

THE UNIVERSITY OUTREACH AS A LANGUAGE EDUCATION SPACE: AN
ETHICAL-RESPONSIBLE DISCUSSION

*A EXTENSÃO UNIVERSITÁRIA COMO ESPAÇO DE FORMAÇÃO EM LINGUAGEM:
UMA DISCUSSÃO ÉTICO-RESPONSÁVEL*

*LA EXTENSIÓN UNIVERSITARIA COMO ESPACIO DE FORMACIÓN DE
LENGUAJE: UNA DISCUSIÓN ÉTICO-RESPONSABLE*



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How to reference this article:

MAZUCHELLI, L. P.; OLIVEIRA, M. V. B. The university outreach as a language education space: An ethical-responsible discussion. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 18, n. 00, e023081, 2023. e-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riaee.v18iesp.1.18480>



| Submitted: 22/03/2023
| Revisions required: 15/05/2023
| Approved: 29/07/2023
| Published: 19/09/2023

Editor: Prof. Dr. José Luís Bizelli

Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

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ABSTRACT: This paper discusses the relevance of the formative role of university outreach, based on dialogicity and engagement with society, having as a starting point a reflection on the activities of two outreach and engagement projects: the Center for People with Aphasia (UNICAMP) and the Observatory of Ageism (UFBA/UFU). While the first works with the cognitive-linguistic reorganization of brain-injured individuals, the second fights age bias prejudice and stigmatization, especially those aimed at older people. Based on the reported and discussed experiences, university outreach and engagement projects can be a privileged space for ethically responsible language education, even though much needs to be done in terms of institutional acknowledgement. Finally, we emphasize that the dialogical and ethically responsible experiences shared in outreach activities highlight the importance of forming professionals committed to facing oppression, injustice, and prejudice that operate through language.

KEYWORDS: Ag(e)ing. University outreach. Language education.

RESUMO: Este artigo discute a relevância do papel formativo das extensões universitárias, fundamentadas na dialogicidade e no engajamento com a sociedade, tendo como ponto de partida uma reflexão sobre as atividades de dois projetos de extensão: o Centro de Convivência de Afásicos (UNICAMP) e o Observatório do Idadismo (UFBA/UFU). Enquanto o primeiro atua na reorganização linguístico-cognitiva de sujeitos cérebro-lesados, o segundo combate preconceitos e estigmatização com viés de idade, principalmente aqueles dirigidos à pessoa idosa. A partir das vivências relatadas e discutidas, defendemos que a extensão universitária pode ser espaço privilegiado para uma formação ético-responsável em linguagem, ainda que haja um longo caminho a ser percorrido para seu reconhecimento institucional. Destacamos, finalmente, que as experiências dialógicas e ético-responsáveis vivenciadas nas atividades extensionistas apontam para a importância da formação de profissionais engajados no enfrentamento de opressões, injustiças e preconceitos que operam por meio da linguagem.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Envelhecimento. Extensão universitária. Formação em linguagem.

RESUMEN: Este artículo discute la relevancia del papel formativo de las extensiones universitarias, basado en la dialogicidad y el compromiso con la sociedad, teniendo como punto de partida una reflexión sobre las actividades de dos proyectos de extensión: el Centro de Vida de Afásicos (UNICAMP) y el Observatorio de la Edadismo (UFBA /UFU). Mientras que el primero opera en la reorganización cognitivo-lingüística de los sujetos con lesión cerebral, el segundo combate los prejuicios y la estigmatización con sesgo de edad, especialmente los dirigidos a los ancianos. Con base en las experiencias reportadas y discutidas, argumentamos que la extensión universitaria puede ser un espacio privilegiado para una formación éticamente responsable en idiomas, aunque queda un largo camino por recorrer para su reconocimiento institucional. Finalmente, destacamos que las experiencias dialógicas y éticamente responsables vividas en las actividades de extensión apuntan a la importancia de formar profesionales comprometidos en el enfrentamiento de la opresión, la injusticia y el prejuicio que operan a través del lenguaje.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Envejecimiento. Extensión universitária. Formación en lenguaje.

Introduction

This text aims to reflect on language training spaces, especially those that, integrated with research and teaching, contribute to an ethically responsible training of its participants. Even comprehending linguistic plurality as an object of knowledge, it is from its constitutive heterogeneity that this text goes beyond, without, however, having the “language domain” as a horizon for this work.

To deal with language training spaces, we will approach two extension projects: the Aphasics Living Center (hereinafter CCA) and the Ageism Observatory. We base ourselves theoretically and methodologically on the works of the Bakhtin Circle and Paulo Freire and start from the consideration of the role and power of university extensions in undergraduate curricula, a theme that has been gaining prominence given its curricularization process³, but which offers risks of emptying of the fundamental characteristics of extension activities.

This discussion is also justified, therefore, given the still marginal nature of extension when compared to research and teaching, which reflects a heritage of training that does not go beyond the walls of the classroom, or that “carries” the classroom for extension, often reducing it to “schooled” courses that mimic and reproduce disciplines offered in graduations and transform extension into a mechanistic and technical instrument of university assistance. We also believe that this scenario accounts, in part, for the feeling of not belonging to the university space for many students. It is in this sense, too, that we argue that extensions have a transforming nature, especially when they are based on ethically responsible and dialogical principles that move away from these hierarchical and welfare practices.

We also discussed the extensionist spaces in this work due to their relevance in our training and research trajectories. Our reflection is thus also based on our reflected experience and understanding of the importance of the possibility of dialogue between the university and other sectors of society and the interdisciplinarity that derives from it. The extension, therefore, can favor an ethically-responsible academic formation that politically involves the university in the necessary confrontation of urgent social issues, such as environmental, ethnic-racial, gender and, particularly for us, age issues⁴.

³ According to the National Education Plan (2014-2024), approved by Law 13,005, of June 25, 2014, by the end of 2022, all undergraduate courses at Brazilian public universities must allocate at least 10% from their workload to university extension.

⁴ It should be noted that the authors of the text are researchers from the Group for the Study of Language in Aging and Pathologies (GELEP-Platform CNPq/Lattes).

Initially, we present the CCA, highlighting its promising history of working with brain-injured subjects, and then present the Observatório do Idadismo, a project created in 2021 that seeks to discuss and face age bias prejudice, mainly against the elderly. Finally, we highlight the intertwining of the actions of these spaces for ethically responsible language training.

The Coexistence Center for Aphasics: a project to face the objectification of aphasics

The Aphasic Living Center, created in the 1980s by researchers from the Department of Linguistics at the Institute of Language Studies and the Department of Neurology at the Faculty of Medicine, both at the State University of Campinas, aims, since its foundation, to enable “living exercise of language” (COUDRY, 1997).

The groups⁵ that constitute it rely on the joint work of subjects with aphasia⁶ and undergraduate students from the Linguistics, Literature and Speech Therapy and Post-Graduation courses in Linguistics, especially those linked to the line of research in Neurolinguistics, in weekly meetings and individual consultations. Thus, the interdisciplinary character of the CCA is noted, as discussed by Novaes-Pinto and Lima (2016), since linguists, speech therapists, educators, artists (musicians, actors, visual artists, etc.) interact.

Since its creation, the CCA has contributed to Discursive Neurolinguistics, which appeared in 1986 with the doctoral thesis of Maria Irma Hadler Coudry and is based on the understanding that “working with language” (FRANCHI, 2011[1977]) demands “the mobilization of several cognitive processes⁷ involved in the symbolic activity of meaning processes, altered in brain-damaged subjects” (COUDRY, 1997, p. 13), that is, it demands work *with* and *in* language and that involve perception, attention and memory structured by it.

It can be seen, therefore, that the CCA is opposed to a trend of clinical work with brain-injured subjects that objectifies them by being based on reductionist language activities, of an excessively abstract nature, with a strong school inspiration, present in the evaluation manuals

⁵In its history, the CCA has three groups coordinated by professors from the Department of Linguistics. Group I, under the responsibility of Prof. Dr. Edwiges Maria Morato; Group II, under the responsibility of Prof. Maria Irma Hadler Coudry; and Group III, under the responsibility of Prof. Dr. Rosana do Carmo Novaes Pinto.

⁶Aphasias are language disorders resulting from acquired neurological injuries, such as strokes, tumors and traumatic brain injuries, which compromise the processes of symbolization and meaning, at all linguistic levels, by disaggregating what was previously integrated (COUDRY, 1986 [1988]).

⁷We emphasize that cognition is “a set of various forms of knowledge that is not totalized or subsumed in language, but that somehow is under its responsibility” (MORATO, 2004, p. 323). In this sense, Discursive Neurolinguistics and CCA do not work from the premise that makes the brain disconnected from the body, from its particular history and from humanity. They distance themselves, therefore, from metaphors that approximate the brain to a computer or from experimental arguments of the “brain in a vat” type. According to Morato (1999, p. 160), “cognitive processes are “like language, depending on meaningful practices, based on sociocultural contingencies, by properties of the unconscious and by the quality of human interactions”.

and of language therapy. On the other hand, based on discursive principles, the assessment and the work of linguistic-cognitive reorganization become, in the CCA, “a broad record” of the processes of meaning and the work that the subjects carry out with *and* in *language*. That is, in the activities developed with aphasic subjects, “language (even fragmentary) is displayed in all its complexity, offering visibility to what is or is not altered, what is lacking and what exceeds, in relation to [its] normal functioning.” (COUDRY, 1997, p. 14, our translation).

The importance of this position regarding language issues and its effects on training will be discussed below. However, before going deeper into this discussion, we present the Ageism Observatory, a work that is also based on a discursive, historical and dialogical position in the face of language issues.

The Observatório do Idadismo: a project to respond to the escalation of violence against the elderly

Ageism is a phenomenon still little investigated, although its first reference dates back to the 1960s, with the work of Robert Butler in the United States. In general, we refer to ageism (also known in Brazil as *ageism*) when dealing with discrimination, violence and stereotypes that circulate based on age group (especially against the elderly) and that lead to marginalization and social exclusion or their accentuation, since they prevail in attitudes that intertwine condescension and negligence. This prejudice manifests itself, therefore, in interpersonal relationships (in disrespectful, often violent treatment), in a self-directed way (as in rejecting one's own aging) and institutionally (dismissal due to age, for example) and is intertwined with other markers such as racism, sexism, transphobia, deepening their violence.

It was at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, when we experienced an escalation⁸ of disrespect, contempt and violence towards the elderly (held responsible for the economic effects caused by social distancing measures and the overload on the health system⁹), that the Observatório do Idadismo emerged as an Extension Project of the Federal University of Bahia, today also linked to the Federal University of Uberlândia. The activities carried out are arranged

⁸At first, the age-old argument for not worrying about the pandemic was widely used by the media and social networks. In a second moment, the elderly were infantilized for not “understanding” the seriousness of the health crisis, being referred to as “stubborn” in memes that circulated on social networks (MAZUCHELLI *et al.*, 2021). Throughout the pandemic, we also witnessed the Prevent Senior scandal, during the investigations of the CPI of Covid-19, in which doctors from the health plan reduced the oxygen levels of hospitalized elderly patients to “accelerate” the release of beds.

⁹Blaming the demographic growth of the elderly population for the burden on the economic social security and health system is not recent and has been addressed in previous works (MAZUCHELLI, 2019).

in three axes: i) monitoring and discussion of news on aging and ageism; ii) translation, publication and dissemination of qualified material on ageism; and iii) training and coping with ageism through workshops and conversation circles.

The work carried out by the Observatório do Idadismo is also based on the understanding of language as historically situated and brings together interdisciplinarity. Its members are from the fields of Human Sciences, Education and Health, mainly Speech Therapy and Linguistics. However, fields such as Sociology, Anthropology, Gerontology and Communication have become essential for the work carried out, since they guide fundamental discussions about aging. Currently, the observatory has researchers, undergraduate and graduate students, as well as health and education professionals, making its integration with training broad and transversal to undergraduate courses.

In the next section, we discuss how the work carried out at the CCA and at the Observatório do Idadismo intertwine in three dimensions: university extension, language training, and responsibility.

University extension: an ethical-responsible space

The work carried out at the CCA and at the Observatório do Idadismo, briefly presented above, is in line with the fundamental principles of university extension, already agreed upon at the 1st National Meeting of Pro-Rectors of Extension of Brazilian Public Universities in 1987:

University Extension is the educational, cultural and scientific process that articulates Teaching and Research in an inseparable way and enables the transforming relationship between University and Society. The extension is a two-way street, with assured transit to the academic community, which will find, in society, the opportunity to elaborate the praxis of academic knowledge. Upon returning to the University, teachers and students will bring learning that, subject to theoretical reflection, will be added to that knowledge. This flow, which establishes the exchange of systematized, academic and popular knowledge, will result in the production of knowledge resulting from the confrontation with the Brazilian and regional reality, the democratization of academic knowledge and the effective participation of the community in the University's activities. In addition to instrumentalizing this dialectical process of theory/practice, extension is an interdisciplinary work that favors an integrated view of the social (FORPROEX, 2012, p. 15, our translation).

The National Extension Policy highlights the importance of the two-way street, provided by the extension activity, which oxygenates the university, on the one hand, and increases the transforming force of the university in its confrontation of contemporary

challenges, on the other. Regarding this relationship, we agree with Neto (2014, p. 93, our translation) when he states:

When thinking about university extension as useful social work, it is seen that this work is not carried out only from the participants of the university community, servers and students. In its dialectics, it requires an external dimension to the university, which is the participation of people from the community or even from other civil society institutions, such as social movements. There is a “two-way” relationship, where participants from the university and other institutions or the community converge.

In this sense, university extension must reject verticalized practices that disregard popular knowledge and reaffirm its dialogical and historically situated character, moving away, therefore, from a welfare work, in which, according to Freire (2001), would be the denial of the subject and from your agency. The welfarist extension – or even the welfarist pedagogical practice – does not attribute to subjects the ability to “re-think” their own action, “re-create” their thoughts and reality. In this regard, Freire (2001) is blunt in his criticism to a *certain* extent:

It seems to us [...] that the extensionist action involves [...] the need felt by those who carry it out, to go to the “other part of the world”, considered inferior, in order, in their own way, to “normalize” it there”. To make it more or less like your world. Hence, [...] the term extension finds itself in a significant relationship with transmission, delivery, donation, messianism, mechanism, cultural invasion, manipulation, etc. And all these terms involve actions that, transforming man into almost a “thing”, deny him as a being of transformation of the world (FREIRE, 2001, p. 22, our translation).

This process of objectification of the other concerns the anti-democratic roots, the “Brazilian mutism”, belonging to the Brazilian society that, historically constituted in the absence of dialogue, denies an authentic democratic experience (FREIRE, 1967). By opposing welfarism, the violence of its anti-dialogue that reduces men to objects, Freire approaches Bakhtin (2010) by stating that, in the human sciences, man should never be studied as a mute object, under penalty of making invisible precisely your possibility to say.

In the cases of the CCA and the Observatório do Idadismo, the experiences and work developed do not stem from a schooled idea “disconnected from the life one lives”, which fragments knowledge and strengthens impossibilities of saying. They distance themselves, therefore, from theoreticalism, from a pretense of universalization and language domination, and depart from the Bakhtinian understanding that the experience refers to two opposite directions: towards the objective unity of a field of culture and towards the unrepeatable singularity of life that you live

The act must find a single unitary plane to be reflected in both directions, in its meaning and in its existence; must find the unity of a bidirectional responsibility, whether in relation to its content (special responsibility) or in relation to its existence (moral responsibility), so that special responsibility must be an incorporated moment of a single and unitary moral responsibility. This is the only way to overcome the pernicious separation and mutual impenetrability between culture and life (BAKHTIN, 2010, p. 43-44, our translation).

This bidirectional responsibility, which takes responsibility for the content and existence based on the inseparability between culture and life, which occurs in the act and for which, therefore, there is no alibi, underlies the actions developed in the two extension projects, either through a response to what Coudry (1997) called the “dilemma of facing 'intractable' subjects”, either by facing the silencing that ageism confers on people in the aging process.

In this sense, the CCA activities offer a type of encounter in which aphasic subjects are not objectified, removed from their agency and their ability to “(re) create”; that is, his knowledge as a speaker who is in the language and has not lost it (as the more traditional discussions still argue) is respected and valued. In this way, the CCA is configured as an ethical-responsible space in which subjects with aphasia can (re)establish social ties while developing coping strategies for the impacts of neurological events that are not restricted to linguistic-cognitive changes, but include exclusions due to prejudices, mainly linguistic, capacitive and social (NOVAES-PINTO, 2008, 2015), many of which sustained by ignorance about what aphasia is ¹⁰.

In addition to a health issue, therefore, aphasia must be understood as a social issue (NOVAES-PINTO, 2008). In this sense, the CCA historically positions itself as an important space for confronting the pathologization and silencing of these subjects (NOVAES-PINTO, 2008, 2012) and for humanistic training for this struggle.

In the case of the Observatório do Idadismo, the activities offer another type of meeting, since for media monitoring, members of the extension select journalistic texts from the regular search for keywords in which they are investigated, despite the absence of the term ageism, discursive and dialogical movements in which the theme is underlying. With the discussion of the selected texts, the participants, from different areas and age groups, (re)signify the ageist

¹⁰As a rule, aphasic people are removed from their professional and social activities, often in still very productive phases of their lives. Even today, there is a frequent belief that subjects with aphasia would suffer, above all, from “reasoning problems”, being seen as incapable, although they do not, in general, present cognitive alterations. There are also beliefs that aphasia would be the result of spiritual disturbances.

discourses (theirs and others) and, at the same time, understand aspects of the functioning of the fields of communication, education and health.

The two extension projects also make it possible to question age stereotypes, both in relation to aging and youth. Many students, especially undergraduates, who are in age groups that are far from the elderly (as well as aphasic), have the opportunity to discuss intensely about aging and about age prejudices experienced and perpetrated by them. In this process, therefore, they begin to better understand the structurality of ageism in the way we live and the struggle for something that also becomes from them. There is, here, the development of what we have been calling *intergenerational responsibility* (OLIVEIRA; MAZUCHELLI, 2021), a responsibility that, in Bakhtinian terms, does not occur in relation to stagnant generations, but in the recognition that temporalities intersect at all times and coexist in each individual and in each act:

[...] we answer not only for what happens today, but both for the past (and here we remember the trivialization of the horror of dictatorship, or slavery) and for the future (and here we think that future generations may not have a habitable earth). For the purposes of this article, we prefer to say that the generations share the dialogization of a time that is not compartmentalized and timed, of representation and projection, which allows the subjects to be, at the same time, coexisting in different generations (OLIVEIRA; MAZUCHELLI, 2021, p. 41, our translation).

The intense circulation of sayings and knowledge, of an intergenerational nature, occurs in a non-vertical way in the two extension projects: subjects with aphasia work *with* and *in* language to share knowledge and experiences with other subjects with aphasia, with researchers, undergraduate students and others CCA participants, while at the Observatório do Idadismo, undergraduate and graduate students share knowledge, experiences and anxieties related to aging, observed or experienced age prejudices, giving new meaning to them. This contributes to strengthening exchanges, learning and combating the objectification of the other. In the sense exposed by Freire, one does not seek to “normalize”, “invade” or “manipulate”. Rather, it seeks to (re)construct meanings, collectively and dialogically, about health, illness, normality, language, communication, aging, ageism.

In our experiences in both projects, it can be said that we know how the conversation will start (with the news and comments on the difficulties of the week and general reports, either in the CCA or in the Observatório do Idadismo), but we never know how it will be finalization, if we will have at the end a reaffirmation of a pre -constructed morality of our knowledge or if

we will be introduced to other knowledge, sewn in the uniqueness and otherness of the encounters (BAKHTIN, 2010).

We consider, then, through the discussion presented, that there is an ethical-responsible look that should subsidize the extensionist activity, whether in the face of ageism or in defense of the right to speak of the aphasic subject. One aspect that intertwines these two dimensions, therefore, is the conception and work carried out *in* and *with* language, which we discuss below.

Working *with* and *in* language: interdisciplinary experiences

In the CCA, practices are observed in which the constitutive character of language is valued, as opposed to merely instrumental objectives translated into skills and abilities to be (re)learned and mastered. Thus, activities of everyday life crossed by language, such as sharing breakfast, reading and discussing news about the country and the world, games, festive celebrations, staging, trips to other cities, visits to museums and exhibitions; that is, the “world of life” encounters (BAKHTIN, 2010) characterize the way in which language and meaning processes are being (re)elaborated, (re)created in shared experiences, in which aphasics and non-aphasics work collaboratively to “rectify what was lived” which, “at the same time constitutes the symbolic through which reality is operated and constitutes reality as a system of references in which that becomes significant” (FRANCHI, 2011 [1977], p. 64, our translation).

It is worth noting that, even though language is “fragmented” in aphasia, the work carried out, in collective and individual sessions, demands that it be treated in all its heterogeneity and uniqueness. Therefore, there are no clippings that favor “models” that would represent the “whole of language”, work that Bakhtin (2016) calls “science fiction”. Participating undergraduate students in Letters, Linguistics and Speech Therapy are invited to look at language beyond its possible theoretical perspectives. Aphasia and work at CCA demand that knowledge be mobilized from the disciplines that make up their curricula: knowledge learned about phonetics and phonology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, speech (in the specific case of Language and Linguistics students), voice, audiology, motricity orofacial, among others (in the specific case of speech therapy students). Thus, participants also learn in the encounter with other areas, whether understanding how a semantic-lexical analysis helps to explain a case of aphasia, or understanding the importance of hydration for voice care or health promotion more broadly, not strictly biomedical. Without this interdisciplinarity and collective work, the understanding and evaluation of the cases is compromised, as well as the preparation for coping with linguistic and social difficulties.

By way of example, we bring a report that shows the complexity of language in aphasia. In it, the aphasic subject, who has constant difficulty finding words, and the interlocutor were talking while the collective session did not start until he noticed the lack of a word that he considered important. Let's see the researcher's diary report on the process of recovering the lost word:

We were in the CCA room. We had arrived around 8:00 am, a little earlier than the group. We arrived, FG and I, and started to set up all the equipment for the group to use. Meanwhile, Mr. AC was whistling. I made a joke that the whistle sounded like an owl. Then we started talking about birds, until a certain moment he asked me what was the name of the bird that sang its own name. He told me he knew and that the word was almost there, on the tip of his tongue. Then I made a guess and asked if it started with B., but he said no. Soon after I whistled the sound of Bem-te-vi, but he said “not that one”. I said I knew yet another little bird that sang the name and whistled the fire-paid song. But he said it wasn't that one either [...] but what he knew was one that he saw a lot when he was younger, but that he had never seen again; it looked like it had disappeared. Then AC kept complaining about the word, that it didn't come, that he forgot the names when he wanted to... After about 20 minutes in which I continued to organize the room, I asked him to whistle or to say a letter, but he said I did not know. Soon after, he said “it seems that I can see him there on the ground, making [imitates the sound]... Bullfinch, phew! I've wanted to remember this name for a long time!” (OLIVEIRA, 2022, p. 216, our translation).

Considering the objectives of this text, it is not our place to proceed with data analysis¹¹, but we highlight the work *with* and *in the* language carried out by the participants who appear in this report and which is inseparable from their life trajectories, daily actions, assumptions and assumptions about speech on the other, the semantic-lexical organization necessary to enable the evocation of a word and which highlights the intertwined relationship between memory and language. The search for the word, carried out in a dialogic and collaborative way, goes far beyond, therefore, determining “successes” and “mistakes” based on the expectations of “linguistic training of lexical evocation” materials, for example. It is also related to active listening, a central point in the relationship with the other word (PONZIO, 2010), and which implies relating to the frustrations of the process and the creation of ways to find the word.

The epistemological assumptions that underlie the activities of the CCA, therefore, provide opportunities for participating subjects, researchers and students in training, to understand the linguistic, metalinguistic and epilinguistic work, which enables the exercise of

¹¹The analyzed data can be found in Oliveira (2022). It is also worth mentioning how the search for the name of the bird continues, in later sessions, with videos of birds singing, conversations and guessing games about birdsongs.

a reflection on the functioning of language, which is essential for a critical role in speech therapy and in formal and informal educational contexts.

At the Observatório do Idadismo, the work also demands the interweaving of diverse knowledge, an assumption in monitoring the multiplicity of ideological threads that make up the discourses and meanings that are being disputed in the word. This work is fundamental if we consider that “the word will be the most sensitive *indicator of social changes*”, since “it is capable of fixing all transitory phases of social changes, however delicate and fleeting they may be” (VOLÓCHINOV, 2018, p. 106, our translation).

anti-ageism training activities already carried out with health and education professionals and with groups of elderly people, are thus sustained in this work *with* and *in the* language, in encounters and disputes over meanings.

Publicizing qualified knowledge about aging and ageism, for example, requires intense study, data analysis, information checking, intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic writing and translation (JAKOBSON, 1981) and understanding of the discursive genres of posts in profiles on social networks (Instagram, Facebook and Twitter). We highlight the translation of the report produced by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) into English and suitable for posts on social networks (Fig.1) that presented summaries of the observatory's discussions (Fig. 2).

Figures 1 and 2 – Productions by the Observatório do Idadismo



Source: Observatório do Idadismo

This work requires strategic lexical and discursive choices, positioning in the face of complex issues, translating concepts and composing images, which requires a constant process of refinement and adaptation to the heterogeneity of readers and participants in the activities. All this work requires and makes possible, at the same time, the development of listening and

otherness; that is, in an encounter with another – concrete, singular and, therefore, irreplaceable – that starts from the “recognition of the impossibility of non-indifference for the other” in a “responsible action that expresses the uniqueness of the being in the world without an alibi” (PONZIO, 2010, p. 22-24, our translation).

In this sense, the more we mobilize and relate to the genres, in this ethical-responsible architecture with the language and with the participating subjects,

the more easily we use them and the more fully and clearly we discover our individuality (where this is possible and necessary), we reflect more flexibly and subtly the unique situation of communication – in short, the fuller is the way in which we use them. We carry out our free process of discourse (BAKHTIN, 2016, p.41, our translation).

In addition to this work carried out with the publication of qualified material on ageism, there is also language work in anti-ageism training carried out through workshops and conversation circles.

In a conversation circle with a group of elderly women (mostly female, as usual) in the city of Salvador, we carried out an activity based on Engaged Multiliteracy (LIBERALI, 2022), which is based on the proposals of Vygotsky and Freire and on confluences with the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies (NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996 [2000]) in the organization of pedagogical practices based on the understanding that education must build increasingly broad modes of participation for all (LIBERALI *et al.*, 2021).

The meetings motivated by the ME are organized in three moments: the first dedicated to *immersion in reality*, in which a cognitive-affective connection with the theme to be discussed is sought; a second dedicated to the *critical construction of generalizations*, when there is a deepening of the understanding of the theme and sharing of knowledge; and, finally, a third dedicated to *production and social change*, in which intervention actions inspired by the lessons learned from previous moments are planned.

Initially, as a form of *immersion in reality*, two stages of situations were performed based on experiences lived and observed by members of the Observatório do Idadismo following the proposal of the Theater of the Oppressed (BOAL, 2019 [1975]), an important pedagogical tool of the ME ¹². In the first scenario, an elderly woman waited in line to vote while poll workers and other voters complained about the delay and said that the line was long due to the slowness

¹²From the 1970s onwards, Boal created a theater committed to confronting oppression. One of his strategies to make it a path to liberation was to transform spectators into “spectators”, capable of interfering and changing the course of a scene.

of the elderly. In the second scenario, a bank manager dealt with a loan directly with the daughter who accompanied her elderly father to get a loan, without giving due attention to the elderly person who would have his money withdrawn.

In both situations staged, it was agreed with the elderly that they could interfere in the scenes if they did not agree with what they were watching, which was done in a very expressive way: the elderly demanded their rights both in relation to voting and borrowing, and questioned the dehumanization and speed of the contemporary world, “*running a lot to get nowhere*”, as one of the elderly women stated in response to the perception that there is no room to “wait” for the other (voting, understanding how a loan would work, for example).

Later, a conversation circle was held to collectively explore the experience of *immersion in reality* and deepen understandings about ageism by sharing knowledge and reading pre-selected materials. Finally, a game was played in which the elderly women had to decide whether some phrases, such as “*She doesn't even look old, she's still beautiful*”, were ageist, ambiguous or if they did not present a prejudiced nature.

As this example suggests, the ethical-responsible work carried out with the elderly does not objectify them. On the contrary, knowledge about ageism is carried out collaboratively, based on their experiences, *with* and *in* language. The participants of the Observatório do Idadismo highlight the firm position of confrontation of the elderly women who questioned during the *critical construction of generalizations* about one of the phrases evaluated: “*Do you mean that only those who do not look old are beautiful?*”.

Although the activity carried out did not directly culminate in an action in the *practice of social change* (due, above all, to time), there is no doubt about the impact that this meeting had on the lives of the participants of the Observatório do Idadismo who *learned* by experiencing the force of confrontation and engagement of the elderly women in the two scenarios and in the reflections that followed. On the other hand, the participants in the conversation circle had the opportunity to expand their understanding of ageism and their coping repertoire.

This experience, lived through extension activity, as well as the experiences in the CCA, are powerful because they are based, as we try to show in the work *with* and *in the* language, in the “life that is lived” in an ethical-responsible way, in a non-intrusive mechanical or normalizing way. On the contrary, in the totality of the act, which “is truly real, it participates in the existing-event; only in this way is it alive, fully and irreducibly, exists, comes into being, takes place” (BAKHTIN, 2010, p. 43, our translation).

Final remarks

This article sought to defend that university extension activities can be privileged spaces for an ethically responsible training in language, since the bidirectional and engaged nature of extension activities, their dialogical uniqueness, both in the relationship between students and professors and in the relationship between the university and the community that is external to it and, at the same time, constitutive. We chose to present two different proposals for extensions that work *with* and *in* language, seeking to expand dialogues, each in its own way, without ceasing, from within an ethically responsible position (BAKHTIN, 2010; PONZIO, 2010), to work on completeness of its dimensions, in the constant attempt to overcome the welfarism that objectify, common in the fields of health and education.

Throughout the development history of the Neurolinguistics area and the CCA, many articles, in different fields of knowledge, were developed to show the work carried out by subjects with aphasia and a clinic capable of creating possibilities for subjects to reorganize themselves linguistically, cognitively and socially. In addition to enabling the work of reorganizing the language of subjects with aphasia, the CCA constitutes, therefore, a space for scientific production and training in the field of linguistic studies, whether for future teachers, speech therapists or researchers in fields that are interrelated with issues related to language and its functioning. Based on similar theoretical bases, the Ageism Observatory has been seeking to follow the same interdisciplinary path in working *with* and *in* language, necessary for a shared formation of teachers and students.

In times of integration of extensions into the curricular matrix of undergraduate courses, it will be necessary to face the challenges of training that still takes little account of student engagement, citizen action and the role of the university in overcoming the inequalities and exclusion mechanisms that are at the heart of Brazilian history. In this regard, the epigraph of the national university extension policy (FORPROEX, 2012) highlights the strength of extensions as resistance to the university's submission to global capitalism, given its active role in building social cohesion, strengthening democracy, cultural diversity, and increased access to knowledge produced by the university as a way to combat social exclusion and environmental degradation.

However, we must recognize that, despite the presence of extension in the university tripod, there is still a long way to go for its institutional recognition, but we believe that dialogical and ethically responsible experiences such as those briefly discussed in this work,

despite their limitations, may continue to enable the training of professionals committed to facing oppression, injustice and prejudice that operate through language.

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CRedit Author statement

Acknowledgments: We would like to thank the participants of the Centro de Convivência de Afasicos, the members of the Observatório do Idadismo and the Group for the Study of Language in Aging and Pathologies, especially Prof. Dr. Rosana do Carmo Novaes-Pinto for her invaluable generosity and listening.

Financing: We would like to thank CAPES for supporting the scientific publication, as well as the Institutional Program of Initiation Scholarships for University Extension at the Federal University of Bahia for the possibility of linking scholarship holders in the extension modality to the Observatório do Idadismo.

Conflicts of interest: There are no conflicts of interest.

Ethical approval: As this is a discussion based on the experience of the authors, this work falls under Item VII and VIII of Article 1 of Resolution No. 510 of 07/04/2016.

Availability of data and material: The data and materials of the Observatório do Idadismo are available on its social networks. The data and materials from the Afasic Community Center are part of the authors' records.

Author contributions: Both authors participated in the design, planning, data interpretation, writing, review and approval of the final version.

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.

