Ethics in Language Education: Colonial Seeds, Decolonial Flowers

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Abstract:

This paper reports on a doctoral research project, carried out by the first author under the supervision of the second one, whose original focus was on elaborating a first draft of a written code of ethics for Brazilian language teachers. Even though this project was initially conceived to elaborate such a draft in light of some European ethics perspectives, as the proponents were generating data with the research participants, it became evident to them that the European-centered worldview would not properly address the struggles and needs of Brazilian language teachers. Two instances of *colonial seeds* becoming *decolonial flowers* are then introduced. The first one relates to the conception of the research project and the data collection; and the second, to the analysis itself. It does not take a village to fail, but it certainly takes one to face it in the way described in this paper. In a highly competitive context as the academia is, time to fail and to reflect upon it would seem to be nonsense to a vast number of scholars. The paper ends with reflective questions to be locally and creatively answered by scholars and teachers from the language education arena.

Keywords:

Decoloniality. Language education. Code of ethics.

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Opening Remarks

> Once upon a time scholars assumed that the knowing subject in the disciplines is transparent, disincorporated from the known and untouched by the geo-political configuration of the world in which people are racially ranked and regions are racially configured. (MIGNOLO, 2009, p. 1).

Even though Mignolo (2009) adopts a fairytale-like language in the aforementioned passage, its message portrays, in fact, what has been considered *legit* and *scientific* knowledge in academia for most of this institution's existence. A growing group of scholars – here we refer to *decolonial* researchers but not only them – seem to make strides towards recognizing the existence of local, subaltern knowledges. Despite the fact that this fairytale of scientific knowledge can be traced to all academic fields, in this paper, we focus on the language education arena, especially in Brazil. The objectivity out there when discussing language education is an illusion. The uncertainty and fluidity of our times make all objective structures to tremble and, more often than not, to fall. The encompassing questioning of social inequalities in Brazilian language classrooms is not a choice, it is, in our view, an ethical and social responsibility.

To put it differently, we, as language educators, are ethically and socially responsible for each other, specifically for our students. As we work on the very final version of this paper before getting it published, the current federal government has once again cut the funding for research in *all* the universities, more precisely the monthly-paid scholarships. We feel compelled to take the opportunity of this paper as a space to denounce those who are deeply against universal public education in all levels. For us, authors, this denouncement seems necessary, and we rightfully do so within the academia. Here, it is of upmost importance to indicate our view on ethics. We share Zembylas's understanding that:

> […] decolonial ethics does not simply recognize the values of intercultural dialogue and cultural differences, as liberal, multiculturalist, and cosmopolitan orientations emphasize. Rather, *decolonial ethics imagines a set of ethical orientations that confront conventional assumptions about culture and history and challenge the normally uninterrogated consequences of coloniality and Eurocentrism in disciplinary discourses and practices*. In this sense, *the task of developing a decolonial ethics is essentially a project of unworking the ethics of coloniality and Eurocentrism within disciplines* (Odysseos, 2017). (ZEMBYLAS, 2020, p. 3 – emphasis added).

In this paper, we report on a doctoral research project, carried out by the first author under the supervision of the second one, whose original focus was on elaborating a first draft of a written[1] code of ethics for Brazilian language teachers (EGIDO, 2019a). Even though this project was initially conceived to elaborate such a draft in light of some European ethics perspectives (e.g., *utilitarian* (BENTHAM, 1776, 1789; MILL, 1991a, 1991b), as we were generating data with the research participants, it became evident to us that

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[1] As Dr. Clarissa Jordão (UFPR) rightfully pointed out during the qualification phase of the doctoral study, teachers seem to already have a professional ethics in practice, as it guides what they usually do; it may just not be in a written format, as we were initially proposing. We deeply thank her for this thought-provoking comment.

the European-centered worldview would not properly address the struggles and needs of Brazilian language teachers. We shall give credits for Isa, who was one of the research participants.

During one of the workshops in which the data was being generated, Isa spoke out cases of harassment, suffered and witnessed by her. She not only presented herself in a vulnerable way to others, but also involved them in her talk. By carefully listening to Isa's vividly experience, we realized two things: firstly, a prescriptive, European-centered (and later understood by us as *colonial*) concept of ethics (i.e., *utilitarian*) would not properly respond to Isa's and others' needs; secondly, we started to search for other lens that would be helpful to interpret the participants' experiences regarding ethics in language education. It was around that time *decoloniality* was presented to us by colleagues from other universities[2], and it then turned to be our main theoretical lens to interpret participants' experiences and propositions[3].

Our intent with this writing is mostly to face the *colonial* traces that we have identified in our own research practices while conducting the aforementioned doctoral research about ethics in language education. It is of the upmost importance to notice that:

> […] decolonization is impossible when our livelihoods are underwritten by colonial violence and unsustainability. The food we eat, the clothes we wear, our health systems and social security, and the technologies that allow us to write about this are all subsidized by expropriation, dispossession, destitution, genocides and ecocides. There is no way around it: we cannot bypass it, the only way is through. (GESTURING TOWARDS DECOLONIAL FUTURES, 2022).

In that sense, there is no way out of *coloniality* without *identifying*, *interrogating*, and *interrupting* it (SOUZA; DUBOC, 2021). In the ongoing and critical reflection during our research agenda (EGIDO, 2019a), we have noticed that, even though some actions were planned from a *colonial* standpoint (i.e., *colonial seed*[4]), they can turn into *decolonial* outcomes (i.e., *decolonial flower*[5]); this is the thinking that has inspired this paper's title. To put it differently, we make an analogy between flower and *decoloniality* because both have the potential to flourish in dry fields and in the *grietas* (i.e., fissures) (WALSH, 2018). Here, the flowers exemplify hope, beauty, and a way out of the sedimentation, that is, the *coloniality*. In sum, the *decolonial flower* may be taken as a synonym of *decolonial gesture* (MIGNOLO, 2014). According to the author,

> […] decolonial gestures would be any and every gesture that directly or indirectly engages in disobeying the dictates of the colonial matrix and contributes to building of the human species on the planet in harmony with the life in/of the planet of which the human species is only a minimal part and of which it depends. And that would contribute to planetary re-emergence, re-surgence, and re-existence of people whose values, ways of being, languages, thoughts, and stories were degraded in order to be dominated. (MIGNOLO, 2014).

In our interpretation, both *decolonial gesture* and *decolonial flower* refer to a way out of *coloniality*; a way that is creative, humane, ethical, and sensitive. It is important to highlight, though, that not every *decolonial flower* comes out of a *colonial seed*, and vice-versa; this process needs to be locally and situatedly considered. Such an analogy concerns a broader scope, which is Ethics in Language Education. In this paper specifically, 'ethics

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[2] We are deeply thankful to Dr. Clarissa Jordão (UFPR) for the reflections she promoted during the qualification of an early version of this investigation. The first author is equally thankful to Dr. Giuliana Brossi (UEG), Dr. Jhuliane Evelyn da Silva (UFPR), and Dr. Valéria Rosa-da-Silva (UEG) for the ongoing discussions related to *decolonial* studies.

[3] We explain them in the following section.

[4] On the one hand, *colonial seed* here stands for the proposition of the research project oriented by a prescriptive view of ethics, that is, the *utilitarian*. According to this concept of ethics, the will of the majority supersedes the minority's and the goal is more relevant than the means; such a view has its roots in an European mindset.

[5] On the other hand, *decolonial flower* concerns what the research turned out to be, that is, being reoriented by a *decolonial* view of ethics. This concept of ethics may be interpreted as one inherently responsible for *identifying*, *interrogating*, and *interrupting* (SOUZA; DUBOC, 2021) instances of *coloniality* aiming to build a more just society for everyone.

in language education' concerns both the practices teachers employ in their classrooms (viz. see the example entitled 'Code of Ethics Duties and Prohibitions) and the practices we, as researchers, carry out when generating data with teachers (viz. see the example entitled 'Research Project and Data Generation'). It is important to mention, though, we neither focus on specific ethical research practices (e.g., EGIDO, 2019b) nor on detailed elements of a written code of ethics for Brazilian language teachers (e.g., BARBOSA, 2014). In sum, *our goal is to illustrate two instances of colonial seeds turning into decolonial flowers when discussing ethics in language education, which refers to the interactions teachers and students or, in broad terms, language users.*

In terms of this paper organization, we first briefly introduce some of the key concepts surrounding the *decolonial* studies, focusing on *decoloniality of knowledge*. After, we contextualize both the research project and the experience of conducting it. In the following section, we conceptualize 'gifts of failure' and exemplify it by describing and reflecting upon two experiences from our research project. In the last section, we both summarize our research (and *decolonial*) experiences and critically comment on the gardens we are currently nourishing in the field of language education, in Brazil.

(De)Coloniality (of Knowledge)

This section is initiated with a broad introduction of key concepts related to *decoloniality*. Then, reflections on the *coloniality of knowledge* are made. Finally, an invitation to decolonize the academia and the knowledge are elaborated. Due to the scope and extension of this paper, we comment on *colonialism*, *coloniality*, and *decoloniality* only. As far as *colonialism* and *coloniality* are concerned, Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 243 – emphasis added) explains that:

> Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. *Thus, coloniality survives colonialism.* It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday.

To put it differently, *colonialism* concerns a certain colonial history with maritime expansions, invasions of earths, enslavement of peoples, and thefts of natural goods, whereas *coloniality* refers to a revised and ongoing version of *colonialism*; one that we are currently living, breathing, and sustaining; one in which oppressive relations and dichotomous understandings are taken for granted and reinforced "all the time and everyday" (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2007, p. 243) or, in Zembylas' (2020, p. 1) terms, "an enduring process that is still very much with us today".

In Duboc's words, *decoloniality* is seen "as the recognition, on the one hand, of the legal and official end of *colonialism* and *decolonization*; on the other hand, the permanence of the harmful effects of the colonial difference consolidated by means of the Eurocentric-modern project; a difference supported by the tripod coloniality of knowledge, power, and being" (DUBOC, 2021, p. 159). As far as *coloniality of knowledge* is concerned, which is our focus here, we recall Mignolo's opening passage of this paper. There, the author indicated, in a fairytale-like language, the illusory idea that knowledge, scientific knowledge precisely, is neutral, objectifiable, quantifiable, and distant.

Such a *colonial* viewpoint of knowledge sustains "universalizing and normatizing narratives supported by the promises of progress, civilization, development, and salvation." (DUBOC, 2021, p. 160). To put it differently, for centuries, scholars have forcibly distanced themselves from the research participants and the social contexts – which can be seen as a *colonial* posture – in order to produce *scientific* and *valid* knowledge – which is a modern promise. This *coloniality of knowledge* values more quantifiable metrics of production than

human relations; it cares more about quantitative-based research findings than qualitative ones; it praises more scholars who keep themselves in the ivory tower than those who choose to get involved with participants' lives and society.

Other instances of *coloniality of knowledge* can be traced to broad institutional organizations of academia. To mention a few, the highly divided fields of knowledge within departments, centers, institutes, and organizations within academia; the metrics imposed on researchers regarding where and when they should publish to be seen as more valued (by some[6]); and the hierarchy of titles and degrees that separate, classify, and evaluate people as more or less capable. More recently, scholars from some fields, applied linguists being one of them, have realized that the objectivity out there when discussing and researching language education is an illusion. In that sense, applied linguists have moved towards valuing local practices, listening to teachers' current issues, and validating their classroom practices.

This *decolonial* movement has started happening in the field of applied linguistics, in Brazil. However, it is wise to remember that "the university is full of hierarchies, inequalities, and exclusions." (DUBOC, 2021, p. 165). As a consequence, to listen to the other, to the teachers, and value their voices, is a daring attitude. We employ Duboc's (2021, p. 173) advise that "it is necessary to go beyond cognition. It is necessary to go beyond the disciplines." In our case, instead of comparing our profession to others that have a code of ethics, we have decided to 'go beyond the disciplines' and look to our own discipline, while getting involved with our own research participants; that's what we aim at illustrating in the following sections.

Doctoral Research Project and Experience

From an academic standpoint, we can state that our interest in ethics in the field of language education has been growing for quite some time. Throughout the years, we have conducted studies focusing primarily on two topics: firstly, ethics in Applied Linguistics research (DE COSTA, 2016; DE COSTA *et al.*, 2019; DE COSTA *et al.*, 2021; EGIDO, 2020; EGIDO, 2022; EGIDO; BROSSI, 2022; EGIDO; DE COSTA, 2022; KUBANYIOVA, 2013; PAGE, 2017; POTRATA, 2010; SPILIOTI; TAGG, 2017), in which the analysis centers on ethical practices researchers usually adopt when interacting with their participants; secondly, ethics in language education, in which the goal is to discuss the ethical scope of teaching practices and interactions born into the language classrooms whose effects can be traced to outside of this physical space (EGIDO; BROSSI, 2022; SILVA, 2021).

The initial idea of the research project (EGIDO, 2019a) was to collect pre-service language teachers' suggestions concerning what elements – in terms of *rights*, *duties*, and *prohibitions* – could possibly constitute a Brazilian language teachers' written code of ethics. Similar research was conducted by Barbosa (2014) as a master's study. As a result of her investigation, the author proposed a draft of the aforementioned code of ethics. We then considered her findings and initially aimed at expanding them, which did not happen, as we will show later.

In our research here presented, in order to collect the participants' contributions, during 2019, we planned and conducted 11 workshops in three different public universities in the state of Paraná, Brazil, in which participants worked collaboratively among their peers to come up with a few elements they considered necessary to be part of such a written document. The participants were mostly pre-service language teachers from different Teacher Education Undergraduate Programs, ranging from Portuguese, English, and Spanish. In some contexts, participants joined the workshop regardless of the specific language of their undergraduate course; in others, the institutions' coordinators organized more than one workshop, so the pre-service language teachers could join the workshop with their peers only. We highlight that the number of participants in each workshop and who would be able to attend was a decision made on the institutional level of the aforementioned

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[6] Here, *some* stands for professionals and groups of people who hold privileged, institutional positions.

programs. In sum, there were 144 participants who elaborated 472 suggestions, which were classified as 170 *rights*, 175 *duties*, and 127 *prohibitions*. Based on this initial research project, the participants' propositions would be synthetized to come up with a new draft of a code of ethics for language teachers. Such an analysis and final goal (i.e., a new draft of a code of ethics for language teachers) would take into account the utilitarian concept of ethics. The analysis, within the scope of the Doctoral research project (EGIDO, 2019a), would be carried out by adopting the Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Analysis (REIS, 2018). However, it is important to indicate that, on this paper, we do not employ any specific analytical method to discuss the two examples.

Back to the workshops, after collaboratively writing their suggestions, the participants were invited to present and explain their propositions. In so doing, they were also motivated to illustrate with examples, either personal or professional, real or fictitious, how necessary those elements could possibly be. It was only during the last workshop we conducted that we realized how personal – and sometimes hurtful – the participants' stories/examples were. We vividly remember – as if we could hear it now – Isa[7] being in front of her class and with a shocked voice explaining to everyone the reasons why a written professional code of ethics for language teachers should include "Do not harass". We will later present her passage and comment on its importance to our learning and changing during the research agenda.

Regarding the two examples discussed in this paper on the next section (i.e., Gifts of Failure), both of them are from the doctoral dissertation (EGIDO, 2022), conducted by the first author and advised by the second one. The first example relates to the conception of the research project and the data collection; and the second, to the analysis itself. In other words, the former concerns the importance of Isa's passage to the huge shift we made during the research agenda, which is from a *colonial seed* to a *decolonial flower*. The latter refers to a few instances of *prohibitions*, *duties*, and *rights* and how some of them, even though proposed within a *colonial* document (i.e., code of ethics), turned out to be interpreted as a *decolonial* element. We now turn to the concept of *failure* and the two examples.

GIFTS OF FAILURE

> Facing failure with accountability, honesty, humility, hyper-self-reflexivity and humor is not easy. (GESTURING TOWARDS DECOLONIAL FUTURES, 2022).

It does not take a village to fail, but it certainly takes one to face it in the way described above. In a highly competitive context as academia is, time to fail and to reflect upon it would seem to be nonsense to a vast number of scholars. It takes a strong personality and a huge dose of humility to own our failures. Personally, it took us about two years to have the courage to think retrospectively about our experience and to write about it. This period has not made this endeavor any easy. In this section, we briefly comment on the concept of *failure*, in accordance with a *decolonial* perspective (DUBOC, 2021; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2007; MIGNOLO, 2009). Later, we illustrate it with two instances of our own work, during the doctoral research project.

Seeing academia as solely constituted of instances of *coloniality of knowledge* (DUBOC, 2021; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2007; MIGNOLO, 2009), built on stolen ground and erased local knowledges would not sufficiently value current and context-dependent *gestures* (DUBOC, 2021) that have been implemented. In our viewpoint, academia cannot be exclusively understood as either *colonial* or *decolonial*. On the one hand, seeing it as just colonial erases our own current *gestures* of decolonizing it. On the other hand, taking academia as solely a *decolonial* institution not only nullify the necessity of an ongoing process to decolonize it, but also reveals a naive understanding that an inherently *colonial* institution can quickly and effectively turn *decolonial*.

It is by considering this highly complex situation of *decolonial gestures* (DUBOC, 2021) implemented in the academia that we realize that we will "undoubtedly and inevitably fail" (GESTURING TOWARDS DECOLONIAL FUTURES, 2022); not because we want to, but simply because there is no way out of

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[7] Pseudonym chosen by the participant.

modernity/coloniality. However, "how we fail is important. It is actually in the moments when we fail that the deepest learning becomes possible and that is usually where we stumble upon something unexpected and extremely useful. Failing generatively requires both intellectual and relational rigour." (GESTURING TOWARDS DECOLONIAL FUTURES, 2022). It is still reluctant but with open eyes that we have decided to face failure in the following selected examples.

Example 1: Research Project and Data Collection

The first version of the doctoral research project (EGIDO, 2019a) can be interpreted as a *colonial seed* for a couple of reasons. First, as we aimed at elaborating a written code of ethics for Brazilian language teachers, we unconsciously assumed that such a document would – to some extent – address the local realities of teachers. Consequently, reality and knowledge had been interpreted as fully comprehensible; entities out there that we, as researchers, could objectively analyze. Such an understanding may be questioned from a *decolonial* perspective, taking into account the singularity of every teaching context, and more precisely, every student as a unique human being. In that sense, from a *decolonial* standpoint (DUBOC, 2021; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2007; MIGNOLO, 2009), every context and individual is ontologically impossible to be represented in such a professional document.

Second, codes of ethics – regardless of the profession they refer to – are driven by a structured perspective of ethics (e.g., utilitarian (BENTHAM, 1776, 1789; MILL, 1991a, 1991b). In order to elaborate such documents, we shall consider shared contextual elements and professional ethical dilemmas and, hence, erase from the document's scope singular traces and realities; this is an example of application of the *utilitarian ethics* (BENTHAM, 1776, 1789; MILL, 1991a, 1991b). In sum, this ethics perspective not only was proposed within a Western-centered understanding of human relations but has also previously and unconsciously decided what lives were valued, what voices deserved to be heard, and what bodies served as the norm. To put it differently, the proposition of a code of ethics – again, regardless of the profession – is always biased to the extent that not every opinion, context or situation can be included; we know whose opinions, contexts, and situations are often included on such a document: the mainstream.

By shifting the ethics perspective adopted from prescriptive (i.e., utilitarian) to one that is inherently unfinished and aims at *identifying*, *interrogating*, and *interrupting* (SOUZA; DUBOC, 2021) instances of coloniality (i.e., decolonial), the doctoral research that was once born (i.e., research project) as a *colonial seed* now (during the data collection and analysis) became a *decolonial flower*. This change is justified not only because of the ethics perspective choices, but also because of the reinterpreted function of a code of ethics, according to us. In our current view, to promote social justice in language education in Brazil and hear to both students' and teachers' voices and livid experiences, it might not be necessary a code of ethics, but an ethics of care, a *decolonial gesture* that cares more to the other as a human being with value in themselves than as a means to my ends; we need to *de-objectify* the individuals.

As to illustrate the importance of hearing to individuals' livid experiences, we now turn to a passage which was shared by a research participant named Isa (pseudonym). Contextually speaking, it was getting close to the end of a three-hour workshop, and we were running out of time. After participants had discussed in small groups for more than an hour and wrote down their propositions of *rights*, *duties*, and *prohibitions* to a written code of ethics for Brazilian language teachers, we invited one participant from each group to present their suggestions to everyone. There were about 10 groups, and Isa was a member of the last but one group. She carefully read each proposition elaborated by her peers and herself and did her best commenting on each one of them. This is her argument why the *prohibition* "Do not harass" is necessary to be part of such a code of ethics:

> *"Do not harass". Girls, mostly. I've seen cases, I've witnessed cases, I've been through cases of harassment, especially because we are women, which should definitely be a case of expulsion of a teacher. It is ridiculous that, in the middle of 2019, 21st century, women still suffer harassment within the academic environment. This is ridiculous. Girls, unfortunately, we still have a sexist society. Damn, most of this room is made up of women, about 90%, how many*

here have already been harassed? Serious. Raise your hand, please. How many of you have been harassed… by a teacher, on the street, anywhere? [Silence] Folks, it is almost unanimously. This is ridiculous. Mainly in the higher education, where we are studying to be "somebody", as if we weren't already, but you are studying to have a future; especially when it comes from a teacher, someone who should respect you. This is unacceptable. It should be a case of expulsion, dismissal of a teacher right after the case is discovered. This is extremely [unfair] for us who suffer, because it's something that embarrasses you and, generally, we don't report it, which is a mistake, because we know it won't go anywhere. There has already been a case here at [university's name deleted] and nothing happened.

Although unconsciously, Isa taught us more about professional ethics than we could have possibly planned to teach her that afternoon. She was honest, and with shocked voice she was able to motivate all the women (and the men) in the room to get involved in her story. It turned out Isa's story was every woman's story. By sharing her livid experience, Isa taught us that more important than proposing a code of ethics constituted of *rights*, *duties*, and *prohibitions*, Brazilian language teachers need to be heard, have their stories valued, and their experiences considered. With this in mind, instead of *proposing* a written code of ethics for Brazilian language teachers, we decided to *learn with* the research participants – through their stories – what ethical practices there are already in place based on their daily vivid experiences.

In sum, even though the research project was initially a *colonial seed*, in the sense of aiming to *propose* a document to language teachers, it turned out to be a *decolonial flower*, as we decided not to propose it, but to listen; not to impose, but to value; not to teach, but to learn. Our openness to learn *with* the pre-service language teachers indicates our commitment to a dialogical and social justice agenda. We understand we have not *given* voice to the participants, but, through Isa's comment, *listened to* their voices, stories, lived experiences, and, ultimately, cases of harassment that they have been suffering. As we listened to them, we employed a "project aiming to re-exist, reemergence and reconstitution of historically inferior and invisible subjects." (DUBOC, 2021, p. 158); in this instance, cases of oppression against women.

In our understanding, it turned out to be a *decolonial flower*, even though it still has traces of its *colonial seed*. In that sense, there is no room for naivety. At the end of the day, we were still the ones making decisions about what road to take in terms of what goal to have in mind while analyzing the data. Even though we have decided to focus on the participants' experiences, they selected what stories to share based on the frame of *rights*, *duties*, and *prohibitions*. To sum up, although we deeply appreciate Isa's livid experience sharing, we are aware that she did so in a highly *colonial* and power asymmetrical setting, which the academia is. She was braver sharing it than we were changing the focus of our analysis.

Example 2: Code of Ethics Duties and Prohibitions

Once we have decided to not *propose* a written code of ethics for Brazilian language teachers, all the data had already been successfully collected with this purpose in mind. As stated in the previous section, Isa's sharing her personal experience made us realize that our goal ought to be around participants' stories that revealed the ethics already in place in their professional lives. In that sense, we considered to maintain the same data, but to analyze it in relation to *decolonial* studies (DUBOC, 2021; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2007; MIGNOLO, 2009)[8]. The irony here is that we interpreted propositions of *rights*, *duties*, and *prohibitions* – being the last two prescriptive in nature, trying to find instances of *decolonial gestures* (DUBOC, 2021). To put it differently, how can participants' propositions of *duties* and *prohibitions* to language teachers enhance a *decolonial* agenda, which, by the way, questions the prescriptive nature of the propositions themselves?

In order to illustrate how a *colonial seed*, i.e., the propositions of *duties* and *prohibitions*, can be transformed into a *decolonial flower*, we exemplify it with participants' suggestions of such cases. For instance, one of the participants suggestions regarding *prohibitions* refers to the indifference between teachers and students, which

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[8] In the doctoral dissertation (EGIDO, 2022), we discuss three ethics perspectives, namely: utilitarian ethics, ethics of alterity (LÉVINAS, 2010, 2020), and decolonial ethics (DUNFORD, 2017). Due to the scope and extension of this paper, we have decided to focus on the third one.

the research participants (i.e., pre-service language teachers) aim at avoiding when proposing that their peers (i.e., in-service language teachers) cannot:

Deny help (337)

Whilst it is authoritative in nature – as it is a *prohibition* addressed to in-service language teachers, it comes from the understanding that in order to *not* deny help, teachers firstly need to recognize the existence of the other (i.e., students) who is in front of them in the classrooms. In so doing, see them (i.e., students) in their vulnerability, fragility, and sensitivity who often need assistance (LÉVINAS, 2010, 2020). In Levinasian terms, it is an ethical and ontological imperative to *attend to* (TODD, 2003) students' needs. To put it differently, in-service language teachers help students not because they are forced to, but because they realize students are vulnerable and in need of assistance.

In other words: on one hand, "deny help" is a *colonial seed* because it is proposed as a *prohibition* addressed to in-service language teachers. On the same note, it places solely on the teacher the ethical responsibility of helping students: How about students' agency? How about students helping each other? As these two questions reveal, the aforementioned *prohibition* lacks to capture students' agentive role in their own learning. On the other hand, it might be taken as a *decolonial flower* when we interpret another facet of thinking underlying it. As in-service language teachers, shouldn't we *always* help our students in need? Isn't it an ethical imperative? If it is, do we really need a *prohibition* stating that we cannot deny it to students? Even if we agree with the thinking underlying this statement, it continues to be a *prohibition*. In that sense, can we really force others to be *decolonial*? Aren't we being colonial? More than providing answers, we aim to provoke you.

One of the *duties* proposed by the participants relates to the neutrality they desire to see in in-service language teachers. They suggested that in-service language teachers ought to:

Be impartial (245)

This proposition can be interpreted as an instance of *coloniality of being* (KRENAK, 2020; MIGNOLO, 2011; WALSH, 2018), based on the assumption that there is such a thing as impartiality. *All* our actions are inherently constituted by ideologies whether we are aware of them or not. Those who see impartiality as possible and desirable seem not to realize that *all* actions are driven by external forces and have consequences, our readings of the world are always partial and biased. Hence, impartiality may be desired by some of the research participants, but it does not seem to be possible. Arguing for its feasibility is an ostensible reason, it is a fictitious easy choice. Those who choose impartially are actually siding with the oppressors (FREIRE, 1968; SIQUEIRA, 2018), because when choosing not to act, they have consequently sided with the ones who currently hold the power from asymmetrical and historical relations.

Considering that human relations are volatile, the definition of who are the oppressors and oppressed is context dependent. It is also worth noting that often when education does not help us to be free, the dream of oppressed is to become the oppressor (FREIRE, 1968). To provide an example, in the propositions introduced above, the pre-service language teachers, that is, the research participants, were exactly the ones who suggested that in-service language teachers should be neutral, impartial. The arguments supporting the research participants' aforementioned proposition rely on teachers guaranteeing a safe and open space in the classrooms where students could freely express themselves without worrying about pleasing the teachers. Controversially, the same research participants also proposed that language teachers should – to some extent – silence themselves to guarantee students' freedom. One of these *prohibitions* is indicated here:

Do not express political and religious ideologies (274)

The line of thought that sustains this *prohibition* seems to be the same conveyed in the *duty* of being impartial. Both suggest that there is some kind of professional stance in which in-service language teachers

can detach their bodies from their feelings, their personal experiences from their professional actions. Such professional stance is sustained by a *utilitarian* view of ethics (BENTHAM, 1776, 1789; MILL, 1991a, 1991b), one that is positivistic in nature and argues for a distance between the knower and the knowledge. It believes that in-service language teachers can distance themselves from their values when entering the classrooms; it believes that in-service language teachers can and should leave their identities outside of the classrooms to provide students' space to share their own views. On one hand, isn't it controversial silencing one group (i.e., in-service language teachers) to guarantee a safe space where another group can talk and be heard? Even though seeking to be *decolonial*, doesn't it end up being colonial? On other hand, isn't it a *decolonial gesture* silencing a highly privileged group (i.e., in-service language teachers) so that members of a less institutionally privileged group (i.e., students) can share their views freely without worrying about pleasing the former? Is it necessary to silence the oppressor so that the oppressed can talk? Here, again, more than providing answers, we aim to provoke you.

THE GARDENS WE ARE NOURISHING

> Decolonial futures don't have words yet; they don't have a "how": How would these networks of exchange of people thinking and living against coloniality be formed? What are the conditions of possibility of this pluriversal movement? Would it be necessary to establish conditions for these dialogues? Among whom would they be? Would they include the oppressor? What languages would be spoken? How would nonverbalized knowledge be recognized? (VERONELLI, 2016, p. 405).

In this reflection, gardens may be interpreted as representative language to the *decolonial* futures indicated by Veronelli (2016). Although we do not know exactly how they look like or how they can be achieved, there are indications that they will be vivid, colourful, and somehow peaceful. This seems to be the kind of gardens/*decolonial* futures we are moving towards.

Not every *decolonial flower* comes out of a *colonial seed*, and vice-versa. Imagine, for instance, if we had decided to not change the research project to value the participants' stories, we would have considered solely a prescriptive and positivist understanding of ethics. In that sense, there would have been, indeed, a *colonial flower*, i.e., a written code of ethics for Brazilian language teachers. Our indication to applied linguists and Brazilian language teachers is that no context or practice, either related to research or to teaching, is exempt from *colonial* traces. The question, though, is how we locally, creatively, and ethically carry out our work in a more just, socially responsive, and ethical way, valuing *all* bodies, voices, and experiences. In sum, a code of ethics does not seem to achieve this goal.

As previously mentioned, in a highly competitive context as the academia is, time to fail and to reflect upon it would seem to be nonsense to a vast number of scholars. However, we took the chance of writing this paper as a learning opportunity, as a growth as imperfect human beings, which could only be achieved by reading ourselves and reflecting upon our interaction with the participants and by understanding the impact of their propositions and experiences to both face and sustain (de)colonial agendas in language education.

We end this paper with concerns to be locally addressed in the future by both researchers and teachers in the language education arena:

If a written code of ethics for Brazilian language teachers is not the answer, what is then?

Is it possible to propose a single answer to multi-centered language classroom issues?

In terms of ethics in Brazilian language classrooms, what practices related to teaching and assessment have been considered ethical and unethical?

Whose worldviews have been legitimized when classifying language classroom practices as either ethical or unethical? And what standards have been taken as adequate to such a classification?

What are some creative, local, and *decolonial* ways to turn the Brazilian language classrooms into more democratic, dialogical, and ethical spaces?

We see the questions we ask as hugely more relevant than the answers we provide. From this paper, we hope language educators keep asking creative, critical questions and sometimes answering them; as we know researchers fail more than they would like, we hope they find the time and courage to face and learn from these moments as we have.

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