the globe (Tavares; Branco, 2021). In such cases, pragmatics assumes a central role in communication. The same phenomenon occurs in medical, educational, and other professional communities, in any language.

Why, then, insist on retrograde educational models that are clearly imposed by a linguistic imperialism that no longer makes sense today, as denounced by Antunes (2007)? This position does not imply devaluing the phonological, phonetic, and syntactic aspects of imperial Anglophone communities[4]; rather, it reflects a refusal to contribute to the imposition of a single way of speaking over other possibilities in English language teaching materials. In other words, we argue that school materials produced by British and North American publishers should take into account the multiple varieties of this vast and diverse language, considering not only communities where English is an official language—such as South Africa, Canada, and Australia—but also the English spoken in countries where it functions as an additional

[2] According to Antunes (2007, p. 53), "language and grammar are not equivalent; knowledge of grammar alone is not sufficient for effective verbal performance."

[3] "[*uma cosa hállo y: sáco por conclusión mui certa:] qui siempre la lengua fue compañera del império; y de tal manera lo siguió, que junta mente començaron, crecieron y florecieron*" (Prologue to *Gramática de la Lengua Castellana*, dedicated to Queen Isabella I, by Antonio de Nebrija, 1492).

[4] England during the colonial period and the United States within a capitalist framework.

language[5]. Likewise, language teachers require training that exposes them to this anticolonial perspective—an increasingly challenging endeavor in the face of an educational system that seeks to standardize learning from north to south. In this regard, it is important to be aware of and to consider the position of Diane Ravitch, who was responsible for implementing standardized testing in the United States education system beginning with the administration of Bill Clinton (1993–2001):

> [I supported assessments, the accountability system (holding teachers and administrators responsible for student performance), and school choice for many years, but the evidence accumulated over that period regarding the effects of all these policies led me to reconsider. I could no longer continue to support these approaches. Teaching did not improve, and we identified only widespread fraud in the process.
> Standardized assessments provide a snapshot of performance. They are useful as information, but they should not be used for rewards and punishments, because when the stakes are high, educators will find ways to artificially raise scores. Many will spend hours preparing students to take these tests, and students will not learn the content required by the subjects; they will merely learn how to take the tests. Tests should be used wisely, solely to provide a picture of education, to provide information. Any measurement becomes corrupted when other elements are tied to a test.
> The most important lesson we can draw from what has been done in the United States is that the focus must always be on improving education, not simply on increasing test scores. It became clear to us that these are not necessarily the same thing. We need young people who have studied history, science, geography, mathematics, and reading, but what we are producing is a generation that has learned how to answer multiple-choice tests. To have a good education, we need to know what good education is. And it is far more than knowing how to take a test. We must be concerned with students' needs so that they can truly benefit from education. (Ravitch, 2010, p. 16, our translation).

The statement by the former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education draws attention to the importance of schools—and, consequently, of teachers—in the civic formation of students, rather than merely training them to respond automatically to test questions. In this regard, Robert Cooper highlights the role of the school as a key space in which meaningful language policies are developed to promote the valuing of linguistic variation, alongside other economic, political, and scientific dimensions. Initially, the author presents twelve definitions of language planning[6] in order to propose his own understanding of the concept based on the following questions: who plans, what, for whom, and how? (Cooper, 1989, p. 31, our translarion).

[5] Readers should note that I deliberately refuse to reproduce concepts such as "mother tongue" and "foreign language."

[6] Although I use the term *language planning*, given the period in which the work was published, its definition goes far beyond this label by considering: (i) that it is an action not limited to top-down processes (originating from

> regardless of the type of language planning, in nearly all cases the language problem to be solved is not a problem in isolation within the region or Nation but is directly associated with the political, economic, scientific, social, cultural and/or religious situation. But I would go further and assert that the latter considerations - political, economic, scientific, Etc - serve as the primary motivation for language planning. Thus those definitions which are framed in terms of the solution of language or communication problems obscure a fundamental point about language planning, namely that is typically, perhaps always, directed ultimately towards nonlinguistic ends. Definitions of language planning as the solution of language problems are not wrong, but they are misleading. They deflect attention from the underlying motivation for language planning. Inasmuch as language planning is directed ultimately towards the attainment of nonlinguistic ends, it is preferable, in my opinion, to define language planning not as efforts to solve language problems but rather as efforts to influence language behavior (Cooper, 1989, p. 35).

With respect to language teaching, Shohamy (2006) argues that educational language policies expressed through teaching materials are examples of implicit mechanisms (policy devices) that contribute to maintaining a colonial stance in language education and, consequently, in the education of language teachers. These teachers often become reproducers of a colonized system—or, in her terms, *soldiers of the system*—as language users. Hence the prevalence of teaching practices focused on "normative grammar" or, more specifically in the case of additional languages, on the imitative reproduction of pronunciations from certain communities where the language holds official status. When approached in this way, such practices diverge from teaching language as a social phenomenon and, for this reason, as something not limited to homogeneity. As Antunes (2007, p. 56, our translation) states, "to think, therefore, that we produce and interpret texts using only linguistic knowledge (which already goes beyond purely grammatical knowledge) is to falsify the authentic activity of verbal interaction."

In other words, whether educational language policies are constructed top-down by educational bodies or official documents, or bottom-up—such as those enacted by teachers in their classrooms—the central issue lies in how capable these teachers are of resisting systemic impositions, a process that must begin in initial teacher education, as proposed by Shohamy (2006). For this reason, issues related to linguistic education and educational sociolinguistics must not only be acknowledged but effectively implemented in both curricula and the

institutions of power), but also encompassing bottom-up processes (which may be carried out by ordinary individuals in their everyday speech activities or social practices); and (ii) that language and its varieties may be subject to change in form, function, and the diffusion of use among their speakers.

methodologies of teacher educators, in order to prevent the persistence of colonial training that still characterizes most licensure programs—and not only those focused on language studies. The prioritization of content irrelevant to the preparation of language teachers for Basic Education hinders the inclusion of curricular components that would make language studies less "catastrophic," as Bagno (2013) argues.

In the colonial process, learning the colonizer's language was essential to be considered educated and to gain access to socially prestigious jobs. The colonial education system reinforced this dependency by marginalizing local languages. This process led to the formation of an elite that spoke the colonizer's language and identified with its culture, thereby ensuring loyalty to the colonial government. Nevertheless, even at that time, challenges to colonial models of language teaching in Brazil can already be identified, such as in Barbosa's (1956, p. 22, author's emphasis) course on Old Tupi:

> It is argued that grammars were concerned with leveling dialects and subordinating language to Latin grammar. The first assertion is entirely inaccurate and must be refuted once and for all (sic). Both Anchieta and the *Vocabulário na Língua Brasílica*, as well as Guarani lexicographers, record local variants and draw readers' attention to them. […]
> The second assertion, however, is true. The early grammarians, when confronted with languages of a completely different nature, were unable to characterize them except in relation to classical languages and grammars. This is hardly surprising, given that Portuguese grammars of the time were modeled on Latin, from which they have not yet fully emancipated themselves, just as they have not freed themselves from scholasticism and other traditional shortcomings.

This model of colonial language policy is still present in "Letters" programs, in which teacher educators impose on students the reproduction of one (among many) variety(ies) of the English language, treating it as the "correct" way of speaking and thereby devaluing not only the language itself, but also identities and subjectivities (Bagno, 2009). Because of such prejudiced attitudes, it is necessary to discuss educational language policies from a decolonial perspective, in which teachers in training are grounded in the practice of linguistic education; that is, as Bechara (2006, p. 14, our translation) states, "ultimately, the great mission of the language teacher […] is to transform their student into a polyglot within their own language." Although this statement was conceived for the teaching of Brazilian Portuguese to Brazilian speakers, it also applies to the teaching of additional languages to this same audience.

Methodological Procedures

This is a qualitative and interpretive study grounded in the Bakhtinian conception of Dialogic Discourse Analysis (DDA). DDA (Bakhtin, 2010, 2016) is a theoretical and methodological approach based on the idea that discourse is always interactive and constitutes a process of meaning exchange among the subjects involved; that is, language is never monologic, as it is always in contact with other voices, influences, and contexts. Within this framework, discourses are constructed and interrelated by considering the social, historical, and cultural aspects that shape the act of communication. Since this act is an interactive space, the researcher does not adopt a position of neutrality—especially when embedded in the research setting—because all elements of language—words, sentences, and structures—construct meanings that reflect relations of power, identity, ideology, and other social dynamics among participants and the institutions to which they belong.

The context of this study is a state university located in northern Ceará, responsible for educating students from more than 53 municipalities in the region and offering 20 undergraduate programs at the bachelor's and licensure levels. The research participants were forty-eight students (A1, A2 … A48) who were completing their teaching practicum (Supervised Internship III and IV) in the final year of the Letters licensure program, with specializations in English Language (EL) and Portuguese Language (PL)[7], in both morning and evening cohorts, in 2024.

Data were collected through an online interview developed using Google Forms, and the findings of a doctoral dissertation (Lins Junior, 2019) were also taken into account. That study involved participants with the same profile, although data collection occurred between the second semester of 2017 and the first semester of 2018. The relevance of triangulating these data lies in the limited change observed in students' discourses, even though they belonged to cohorts governed by different Pedagogical Course Projects (PPCs); by the most recent data collection, the program had already updated its PPC twice. This circumstance justified the inclusion of the PPC (Sobral, 2015) as an object of analysis.

[7] The decision to include participants from both degree tracks is based on the recognition of the need to reform the curriculum not only of a single track, but of all tracks, since this study identifies, based on the analysis of the reports, a colonizing perspective among the teacher educators in the program.

These data were analyzed across two thematic fields that reflect ideologemes (Riley, 2007) present in the PPC of the UEVA Letters program[8]. That is, since identity is a linguistic construct, it is composed of multiple social and psychological imperatives whose parameters are determined by sociocultural factors that shape formation, self-recognition, and the maintenance of the group itself. Although the PPC represents the faculty of a program, cultural heterogeneity means that not all members fully agree with its representativeness. In this regard, the two thematic fields analyzed here are: (i) how conceptions of language and of language use influence educational practices in the UEVA Letters program; and (ii) whether the discursive roles of faculty and students are situated within the same power relations in the UEVA Letters program.

The methodological resources of Dialogic Discourse Analysis (DDA) made it possible to: (a) identify the "voices" present in the discourse—that is, the different viewpoints, social positions, and identities represented, as well as how these voices interact and influence one another through conflict or contradiction, hybridization, or simple repetition of ideas; and (b) observe how linguistic forms are used to express these interactions through lexical choices and modalization. For instance, in analyzing specific terms used in the introductory section and justification of the PPC, I found that they do not recur in the syllabi of curricular components and, consequently, in faculty teaching practices. The term "autonomy" (Sobral, 2015, p. 20, our translation), accompanied by notions such as "inverted symmetry" and other communicative practices that claim to take "linguistic variation" into account, appears recurrently in only two curricular components across all eight semesters of the program—and in only one Supervised Internship component. This finding led me to conclude that there is little room for inverted symmetry or for a more critical and participatory stance on the part of undergraduate students. In other words, the model internalized through this training is that of "soldiers of the system." Consequently, as future language policy agents in Basic Education, these prospective teachers are not being encouraged to create bottom-up language policies, but rather to continue receiving information and complying with imposed directives.

[8] Although the official acronym remains UVA, there is an internal movement within the institution—currently under discussion in the process of drafting a new statute (https://www.uvanet.br/sipe/estatuto.php)—with which I agree, advocating the inclusion of the vowel that identifies it as a public institution at the state level. This change would avoid confusion with Universidade Veiga de Almeida (UVA), located in Rio de Janeiro.

Results and Discussion

P Part I: The Colonizing Curriculum of the UEVA "Letters" Program

To initiate this discussion, I return to a statement by a professor from the University of Brasília (UnB) that denounces the chaotic situation of Letters programs in Brazil:

> It is disheartening to know that an individual who has secured a place in a *Letters program* will enter an obsolete and anachronistic academic structure, designed at least two hundred years ago. […] Many professionals working in *Letters programs* seem to refuse (consciously or unconsciously) to acknowledge that the program's natural vocation is the education of teachers of Portuguese and/or foreign languages, a refusal that runs counter to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education itself regarding teacher education (Bagno, 2013, p. 16–17, author's emphasis, our translation).

In the words of the Brazilian linguist, it is possible to understand that language policies are never neutral. Although there are many cultural variables involved in language policies (Schiffman, 1996), the absence of an explicit stance regarding a given linguistic behavior does not mean that there is no implicit policy fostering its use—thus justifying the cultural non-homogeneity mentioned in the final paragraph of the previous section.

What constitutes an academic board or department is its curriculum, understood as a language policy. More than a mere document presenting the program, its curricular components, contents, and bibliographic references, it encompasses the practices enacted within the program, that is, "ways of being and existing in the world" (Silva, 1999, p. 15, our translation). The Pedagogical Course Project (PPC), therefore, constitutes the language policy of the program, and aspects such as democracy, participation, and power may be values in dispute throughout its formulation and implementation. In other words, it is "a terrain of struggle and conflict, where interests, values, and power relations that permeate the school and society are expressed" (Sacristán, 2000, p. 43, our translation).

With regard to the PPC of the UEVA Letters program, within the first thematic field—how conceptions of language and of language use influence educational practices—I identified the following ideologemes: (i) "to educate language teacher[s] […] committed to the construction of a teaching identity oriented toward the confrontation between theory and practice" (Sobral, 2015, p. 6); and (ii) "the curricular components are organized into two major blocks: a foundation of specific academic training or basic content, and a foundation of pedagogical and practical training or professional content" (Sobral, 2015, p. 28, our translation).

In the interview, one of the questions related to this thematic field was: "How would you describe your English language[9] classes at the university, and how do you evaluate them?" The responses were as follows:

> *A2-ESIII-LP:* "[the classes are] based on photocopies of books. […] Then they assign activities; others require seminars, and in the end they evaluate through written exams. […] For me, it is about memorizing content. […] I am having a lot of difficulty teaching in high school because I do not know some aspects of grammar";
> *A29-ESIV-LP:* "we study using handouts, through articles, and also through recommended books and theorists suggested by the professors" […] "I would not know how to evaluate it, maybe by giving them a test on topics they do not teach?";
> *A36-ESIII-LI:* "[the classes are] based on chapters from a book we do not like. […] The professor is temporary and very good because she speaks more English than others I have had. […] For me, it would be better if it were always like she does occasionally: she brings a topic and we discuss it";
> *A17-ESIV-LI:* "we study based on texts that the professors bring. […] They always ask us to participate and give our opinion, but we do not always participate because we do not know how to speak. […] The worst part is when he asks us to present a seminar and keeps interrupting to say that the pronunciation is not correct. […] I find the classes very boring sometimes."

Regarding ideologeme (i), based on the reports by A2 and A17, it is not possible to argue that this training is genuinely committed to the relationship between theory and practice. According to Pimenta (2012, p. 20, our translation), "the relationship between theory and practice is not one of simply applying theory to practice, but of constructing teaching knowledge through critical reflection on practice in light of theory." In this sense, A2 perceives difficulties in carrying out didactic transpositions of content addressed in Portuguese Language components, while A36 expresses dissatisfaction with the adopted materials. This leads us to question how classes are planned: whether assessment is based on memorization activities—as stated by A2—or whether there is consultation regarding which materials are more appropriate to students' realities, as reported by A36.

With respect to the two major blocks described in ideologeme (ii), these appear to prioritize academic training in specific content over pedagogical and professional training, as indicated by A17 and A29. For A17, the adjective "boring" used to describe the class may refer either to a lack of interest or to the constant interruptions for pronunciation correction. This suggests the presence of a colonizing practice grounded in an exclusive norm—British Received Pronunciation or General American—that ignores local ways of speaking, or, as

[9] It is important to note that, in the English Language specialization, language components are distinct from those focused on linguistic analysis (such as phonetics, syntax, and semantics) and are, in most cases, taught in the target language. In contrast, in the Portuguese Language specialization, curricular components are concentrated on linguistic analysis and literary studies, with few components addressing linguistic variation and none dedicated to language policy.

Pennycook (1998, p. 19) frames it, the *World Englishes*. In this regard, Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 190, author's translation) argues that "the dominance of native-speaker models in English language teaching sustains colonial attitudes and denies legitimacy to local varieties of English." Requiring students to reproduce a native pronunciation model thus constitutes a colonized approach to teaching additional languages, one that sustains external norms and marginalizes local varieties. If practices reflecting a critical pedagogy, as proposed by Rajagopalan (2005, p. 45), had been reported, there would be recognition of the plurality of Englishes and appreciation of intelligibility and the linguistic identity of Brazilian speakers—namely, the students of this program—which would signal the realization of ideologeme (i).

As demonstrated, there is a dissonance between what the PPC advocates and teachers' practices from the students' perspective. This directly affects the second thematic field—the power relations underlying decisions about educational practices—since the ideologeme that posits inverted symmetry and, consequently, equal power relations between faculty and students does not emerge in the discourses of A2, A17, A29, and A36. This does not entail disregarding the role of the teacher educator as guide, mediator, and facilitator, but rather denouncing a colonizing and oppressive stance that prevents curricular components from being collaboratively discussed and defined by both faculty and students.

The ideologemes of the second thematic field state that the UEVA Letters program: (i) "is guided […] by the principle of coherence between the training offered and the practice expected of the teacher, in light of the concept of inverted symmetry" (Sobral, 2015, p. 12, our translation); and (ii) "is committed to promoting teaching and learning situations grounded in a communicative approach, in which students and teachers co-participate, exerting equally decisive influence on the success of the process" (Sobral, 2015, p. 14, our translation), since, ultimately, (iii) "nothing can replace the student's own engagement in the task of constructing meanings about learning content. It is the student who will modify, enrich, and thus construct new and more powerful instruments of action and interpretation" (Sobral, 2015, p. 15, our translation).

The responses presented in the previous thematic field show that practices do not unfold as prescribed in the document. It should be noted that, following these data, the PPC of the program was revised twice, involving changes in the names of curricular components, modifications to syllabi, and the addition of new components. However, these changes did not alter the practices of teacher educators nor the students' responses when questioned in

subsequent Supervised Internship meetings—a curricular component I teach and a moment in which we discuss training pathways and their applicability to classroom practice.

The findings of this study align with those obtained during postdoctoral research in Applied Linguistics (Lins Júnior; Moraes, 2023), which investigated the academic literacy of students in the final semester of the English Language specialization. In that study, participants reported that the main difficulties encountered throughout the program were: (a) a lack of convergence between theory and practice, associated with an excess of theoretical content; (b) difficulty in didactically transposing this content into their teaching during practicum experiences; and (c) challenges in preparing lesson plans, which revealed that reflection on the teaching profession occurs only in the final stages of the program. This allows us to infer that, during the first two years of training, the program functions less as a licensure program and more as a bachelor's degree.

In this study, it was possible to analyze both thematic fields based on just one of the proposed questions and, as a result, to identify that the teaching practices of teacher educators end up—consciously or not—reproducing an oppressive curriculum that is unfavorable to the development of critical thinking and professional autonomy. Following Paulo Freire (1987, p. 84), "there is no neutrality in education: it is either liberating or domesticating. The curriculum, as an educational practice, always serves interests of power." Thus, understanding the colonized curriculum entails recognizing that language teaching, when carried out from a standard or prestige norm perspective—stripped of its political dimensions—functions as an oppressive practice that silences local identities and forms of knowledge.

Kumaravadivelu (2006) calls on teachers and learners to break away from universalizing methods and to adopt practices that emerge from their own contexts, since teaching languages—as social practices—means not reproducing logics of domination, but transforming the classroom into a space of resistance and liberation, where learning a language—whether official or additional—also entails questioning the structures that have historically occupied positions of power.

If one of the greatest difficulties reported by the research participants was lesson planning—that is, the didactic transposition of theoretical knowledge into learning objects—what can be done to reverse this catastrophic situation (Bagno, 2013) in the UEVA Languages (Letras) program? In the next section, without any intention of proposing a formula, we outline a model for a decolonial curriculum, open to revision and adaptation to the contexts in which it may be applied.

Part II: Proposal for a Decolonial Curriculum Model for Languages (Letras) Programs

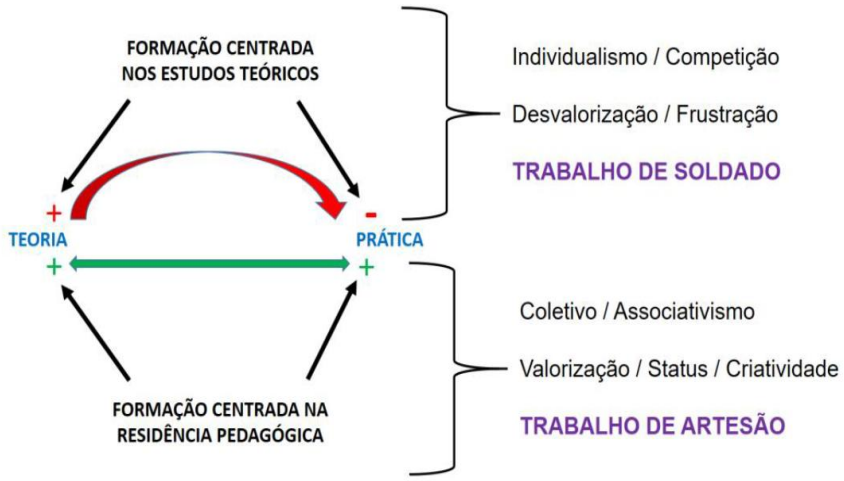
As shown by the participants' reports, the Pedagogical Course Project (PPC) of the UEVA Languages program appears, at least in practice, to be based on a Training → Repetition model, revealing an inconsistency with its own discourse, which advocates inverted symmetry and the education of a teacher-researcher. The fact that we are free to believe, investigate, and act according to different linguistic theories should neither—nor can—characterize a language teacher education program that is disconnected from the demands of Basic Education. This points to the need to unlearn and relearn in order to apprehend a new order, that is,

> the new education must teach the individual how to classify and reclassify information, how to evaluate its truthfulness, how to change categories when necessary, how to move from the concrete to the abstract and vice versa, how to look at problems from a new direction—how to teach oneself. The illiterate of tomorrow will not be the person who cannot read; it will be the person who has not learned how to learn (Gerjuoy [n.d.] apud Toffler, 1970, p. 414, our translation).

Teaching practice is a continuous process of construction that must accompany teachers' daily work, rather than a finished product concluded in initial and/or continuing education programs. The proposal presented here to Languages programs is grounded in a new curricular organization (Figure 1), structured in a spiral dynamic—rather than sequenced through prerequisites—in order to articulate the knowledge developed in academic training with knowledge experienced outside it. This requires that pre-service teachers engage with Basic Education schools from the very beginning of the program. It is, therefore, a model that must be discussed collectively among faculty members in order to be materialized in an official document; but, above all, it must stem from a shared understanding that (i) merely changing the names of curricular components; (ii) relocating Teaching Practice courses from the final semesters to the initial ones without proper interaction between theory—disciplinary knowledge—and practice—pedagogical and professional knowledge[10] and (iii) continuing to deliver non-dialogical classes with no student autonomy is no longer efficient and perhaps never was effective.

[10] These first two positions were adopted in the last two amendments to the UEVA Language Program.

Figure 1 – Epistemological proposal for organizing a decolonial curriculum



Source: Prepared by the author (result of postdoctoral research in Portuguese Studies at the Universidade Aberta de Lisboa, 2023).

In this model, the spiral dynamic unfolds across three cycles, with curricular components introduced progressively. The first cycle, lasting one year—the Teaching Initiation Cycle—corresponds to semesters I and II, in which English is introduced through its specific skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—alongside English Literature I and II, beginning with verbal texts of low complexity and multimodal texts. In parallel, there are pedagogical training components with field activities, already accounting for Supervised Internship hours; basic linguistic studies—conceptions of language, tongue, sign, speech, reading, and writing—and academic reading and writing practices.

The second cycle, lasting two years—the Teaching Deepening Cycle—corresponds to semesters III to VI, in which: (a) English is divided into grammar components focused on teaching in Basic Education and language development, expanding vocabulary and communicative situations in both oral and written registers; (b) literature centers on three major genres—poetic, narrative, and dramatic—and literary theory addresses concepts of textual analysis; (c) Cultural Studies of Anglophone peoples are included; and (d) Teaching Practices develop activities related to the semester's contents, such as curricular extension activities through Integrative Projects and studies in Applied Linguistics—language acquisition, notions of teaching and learning, and teaching methodologies.

The third cycle, lasting one year—the Teaching Consolidation Cycle—corresponds to semesters VII and VIII, in which English focuses on specialized academic and professional discourse; linguistic studies address educational sociolinguistics and language policies;

literature engages with decolonial themes; and the cycle culminates in the Supervised Internship Seminar and the Final Undergraduate Project, which would consist of an English language intervention proposal, duly grounded and reflected upon, implemented in the final years of Elementary School or in High School, as developed during the internships.

By observing the changes introduced in the most recent Pedagogical Course Project (PPC) of the UEVA Languages program (Sobral, 2015), it becomes evident that the acceptance of the proposed model would require a radical (re)vision (Mello, 2000) of faculty attitudes and interests, of their understanding of the program's demands and of the macro-region in which the university is located, as well as of how the program dialogues with school institutions and with society at large.

> Brazilians themselves will define the purposes of schooling in Brazil and, consequently, will educate their teachers. The question is whether they will do so democratically or whether education will continue to be, as in most countries, an instrument for reproducing inequalities and subjecting the masses to dominant thought. Unfortunately, we have little reason for optimism. This does not prevent us from reflecting on the ideal education of teachers for an ideal school; however, we are not so naive as to believe that mere ideas can dismantle relations of force (Perrenoud, 2002, p. 13-14, our translation).

The proposal presented here is grounded in Shohamy's (2006) studies on educational language policies and in Alliaud's (2004, 2014) conception of teacher education as craftsmanship. This perspective implies the formation of pedagogical subjects driven by multiple principles, including: knowledge and understanding of their social universe; mastery of plural and heterogeneous forms of knowledge; the theory–practice dialectic; the stance of the teacher as researcher; cooperative and collaborative work; competence regulated by professional autonomy; and disciplined engagement in critical and transformative reflection. In other words,

> specifically, we are referring to what teachers learned "in situation," throughout all the years in which they were students. It is what is lived and experienced in particular circumstances in which formalized content is learned. It is what I learned "informally" or "implicitly" through prolonged participation in educational institution [11] (Alliaud, 2004, p. 1-2, our translation).

[11] *Concretamente, nos estamos refiriendo a lo que los maestros han aprendido "en situación", en todos los años que fueron alumnos. Es aquello que se vive y experimenta en determinadas circunstancias en las que se producen*

I therefore propose a model for a Language Studies program with a focus on language teaching, based on: (1) the contemporary demands of Brazilian education; and (2) the needs of pre-service teachers with regard to the appropriation of plural forms of knowledge (Tardif, 2014), which must be fostered through processes that position them as agents who make decisions about their own educational trajectories, rather than as subjects merely exposed to decontextualized practices and assessment instruments that disregard the creative and scientific dimensions required of those who produce knowledge.

This would constitute a radical reformulation—one that we know is not easy, but which will never be possible as long as we maintain a disciplining (colonial) stance that is far removed from an activist and committed posture. What is required is teacher education grounded in need, context, and reflection on action. For this reason, in the curricular model we advocate, theory and practice are aligned with equal importance in professional education, generating not only greater critical awareness and creativity in teaching practice, but also politically constituted action. Hence its decolonial nature and, one might say, its affinity with craftsmanship, insofar as the teacher becomes the builder of their own art—in this case, their language teaching methodology (and that of other curricular components).

Final Remarks

Educational language policies hold significant potential for enhancing the quality of language teaching across its various levels and modalities. However, as demonstrated, they may also embody imperialist perspectives when they marginalize linguistic variation and contexts of use in favor of a single normative standard. Consequently, professional training at the higher education level emerges as a first-order political, economic, and cultural issue within the field of Education, calling for actions that contribute to the strengthening, renewal, and social valorization of the teaching profession. In this process, the discourses produced by teacher educators and by teachers in training play a crucial role.

The inclusion of these issues in teacher education curricula can positively contribute to consolidating a professional category that is aware of contemporary educational demands. If

los aprendizajes de contenidos formalizados. Es lo aprendido "informal" o "implícitamente" en la prolongada estadía que uno pasa por las instituciones escolares.

such issues are ignored, we end up reinforcing—albeit unintentionally (perhaps)—beliefs that sustain the merely reproductive character of the academic environment, thereby preventing educational changes aimed at more conscious and reflective teacher education. In other words, it is a matter of choosing to educate—or to become—"soldiers of the system" or "craftspeople," a choice that is neither neutral nor innocent.

The curricular proposal presented here seeks to overcome methodological formalism grounded in Cartesian certainties, with the intention of collectively addressing—or at least minimizing—a long-standing problem affecting teacher education programs. Because they are unfamiliar with the construction of knowledge through experience—under the belief that classical theories are superior to knowledge produced through teaching practice—newly graduated teachers often appear unprepared to employ innovative methodologies in Basic Education. This, in turn, fosters disinterest and low productivity, contributing to the devaluation of the profession, often because they themselves never experienced such methodologies during their academic training.

Opting for a decolonial curriculum entails recognizing the need to understand the "changes related to the sociocultural, political, and historical life" of those involved in the research. That is, it presupposes that participants grasp the importance of "appropriating research and learning to reformulate their own discourses, perspectives, interests, and individual or collective needs in languages susceptible to a certain degree of objectification" (Tardif, 2014, p. 239, our translation). Accordingly, the main objective of this study is to provoke and generate discursive and agentive possibilities capable of removing Languages (Letras) programs from the chaotic situation in which they currently find themselves.

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