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LARYSSA PAULINO DE QUEIROZ SOUSA

**A posthumanist perspective on an English course at a private  
language school**

GOIÂNIA  
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LARYSSA PAULINO DE QUEIROZ SOUSA

**A posthumanist perspective on an English course at a private  
language school**

Doctoral dissertation submitted to the *Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras e Linguística* (Graduate Program in Letters and Linguistics), at the Faculty of Letters of the Federal University of Goiás, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of *Doutora em Letras e Linguística* (Doctor in Letters and Linguistics).

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### ATA DE DEFESA DE TESE

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Aos **trinta e um** dias do mês de **agosto** do ano de **dois mil e vinte e dois**, a partir das **oito** horas, via Google Meet, realizou-se a sessão pública de defesa de tese intitulada "**A POSTHUMANIST PERSPECTIVE ON AN ENGLISH COURSE AT A PRIVATE LANGUAGE SCHOOL**". Os trabalhos foram instalados pela orientadora, **Profa. Dra. Rosane Rocha Pessoa** (Presidente/PPGLL/FL/UFG), com a participação dos demais membros da banca examinadora: **Prof. Dr. Marcelo El Khouri Buzato** (PPG-LA/Unicamp), **Profa. Dra. Nara Hiroko Takaki** (PPGEL/UFMS), **Profa. Dra. Simone Batista da Silva** (PPGEA/UFRRJ) e **Prof. Dr. Lynn Mario Trindade Menezes de Souza** (FFLCH/USP), membros titulares externos. Durante a arguição, os membros da banca **não** fizeram sugestão de alteração do título do trabalho. A banca examinadora reuniu-se em sessão secreta a fim de concluir o julgamento da tese tendo sido a candidata **aprovada** pelos seus membros. Proclamados os resultados pela **Profa. Dra. Rosane Rocha Pessoa**, presidente da banca examinadora, foram encerrados os trabalhos e, para constar, lavrou-se a presente ata que é assinada pelos membros da banca examinadora, aos **trinta e um** dias do mês de **agosto** do ano de **dois mil e vinte e dois**.

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*Against Forgetting*, by Nina Montenegro (2015)  
Wax rubbing of tree and fingerprint

## Abstract

This doctoral dissertation has as its main focus the discussion of an English language education experience from a posthumanist perspective. This study was done with a group of six students at a private language school located in Goiânia, in the state of Goiás, in the Central West region of Brazil, in 2019. In addition to being the inquirer, I was also the teacher of that group. In this investigation, supported by arguments from posthumanism aligned with critical applied linguistics, I seek to promote a deconstruction of understandings of what it means to be human, along with the questioning of what language is and what it involves, and the problematization of relations between human and nonhuman entities. In this regard, materiality and discourse are conceived as intertwined. This undertaking is grounded in reflections from postqualitative inquiry and postfoundational frameworks; more specifically, it is characterized as a posthumanist study. For the generation of empirical material, which occurred from August to December (i.e., during one semester), the apparatuses that became part of the study were the following: a) an initial questionnaire; b) classroom intra-actions with the learners, which were filmed, audio recorded, and transcribed; c) students' activities done throughout the semester; d) reflective and diffractive field notes; and e) intraviews. The discussion of the empirical material is divided into two main topics: sociomateriality of (human) bodies and material-discursive ideologies of language and language education. As posthumanist scholars have pointed out, by and large, academics involved in the humanities and social sciences have often neglected material aspects when it comes to discourse, and because of that my objective is to problematize not simply social aspects (as it has been the focus of critical applied linguistics), but rather sociomaterial ones, based on the events that occurred throughout the study. As unfoldings of this experience, the reflections on bodies, issues of identity, especially class, race and ethnicity, gender, and age presented in this work offer a post-anthropocentric viewpoint from events that the students and I experienced. Regarding language and language education, I discuss the learners' perceptions, attitudes, and actions as well as my own as material-discursive practices, with a focus on our intra-actions with the classroomscape and technologies, the assessment and tests, and their language learning projects. As I draw on the aforementioned perspectives, I aim to show how matter mattered in this language education experience.

**Keywords:** Posthumanism, English course, private language school.

## Resumo

Esta tese de doutorado tem como foco principal a discussão de uma experiência de educação linguística de inglês a partir de uma perspectiva pós-humanista. Este estudo foi feito com um grupo de seis alunas/os em uma escola particular de idiomas, localizada em Goiânia, Goiás, Brasil, em 2019. Além de ser a pessoa que conduziu o estudo, fui também a professora deste grupo. Nesta investigação, apoiada em argumentos do Pós-humanismo, alinhados à Linguística Aplicada Crítica, busco promover uma desconstrução de entendimentos sobre o que significa ser humano, juntamente com o questionamento do que é língua/linguagem e do que ela envolve, e a problematização das relações entre entidades humanas e não humanas. Nesse sentido, materialidade e discurso são concebidos como entrelaçados. Este trabalho está fundamentado em reflexões das perspectivas pós-qualitativa e pós-fundacional; mais especificamente, caracteriza-se como um estudo pós-humanista. Para a geração do material empírico, que ocorreu de agosto a dezembro (ou seja, durante um semestre), os aparatos que se tornaram parte do estudo foram os seguintes: a) um questionário inicial; b) intra-ações em sala de aula com as/os alunas/os, as quais foram filmadas, gravadas em áudio e transcritas; c) atividades das/os estudantes realizadas ao longo do semestre; d) notas de campo reflexivas e difrativas; e e) intravistas. A discussão do material empírico está dividida em dois eixos principais: a sociomaterialidade dos corpos (humanos) e ideologias material-discursivas de língua e educação linguística. Como as/os estudiosas/os pós-humanistas têm pontuado, de modo geral, as/os acadêmicas/os envolvidas/os nas ciências humanas e sociais frequentemente negligenciam aspectos materiais quando se trata do discurso, e, por conseguinte, meu objetivo é problematizar não apenas aspectos sociais (como tem sido o foco da Linguística Aplicada Crítica), mas sociomateriais, com base nos eventos que ocorreram ao longo do estudo. Como desdobramentos desta experiência, as reflexões sobre corpos, questões de identidade, especialmente de classe, de raça e etnia, de gênero e de idade apresentadas neste trabalho oferecem um olhar pós-antropocêntrico a partir de eventos que as/os alunas/os e eu vivenciamos. Em relação à língua/linguagem e à educação linguística, discuto as percepções, atitudes e ações das/os aprendizes, bem como as minhas, como práticas material-discursivas, com foco nas nossas intra-ações com a paisagem da sala de aula e as tecnologias, a avaliação e as provas e seus projetos de aprendizagem de língua. Com base nas perspectivas supracitadas, busco mostrar como a matéria importou nesta experiência de educação linguística.

**Palavras-chave:** Pós-humanismo, curso de inglês, escola de idiomas.

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## Glossary

As I draw on specialized terms to construct this discussion, especially based on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980]) and Barad (2007), here I provide some definitions of words used throughout this dissertation:

**affect:** the ability to affect others and be affected by them. The concept of *affect* encompasses more than just emotions and feelings. It refers to conscious and unconscious encounters with other bodies, which nudge us in certain directions rather than others. In the words of Massumi (2005, p. xvi), “[i]t is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act”.

**agency:** it is not an attribute that either humans or nonhumans have. Agency is “the ongoing reconfigurings of the world” (BARAD, 2007, p. 141). It is distributed across spacetime and emerges from relations among beings. Thus, it concerns the movements that lead to particular configurations within phenomena.

**assemblage:** it comprises an open-ended multiplicity of elements. According to Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980], p. 8), “[a]n assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections”. Therefore, as it connects with other beings and elements, it undergoes rearrangements and transformations.

**becoming(-with):** following Haraway (2008, p. 244, emphasis in original), “becoming is always becoming *with* – in a contact zone where the outcome, where who is in the world, is at stake”. This concept refers both to one’s ontological (trans)formation and their inevitable mutual constitution with others.

**diffraction:** a movement that relates to the interruption of one’s taken-for-granted understandings, which undergo changes when combined with unfamiliar ideas (TOOHEY, 2021).

**entanglement:** Barad (2007, p. ix) argues that “[t]o be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair”.

**intra-action:** unlike the notion of *interaction*, which presupposes separate individuals with inherent boundaries and properties, the concept of *intra-action* recognizes the ontological co-constitution of beings (BARAD, 2007). This implies the comprehension that we become who/what we are in relations established with other human and nonhuman entities.

**material-discursive practices:** this concept refers to the entanglement of matter and discourse. The latter does not pertain to an anthropocentric notion of discourse but to how a “part of the world makes itself differentially intelligible to another part of the world” (BARAD, 2007, p. 140).

**ontology of immanence:** it maintains that “the foundational origin of things is not separated from them, but present or contained in them” (BUZATO, 2022b, p. 224). Following Deleuze (2001 [1995], p. 26, emphasis in original), “immanence is in itself: it is not in something, *to* something; it does not depend on an object or belong to a subject”. In this sense, as opposed to transcendental humanism, which sees matter as “passive, inert, static, and pliant” (CANAGARAJAH, 2018b, p. 33), this philosophical perspective acknowledges the active and agentive characteristics of matter. It argues for its self-generation, self-organization, and self-regulation.

**ontoepistemology:** it stresses the inseparability of ontology and epistemology. It thereby refers to “the entangled practices of knowing and being” (BARAD, 2007, p. 379).

**rhizome:** it is a notion of web of relations that disrupts ideas of linearity and hierarchy, as it does not work with centers. According to Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980], p. 7), “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and [it] must be”. It recognizes fluidity, unpredictability, and unruliness as its constitutive elements.

## **A line of flight: multiple entryways**

The line of flight mentioned in the title refers to one of the factors in an assemblage: the movement of elements, as they adapt and change, in their entanglement (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2005 [1980]). I draw on this concept to address the interlacing of the ideas presented here. Following Massumi (2005, p. xvi), a line of flight is related to “the act of fleeing or eluding but also flowing, leaking, and disappearing into the distance”. As I see it, each aspect discussed in this introduction moves toward one of these directions. In addition, multiple entryways, in the subtitle, concern the different kinds of elements that have entered into this work, as the reader will see.

I display Montenegro’s (2015) art – *Against Forgetting*, wax rubbing of tree and fingerprint – which precedes this introductory chapter, so as to gesture toward the spirit of this dissertation: the decentering of human being in language studies. In order to endorse this stance as well as relate it to Montenegro’s (2015) artwork, I add that as recent studies have shown, trees have inner workings that resemble human heartbeats (ZLINSZKY, 2018; ZLINSZKY; BARFOD, 2018; ZLINSZKY; MOLNÁR; BARFOD, 2017). This is an aspect which had not been considered before, not only because of our limitations with regard to perceiving and understanding things but also due to our arrogance when it comes to our own ontoepistemologies. Shapiro (2018, p. 166, emphasis in original) claims that,

as posthumanists will be quick to point out, trees participate in thought, sensibilities and political practices not only by way of human language but also through biological interactions including, most obviously, symbiotic exchanges of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Human life literally depends upon trees, which not only afford a host of human technologies of production, but also sustain the atmosphere on which we depend. Trees also frequently serve in human imaginaries as figures for bios, or creation as such. Thus, human relations with trees involve ecological interdependencies, symbolism, and aesthetics, all of which are intertwined. In some instances, the same trees both figuratively and literally ‘inspire’ human observers whose aesthetic responses and intellectual reflections are energized by the oxygen they inhale.

This relation I mention between trees and us is not promoted at random. During my doctoral studies, not only once but several times, I was exposed to information about this subject, brought up in books, articles, news and videos on social media. Following the author’s arguments, as we think in terms of relations and networks, it is crucial to acknowledge that trees and nonhuman others are present in them, and hence connected with us. In other words, everything is entangled (BARAD, 2007). It is the human hubris and our inability to coexist

relationally with human and nonhuman<sup>1</sup> others that have led us, for example, to the devastating consequences that followed from the COVID-19 pandemic, from 2019 to 2022.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, I argue that deconstructing anthropocentric views, such as renouncing the mistaken belief of a transcendental right to privileges, is an important action that can ease current and prospective problems.

This study is the materialization of an attempt to expand perspectives. The information presented in this introduction, and the way it is presented, resonates with an academic standpoint according to which the experiences we live in all spheres of life directly and indirectly affect our worldviews, practices, and actions (APPLEBY; PENNYCOOK, 2017; HARAWAY, 2016 [2003]; ST. PIERRE, 1997a, 1997b). In keeping with this argument, my personal and professional experiences are intertwined with the presentation of this study.

During my academic trajectory, I had the opportunity to get involved in different projects in the undergraduate and graduate programs I attended. The collaborations with colleague-friends and mentors I have had resulted in several publications focused on sociocultural perspectives of language education (BASTOS; SOUSA, 2021; SOUSA, 2016, 2018a; SOUSA; FIGUEREDO, 2017; SOUSA et al., 2019; TIRABOSCHI et al., 2019), critical language education (FERREIRA et al., 2020; SOUSA, 2017; SOUSA; LIMA NETO, 2022), decolonial discussions on language teacher education (BASTOS et al., 2021; REZENDE et al., 2020), and posthumanist problematizations of language, language education, and language teacher education (SOUSA, 2018b, 2019; SOUSA; PESSOA, 2019, 2023). These experiences broadened my comprehension of issues related to the field of applied linguistics and contributed to the promotion of my current academic vantage point. Inspired by Ulmer's (2017) scholarly account, I believe it is important to state that what I discuss here is the unfolding of an idiosyncratic trajectory whereby I could have access to different kinds of knowledge that helped me make the choice to carry out an investigation underpinned by a posthumanist framework.

I have been working with ideas from critical language education since 2014<sup>3</sup> (the year in which I obtained my undergraduate degree); from 2015 to 2017, I conducted a study that encompassed both critical English language education and English language teacher education,

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<sup>1</sup> When I refer to "human and nonhuman" entities, I do not have in mind their dichotomization. Rather, this particular use of the terms is a pragmatic choice, given the way we see our relations in and with the world. Further, I draw on Deleuze and Guattari's (2005 [1980]) logic of "and, and, and, rather than instead" (SOUSA; PESSOA, 2019, p. 525, emphasis in original), to help me stress their mutual constitution.

<sup>2</sup> See philosopher and indigenous movement leader Ailton Krenak (2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d) for a detailed discussion on this matter.

<sup>3</sup> Although I recognize our construction of time as an invention (ST. PIERRE, 2011a), for the purpose of elucidation, I retain the linear temporality in my accounts.

which resulted in my master's thesis, under Professor Rosane Pessoa's supervision. The empirical material generated during that investigation indicated the constant fluidity and interconnectedness between our daily professional and personal experiences, which are discursively and materially entangled (SOUSA, 2017). In the following years, readings on posthumanist ideas, along with discussions with other scholars interested in this orientation and in others related to it, led me to many reflections, some of which made me realize the need to deconstruct our understanding of what it means *to be human* nowadays (BUZATO, 2020b; FERRANDO, 2013; PENNYCOOK, 2018b, 2018c) as well as the importance and need of our ontoepistemological decentering (BARAD, 2003, 2007; FERRANDO, 2013; ST. PIERRE, 2021b). As an English teacher, I was drawn to posthumanism because, when I first read about it, I could notice it offers illuminating insights into materiality. That is, I realized the shortcomings in the understanding of language as a merely discursive phenomenon. Consequently, I started to see classroom events as material-discursive<sup>4</sup> practices.

Nomenclature is a tricky thing. Academics have addressed arguments that could be considered posthumanist with contrasting names, such as *new materialisms*, *new empiricisms*, *the ontological turn*, *agential realism*, *critical posthumanism*, amongst several others. However, despite the fact I am aware of their epistemological distinctions and different genealogies (FERRANDO, 2013; ST. PIERRE; JACKSON; MAZZEI, 2016; TOOHEY, 2018, 2019), I decided to simply adopt the word *posthumanism* for pragmatic reasons. First and foremost, it has been the term most extensively employed by applied linguists, especially in Brazil, granting the field a certain consistency that has led to the creation of networks among scholars; and secondly, even though the aforementioned movements often intersect one another, I have opted for the term *posthumanism* because it encompasses a very wide scope of subjects and concerns. Nevertheless, it is important to add that the work developed here is particularly grounded in critical strands of posthumanism (BARAD, 2003, 2007; BRAIDOTTI, 2013, 2017a, 2017b, 2022; PENNYCOOK, 2018b, 2018c, 2021a).

Scholars who work with critical perspectives of posthumanism normally address issues of discrimination, inequality, and injustice in their studies. They see their work as an ethical and political project committed to social justice (BRAIDOTTI, 2017b, 2022; HERBRECHTER, 2013 [2009]; MURRIS, 2016). Following this line of thought, in the field

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<sup>4</sup> My conception of the terms "material" and "discursive" will be addressed in detail later. However, for the time being, I should stress that this discussion seeks to shake up the humanist relation which we have established with matter and processes of materialization and expand the notion of *discourse* by drawing on a comprehension of post-anthropocentric semiosis.

of language studies, the posthumanist orientation with which I work lies within the scope of critical applied linguistics (PENNYCOOK, 2018c, 2019a, 2021a). In line with Braidotti's (2019, p. 132) understanding of "knowledge production as embedded, embodied, affective and relational", in this inquiry<sup>5</sup> my objective is to question humanist and anthropocentric views of human beings and their relations with others. In order to do that, as an applied linguist, I try to offer alternative ways of looking at language, social relations, materiality, and space, from an English language education experience. In this sense, I see posthumanism as a form of engagement in and with the world.

While I acknowledge that the use of the term *posthumanism* homogenizes dissimilarities among the varied perspectives adopted by different academics, I employ it in this study as a particular and situated *praxiology* (implying the nonseparation between theory and practice, since they are regarded here as interlaced and co-constitutive elements). Further, this dissertation is an undertaking from the Global South – not only in geographical terms, but also in geopolitical and epistemological ones (PENNYCOOK; MAKONI, 2020). Thus, my locus of enunciation indicates both my *place of speech* and *place of existence*<sup>6</sup> (RIBEIRO, 2017, as cited in REZENDE, 2019a). My reading of posthumanism has been cut across and destabilized by decolonial and Indigenous<sup>7</sup> arguments, which have greatly influenced my worldview. Thereby, I perceive the ideas discussed here as part of a project that involves "complex heterogeneously entangled processes" (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2020a, p. xii). Buzato (2019) mentions that, in Brazil, decolonial thinking permeates the work of many applied linguists engaged in projects grounded in posthumanism. As the author explains, this occurs because the deconstruction of liberal humanism "favors the appreciation of subaltern knowledges and liminal thinking, as well as the fight against Westernization and modern ontologies and epistemologies, founded on the Enlightenment"<sup>8</sup> (BUZATO, 2019, p. 480, my translation).

I know that many arguments on which I rely to construct my own might be considered incommensurable by some authors. In view of that, I have tried to make connections carefully. However, it is worth mentioning that I do it because I have gradually taken notice of the many ways in which their ontoepistemological projects intersect. In addition, I consider it to be an ethical duty to rightfully acknowledge the claims and work of those others who came before us

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<sup>5</sup> In this dissertation, I use the terms *inquiry*, *study*, and *investigation* interchangeably.

<sup>6</sup> *Place of speech* concerns the social context from where one enunciates, and *place of existence* is related to one's social locus, the relations of power involved, and one's sense of belonging.

<sup>7</sup> In order to eschew generalizations of Indigenous cosmovisions, whenever I draw on their arguments, I mention the people to which they belong, when this information is not explicit.

<sup>8</sup> Original quote: "favorece a valorização dos saberes subalternos e do pensamento liminar, assim como o combate ao ocidentalismo e às ontologias e epistemologias dos modernos, fundadas no iluminismo".

and somehow contributed to the emergence of reflections that have been produced and actions that have been taken.

In many respects, posthumanism is the recognition, in Western scientific fields, of many an argument that Indigenous peoples have urged us to consider for centuries, and to which we have not listened attentively thus far. In keeping with this claim, MacLure (interactive paper, in DENZIN et al., 2017, p. 489) argues that, while *new materialisms* (and hence posthumanism)

challenge the dominance of cultural explanations of the world in order to engage the materiality of a world that is always more than human, [...] Indigenous philosophies and ethics are also strongly materialist in their recognition of the agency of matter, though this debt has not always been acknowledged.

In the same vein, Koro-Ljungberg, MacLure, and Ulmer (2018, p. 814-815) corroborate that Indigenous cosmovisions are vitally attuned to matter: “In such philosophies, ways of knowing and being rest on a fundamental acknowledgment of the agency of place and land and an ethical recognition of relationality and responsibility across human and nonhuman entities”. Unanga scholar Tuck (2010, p. 646), from her own experiences, questions:

For instance, how do I attribute Deleuze’s notions of rhizomatic interconnectedness, a notion at the very center of his philosophies, when for hundreds and thousands of years interconnectedness has been the mainstay in many Indigenous frameworks, both tribal and diasporic? [...] It’s an issue of false inventions and giving credit where credit is due, and again an issue of describing and engaging in contentious, complex ideas.

In this regard, Mawhinney (1998) and Tuck and Yang (2012) caution us about *moves to innocence* that conceal our involvement in systems of domination and oppression. The authors remind us that we are always involved in hegemonic structures which are constantly reproduced, recirculated, and revitalized in new and different ways. Thus, based on their words, I bring into play reflections and arguments of Indigenous and decolonial authors, which have different sociogeopolitical origins from posthumanism, to assist me in the exercise of self-reflection, self-questioning, and self-critique. Nevertheless, in order to avoid “settler appropriation”, as advised by Tuck and Yang (2012, p. 3), as “a settler/trespasser/scholar”, I do not absorb, adopt, or transpose their perspectives into and to this study, but rather simply attempt to rely on them so as to call into question some of the elements of the investigation carried out. In this respect, it is worth emphasizing that, although this work was undertaken on the basis of a posthumanist orientation, these other worldviews comprise an important part of my scholarly education.



For Pennycook (2018a, p. 119), “[i]n order to become a politically and ethically responsible field of work, applied linguistics needs to broaden its epistemological repertoires to embrace alternative ways of thinking that it has for too long ignored or dismissed”; or, as Makoni (2021, p. xii) underlines, founded on Santos (2014), “what we need is unconventional thinking about alternatives”. In Bernstein’s (2000, as cited in PENNYCOOK, 2018a, p. 118) words, “the ways knowledge is classified [...] are expressions of power”. Therefore, for its characterization, this study is configured as an attempt to destabilize the humanist and anthropocentric ontoepistemological power structure, as I seek other ways of looking at what takes place in language education, based on epistemic dialogues. I thereby stress that this inquiry is markedly opposed to movements toward boundary-making around disciplines/knowledges and framing that encourage control and totalization.

As suggested by Pennycook (2018a, 2021c), the scholarship approached here is construed as *epistemes* and, consequently, applied linguistics is conceived as an epistemic assemblage. He contends that “applied linguistic practices can be more usefully understood as temporary assemblages of thought and action that come together at particular moments when language-related concerns need to be addressed” (PENNYCOOK, 2018a, p. 113). In line with this idea, as a localized project, this study falls back on contributions from different fields in order to approach matters of ethical and political concerns. In addition, this undertaking is not only delineated as contingent, but also as immanentist (gesturing toward a Deleuzo-Guattarian ontology). As I see it, the elements present during its course affected, constituted, and transformed each other, and together they produced the unfoldings of this investigation.

Although there is a considerable amount of work published on posthumanism and projects inspired by it, along with authors such as Smythe et al. (2017) and Toohey (2018), I argue that further research into specific contexts, like the classroom, can contribute to helping us better understand what occurs in sociomaterial spaces (SOUSA, 2019; SOUSA, PESSOA, 2019). Thus, my aim is to foster a discussion that focuses on language education and issues pertaining to it. In this light, this study is justified on the grounds of its ontoepistemological relevance insofar as, unlike epistemology, ontology is not a subject usually directly addressed in the field of applied linguistics, let alone ontoepistemology – “the study of the intertwined practices of knowing and being” (BARAD, 2007, p. 409). Thus, one of my main goals is to problematize aspects taken for granted when it comes to materiality and the human-centered structure that shapes our conception of reality, especially in the context of language education. I hope this project can contribute to promoting reflections that might destabilize the ways we understand our sociomaterial existence, and hence occasion new productive becomings.

Specifically, to do that, this study was undertaken at a language school, located in Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil, with a group of six English language learners. In addition to being the inquirer<sup>9</sup>, I was also the teacher of that group. Therefore, I did not only investigate the language learning processes of the students involved, but also my own teaching practice. In chronological terms, the generation of the empirical material started on August 06 and ended on December 19 of 2019, i.e., it occurred during one school semester. The group had classes that lasted 1 hour and 15 minutes, on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The justification for the context chosen lies in the fact that I have a long-standing connection to language schools, since I have been in that context (as a student and then as a teacher) for around ten years.

The school in question was also the context where my master's research was conducted (SOUSA, 2017). Since I was a teacher there, and hence familiar with the school, and also because it is an environment where the staff welcomes, supports, and encourages researchers to develop their studies, I decided to carry out this investigation in the same school. Therefore, my overall goal was to inquire into the unfolding of an English language education experience, as I read it from posthumanist perspectives. Jackson and Mazzei (2018, p. 1257, emphasis in original) stress that the questions posed should not precede the project “but *emerge in the middle* of ‘plugging in’”. This stance disrupts the idea of a doer, “a person, a self, who exists ahead of the deed” (ST. PIERRE, 2021b, p. 480).

It is important to add that before starting the field work in the classroom, I had very different objectives in mind. The first question concerned the analysis of an ethnographic study of my own English classes, based on posthumanism and critical applied linguistics, which I would carry out in this language school.<sup>10</sup> As for the second question, I intended to discuss the strengths, limitations, and challenges of implementing this English language education experience. Therefore, although I would work with the same group of students, the questions would be different. However, while I was teaching the classes, as I read more and let postqualitative, postfoundational, and posthumanist ideas wash over me (KUBY; CHRIST, 2020), I realized the need to reformulate my objectives according to what was taking place in the classroom. From my point of view, especially in the field of language education, it is an ethical imperative to work with the empirical material in a way that it can (re)direct the study. After all, my focus has been on the experience, i.e., on what could emerge from it, and not just on “discussing theoretical concepts”. By the end of the course and the field work, my questions

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<sup>9</sup> The choice of this word, rather than *researcher*, will be explained later.

<sup>10</sup> This was inspired by Pennycook's (2018c) argument that applied linguists should preferably study and work with language ethnographically.

had changed to only one: How does the teacher-inquirer conceive the sociomateriality of bodies and ideologies of language and language education in an English course at a private institution, from a posthumanist standpoint?

I did not initially have in mind to discuss the sociomateriality of bodies, and neither did I intend to address ideologies. The classes, the field work, my readings, chats with the students and the coordinators, conversations with my adviser and colleague-friends, study group meetings, and many other human and nonhuman actors led to the objective just presented. The aforementioned themes took shape and became important issues for this study during the generation of the empirical material. Therefore, the final question was not chosen by a conscious, self-contained, intentional subject, but rather emerged from countless intra-actions. As I attempted to move away from humanist and anthropocentric viewpoints, what I did was to try to be more attentive to the assemblage, i.e., to what human and nonhuman entities, the space, the events, the experience were telling me as well as sensitive to the contingencies and directions to which they were pointing. Finally, it is important to add that, like Jackson and Mazzei (2018, p. 1263), here I do not seek “to answer questions, as in traditional qualitative analysis”, for as the authors argue, questions usually tend to provoke answers that close down thought. Rather, my aim is to envision and discuss possibilities for thinking otherwise.

Roughly speaking, in the last decade, and especially in the last years, applied linguists have taken an interest in posthumanism (or, as some would say, new materialisms) as a framework through which not only much work has been deconstructed and reconceptualized, but relatively new perspectives have also flourished concomitantly. On the international front, authors such as Toohey et al. (2015), Dagenais and Toohey (2016), Smythe et al. (2017), Toohey (2017a, 2017b, 2018, 2019), Canagarajah (2018a, 2018b, 2020a), and Pennycook (2018b, 2018c, 2020b, 2020c), to name but a few, have contributed significantly to the production of scholarship that revolves around this ontoepistemology. In Brazil, some examples of this work can be found in Buzato’s (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2022b), Ribas’ (2018, 2019a, 2021), and Takaki’s (2019a, 2019b) papers and lectures.

In 2019, I had the opportunity to participate in two conferences: the first being the *V Jornada de Educação, Linguagem e Tecnologia (V JELT)* (5<sup>th</sup> Conference on Education, Language, and Technology)<sup>11</sup>, which had as its theme “Agendas and challenges for posthumanist applied linguistics: policies, language practices, pedagogies, and media”; and the second being the *II Jornada Internacional de Linguística Aplicada Crítica (II JILAC)* (2<sup>nd</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See: <https://www2.iel.unicamp.br/jelt/>. Access on: 28 Sept. 2020.

International Conference on Critical Applied Linguistics)<sup>12</sup>. In those events, I had the chance to listen and talk to and exchange ideas with Andrade (2019), Pennycook (2019a), Ribas (2019b), Silva (2019), Tagata (2019), and Takaki (2019a), scholars who have been working with posthumanism. As one might notice, especially in applied linguistics, studies based on this framework are still relatively embryonic in the academic world. Thus, through this study, I seek to make a modest contribution to the field.

Since this inquiry has been heavily influenced by Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980]) and Barad (2007), in keeping with their work, I have developed my writing and presented my arguments rhizomatically. Hence, the reader that is not familiar with this writing style might feel uneasy at first. However, following Braidotti (2022, p. 23), what I seek here is “the rigour of consistency, not the comfort of linearity”. This dissertation is divided into five parts: introduction; discussion of general aspects of the development and characterization of this investigation; two chapters in which the empirical material is addressed; and final reflections. Although I recognize “both the difficulty and problematics in creating such divisions” (JACKSON; MAZZEI, 2018, p. 1257), the ones made in this text work as *cuts* (BARAD, 2007; TOOHEY, 2018), or as Canagarajah (2018b) would put it, *pragmatic boundaries*.

Instead of a descriptive methodological chapter, this study is based on and developed from discussions concerned with postqualitative inquiry (ST. PIERRE, 2011a, 2014a, 2014b, 2019; among others), working hand in hand with a postfoundational framework (BUTLER, 1992; JACKSON; MAZZEI, 2018; LOPES; BORGES, 2015; MARCHART, 2007; among others), and, more specifically, it is delineated as a posthumanist study (BARAD, 2007; ST. PIERRE; JACKSON; MAZZEI, 2016; ULMER, 2017; among others). These perspectives recognize and engage themselves with the heterogeneity, fluidity, instability, and contradictions of social processes. In general terms, postqualitative and posthumanist frameworks do not work with methods, approaches, and procedures but rather with concepts that correlate closely with the inquiry proposals put forward. The apparatuses used for the generation of the empirical material were: a) an initial questionnaire; b) classroom intra-actions with the learners, which were filmed, audio recorded, and transcribed; c) students’ activities done throughout the semester; d) reflective and diffractive field notes; and e) intraviews. The empirical material is addressed via a diffraction orientation (BARAD, 2007, 2014; LENZ TAGUCHI, 2012; among others).

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<sup>12</sup> See: <https://gecal-unb.com.br/2018/10/02/jilac-ii-jornada-internacional-de-linguistica-aplicada-critica/>. Access on: 28 Sept. 2020.

The posthumanist perspective adopted here is grounded in the work of authors such as Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980]), Haraway (2008, 2016 [1985], 2016 [2003], 2016), Barad (2003, 2007), Braidotti (2013, 2017a, 2017b, 2022), Canagarajah (2018a, 2018b), Pennycook (2018b, 2018c, 2021a), among others, whose studies promote new ways of understanding what it means to be human, insofar as materiality, space and language are perceived as intertwined and co-constitutive elements. Thus, I aim to investigate the language classroom for the generation of new forms of comprehending the work carried out by language teachers, which might lead to new possibilities of action. In this respect, this dissertation affords the opportunity to explore the diffractions from an experience lived by a teacher-inquirer and her students in a language school.

I scrutinize the following topics in two chapters of the empirical material discussion: a) sociomateriality of (human) bodies and b) material-discursive ideologies of language and language education. As posthumanist scholars have pointed out, by and large, academics involved in the humanities and social sciences have often neglected material aspects when it comes to discourse, and because of that my intention was to observe and problematize not simply social aspects (as it has been the focus of critical applied linguistics), but rather sociomaterial ones, based on the events that occurred throughout the study. As an alternative to what has been widely known and addressed as language ideologies, I sought to reflect on material-discursive ideologies of language and language education that constitute us and that we (together with other entities) create. In order to do that, I propose an ontoepistemological understanding of *language as sociomaterial practice*.

I must also add that, following the latest regulations of the Universidade Federal de Goiás (2016, 2019), which opened up the possibility of writing dissertations and theses in languages besides Portuguese, I chose to do mine in English for two major reasons. First, a reasonable number of my direct and indirect interlocutors are not Portuguese speakers. Secondly, because I have a degree in English language teaching, and not in Portuguese, I see myself largely, in terms of professional identity, as an English teacher.

Ultimately, although I understand the implications of using personal pronouns, my use of “I” is deliberate, at certain moments, to signalize my *voice* as a doctoral student and the author of this text. However, this “I” is not conceived as the subject of humanism – “a sovereign, lucid, transparent, free, agential, self-sufficient, rational, knowing, meaning-giving, conscious, stable,” self-contained, “coherent, unified, self-identical, [...] autonomous, intentional, and ahistoric individual” (ST. PIERRE, 2011a, p. 618), which evinces a human-centered structure – but rather as an entity enmeshed in a myriad of assemblages. In Deleuze and Guattari’s (2005

[1980], p. 138, emphasis in original) words, “you can keep on saying ‘I,’ just for kicks, and already be in another regime in which personal pronouns function only as fictions”.

In the next chapter, I address the general and specific aspects that delineate this investigation.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> As the glossary is important for the comprehension of the following discussions, I suggest reading it before moving on.

## Chapter 1

### The study

This chapter is not so much aimed at providing a description of this study as it is set out to call into question several assumptions qualitative researchers have taken for granted over the years and to discuss other possibilities for thinking *about* and *with* inquiry. Further, although this chapter is divided into specific sections, in which I discuss different aspects, the present structure is not simply the result of pragmatic choices. It is also an outcome of the several becomings with texts and the empirical material, among countless other entities, with which I have been entangled. Therefore, this work moves toward an epistemology of emergence<sup>14</sup>, according to which an inquirer's understandings are occasioned by various sociomaterial practices.

Santos (2018) stresses the importance of questioning the colonial character of modern Western science, which produces and hides the abyssal line that creates zones of nonbeing. The author claims that hegemonic power structures that operate in society foster such a division, and that socially marginalized knowledges that lie on the other side of the abyssal line end up disappearing, insofar as they are conceived and treated as inexistent. Modern science, therefore, determines what is “true”, “valid”, and “acceptable”, and language plays a very important role in establishing such relations.

In keeping with this idea, St. Pierre (1997a, p. 406) draws attention to the fact that

[i]t is very difficult, almost impossible at times, to write and think outside the language of humanism, our mother tongue that constructs and perpetuates with such transparent ease binaries, hierarchies, [categories,] dialectics, and other structures that are not just linguistic but that have very material effects on people.

Accordingly, the use of language from humanist discourses does not work for critical projects that seek to comprehend phenomena in their complexities and actualize what the post movements propose (MACLURE, 2013; ST. PIERRE, 2014a, 2014b, 2015b, 2017a, 2019; ST. PIERRE; JACKSON; MAZZEI, 2016). Some might argue that resignifying terms, concepts, and practices could be enough. However, it is important to have in mind that these elements carry “[their] own ontological and epistemological weight, given the philosophical framework from which [they flow]” (JACKSON; MAZZEI, 2018, p. 1241). In addition, since language has real effects on our lives, drawing on and devising other alternatives might be something

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<sup>14</sup> See Somerville (2007) for a detailed discussion on the matter.



helpful, and even necessary. For Jordão (2020a, online), “changing the terms might help call our attention to things that have been sent to the other side of the abyssal line [...], [thus] mak[ing] them visible”.

In this light, I shall touch upon the term *method(ology)* as an example. In the words of Beardsworth (1996, p. 4), “[a] thinker with a method has already decided how to proceed, is unable to give him or herself up to the matter of thought in hand, is a functionary of the criteria which structure his or her conceptual gestures”. Hence, I opted to avoid the use of the word *methodology*, and instead work with other terms, for, as St. Pierre (2014b, p. 15, emphasis added) underlines, “the very idea of *method* forces one into a prescribed, linear, systematic order of thought and practices”. She also adds that “[m]ethod proscribes and prohibits. It controls and disciplines. Further, method always comes too late, is immediately out-of-date” – “method not only can’t keep up with events; more seriously, it prevents them from coming into existence” (ST. PIERRE, 2015b, p. 79). The conventional concept of *method(ology)* is thereby directly opposed to the perception and characterization of this investigation, since this inquiry is understood as “emergent and immanent to that which is becoming” (JACKSON; MAZZEI, 2018, p. 1242).

As Jackson and Mazzei (2018, p. 1264) claim, *research* is still traditionally “treated as linear stages and series of procedures”. The authors argue that students are often taught how to master methods, without proper consideration of the ontoepistemological aspects that constitute the enterprises proposed. For St. Pierre (2020, 26:09-26:14, emphasis added), the word “*research* just throws people right back into methodology”, and consequently into the constraints that come with it. In addition, Māori scholar Tuhiwai Smith (2008 [1999], p. 1, emphasis in original) reminds us that “the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism”.

Therefore, as an alternative, I work with the term *inquiry*, as suggested by St. Pierre (2015a, 2020), Dimitriadis (2016), and Denzin and Lincoln (2018), since “[i]nquiry does not carry the trappings of the word *research*, which is tainted by a lingering positivism. *Inquiry* implies an open-endedness, uncertainty, ambiguity, praxis” (DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2018, p. 44, emphasis in original). Further, in relation to undertaking a study, the term *research* has always been more related to academia, Science, whereas the word *inquiry* has been more connected with asking about/for something and learning about it, seeking information or knowledge. As I see it, the notion of *inquiry* thereby involves a wider scope and adopts a less pretentious posture in socio-etymological terms. Thus, inspired by the authors on whose reflections I rely in this part of the chapter, I refer to reading, talking with my peers, using (especially new) technologies

(e.g., computers, smartphones) and accessing networks available through them, learning about different kinds of information, among others, as *inquiry practices*. Following a posthumanist viewpoint, it is possible to claim that my entanglement with them has entailed new perceptions, new becomings, and hence much of what I present here.

In this sense, as a decolonial option for the construction of knowledge, along with academic texts, I have also drawn on several sorts of materials that greatly enriched the reflections and discussions addressed in this work. This choice was also made with the intent of putting into question the dichotomy between scientific scholarship and nonscientific knowledge, obviously enwrapped in politics, issues of legitimation, and power relations in the academic world. These other materials refer to live stream videos (as the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, conferences had to be held virtually, for example), conversations with professors and classmates in formal settings (study groups, research groups, meetings, etc.) and informal spaces (like messaging apps), news from social media, among others. In this respect, I must mention that permission has been granted by everyone whose work and/or speeches have not been published or are unavailable for public access.

Even before getting to know her work, I had done what St. Pierre (2014b, 2015a, 2015b, 2019, 2021b) suggests we should do when we intend to carry out any critical study: instead of specifically reading about *methodology*, I read about and studied ontoepistemologies and shared my reflections with my peers, who helped me expand them. I had already read a considerable number of articles and books before meeting the students who would then be the primary human participants in this investigation. Thus, I decided that I would first conduct the study, and that during and after our English classes I would seek to understand the events and discuss them according to what had happened. This is in line with St. Pierre's perspective of postqualitative inquiry, according to which the particularities of the investigation should only be addressed after the fact. This practice ought to prevent the imposition of prescriptions that could constrain the emergence of generative movements within phenomena.

At this point, I believe it is befitting to remember her words when she mentions that one might as well question,

“If this *new* work doesn't use existing, accepted scientific research methodologies, how do we know it's science?” I would respond by saying that science exists only in a relation of power, when one group who claims to be scientists draws a line to exclude others they claim are not scientists. (ST. PIERRE, 2014b, p. 16, emphasis added).

This contention is important insofar as this dissertation does not quite fit into conventional designs and discourses of academic investigations. We should bear in mind that these structures that regulate, normalize, and restrain our work were *invented*. Thus, we can try to rework, reinvent, and even replace them with others that are more aligned with our projects. In this light, I strive to distance myself from recognizable, comfortable structures that usually characterize educational research.

Epistemology emerges from our understanding of ontology, in a fashion that is not linear and systematic, but rather rhizomatic. According to St. Pierre (2019), *theory* has been usually associated with epistemology, and *practice* has been commonly linked to ontology – a history that, in one sense, began with Descartes’ mind/body binary, which in general terms entailed the view of rationalism (theory) *versus* empiricism (practice). In this regard, Jackson and Mazzei (2018, p. 1257, emphasis in original) encourage academics to work with concepts that might help to disrupt this binary, decenter each of the concepts, and show “how they [rather] *constitute or make one another*”.

St. Pierre (2014a, p. 12, emphasis in original) adds that

[if] one thinks with post ontologies, it makes no sense to separate our analysis of words “collected” in existing documents into a section of the research report called the “literature review” from our analysis of words “collected” in interview transcripts and fieldnotes in a section called “findings”. But we do. And I would argue that that separation makes it easy for epistemology, ontology, and methodology to be misaligned in conventional humanist qualitative methodology.

In this dissertation, the *literature review* and the *findings* are presented and discussed together, in a similar fashion I did in my master’s thesis (SOUSA, 2017). Several former and current graduate students supervised by Professor Rosane Pessoa have already moved toward the nonseparation of them – and we have employed the term *praxiology* to emphasize this idea. *Literature review* (theory) and *findings* (practice) are not divided into different chapters in our master’s theses and doctoral dissertations (BASTOS, 2019; FERREIRA, 2018; ROSA-DASILVA, 2021; SILVESTRE, 2016; SOUSA, 2017; URZÊDA-FREITAS, 2018; among others).

In this chapter, I first draw attention to a postqualitative and postfoundational perspective of inquiry, followed by a discussion of posthumanist ideas aligned with this study. In the following sections, I then present the context and some information about the people that took part in this investigation. After that, I focus on the apparatuses for the generation of empirical material. Finally, I explain the way that the empirical material is addressed in this study.

## 1.1 Postqualitative inquiry: a postfoundational proposal

According to St. Pierre (2014b, p. 1, emphasis in original), postqualitative inquiry<sup>15</sup> encompasses many post/contemporary movements that seek to part ways with

conventional humanist qualitative methodology and marks a turn toward poststructural and posthuman inquiry. It also takes account of the new empiricisms emerging with the ontological and material turns in the humanities and social sciences. This inquiry is not methods-driven but informed by concepts like Karen Barad's *entanglement* and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *assemblage* and by conceptual practices those concepts make possible, practices that will be different in different projects. Post qualitative inquiry is an invitation to think and do educational inquiry outside normalized structures of humanist epistemology, ontology, and methodology.

In this sense, certain strands of posthumanism, especially those based on critical perspectives, are within the scope of postqualitative inquiry. The latter is marked by its flexibility and nonnecessity to fit into preexisting rules and processes and pre-defined and rigid categories. Moving away from the idea of methods, approaches, and procedures, it makes it possible to rather think in terms of concepts. This is an orientation that encourages varied types of exchanges among different fields with a view to outlining new proposals and actions.

In keeping with this idea, Massumi (2002) and Lenz Taguchi and St. Pierre (2017) argue that this process does not presuppose that there exists “a subject who applies concepts in their practices”, for that involves a kind of control which would be enacted by a conscious, independent individual. Instead, based on the idea of intra-action<sup>16</sup>, we should understand that when we involve ourselves with concepts, they end up affecting us somehow (whether or not we are aware of it), and they might even reorient our thoughts. Further, De Freitas (2017, p. 741) claims that we should see concepts as “working material assemblages rather than pure forms subject only to recognition, imposed on formless and inert matter”. As Kuntz and Presnall (2012, p. 740, emphasis in original) add,

[i]f concepts are created by the mind, they are created by an embodied mind that uses embodied experience to enact language. Our conceptual system, then, *is embodied*, interlinked with our experiences within the world in which we live.

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<sup>15</sup> The term was coined by St. Pierre in 2011, and it has been used by many other scholars ever since.

<sup>16</sup> “In contrast to the usual ‘interaction,’ which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede but rather emerge through their intra-action” (BARAD, 2007, p. 33, emphasis in original). This concept is better explored in the following chapters. For now, however, it is worth adding that, whenever I claim that beings intra-act, I am making agential cuts for the purpose of intelligibility – i.e., for instance, when I refer to my students and me and then focus on a cut from our intra-actions, I do not presuppose that we exist as independent, autonomous beings, but rather that we emerge as entities that are provisionally outlined in certain ways as a result of prior intra-actions.

Put differently, from this perspective, concepts are seen as material-discursive phenomena.

Postqualitative inquiry, especially in the fields of education and social sciences, seeks to work with the contingency, unpredictability, and unruliness that characterize life. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's (2005 [1980], p. 361) words, this kind of nomad science "operates in an open space throughout which things-flows are distributed, rather than plotting out a closed space for linear and solid things". St. Pierre (2019, p. 9, emphasis in original) explains that

[p]ost qualitative inquiry never is. It has no substance, no essence, no existence, no presence, no stability, no structure. [...] It presumes an ontology of immanence and is always becoming. Its empiricism is transcendental empiricism whose task [...] is not to recognize its epistemic object – what is already known – but to look for the conditions of emergence for what comes to be [...]. It does not assume that humans have access to the world, to the thing-in-itself, but rather that the world exists for-itself, and that its difference, its diversity, is much more complex than the human mind can comprehend. The work of post qualitative inquiry is not to find, describe, interpret, and represent what is but "to bring into being that which does not yet exist" (Deleuze, 1968/1994, p. 147), the new. For that reason, it must be treated "every time as something which has not always existed, but begins, forced and under constraint" (p. 136) – forced because it cannot refer to or repeat an existing structure, essence, truth, or judgment. Post qualitative inquiry does not exist prior to its arrival; it must be created, invented anew each time. For that reason, there can be no post qualitative "research design" or "research process".

This is a transgressive proposal. However, from a Baradian perspective, it is worth remembering that since we are all immersed in the ongoing reconfiguration of spacetime-matter, things are being made anew all the time. In addition, for example, in the field of critical applied linguistics, the movement proposed by St. Pierre would not entail disregarding what has been already generated as knowledge. On the contrary, it means working from it and trying to create new possibilities for thinking and doing things differently. In this sense, following St. Pierre (1997b), one's memories, stories, and trajectory are seen as entangled with this process.

Deleuze and Guattari's (2005 [1980], p. 21) concept of *rhizome* is helpful at this point, for "the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable", in a manner that it "enters the service of a virtual cosmic continuum of which even holes, silences, ruptures, and breaks are a part" (p. 95). In view of this, postqualitative inquiry urges the need to create different articulations, different assemblages and becomings, given the intrinsic instability and unrepeatability of our entanglements and relations. Moreover, critical language teachers have argued that it is important to look at one's place of speech/locus of enunciation<sup>17</sup>. In this vein, as Takaki (2022)

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<sup>17</sup> For a thorough discussion on the similarities and differences between *locus of enunciation* and *locus of speech*, see Nascimento (2021).

would put it, language education studies inspired by decoloniality should also be seen as a *place of listening*, since teachers-inquirers primarily rely on their conversations with their students to negotiate their language learning process and the undertaking of inquiry. Therefore, in keeping with the aforesaid arguments, I tried to work with what emerged from the intra-actions with the learners during the course. Hence, the school's institutional and pedagogical requirements, the students' local and situated needs, the classroom space, and nonhuman elements were all taken into account. As Rezende (2019b) states, each study should follow its own path, as its demands make themselves present during its development.

I have wondered: “Am I doing some kind of postqualitative inquiry? Am I actually drawing on the onto-ethico-epistemology<sup>18</sup> of the posts?” From my viewpoint, because we are so ingrained in humanist structures of all kinds, this work just gravitates toward postqualitative inquiry. My study thereby seeks to enable, alongside many others, “lines of flight to what we have not yet been able to think and live” (ST. PIERRE, 2016, p. 122). As I present this text, I look for a mixture of striated spaces and smooth spaces (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2005 [1980]; HOLLAND, 2013; ST. PIERRE, 2000), that is, in-between spaces of (im)possibilities in terms of inquiry. Obviously, not all critical posthumanist inquiry needs to be postqualitative, neither does it have to necessarily follow similar ideas. This was a choice I made based on my readings and experiences, as I noticed these movements were aligned with my project.

St. Pierre and Pillow (2000, p. 2) argue that the post movements have worked to “facilitate structural failures in some of foundationalism's most heinous formations – racism, patriarchy, homophobia, ageism, and so forth”. According to them, although still grounded in a rather specific perception of human being, such perspectives have sought to trouble foundational ontologies and epistemologies that structure a great deal of life. In this respect, St. Pierre (1997a, 2000), Lopes (2013), Lopes and Borges (2015), and Jackson and Mazzei (2018) direct our attention to the potentialities of postfoundational frameworks, which are grounded in the notion of *moving foundations*. For Jackson and Mazzei (2018, p. 1253), we need other “concepts, languages, and practices”, “a doing that proceeds from the middle of things – a new analytic practice that enters and exits sideways in an immanent (un)foldings where distinctions fall apart”.

Marchart (2007, p. 2) claims that postfoundationalism can be understood as “a constant interrogation of metaphysical figures of foundation – such as totality, universality, essence, and ground”. He adds that it can thus be described “as ‘disruption’ of foundationalism from within

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<sup>18</sup> Barad's (2007) term to refer to the inseparability of ontology, ethics, and epistemology.

through the realization of contingency” (MARCHART, 2007, p. 16). In this regard, tackling the present-absent opacity of everyday events, both in professional and personal contexts, allows the perception of contingent and fleeting grounds (LOPES; BORGES, 2015).

In a similar vein, St. Pierre (2021b, p. 486) states that “in an ontology of immanence, there is no ground, no foundation, no beginning, no origin anywhere”, and Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980], p. 25) go even further by stressing the need “to overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings”. I agree with the authors’ statements to a certain extent. However, founded on the premise of ongoing becoming, even for the purpose of conveying ideas to others, we need to rely on provisional, unstable foundations, otherwise we might get lost into intelligibility in such a manner that it could prevent the undertaking of our projects. In addition, we also need to account for their impacts on the world. Drawing on contingent foundations implies that we ought to make ethical choices according to the specificities of each situation and context. This process should, therefore, be accompanied by (self-)reflection, (self-)questioning, and (self-)problematization so as to mitigate dogmatic standpoints.

In this study, for example, as an inquirer, I seek to disrupt foundations such as the structure of a dissertation (as a text genre), traditional steps of construction of inquiry, and humanist and anthropocentric conceptions of language education. As a teacher, I had to work with and against foundations like institutional rules and procedures established at the language school, the book series used there, traditional methods and approaches to language learning to which the students and I were accustomed, and so on. Buzato (2021) would argue that, in Deleuzo-Guattarian terms, territories (i.e., foundations) need to be identified in order for the inquirer to deterritorialize (disrupt) them. Further, it is worth stressing that, based on my prior knowledge, I had also sketched several ideas both for the classes and the inquiry, and most of them were effectively incorporated into the study after undergoing contingent changes. In this sense, many negotiations had to be made throughout this investigation and the English course. Following Butler (1992, p. 8), foundations are rendered “a site of permanent political contest”. As she proposes looking at foundations as fleeting grounding, the author argues that a “foundation would settle nothing but would of its own necessity founder on its own authoritarian ruse. This is not to say that there is no foundation, but rather, that wherever there is one, there will also be a foundering, a contestation” (BUTLER, 1992, p. 16). One should remember, however, that *degrounding* does not imply absolute severance from certain foundations, since we have been constituted by them throughout history – although we might desire it, thinking we could do it would be a misleading perception.



St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei (2016) argue that a particularly important foundation that needs to be deconstructed is Descartes' *cogito* – “I think, therefore I am”. In the authors' words,

[d]uring the 17th-century Enlightenment in Western thought, Descartes, credited as the father of foundationalism, laid out a plane on which he could invent the concept, the *cogito*, a knowing subject, an epistemological subject, separate from, superior to, and master of everything else in the world. The *cogito*, this exceptional human, has innate agency. All other forms of life, nonhuman, unconsciousness life, are inferior. And matter (things, objects) is inanimate, inert, passive, waiting to be acted upon; it is the object of his subject, his *cogito*. Descartes' foundational plane, his image of thought grounded in the master binary, Self/Other, spawned many others. (ST. PIERRE; JACKSON; MAZZEI, 2016, p. 102).

These were reinforced throughout the centuries and are still often reaffirmed explicitly and implicitly in the academic world. They refer to the “Cartesian binaries of mind/body”, “rational/irrational, objective/subjective, human/nonhuman” (ST. PIERRE, 2014b, p. 7), “word/thing, representation/the real distinctions” (ST. PIERRE, 2015b, p. 86), to name a few. Moreover, as the author underlines, “the ‘I’ taken for granted in Cartesian subjectivity has become almost imperceptible in Western thought, especially in Western science” (ST. PIERRE, 2021b, p. 482). The “I” is hardly ever questioned. St. Pierre (2021a, p. 4) goes on to comment that, although “conventional humanist qualitative methodology has been able to accommodate interpretive, emancipatory or critical, and even post-positivist inquiry”, it is still human-centered, as it relies “on a particular description of human being”: there is “an active, intentional, agential ‘I’ – who initiates and authorizes the sentences upon which social science research is based: ‘I investigate’, ‘I collect data’, ‘I analyze data’, ‘I find’, ‘I know’”. (ST. PIERRE, 2017b, p. 688).

In this sense, Lather and St. Pierre (2013, p. 630, emphasis in original) underscore that humanist qualitative methodology assumes that “[t]he doer exists before the deed”, and that, consequently, “the researcher can (and must for IRBs [Institutional Review Boards]) write a research proposal that outlines the doing before she begins. The assumption is that there is actually a *beginning*, an origin, that she is not always already becoming in entanglement”. The IRB then necessarily counts as an institutional agential cut.

Regarding the previous arguments, first, an important aspect to which we should pay heed is the fictional dividing lines that determine beginnings and endings. From a Western perspective, in general, as these elements are very well-defined, that occasions a relatively static perception of phenomena, narrows the transformative potentiality of entities and their relations, and to a certain extent prevents thinking otherwise. Conversely, St. Pierre (2000, p. 271) notes

that “easily identifiable limits can often be more easily subverted”, because once we are aware of them, we can try to find ways to work around and perhaps disrupt them. In keeping with this discussion, Marchart (2007, p. 19, emphasis in original) claims that, although entities and elements “have to be differentiated in some way [...], at one and the same time, [they] *cannot* be differentiated neatly, as they are ceaselessly crossing over into each other”, constituting an “inseparable intertwining”.

Secondly, such a posture conveys not only the idea of “the doer before the deed,” but also of “the knower before the knowledge” (ST. PIERRE, 2020, 34:46-34:50). For St. Pierre (2014b, p. 23, emphasis in original), then “[p]erhaps *not knowing* and *waiting* describe the *style* of the new empirical [inquirer]”. By relying on Pennycook’s (2018c) arguments, we can go even further and claim *not only not knowing but also not even understanding*, in as far as understanding is never complete. As Vannini (2015, p. 6) reminds us, we are always dealing with “the ephemeral, the fleeting, and the not-quite-graspable”, and in this sense, according to Ulmer (2017, p. 839), perhaps we should not obsess over “knowing, but [rather engage] in exploring how we are entangled with other organisms around us”. Such a stance could open up other possibilities for thinking and acting otherwise.

It is worth mentioning that, in the West, before rationalism (Descartes) and logical empiricism (positivism), some considered the “experience of the world and self as an unbroken continuum” (BORDO, 1986, p. 447), akin to how Indigenous cosmovisions have historically conceived this relation. Such a perspective was constituted by a different ontology when it came to the relation between *subjects* and *objects*. St. Pierre (2021b, p. 485) touches upon the fact that, after Descartes, “[a]s man withdrew from the world, objectivity replaced continuity”. By going in that direction, in order to attain a supposed objectivity, accompanied by a misleading claim of neutrality, a human-centered understanding of virtually everything was fostered. Thinking in terms of continuity, which undermines margins and boundaries, can thereby be useful to help us decenter not only the human figure but also the perception of it in relation to everything else. Accordingly, the dichotomy of human being *versus* the passive world is rejected and deconstructed in critical posthumanist inquiry (ST. PIERRE, 2020). Humans are not seen as separate from and superior to the world, but rather as beings that exist with it. St. Pierre (2011a, 2013) argues that the inquirer is always already entangled with countless becomings they are not even aware of – or, in other words, as Barad (2007) and Murris (2016) would put it, there is no separation of anything. Other issues pertaining to this discussion are addressed in more detail in the following section.

## 1.2 A posthumanist study

Ulmer (2017) underlines that posthumanism is a catalyst within postqualitative inquiry. The author stresses that “there are many posthumanisms and each offers different twists, turns, and ways of thinking” (ULMER, 2017, p. 832). In this respect, I should stress that the aspects discussed in this dissertation, particularly in this section, are based on critical strands of posthumanism. Its multiplicity, however, opens up possibilities for expanding knowledge construction, and in this sense, Ulmer (2017, p. 832) suggests thinking in terms of “a postdisciplinary future”. In the same vein, Pennycook (2018a) offers the notion of *epistemic assemblages*, which does not refer to disciplines and fields but rather to exchanges of knowledge that can form fruitful alliances in order to attain certain objectives. As this investigation is academically situated in the field of applied linguistics, I aim to broaden our understandings of issues concerning language, and more specifically language education.

We should observe that although critical projects seek to work against marginalization, oppression, and inequity, they generally draw on a human-centered frame of reference to do so; posthumanist inquiry, on the other hand, encompasses these issues, but it “expands these same objectives on a [larger] scale”, thus seeking to “respond to injustices within broader contexts” (ULMER, 2017, p. 832). As the human figure is decentered, a more horizontal ontological plane, which urges us to perceive both humans and nonhumans from a nonhierarchical (or at least a less hierarchical) perspective<sup>19</sup>, is proposed. It is important to stress, however, that posthumanism does not pertain to a project of inclusion, but rather of ontoepistemological reconfiguration (BARAD, 2007). The issue is not about equating everyone and everything to the same level of the ideal human but deconstructing the structure that put this human there in the first place. Human and nonhuman others – i.e., those who have been historically marginalized – need to be recognized in their specificities, in their particular ways of knowing, being, and living in the world.

Ulmer (2017, p. 833) elaborates on this discussion by arguing that

critical qualitative methodologies often have promoted transformative aims by attending to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, culture, spirituality, ability, language, and other aspects of identity. [...] These methodologies have been applied most often within interpretivist frames that underscore the importance of honoring marginalized people’s experiences, perspectives, voices, and participation in research. [...] And, in a world that contains racism, sexism, violence, and other forms of

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<sup>19</sup> For Pennycook (2019a), the concept of flat ontology is politically problematic. He maintains that, as power permeates social relations, disrupting hegemonic structures in a way a completely horizontal ontology could be established is an unattainable objective in the world at large.

oppression, they remain necessary today. [However,] [g]iven the state of the planet, human-centered approaches to research may not be enough. [Many posthumanist scholars] [...] instead suggest that justice involves more than what can be found solely within the realm of human relations. Rather, justice is also material, ecological, geographical, geological, geopolitical, and geophilosophical. Justice is a more-than-human endeavor. Their aim is not to remove humans from [inquiry], but to deemphasize the focus on humans and recognize that non-human elements are always already present.

In this study, I specifically attempt to focus on topics directly related to critical perspectives, but in a way material-discursive relations, the sociomateriality of bodies, space, and the elements involved in them can also be addressed. Thus, I seek to consider how we are influenced, shaped, and intricately constituted by them. In this investigation, as prompted by Ulmer (2017), humans are not considered the only ones capable of producing knowledge, insofar as things, objects, and other beings are also perceived as taking part in it.<sup>20</sup> In the words of Barad (2007, p. 342), “[k]nowing is a distributed practice that includes the larger material arrangement”. Accordingly, posthumanism is set out to “expand notions of who and what is *social* to include living and non-living matter” (ULMER, 2017, p. 838, emphasis added). Since we are interconnected with others, this perception should be brought into the undertaking of inquiry, that is, into how we understand and do our work by seriously taking into account the relations created and effects produced in the assemblages that emerge. As a result, from this viewpoint, the smallest unit of analysis cannot be the individual; it has to be the relation instead (HARAWAY, 2016 [2003]).

As Ulmer (2017, p. 837) adds, posthumanism endeavors to attend “to the ways in which different bodies”, human and nonhuman, “are subject to the forces of oppression, violence, marginalization, labor, and production”. This framework distances itself from conventional interpretivism – “implicit in this model is the conflation of thought with knowledge and the supposition that knowledge is ultimately a form of recognition” (PATTON, 2000, p. 19). Traditional interpretivism is based and developed from precepts of language that are humanist, such as the idea that knowledge is only that which the human mind can recognize. A posthumanist inquiry lays emphasis on the agency of matter in its entangled relations to destabilize our hierarchical Western conception of our relationship with the world.

St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei (2016, p. 103) argue that an unfolding of Descartes’ assumptions is his philosophy of representation, according to which “language can be transparent and mirror the world for the mind. Here, language does not interfere – it can be

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<sup>20</sup> In Chapters 2 and 3, I show how this process takes place in detail by providing exemplifications.

crystal clear”. The authors claim that academic textual productions are often imbued with this belief, for instance, when they adopt practices of observation and documentation that strengthen the binaries of reality/representation and essence/representation, as they draw on language as their intermediary. Hence, I must stress that I do not understand my study as a representation that captures “the world in language”, (a conception that still “dominates both the natural and social sciences”) (ST. PIERRE, 2021b, p. 483), but rather as a cut of an assemblage that involves countless entities. In other words, I do not see it as a result, but as one of the several becomings that have emerged from the experience. In this respect, one might question: “How does the notion of *becoming* help us in our critical projects?” As it concerns a comprehension of constant transformation, it makes it easier to notice other possibilities of be(com)ing-with the world. It thus redirects the focus from static to dynamic states, to complexity.

Non-representational<sup>21</sup> inquiry refuses the “repetition of the same” (DOEL, 2010, p. 117) encouraged by conventional representational frameworks. *Representation* reinforces an idea of fixity – creating *congealed images* (frozen states) – which is opposed to the perception of ongoing becoming proposed by posthumanism. At this point, it is important to add that, as Massumi (1992, p. 103) affirms, becoming “cannot be exhaustively described. If it could, it would already be what it is becoming, in which case it wouldn’t be becoming at all”. Non-representational inquiry instead gravitates toward “[e]vents, relations, practices and performances, [and] affects” (VANNINI, 2015, p. 9), not in a descriptive way (which would follow a linear temporal reasoning) but rather in an entangled, transformative one.

Based on Haraway (1997), Barad (2007, p. 71) claims that “whereas the metaphor of reflection reflects the themes of mirroring and sameness, diffraction is marked by patterns of difference”. I have retained the word *reflection*, alongside *diffraction*, in this dissertation because it has been important for the critical work done in language education in the Global South. Although their genealogies are different, here the terms *reflection* and *diffraction* have similar meanings. Reflection might involve change; diffraction does entail change. Barad (2007, p. 389) urges us to rethink representations as “productive evocations, provocations, and generative material articulations or reconfigurings of what is and what is possible”.

Further, at the same time posthumanism moves away from *representation*, it moves toward *response* (INGOLD, 2015), toward the development of *response-ability* (HARAWAY, 2008, 2016), which is enveloped in ethics. Here ethics refers to a contingent way of thinking-acting that takes into account affect (affecting others and being affected by them), relationality,

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<sup>21</sup> Although several authors use the term *non-representational*, like Vannini (2015), others prefer the term *more-than-representational*, like Lorimer (2005).

and accountability. St. Pierre (1997b, p. 186) suggests that ethics be “invented within each relation”, as inquirer and those involved “negotiate sense-making”. In this regard, Barad (2007) contends that we are responsible both for what we bring into our cuts as well as for what we exclude from them. In her words,

[w]ith each intra-action, the manifold of entangled relations is reconfigured. And so consequentiality, responsibility, and accountability take on entirely new valences. [...] Responsibility entails an ongoing responsiveness to the entanglements of self and other, here and there, now and then. (BARAD, 2007, p. 393-394).

For Patel (2016, p. 57), at the same time we have to be fluent in and contribute to existing research, we also need to understand “our ontological entry-points” and impacts on the world. In the humanities and social sciences, although many of us have been engaged in producing socially relevant critical epistemologies, our ontological perception is still imbued with a hierarchy between the *human* and the *nonhuman*. In this respect, seeing that we continuously *become-with* others, and that we cannot exist as individual entities in the world, is paramount. From this perspective, insofar as “(all) bodies (matter) matters” (KUBY; CHRIST, 2020, p. 73), there is a shift from thinking *about* human and nonhuman others to thinking, intra-acting, and becoming *with* them. For St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei (2016, p. 100), it is therefore an “ethical imperative to rethink the nature of being” and its relations.

In this dissertation, posthumanism is addressed as “a localized viewpoint, of which the focus is on understanding the relations between humans, nonhuman others, matter, language, and space in one’s own context” (SOUSA; PESSOA, 2019, p. 523). In this sense, this investigation is a markedly partial and situated study, specifically concerned with an English language education experience in a language school. Barad (2007, p. 127) claims that “choices are made to help us focus on the important features”. In this inquiry, I specifically address the sociomateriality of bodies and ideologies of language and language education. Following the author’s argument, these discussions are configured as agential cuts that work as part of the phenomena that they have helped produce. Sociomaterial relations are constantly (re)produced in language classrooms. Hence, my contributions are aimed at providing a better understanding of the complexity of aspects that have always been entangled with us but to which we might have not given proper attention.

In the next section, I present the context, particularly the language school where the study was conducted.

### 1.3 The context

As Jackson and Mazzei (2018, p. 1257, emphasis in original) underline, once we are “*emerged in the middle of ‘plugging in’*”, plugged into a postqualitative, postfoundational, and posthumanist ontoepistemological orientation, contexts are then perceived as “situations which we no longer know how to react to, in spaces which we no longer know how to describe” (DELEUZE, 1989, p. xi). This disrupts the idea of pre-established attitudes and actions and relates to the reflections previously presented. In keeping with these arguments, notions associated with certainty, fixity, predictability, control, and representation by means of language are rejected.

Therefore, the exposition of the language school in this section should be seen as a *cut*, like many others made along the text, which does not refer to a description but to contingent information provided from entanglements of students, school staff, space, technologies, objects, etc. In this sense, we have constructed the school, but it has also constructed us, in linguistic, semiotic, discursive, and sociomaterial terms. Once I look back on it and deliberate on our intra-active constitution, I notice how the relations fostered have been visibly fashioned by the physicality of that place. As I see it, the school context has created a particular atmosphere from the materiality that composes, promotes, and disrupts certain elements and aspects in that space.

The language school in question is located in a middle-class neighborhood of Goiânia, capital of the state of Goiás, in Brazil. Unlike most language schools in the country, this one does not operate under a franchise, albeit it has made agreements with publishing houses throughout the years. And yet, despite being an independent institution, this school works in association with a labor union. One of its main aims is to provide quality education at an affordable price, especially for those who would not normally have the financial means to study English at a private institution. This is related to the educational and social ideologies of the group that runs the school. Hence, the majority of students who attend it belong to the working and middle classes.

English has been taught there since 2007, and instruction has been predominantly grounded in communicative teaching and task-based and project-based learning. When answering the first question of the initial questionnaire – “What do you think of the English classes you have had in this school?” – four out of the six students that participated in this study complimented the lessons. They highlighted the teachers’ preparation of dynamic and interactive activities (Helem, Mark, and Rubi), dedication to students’ language learning (Elton,

Helem, Mark, and Rubi), and commitment to both respecting and pushing students' limits/challenging them (Elton and Helem).

By the time of the undertaking of this investigation, all the teachers who worked there had at least a B.A. in English language teaching, and some of them also had specialization courses and master's degrees. Given their background, the staff has always welcomed and engaged in educational projects and teacher education courses at the school, both proposed by insiders (teachers and coordinators) and outsiders (researchers, independent teachers, people associated with foreign and national companies, etc.). For instance, the writing of my master's thesis was based on a teacher education experience with a group of eight English language teachers that worked in this school, in 2015 (SOUSA, 2017). Thus, this specific context was chosen as the site for this study not only for being open to and supporting the undertaking of projects and research/inquiry in its space, but also for being an institution with which I was familiar, since I was a teacher there for some years.

With an inquiry proposal approved by the Federal University of Goiás's Institutional Review Board<sup>22</sup>, I went to the school for "field work". The coordinators and I had decided I would work with a group designated as *Pre-advanced Conversation*. On the first day of class, the general coordinator talked to the students and introduced me, and I presented the proposal of the study to them.<sup>23</sup> Six students and I – as their teacher and the inquirer – took part in this investigation. In linear temporal terms, the empirical material was generated from August to December 2019. The classes occurred on Tuesdays and Thursdays, in the evening, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:45 p.m., thus lasting 1 hour and 15 minutes each.<sup>24</sup> The classroom in which we spent most of our time together can be seen below. Barad's (2007, p. 74) argues that

entanglements are highly specific configurations and it is very hard work building apparatuses to study them, in part because they change with each intra-action. In fact, it is not so much that they change from one moment to the next or from one place to another, but that space, time, and matter do not exist prior to the intra-actions that reconstitute entanglements. [...] The point is that the [...] apparatuses must be tuned to the particularities of the entanglements at hand.

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<sup>22</sup> CAAE: 99588718.8.0000.5083. Scientific Review: 3.383.404 (Annex A).

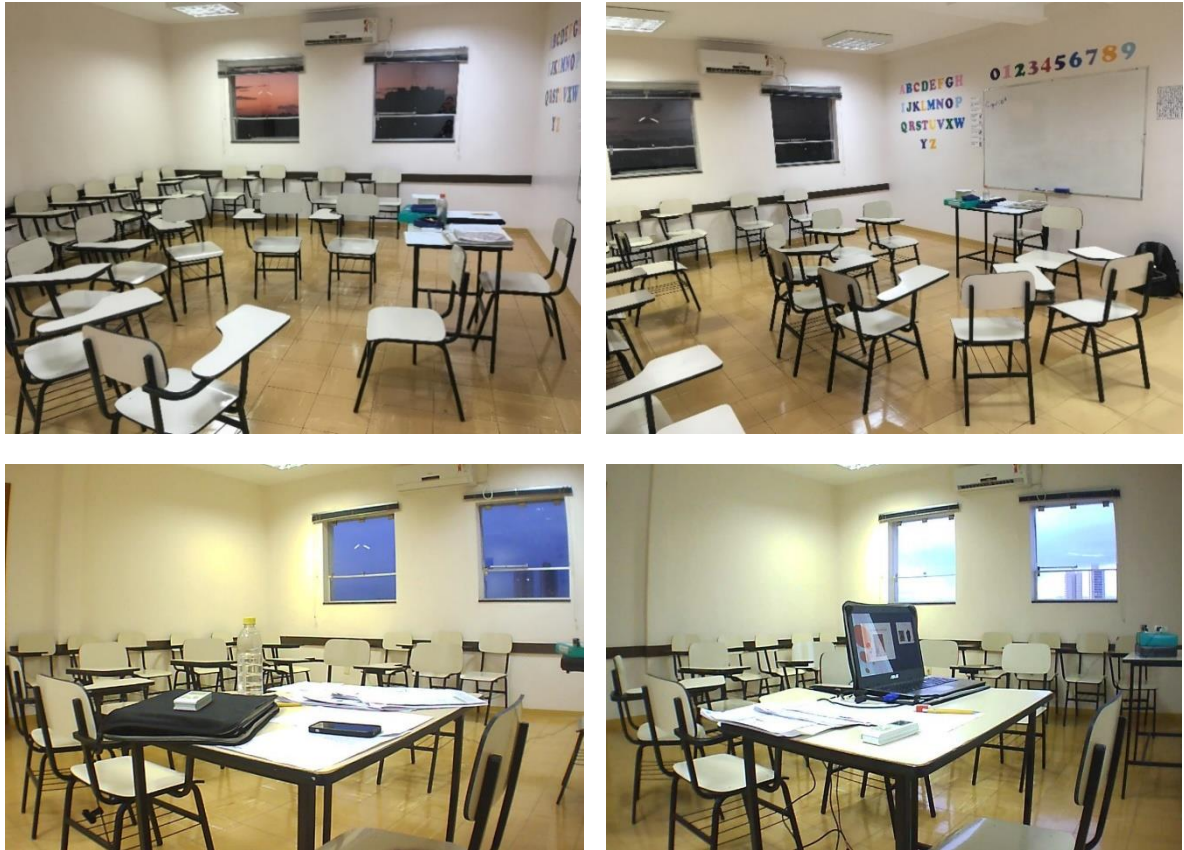
<sup>23</sup> The research commitment form was signed by my adviser and me (Appendix A), and the school consent form was signed by the general coordinator (Appendix B), before talking to the students. The informed consent form (Appendix C) and the informed assent form (Appendix D) were signed by the students and, in the case of minors, by their parents or legal guardians too.

<sup>24</sup> St. Pierre (2011a, p. 619) states that "[t]he human desire to measure and control everything extended to time itself (we invented clocks), but time is out of joint and always has been". Notwithstanding I am aware of that, schedules and dates are presented throughout this dissertation to situate the reader in specific spacetimes.



Following her arguments, I draw on the Deleuzian conception of *images in movement* to address the figures presented in this work. In the author's words, instead of perceiving a still, fixed image, "a figure described in a unique moment", the attention is directed to "the continuity of the movement which describes the figure" (DELEUZE, 1986, p. 5).

### Movement-image 1 – The classroom



Pictures taken on August 06 and November 05 and 26, in 2019.

Source: Empirical material.

Despite the information provided here, it is important to restate that, from a posthumanist viewpoint, "there is no beginning of this work that is always becoming, spreading from the middle" of assemblages (LENZ TAGUCHI; ST. PIERRE, 2017, p. 644). According to St. Pierre (2015a, p. 18-19),

usually we've begun [inquiry] long before the official beginning described in most methodology books. You're living the study, you've been talking with people about this thing you've been interested in for some time, you've been reading about it, finding it in novels and movies. At some point, you have to get a focus and organize your work so you can graduate within a year or two, and decide what you can do well in that timeframe.

From this perspective, a *context* thereby spreads out and encompasses different kinds of assemblages, which are more often than not overlooked. In this sense, there are no well-delineated lines that can establish where a context begins and ends. Personally, I first came into contact with posthumanism in 2017, when I read Pennycook's (2018b) article entitled *Posthumanist Applied Linguistics* (published online ahead of print, in 2016). Therefore, I have been reflecting on how this framework could help me see the English language classroom differently ever since.

In keeping with the ideas previously presented, we are not thus able to locate the *field* in which we work, as the lines get blurred (ST. PIERRE, 2004). In the case of this investigation, the class(room) was not only inside the school. We constantly talked on WhatsApp, on Google Drive, through their activities (as we left messages on them to each other), in other rooms of the school (the lobby, the halls, the secretary room, etc.), and so on. Moreover, the students engaged in other learning environments and activities chosen by themselves in order to work on their language learning projects.

The fact that I do not consider time linearly, though there is an official *field* of study, "the natural setting", breaks the conception of when the study actually *began*. I do not know, and immersed in an understanding of continuous becoming, I do not think I *need* to know. During field work, we are at the same time inhabiting "the past-present-future-time" (ST. PIERRE, 2018, p. 606). The past and future are seen as entangled with the present, making us do what we do. Present, past, and future are/were/will always be there with us – in the form of thoughts, memories, effects, affects, expectations, aspirations, plans, etc. – intra-acting with us. As Barad (2014, p. 168) explains, we should not perceive them linearly, but as constantly diffracting anew, insofar as new "spacetime-matterings" lead to "new diffraction patterns".

For Koro-Ljungberg, Maclure, and Ulmer (2018, p. 820), empirical material travels across space, or, in other words, empirical material+space are "a moving conjunction, a set of temporary connections or constellations between diverse [...] particles". They thereby claim we should direct our attention to "undulating and varied spaces instead of smooth and uniform spaces", "see spatial and temporal experiences of individuals and groups as flows, fillers, extensions, conjunctions, and interactions", and consider empirical material+space as "something to be contemplated, striated, regulated, disagreed about, governed, empowered, and released" (KORO-LJUNGBERG; MACLURE; ULMER, 2018, p. 820).

In relation to the classroom, in keeping with this line of thought, the bodies present in each class were, to some extent, always different bodies – people, objects, space, etc. – always becoming-with and in different entanglements with each other. However, it is worth observing

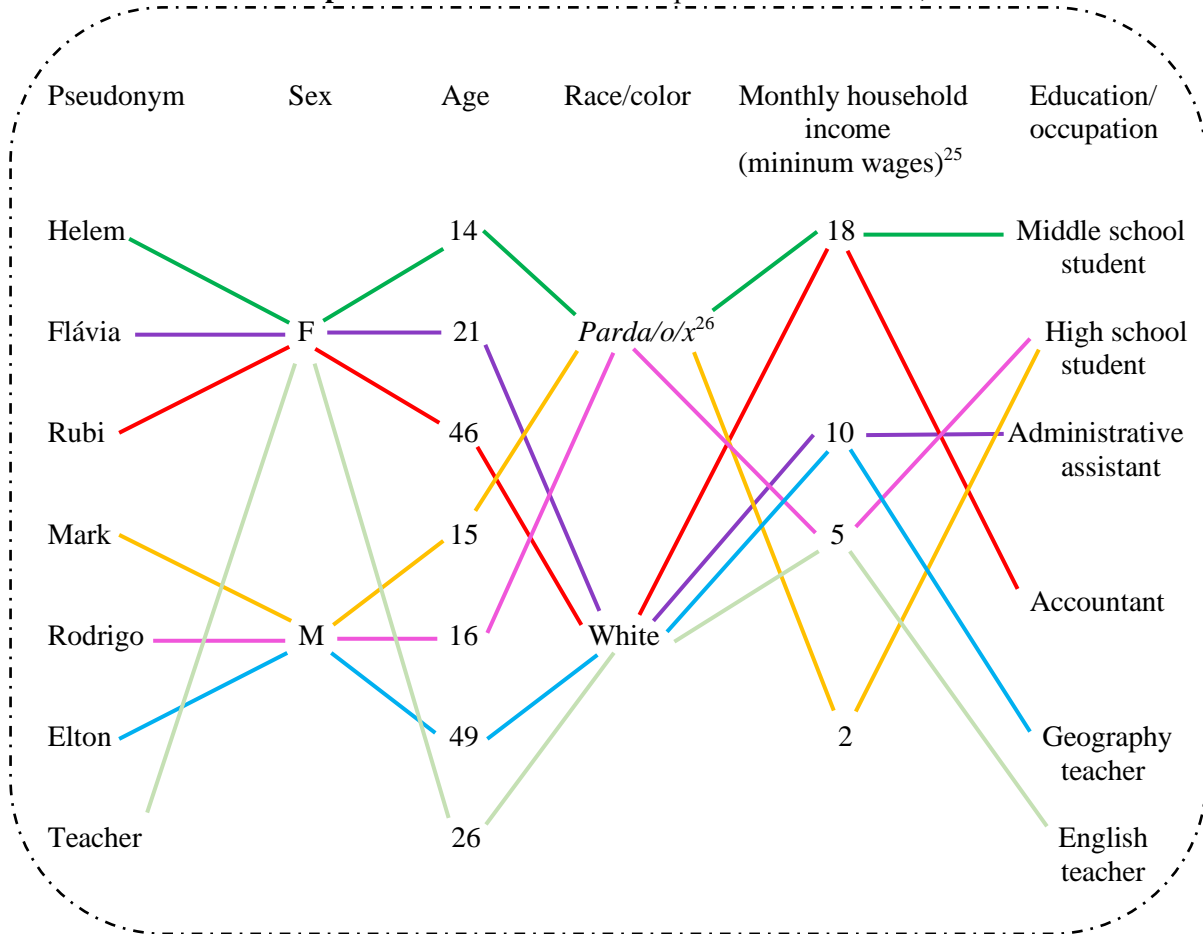
that since we often perceive what occurs in class in static terms, we tend to overlook movements and relations of becoming.

St. Pierre (1997b) poses a very pertinent question, which I reformulate here for this discussion: How are the physical and praxiological sites of knowing related and what are the effects of such relations? We are not only continuously (de)/(re)constructed through praxiologies but also inhabit several different kinds of physical sites of knowing that fashion our understandings. Such an entanglement leads to the emergence of assemblages in which discernible and indiscernible exchanges take place. These premises prepare the ground for the discussion of the empirical material generated from the educational context in question.

In the following section, I address some information on the students and on myself as teacher-inquirer.

#### **1.4 The students and the teacher-inquirer**

I chose to draw up the students' personal information and mine in a rhizomatic presentation in order to highlight the interconnections of the elements displayed. In addition, I sought to refer to the group as an assemblage without very well-defined lines – hence the choice of the format “under erasure” (MARCHART, 2007), following a postfoundational comprehension of porous boundaries. Moreover, in keeping with the Deleuzo-Guattarian literature, instead of using a table here, I present the information on a map, since “the map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting” (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2005 [1980], p. 12).

**Map 1** – Students’ and teacher’s personal information, in 2019

Source: Initial questionnaire.

The information that made possible the mapping of this rhizomatic set comes from the initial questionnaire, answered by the students. This apparatus is addressed in detail in subsection 1.5.1. It is important to emphasize that my intention here is not to present “lengthy, rich, thick descriptions of individual participants [...], producing them as autonomous, coherent, intentional, knowing, speaking subjects” (ST. PIERRE, 2011a, p. 620). As the reader will see in the following chapters, I try to address their identities and elements associated with them in a less conventional manner. Further, these pieces of information refer to specific answers given in a certain spacetime, and hence should not be seen as fixed.

<sup>25</sup> In 2019, in Brazil, the minimum wage per month was R\$ 1,045 (\$259 dollars).

<sup>26</sup> The options for color/race given by IBGE [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics] (2011) are white, black, yellow (for Asians), *parda/o/x* (for people of multiracial ancestry), and indigenous (Amerindians). Although many of those who self-identify as white, black, yellow, or even indigenous have mixed ancestries, *parda/o/x* is “the race generally ascribed to those who have multiracial ancestry in Brazil” (SOUSA et al., in development). Here I do not use the word *mixed-race* because, depending on the context, this is a term that might also refer to fair-skinned people from different cultural backgrounds (MULTIRACIAL, 2022). In addition, the term does not live up to the particular historical formation of the Brazilian population, like the word *parda/o/x* does.

Despite my attempt at a rhizomatic presentation, groups and subgroups can be spotted within the map. Obviously, I had to exhibit the information in a way that it could be intelligible, but I also wanted to stress how identities might overlap, intersect, and cut across each other. In class, there was a clear division between students and teacher, hence the first column. I then tried to organize the information in terms of gender, age, race, household income, and education/occupation. It is worth adding that I could have also asked them about their religion/spirituality, since this is an important identity for most Brazilians.

Paraphrasing St. Pierre's (1997b) argument, as I address my students' lives, I also address my own. We were the primary participants in this inquiry. However, in relation to those who/which have been invisibilized in studies, I should mention the coordinators, the secretaries, the students' parents and legal guardians, the cleaning ladies, the doormen, the janitor, for example, who contributed to making everything we did possible throughout the semester, as well as countless others, human and nonhuman, indirectly involved in other ways. Before the official beginning of field work, I had already spent several years of my professional life with them: those boards, desks, windows (from which I often saw the environment around, from the fourth floor of the building), teaching aids, the school staff, and so on. This argument exemplifies the assemblagic and intradependent features of this investigation.

Therefore, that place, its objects, and people also constituted my students and me – that is, throughout the years the relations created among entities in that spacetime contributed to making us who we were and became as students/teacher and people. As an illustration, in material-discursive terms, the school facilities are aimed at creating a certain kind of interactive environment and atmosphere for students and teachers: the exhibition of posters and different semiotic productions (some of which have been made by students) is something that characterizes that school space; literary books are displayed and available in the hallway for all students to borrow; there are phonemic charts, data projectors, and CD players in all classrooms; there is also a space for games. Thus, the organization and disposition of the elements that compose the school space are directly related to the coordinators' ideologies of language education.

In this light, I stress that the embodied, situated, partial, and limited perceptions (HARAWAY, 1988) I discuss here have obviously been materially and discursively suffused with my experiences in that school. As St. Pierre (2011a, p. 621) claims, such an understanding exceeds the notion of people as subjects who simply have multiple subjectivities and/or move among subject positions, insofar as it considers our constitution, as previously mentioned, as “a simultaneity of relations with humans and the nonhuman”. In her words,

we are always *assemblages* that are not stable entities that can be broken down into distinct component parts and made to mean, but rather that are [...] constantly territorializing and deterritorializing – becoming. Importantly, assemblages do not imply interiority but exteriority, so we would not ask what an assemblage *is* or what parts it contains but rather with what it connects, what it plugs into. Again, human being is not independent and self-contained but mixed with everything else on the surface. We cannot separate out the human subject in posthuman, new empirical, new material, post qualitative inquiry. Our responsibility is no longer to the privileged human but to the assemblage, which is always more-than-human and always becoming. (ST. PIERRE, 2015b, p. 88, emphasis in original).

As we engage with the idea that “the subject no longer remains separate from objects or time or space but enters into composition with them” (ST. PIERRE, 1997a, p. 412), we then understand that “the empirical world [...] does not begin with ‘I’ but is a nonsubjective, impersonal, preindividual, empirical world – a simple ‘there is’” (ST. PIERRE, 2017b, p. 694, emphasis in original). Therefore, the phenomena, the inquirer, and this dissertation are not seen as separate but entangled entities in material-discursive relations.

In the next section, I address the apparatuses used for the generation of empirical material.

## 1.5 The apparatuses

In this dissertation, instead of thinking in terms of instruments or sources, I work with the Baradian concept of *apparatus*. The word *instrument* has well-known positivist connotations, especially linked to the extraction of information; and the notion of *source* presupposes that there is a beginning for phenomena. In addition, the use of both terms has been based on underlying assumptions that consider things as separate from sociomaterial events. Conversely, as Barad (2007) explains, apparatuses are seen as playing crucial, constitutive roles in the generation of phenomena. In the words of the author,

apparatuses are not mere instruments or devices that can be deployed as neutral probes of the natural world, or determining structures of a social nature [...]. [Rather,] apparatuses are specific material-discursive practices (they are not merely [...] setups that embody human concepts and [provide a reproduction of events that took place]); [...] apparatuses produce differences that matter – they are boundary-making practices that are formative of matter and meaning, productive of, and part of, the phenomena produced; [...] apparatuses are material configurations/dynamic reconfigurings of the world. (BARAD, 2007, p. 142, 146).

It is important to stress that the apparatuses with which I have worked are not postqualitative and posthumanist in themselves. Rather, as an inquirer, I attempted to interpret the ways the apparatuses and empirical material intra-acted with the students and me from a

postqualitative, postfoundational, and posthumanist perspective. Following Barad (2007, p. 232), I have tried to see the apparatuses as “laborers that help[ed] constitute and [were] an integral part of the phenomena [...] investigated”. Further, we should bear in mind that the inquirer works with and against forces that steer them toward the materialization of their study in a certain way (BUZATO, 2022a).

These are the apparatuses that took part in this study: a) an initial questionnaire; b) classroom intra-actions with the learners, which were filmed, audio recorded, and transcribed; c) students’ activities done throughout the semester; d) reflective and diffractive field notes; and e) intraviews. Most of the material-discursive cuts from the empirical material are derived from classroom intra-actions. Before starting this study, I did have an idea of the apparatuses that could be suitable for the investigation. However, they only effectively became elements that composed this inquiry once I taught the classes, and the coordinators, the students, and I made certain choices and decisions, attending to the particularities of the group and the proposal. Thus, working or not with a certain apparatus was something that had to be negotiated, given the contingencies of the experience. Now, for the purpose of elucidating what was done, I present a schedule with its chronological organization:

**Table 1** – Schedule of empirical material generation<sup>27</sup>

Inquiry activities	Dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation of the inquiry proposal</li> <li>• Initial questionnaire</li> </ul>	August 06, 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom intra-actions with the learners, which were filmed, audio recorded, and transcribed</li> <li>• Students’ activities</li> <li>• Reflective and diffractive field notes</li> </ul>	August 06 – December 19, 2019 (Classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays) Total: 39 classes of 1h. and 15min./each
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intraviews</li> </ul>	December 12 and 19, 2019

Source: Empirical material.

For St. Pierre (2015c), more than simply describing and creating reality, language participates in thinking and becoming. In qualitative research,

data is generally textualized, reduced to words in interview transcripts and fieldnotes, to language that represents the world. Deleuze and Guattari, however, reject the logic of representation that allows words and things to be separated and locate language *in the mixture* of words and things. (ST. PIERRE, 2017b, p. 1082, emphasis in original).

<sup>27</sup> It is important to add that this schedule was not designed beforehand. Everything was discussed with the coordinators and the students, and then set according to the needs and demands of those involved. After each one of these inquiry activities, I wrote down the dates so that later I could present the chronological organization of the study in this dissertation.

In this respect, Koro-Ljungberg, MacLure, and Ulmer (2018) focus on the idea of empirical material as performance. For them, empirical material+performance create openings in which “[empirical material] do[es] not remain within fixed points but exert[s] agency to move across time, space, and analysis. No longer waiting to be interpreted,” empirical material+performance intra-act with the inquirer, material-discursive surroundings, and even itself (KORO-LJUNGBERG; MACLURE; ULMER, 2018, p. 825). Here I see the empirical material as “active, generative, and agential” matter that affects as much as it is affected by those involved with it (CANAGARAJAH, 2018b, p. 33). At different moments throughout the past years, I worked on the discussion of the empirical material in this dissertation. The material affected me in several ways, leading me to different directions which disrupted the linearity of time, space, and analysis within the context of my study, as the reader will be able to see in the following chapters. In line with the authors’ arguments, as I see it, such a material – made up of our practices – often “hail[ed] for action, change, transformation” (KORO-LJUNGBERG; MACLURE; ULMER, 2018, p. 831).

Regarding writing about the empirical material, which became something else through its intra-action with me and others, I need to mention, as part of such entanglements, my advisor, the dissertation committee members, several colleagues with whom I have talked about it, people who are not academics, including relatives and friends, the articles and books that I read, objects, technologies, and so forth. Like St. Pierre (1997b, p. 184-185),

[a]ll these others move[d] me out of the self-evidence of my work and into its absences and [gave] me the gift of different language and practice[s] with which to trouble my commonsense understanding of the world. They help[ed] me move toward the unthought, [...] [leading me to a] disruptive, unplanned, uncontrollable, yet fruitful fold in [my] work.

In this vein, St. Pierre (2011a, p. 621) also highlights that we always think/write “not only with textualized” empirical material from “transcripts and fieldnotes, but also with [empirical material] that is not textualized, fixed, and visible”, and I would add, even graspable. Therefore, we should understand that we go through “embodied experiences in material contexts” from which we do not simply state “the meanings we have made” (KUNTZ; PRESNALL, 2012, p. 738). That is, there is a lot more going on to which we do not usually pay attention, such as our memories, perceptions, and expectations, our idiosyncratic personal stories, relations of affect as well as effects and consequences of them, different kinds of energy flows and molecular exchanges in which we participate, etc. All these often-overlooked elements and processes play a part in meaning making.



Last but not least, as Lincoln (in DENZIN et al., 2017, p. 483) reminds us, distancing ourselves from a humanist viewpoint “[...] is not an unproblematic exercise”. We are entangled with and constituted by several different worldviews that overlap, intersect, encroach, dispute, and hence interfere with each other. Consequently, that results in conflicts that might be plainly visible in our studies. In the following subsections, I address each apparatus separately and try to discuss some of these frictions.

### 1.5.1 Initial questionnaire

Although the word *questionnaire* is substantially marked by a traditional conception from qualitative and, especially, quantitative research, I use it here with a different comprehension of its possibilities. The information conveyed by the students is characterized as empirical material that was provided before the classes had begun (this was the first inquiry activity they did after the general coordinator introduced me to the group). Their answers refer to some of the learners’ social identities and their English language learning experiences.

In the initial questionnaire (Appendix E), once they had chosen their pseudonyms, the students shared the following personal information: age, gender, race, average household income, level of education, and occupation (see Map 1 in section 1.4). Then, they answered five open-ended questions concerning their English language learning:

- 1) What do you think of the English classes you have had in this school?
- 2) What did you like most in the classes?
- 3) What is the importance of English in your life?
- 4) What kind of topics do you like to discuss in class?
- 5) How is your relationship with technology? (How do you feel about it and how do you deal with it?)

These questions were asked not only to help me get to know the students but also to accommodate their language learning expectations and needs. Since I was interested in what they could share with me about themselves, although the questionnaire was in English, I told them they could answer it in Portuguese, should they feel more comfortable. Helem, Flávia, Rubi, and Elton did it in English, and Rodrigo and Mark did it in Portuguese.

According to Jackson and Mazzei (2018, p. 1250, emphasis in original), “a recognition of the limits of our received practices does not mean that we *reject* such practices; instead, we work the limits (and limitations) of them”. For instance, this is how I see the work I did with the questionnaire: I could not think of a better option to gather the information mentioned, given

the circumstances back then. Although I did not design it in a binary fashion (for example, gender: ( ) male ( ) female), I could have prepared a list of topics, which I would like to know from the students, and asked them to record their answers and send them to me on WhatsApp. This would be an alternative to the more traditional questionnaire, making it possible for the learners to choose between answering it in the written or oral form.

The way I worked with the questionnaire indicates the limitations of procedures that tend to guide our inquiry practices. I missed the chance of accessing other kinds of information. However, following a posthumanist understanding of phenomena, since we are in a constant process of transformation (becoming), it is important to recognize this specific perception as an unfolding of entanglements. As for the alternative suggested in the previous paragraph, instead of addressing it as a questionnaire, I could have worked with an “initial self-presentation”. In addition, I would have also added the question: “Is there any other aspect that you consider relevant to be mentioned in relation to your personal information? If there is, and if you feel comfortable, could you share it?”

### 1.5.2 Classroom intra-actions and activities

In this subsection, I address the information about the classes at the school and the elements that worked as extensions of them. My conversations with the students occurred not only in the physical space of the classroom, but also on WhatsApp and Google Drive and through their activities and even tests. The general and pedagogical coordinators participated in the first four classes.<sup>28</sup> Further, I also talked to the students’ parents or legal guardians, which took place during the *feedback sessions* included in the school calendar. All these elements and events constructed this experience.

Concerning the classes, all of them were filmed with two cameras, each positioned in one side of the classroom, and I also relied on my smartphone as an extra aid to record the audio (the latter made it possible for me to listen to speeches that were inaudible in the video recording). Nevertheless, not all that was recorded was transcribed, since it was a five-month semester of classes. Instead, I opted to listen to all recordings several times so as to identify the events that glowed (MACLURE, 2013), and then transcribe them.

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<sup>28</sup> The transcription of their speeches was not made for this inquiry, since the objective was to investigate the language education experience the students and I had. However, as I mention the impact of some of their actions, it is important to recognize their presence in the classroom.

Before the classes started, I had talked to the general coordinator a couple of times to gather information about the group of students. In that language school, by the time of this study, they were using the book series *World English*, second edition (CHASE; JOHANNSEN, 2015; CHASE; MILNER, 2015; CHASE; MILNER; JOHANNSEN, 2015a, 2015b). There the teachers work with the following proficiency levels: elementary, basic, intermediate, upper intermediate, and advanced. Whenever a group does not reach the proficiency/language level expected, a level named *conversation* is included along the course for those students so that they can achieve the language requirements before going to the next level.<sup>29</sup> That is what occurred with the group that partook in this study, referred by the school staff as *pre-advanced conversation*.

The coordinators told me that they wanted the students to review specific contents of vocabulary, and especially grammar, from the previous levels. For the conversation levels, textbooks are not used, but they lent me the ones that the students had used and gave me a list of the contents that should be reviewed. These constraints worked as a factor that deeply influenced what would then occur in the classes. I was instructed not to teach any grammar or vocabulary content that the students had not studied yet, since they would go back to the book series mentioned after the conversation level. Moreover, the coordinators said that they would attend the first lessons and talk to the students so that I could add the contents the learners thought they needed to review as well, thus taking into account the learners' wants and needs. Apart from reviewing certain linguistic contents, the coordinators granted me permission to include themes I saw fit to work with the group. It is worth mentioning that, during the course, sometimes the students wanted to learn topics of grammar and vocabulary they had not studied before. Given the circumstances, when this happened, I prepared extra materials and, before or after some of the classes, I tried to help them understand such contents.

In addition to working with topics such as Plato's allegory of the cave, identity, race, gender, among others, I asked the students to develop a personal language learning project throughout the semester. The Language Learning Project (LLP) is a proposal of self-study developed by Pessoa (2006) and used in the undergraduate course where she would teach. I adjusted it to be implemented in this inquiry. It refers to telling the students to choose a language skill and an aspect of language related to grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation that they would like to improve, and sequentially helping them to implement this personal project (see Appendix F). Further, it is important to point out that several of the activities used in this study

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<sup>29</sup> When there are noticeable discrepancies among the students' language levels, some are relocated to other groups.

are adaptations of Professor Rosane Pessoa's activities designed for her groups in the undergraduate program of English language teaching (*Letras: Inglês*) from the Federal University of Goiás.

The syllabus was basically constructed with the coordinators and the students in the first classes. All the school procedures were established by the coordinators. My additions to the syllabus were exclusively related to the discussions of social issues and to the work with language learning projects and the phonemic chart. Here I present a copy of the schedule handed out to the students, with the topics of the classes:

**Table 2** – Schedule for 2019/2

<b>Classes and days</b>	<b>Contents</b>
Class 01 Aug. 06th	Introduction; Personal information; Inquiry proposal; Expectations about the semester.
Class 02 Aug. 08th	Expectations about the semester; Discussion on the syllabus; Writing a text in pairs.
Class 03 Aug. 13th	Correction of the texts written in pairs; Conversation on the LLP and the semester.
Class 04 Aug. 15th	Phonemic chart; Instructions on the LLP and Google Drive.
Class 05 Aug. 20th	Phonemic chart; Schedule; Instructions on the LLP and Google Drive; Plural nouns.
Class 06 Aug. 22nd	Capitalization and punctuation; Academic writing and vocabulary; Phonemic chart.
Class 07 Aug. 27th	Correction of texts asked as homework; Discussion on Plato's allegory of the cave.
Class 08 Aug. 29th	Phonemic chart; Wh-questions; Simple present and simple past.
Class 09 Sep. 03rd	Wh-questions; Subject and object questions; <i>A Girl Who Demanded School</i> , by Kakenya Ntaiya (2013) (TED Talk).
Class 10 Sep. 05th	Simple past and past participles; Subject and object questions; Movies and series; Present and past participles as adjectives.
Class 11 Sep. 10th	Movies and series and adjectives to describe them; Phonemic chart.
Class 12 Sep. 12th	Adverbs of manner; <i>A Call to Men</i> , by Tony Porter (2010) (TED Talk); Adjectives and their antonyms and adverbial forms.
Class 13 Sep. 17th	Discussion on the video <i>Everybody's Free (to Wear Sunscreen)</i> (1997); Questions with <i>how</i> .
Class 14 Sep. 19th	Review I
Class 15 Sep. 24th	Test I
Class 16 Sep. 26th	Correction of the 1st test.
Class 17 Oct. 01st	Comparatives, superlatives, and equatives.
Class 18 Oct. 03rd	Speeches on the LLP; Correction of the LLPs in group.
Class 19 Oct. 08th	Phonemic chart; Correction of the LLPs in group; Going to and will; Transportation.
Class 20 Oct. 10th	Correction of the speeches; Transportation; Expressions of quantity.
Class 21	Phrasal verbs.

Oct. 15 <sup>th</sup>	
Class 22 Oct. 17 <sup>th</sup>	Feedback Session I
Class 23 Oct. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Comparisons with adjectives, verbs, nouns, and past participles; Phrasal verbs; Conversation and discussion on appearances.
Class 24 Oct. 29 <sup>th</sup>	Adjectives and their antonyms and corresponding nouns.
Class 25 Oct. 31 <sup>st</sup>	Discussion on the short film <i>Validation</i> (2007); Indefinite pronouns; Halloween.
Class 26 Nov. 05 <sup>th</sup>	Indefinite pronouns; Prepositions of place and time.
Class 27 Nov. 07 <sup>th</sup>	Discussion on identity; Use of prepositions after verbs and adjectives.
Class 28 Nov. 12 <sup>th</sup>	Discussion on the text <i>Questions of Identity</i> (2016).
Class 29 Nov. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Talking about people's identities; Preposition + verb + -ing; Friendship.
Class 30 Nov. 19 <sup>th</sup>	Friendship – Phrasal verbs; Speeches on identity; Responses with so, too, either, and neither.
Class 31 Nov. 21 <sup>st</sup>	Making complaints; Describing problems.
Class 32 Nov. 26 <sup>th</sup>	Describing problems; Having/getting things done.
Class 33 Nov. 28 <sup>th</sup>	Feelings and gestures; Discussion on being a mother as an identity; Making requests.
Class 34 Dec. 03 <sup>rd</sup>	Review II
Class 35 Dec. 05 <sup>th</sup>	Review II
Class 36 Dec. 10 <sup>th</sup>	Test II
Class 37 Dec. 12 <sup>th</sup>	Correction of the 2nd test; Correction of the LLPs in pairs.
Class 38 Dec. 17 <sup>th</sup>	Correction of the speeches; Fun class – Board game.
Class 39 Dec. 19 <sup>th</sup>	Feedback Session II

Source: Empirical material.

The content of the classes is shown in a table, and not on a map, paralleling the rather rigid and constrained manner in which this part of the course was constructed. Various human and nonhuman entities (the coordinators, the inquirer-teacher, the students, the book series, institutional rules and procedures, underlying neoliberal tendencies, and so on) affected the way this course was formulated.

### 1.5.3 Reflective and diffractive field notes

As Koro-Ljungberg, MacLure, and Ulmer (2018, p. 818) argue, the relation between empirical material and time might be seen as multidirectional if they are perceived as being “generated in the movement and flow”. According to the authors, “in such a view, time does

not fix or structure [empirical material]”, but “[empirical material]+time generate their own space and dimensionality” (KORO-LJUNGBERG; MACLURE; ULMER, 2018, p. 818). During, before, and after the classes, sometimes not on the same day, the events that occurred in the classroom compelled me to make notes. As I was studying and working on posthumanist ideas throughout the semester, they intra-acted with the choices I made and my interpretation of the empirical material.

I relied on field notes not to capture and represent what I had observed but rather as a space for making remarks about specific events that called my attention and often reoriented my thoughts and actions. The notes worked as extensions of something that had happened, which I could or could not grasp, and to which I would often return for later reflection. As one can see, they were not *used* as an *extraneous source* during the process, but rather interpellated me, redirected my praxis, and hence entailed new becomings, i.e., they were crucial elements that directly constituted the process.

I should add that, given the different possibilities technology has made available, I did not only make written notes but also recorded some reflections in my smartphone (which I transcribed later), both to save time and extend my thinking by talking about past events.

#### 1.5.4 Intraview

The word *interview* carries a traditional, dichotomic, hierarchical connotation *between* interviewer and interviewee and centers on the individual human, speaking subject, and hence on their *voice*. For Kuntz and Presnall (2012, p. 734), “[t]he interview is represented as a linear process, [...] [with] the translation of an event to a visual artifact”. The authors draw our attention to the fact that

[t]he transcript thus exists as both a form of control via vision and a mechanism for representationalist epistemologies. In response, [they] offer the *intraview* as a productive reunderstanding that foregrounds the embodied and emplaced nature of interaction. Through the *intraview*, diffractive seeing is made possible, an integrative, *becoming with knowing* that is inherently transformative. (KUNTZ; PRESNALL, 2012, p. 733, emphasis in original).

Following Deleuzo-Guattarian and Braidottian perspectives, they perceive the intraview as “a wholly engaged encounter, a means for making accessible the multiple intersections of material contexts that collude in productive formations of meaning”, and as “a process-based, intra-active event” (KUNTZ; PRESNALL, 2012, p. 733). For them, the intraview is “a

cocreation among (not between) multiple bodies and forces” (KUNTZ; PRESNALL, 2012, p. 733). Therefore, I opt for the *intraview* in this study, since, from this perspective, people and their voices are conceived as actors in discursive-material assemblages with others. It is worth mentioning that the concept of *intraview* does not necessarily entail the need for the respondents to also ask questions. That is, teacher and students do not need to play the same roles. Further, even though the students probably perceived this moment as an interview, or a conversation, I conceive it as an *intraview* based on my reading of the event through a posthumanist lens.

The *intraview* was done after the course had finished, and by then the students and I had gotten to know each other on a personal level. Thus, from their answers, the reader will be able to see how the relations established during the course affected them as English language students and sociomaterial beings. The *intraview* (Appendix G) was originally held in Portuguese so that the learners could feel more comfortable to express themselves. They answered seven open-ended questions concerning the classes we had:

- 1) What is your opinion on the use of extra-class resources, such as the WhatsApp group and Google Drive? How did you use them? What was their influence on your learning process?
- 2) What did you think of learning the phonemic chart (studying the sounds of the English language)?
- 3) Give your opinion on the following topics discussed in class: a) *Plato's Allegory of the Cave*; b) *A Girl Who Demanded School*, by Kakenya Ntaiya; c) *A Call to Men*, by Tony Porter; d) *Everybody's Free (to Wear Sunscreen)*; e) *Validation*; and f) *Questions of Identity*.
- 4) What did you think of the Language Learning Project (LLP) proposal? What did it mean to you?
- 5) How were the group interactions throughout the semester? How did you feel about your classmates?
- 6) What do you think and how do you feel about the physical structure of our school context and the way we organize the classroom?
- 7) In general, what is your opinion on the classes we had this semester?

The *intraviews* worked as moments of mutual transformation: their replies were very important to (re)direct this study and to help me rethink my own praxis; the questions that I asked the students made them reflect on the course, their language learning, identities and subjectivities, and relations with others. In addition, although the questions focused on opinions and perceptions, matters of affect and mapping of relations are present in the answers provided

by the learners, as it will be possible to see in the following chapters. Nevertheless, after the course had ended, as I reflected on the questions asked, I noticed that they could have had a more posthumanist tone. For instance, in the first question, instead of explicitly asking their opinion, other options would be: “What roles do extra-class resources, such as the WhatsApp group and Google Drive, play in your language learning process?”, or “How did the WhatsApp group and Google Drive participate in your language learning process?”; in the sixth question, in relation to the group, other options might have been: “How did your interactions with your classmates affect you? And how did you affect them?”, or “How was your relationship with the group?”

Therefore, since this study was carried out in an educational context, which directly involves students and teachers, I counted on the intraview as an additional apparatus to help me understand some of the aspects of the process that the students and I had experienced. Here the learners’ utterances are regarded as immersed in material-discursive assemblages. From them, I attempt to decentralize the voice of the human subject and understand it as *one* of the elements that compose the phenomena addressed.

In relation to “the significance of the material factors” (BRINKMANN, 2018, p. 1025), “the crucial and multifarious role of the material” (MICHAEL, 2004, p. 6), I should mention that I talked to each student separately in an unoccupied classroom (with a beautiful view of the city), as we sat at desks close to each other and chatted, allowing them to feel comfortable to tell me their opinions without any interruption from other students. I used my smartphone to record my conversations with them. I acknowledge that as an intraviewer and an interviewee, we did not act alone “to constitute the conversational context, for the physical properties of the situation [...] are important as well” – i.e., the intraview “as a context [...] is the result of numerous actors (some human, others nonhuman) orchestrating this complex episode” (BRINKMANN, 2018, p. 1025, 1026). Furthermore, the relationship that I built with my students also made them feel apparently at ease to share considerably more than I had asked them, which enriched the empirical material.

In the following section, I focus on some further specificities of this inquiry.

## **1.6 The discussion of the empirical material**

Although I am aware that “[i]f everything is entangled in continuous variation – always becoming – then bits can’t be separated out, objectified, and known” (ST. PIERRE, 2021b, p. 485), influenced by my posthumanist readings, I address the pieces discussed here as *material-*



*discursive cuts*. I make this choice because my intention is not to overemphasize language but recognize it as part of the materiality that not only surrounds but constitutes us. The idea of *cuts* is drawn from Barad's work (2003, 2007), considering we make cuts from assemblages in an attempt to understand specific aspects and elements of intra-actions. Therefore, they are not seen as representations but as moving translations of the events – this implies the aspect of nonfixity. In relation to the illustrations presented, based on Deleuze's (1986) work, they are conceived as movement-images, hence encompassing both the ideas of *being in the middle of things* and *ongoing becoming*.

In addition, following Denzin (2013, p. 355), as the word *data* invokes a positivist onto-epistemology, I use the term *empirical material*<sup>30</sup> instead, since I understand that “it is not passive”, i.e., that it is imbued with agency. The notion of empirical material disrupts the illusion there is an inquirer, a human subject, that simply gives meaning to a brute, inert, and passive material. Koro-Ljungberg, MacLure, and Ulmer (2018, p. 806) expatiate on the ontological status of empirical material, calling into question its existence “as a knowable and stable entity”. The authors trouble the fixity with which we look at it and read it. Inspired by the authors' arguments, I pose some questions that might assist us to reflect on it: What makes something empirical material? Why? What is considered empirical material? What does it become? How does it interpellate us? What encounters do they have with us? Where do we draw the line? From a posthumanist perspective, empirical materials are agentic and generative, they intra-act with us. They do not have an origin point but rather arise from different assemblages. In this sense, I gravitate toward an understanding of empirical material as “[s]omething in the world [that] forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*” (DELEUZE, 2004 [1968], p. 176, emphasis in original).

One of the nonhuman elements that participated in the generation of the empirical material was the book series, as it directly affected the classes that we had. Thus, it became empirical material that flowed through the course, leading us some ways rather than others. In addition, the past, present, and future return of the book series hovered over us throughout the semester. However, in the course, it is worth observing, as it left its traces behind, it also became

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<sup>30</sup> Although I recognize that the word *empirical* also has positivistic undertones in some contexts, my use of the term is based on the work of authors such as St. Pierre (2016) and St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei (2016), who have developed the concept of *new empiricisms* from Deleuzian arguments. Moreover, following a Baradian literature, I am aware that I could have opted for “phenomena” instead of “empirical material”. Nevertheless, since my attention was focused on a particular language education experience, from which material-discursive cuts were made and then discussed, and also owing to further reading I did on new materialisms and new empiricisms, I chose the latter.

something else: an element that was rejected by the students after the classes they had with me, without the use of a textbook.

In light of discussions such as these, MacLure (2013) adds that empirical material *glows*. In her words,

in a materialist ontology, [empirical material] cannot be seen as an inert and indifferent mass waiting to be in/formed and calibrated by our analytic acumen or our coding systems. We are no longer autonomous agents, choosing and disposing. Rather, we are obliged to acknowledge that [empirical material has its way of making itself] [...] intelligible to us. This can be seen, or rather felt, on occasions when one becomes especially ‘interested’ in a piece of [empirical material] – such as a sarcastic comment in an [intraview], or a perplexing incident, or an observed event that makes you feel kind of peculiar. Or some point in the pedestrian process of ‘writing up’ a piece of [inquiry] where something not-yet-articulated seems to take off and take over, effecting a kind of quantum leap that moves the writing/writer to somewhere unpredictable. On those occasions, agency feels distributed and undecidable, as if we have chosen something that has chosen us. (MACLURE, 2013, p. 660-661, emphasis in original).

As Lecercle (2002, p. 27) underscores, “the separation between subject and object, thought and matter, words and things, is an illusion of [a humanist and anthropocentric] language” that has been apparent in the ontologies of conventional methodologies. In addition, once we consider language is opaque, unclear, and messy, we understand that we never actually *know* things as a straightforward process – meanings are not as intelligible as we might think they are. Thus, what I discuss here are reconstructions of events in a relatively different spacetime.

According to St. Pierre (2011a, p. 621, emphasis in original), the empirical material – “*we think with when we think about a topic* – [can only be] identified *during* analysis and not before. Until one begins to think, one cannot know what one will think with”. Therefore, empirical material emerges during thinking and, in some cases, during writing. The author also adds that inquirers

[...] bring the richness of their lives to their [studies]. Thus, different [inquirers] studying the same topic think with different conventional and transgressive [empirical materials] and necessarily produce different knowledge. There is no separation between the knower and the known in the work. (ST. PIERRE, 2015c, p. 2).

The empirical material that is usually not considered in inquiry is identified by St. Pierre (1997b, 2015c) as *transgressive*. This kind of material might not fit into pre-established categories of qualitative research, and it might often escape our limited perception of phenomena, as we cannot quite put our fingers on it. It may include elements such as memories,

dreams, sensory impressions, emotions, the words of others not directly involved in the inquiry<sup>31</sup>, etc., whose “presence and importance are seldom acknowledged” (ST. PIERRE, 2015c, p. 2), and that may disrupt “linearity, consciousness, and the mind/body dichotomy” (ST. PIERRE, 2011a, p. 621). In the case of this investigation, for instance, affect, which can be overwhelming at times, and epiphenomena from the inquiry are addressed as transgressive empirical material. Thus, I mention and draw on some facts and elements pertaining and relevant to the discussion at hand with which this study became entangled.

Lather and Smithies (1997, p. xvi) note that empirical material might move “across different levels and a multiplicity and complexity of layers that unfold an event which exceeds our frames of reference, [...] exceeds our own understandings”. This comprehension of entangled assemblages leads one to notice that the inquirer does not perform the role of a sole interpreter of the empirical material simply via their cognitive processes and singular understanding, but that they do it the way they do it because of the countless relations that constitute the phenomena discussed. St. Pierre (1997b, p. 179) criticizes the notion that empirical material can be captured, represented, “translated into words” so that it can be “accounted for and interpreted”.

In this respect, Kuntz and Presnall (2012, p. 740, emphasis in original) add that

[m]eaning, or “knowing,” is generated not through representationalism, but occurs within such events by the coming together of multiple forces in momentary alignment. Further, meaning extends from *becoming-with* (not distinguishing-from) the event as it patterns affect. Meaning transforms us because we extend beyond ourselves.

As I distance myself from a representational framework, I thereby corroborate Jackson and Mazzei’s (2018, p. 1255) argument that we should not be so concerned “about what things mean but about how things work”.

This process of inquiry did not follow conventional steps, that is, identifying research questions, designing a study, going to the field to collect data by using instruments, and then analyzing the data and writing them up. As suggested by Jackson and Mazzei (2018), I do not draw clear distinctions here. Rather, as a study carried out in an educational context, grounded in a posthumanist orientation, what I attempted to do was to try to look at and discuss what the students and I were doing in our classes. The events that unfolded (during the generation of the empirical material) and along the way (our becomings) led to (different paths, and consequently

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<sup>31</sup> Needless to say, for ethical reasons, in order to use such a material, the permission of the people involved should always be requested.

to) the questions raised in this dissertation. Therefore, the questions were not asked beforehand but arose from the experience, and the contours and configuration of the study emerged from what we did. In order to help me comprehend the events, I relied on apparatuses not simply to register but construct the inquiry, as they acted as an extension of myself as an inquirer, so that I could have a broader understanding of the empirical material. The reflections and writing did not just take place after the official generation of the material was completed, but also occurred before and during the classes, intra-acting with one another. Therefore, there were no pretensions of linearity, transparency, and systematicity, once I took “the risk of [a] new relationality” (BERLANT, in DAVIS; SARLIN, 2012, p. 27).

For Kuntz and Presnall (2012, p. 740), an inquirer should work toward “responsive listening [and] diffractive seeing”, which is related to Haraway’s (2008, 2016) *response-ability*, mentioned previously. Following Haraway (1992), Barad (2003, 2007, 2014), Lenz Taguchi (2012), and Lather (2015), I draw on a diffractive reading with the empirical material, understood as an embodied engagement with how “matter and meaning are mutually constituted” (BARAD, 2007, p. 152). This stance thus refers to becoming-with the empirical material as inquirer, highlighting its “intra-relation and co-constitutiveness” (LATHER, 2015, p. 104). In the words of Lenz Taguchi (2012, p. 277, 278),

in the diffractive analysis, the [inquirer] partakes in a process of knowing-in-being (onto-epistemology), and cannot be understood to perform an analysis from a position ontologically separated and at a distance from the [empirical material]. [...] What is produced as knowing in the diffractive analysis is thus a material-discursive reality where that which has been considered passive and minor is now seen as active and forceful in its intra-activities with other bodies. Diffractive analysis makes us aware of our embodied involvement in the materiality of the event of analysing [empirical material].

In addition, diffraction means “to break apart, in different directions” (BARAD, 2014, p. 168), indicating its rhizomatic constitution. At this point one might question: So how did you get to the current organization of the dissertation, with chapters, sections, and subsections divided into specific topics? First, I need to stress that, as advised by postqualitative and posthumanist perspectives, I attempted to rely on the concepts previously presented to make these choices. Second, as I intra-acted with the empirical material, which often redirected my thoughts and actions, both when it came to the classes and the inquiry, subjects that were important to the students and to me arose from our experience. Therefore, concepts and local contingencies formed this assemblage, and what took place especially in the classroom directed and redirected this inquiry.

St. Pierre (2011b, p. 42, emphasis in original) underlines that researchers often try to “force what might be always already distorted, contingent, and/or arbitrary into supposedly ordered, coherent, rational structures of meaning (e.g., organizing [empirical material] into *themes* and *patterns* and *linear narratives*)”. In this regard, I attempted to focus on the relations and entanglements that emerged from the inquiry, as praxiologies, concepts, and the empirical material glowed and washed over me, forming different kinds of assemblages.

The non-verbatim transcription<sup>32</sup> of the material-discursive cuts includes the following symbols for elucidation of the discussion:

**Table 3 – Transcription symbols**

<i>Italics</i>	Foreign words, phrases, sentences, or references to texts, books, videos, and so on
<b>Bold</b>	Emphasis added by the inquirer
UPPER CASE	Emphasis in original
[...]	Omission of words or phrases
[ ]	Inquirer’s additions, substitutions, explanations, observations, or translations
[??]	Unintelligible
...	Pause
“ ”	Quotes

Source: Prepared by the author.

In the transcription of the empirical material, I have used different typefaces to indicate each apparatus: *Consolas* (initial questionnaire); *Comic Sans* (classroom intra-actions and informal conversations); *Arial* (language learning projects); *Segoe Print* (field notes); and *Courier New* (intraview). As Murphy (2017, p. 65) argues, “typeface is not merely a formal stylization of some more fundamental script”; rather, like language, “[it] is itself subject to and complicit in a range of cultural projects along various affective, ideological, and even political dimensions”. According to the author, in ideological terms, when we read texts, we might be sensitive to the indexical meanings of specific fonts and hence assess if the intended message matches the form of the typeface used – i.e., if it looks scholarly and serious, or bold and flamboyant, or informal and casual, and so on. Therefore, as Murphy (2017, p. 70) stresses, there is usually an underlying relation between “a particular kind of discourse and the graphic system that represents it”.

In Brazil, especially when it comes to academic writing, the typefaces used are Times New Roman and Arial. I have made intuitive choices to highlight the different apparatuses from

<sup>32</sup> In order to achieve the purposes of this study, non-verbatim transcript was chosen for allowing the deletion of unintended pauses and repetitions of words, repairs, and other elements that would not be relevant to this discussion.

which the empirical material was generated. Paying heed to aesthetic qualities of language, the fonts used for the initial questionnaire and the intraview are supposed to indicate the guided aspect of the questions asked by the teacher-inquirer and answered by the students. The typeface for the transcription of the classroom intra-actions and conversations with the learners is meant to convey the idea of informality and a less constrained space. As the language learning projects written by the students have the format of small papers, the font utilized is associated with the academic genre. Finally, the typeface for the field notes is intended to resemble the hand-lettered text.

Before ending this chapter, a final observation is important. We, critical language teachers, often question dichotomies when it comes to discussions about social issues. However, with respect to the ontoepistemologies that guide our choices for undertaking investigations, we tend to overlook several dualisms, and that happens, I believe, because we are too immersed in colonial and humanist ways of doing inquiry. Hence, encouraged by Kuntz and Presnall (2012), I invite the reader to think in nondualist terms *with* me, not as a spectator but as an inquirer enmeshed in this assemblage.

As mentioned previously, in this dissertation, the empirical material is entangled with the praxiologies that grounded this inquiry. In the following chapters I thereby address events, elements, and aspects from the language education experience that the students and I had. In Chapter 2, I focus on the sociomateriality of (human) bodies; and in Chapter 3, I discuss material-discursive ideologies of language and language education.

## Chapter 2

### Sociomateriality of (human) bodies

*One's body is the first thing that is seen.*<sup>33</sup>

Rezende (2020a, online, my translation)

In material-discursive terms, the body is not only one's locus of enunciation but also their locus of existence. In line with critical applied linguistics, the discussion presented here is associated with questions of power, domination, oppression, disparity, discrimination, difference, resistance, and desire (PENNYCOOK, 2021a). However, albeit there is a focus on human relations that involve issues of class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, among others, Chapter 2 is entitled "Sociomateriality of (human) bodies" because I aim to put forward ontoepistemological reflections that question and deconstruct humanist and anthropocentric perspectives. Hence, before discussing the events that occurred during the study, I provide a sociohistorical contextualization of the often taken-for-granted notion of *human*. Then, I offer a justification for working with a posthumanist framework and address the contributions of this orientation to language studies and, especially, to critical applied linguistics.

#### *Problematizing and deconstructing humanism*

According to Douzinas (2007, p. 51), the idea of "[h]umanity is an invention of modernity". Braidotti (2013, p. 151) reminds us that the construction of the human is "historically framed and contextually defined, in spite of [its] universalistic pretensions". Etymologically, "to humanize" means to render human, to civilize others.<sup>34</sup> Put differently, such a concept has always been coupled with colonial stances and projects. Throughout history, it has delineated a very specific idea of who is considered human and, more recently, reinforced a kind of individualism associated with neoliberal agendas.

In the same line of thought, Indigenous leader Ailton Krenak<sup>35</sup> (2019, 2020c) states that there has always been a select group of people that constitutes such a "humanity", which does not accept new members. The belief of human superiority is based on an ontological perspective

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<sup>33</sup> Original quote: "O corpo, quando chega, é o primeiro a ser visto".

<sup>34</sup> See Online Etymology Dictionary for further information: <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=humanize>. Access on: 09 Mar. 2022.

<sup>35</sup> In Brazil we mention the first name of Indigenous authors so they can be identified among their people (for instance, Ailton is an indigenous movement leader from the Krenak people – i.e., his last name refers to the community to which he belongs).

that establishes dichotomies between the human and nonhuman worlds, in a way that it justifies the domination of those who are not considered “(fully) human”. Santos (2014, p. 167) reminds us that dichotomy is “[t]he most complete form of totality [...], because it combines symmetry and hierarchy most elegantly”. Therefore, the social construction of humanity is premised on an underlying view that separates, categorizes, and hierarchizes beings and their relations beforehand. The more human one is considered, the more they benefit from privileges and rights.

Which bodies occupy spaces of power in society? Instead of addressing Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man, as often portrayed in posthumanist discussions (BRAIDOTTI, 2013), here I offer a couple of less abstract and more situated examples: the group of Brazilian federal deputies elected in 2018 and the current governor of Goiás and city councilors of Goiânia in a meeting in 2022.

**Movement-image 2** – Swearing-in ceremony of the federal deputies elected in Brazil, in 2018



Source: Macedo (2018, as cited in RADIOAGÊNCIA, 2018).



**Movement-image 3** – Governor of Goiás and city councilors of the Municipal Chamber of Goiânia, in 2022



Source: Corrêa (2022, as cited in FABIANA, 2022).

As reported by the Brazilian 2010 Census (IBGE, 2011), which is the most recent census of the country, around one decade ago, 51% of the population was female, and 52,3% of Brazilians identified themselves as people of color. According to IBGE (2022), Goiás is a state with around 7.2 million inhabitants, and Goiânia, its capital, has around 1.5 million people. In Goiânia, from the 35 current city councilors, only five are women (MONTENEGRO, 2022). In 2018, in Goiás, from the 41 state deputies elected and reelected, only two were women (MARTINS, 2018), and from the 17 federal deputies, only two were women as well (VELASCO, 2018). Moreover, all three current senators of Goiás are men (SENADO FEDERAL, [2019]). The discrepancy in gender representation is not even greater because, as required by law, at least 30% of names on party lists must be of women (RADIOAGÊNCIA, 2018).

The overwhelmingly majority of the politicians mentioned are conservative, white, male, middle-aged, wealthy, Christian, educated, able-bodied, and heterosexual (as a matter of fact, the LGBTQIA+ community does not seem to have any representative in Goiás). These are the material-discursive bodies that usually occupy positions of power in the Brazilian society. In fact, we could say that these subjects are the progeny of the Vitruvian Man in this country. Following Braidotti (2013, p. 13, emphasis in original), “they uphold a specific view of what is ‘human’ about humanity”.

It is important to remember that, in the course of history, the ideal of human being has excluded women, blacks, indigenous peoples, the LGBTQIA+ community, the deaf

community, people with disabilities, and the poor. For a long time, these people were on the margins of what would be considered “human”. As a result, there is still widespread violence against groups who distance themselves from such an ideal human – Brazil, for example, has very high violence rates against socially marginalized groups (examples are mentioned in the following sections). Again, the idea of superiority and inferiority is thereby created to grant legitimacy to relations of domination of some groups over others.

In addition, for instance, once we observe our relations with animals and objects closely, we can see humanist ideas incorporated into our ontological perception of them, which consequently pervade all domains of our entangled lives. Breeds of dogs and other pets are also socially classified. To wit, “black dogs and cats are less likely to be adopted than light-colored domestic animals”<sup>36</sup> (ANDRADE, 2021, p. 31, my translation), and mixed-breed and old pets as well as those with disabilities are often marginalized. Why are some breeds entitled to better lives than others? Hierarchies from the human realm are reformulated and reappear in the nonhuman world. Put another way, animals are also judged through a human(ist) lens, which is often revealed by its discriminatory practices. For this reason, for Braidotti (2013, p. 77), “[s]peciesism is [...] held accountable to the same degree as sexism and racism”.

The *Rhodes Must Fall* movement is another example that illustrates this discussion. Murriss (2016, p. 274) narrates and discusses some events that occurred in the University of Cape Town, reporting that students said

it was unbearably humiliating to have to walk past a statue glorifying someone now regarded as a racist. The presence of such a statue on campus cast a shadow on black and other students alike, who object to, or who struggle to identify with, an institution that harbours a statue immortalising a British imperialist.

Such instances show how we tend to anthropomorphize everything, and that we have naturalized this practice. Accordingly, our perception of nonhuman others, in their own particularities, is very limited. As a response, posthumanism encourages us to address their ontological deprivation by decentralizing the human from the picture, not to undermine the important discussions going on about minoritized groups but rather to deconstruct the structure on which “humanity” was primarily built. In this sense, following Hayles (1999, p. 285), we need “new ways of thinking about what being human means”.

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<sup>36</sup> Original quote: “cães e gatos pretos têm menor probabilidade de serem adotados do que animais domésticos de cores claras”.

In taking the debate forward, Barad (2007, p. 136, emphasis in original) argues that there is no “separateness of any-‘thing’”. This is one of the ethical-political reasons why posthumanism seeks to encompass all those *othered* – people, animals, objects, spaces, and the planet as a whole – who have suffered with and along the construction of humanism (APPLEBY; PENNYCOOK, 2017; BRAIDOTTI, 2013, 2016, 2017b; PENNYCOOK, 2018b, 2018c, 2020a). I opt for the word *othered* instead of *other(s)* here with a view to emphasizing the violent processes of ontocide and epistemicide (or ontoepistemicide) to which so many have been subjected throughout history, which made them into *others* and created hierarchical, dichotomous relations between them and dominant groups.

It is important to stress that the idea of inclusion behind humanist proposals does not disrupt inequitable relations, keeping hegemonic structures of power intact. Humanism has historically worked together with other forms of discrimination such as “patriarchy, racism, misogyny and homophobia” as well as with “Eurocentrism (identification of progress and norms with European life and Christianity)” (PENNYCOOK, 2018c, p. 24). In this light, according to Skliar (2006), we need to be attentive to how notions of inclusion associated with human rights have worked as a control mechanism in society. For the author, what generally occurs is an *excluding inclusion*. In his words,

the illusion of an inclusive space is created, and the exclusion of all others, who are thought and produced as ambiguous and abnormal, is actualized in this spatiality. Inclusion, then, is nothing more than an undermined, sometimes subtle, yet always tragic form of relation of coloniality with otherness. And it is a relation of coloniality because it continues to exercise power in a bipolar way through which everyone is forced to exist and subsist.<sup>37</sup> (SKLIAR, 2006, p. 28, my translation).

Conversely, albeit the idea of human rights is based on an “abstract and universalist notion of rights”, following Pennycook (2018c, p. 27), “the fact that human rights are a site of struggle by no means undermines their status. Indeed, it is in such struggles that we can see how different versions of humanity are at stake”. Rezende (2019b) adds that human rights mean different things to different people; and, consequently, what we need is “a more grounded, localized understanding of situated ethics” (PENNYCOOK, 2018c, p. 68).

Menezes de Souza (2020b) explains that modernity arose in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and created several dichotomies: culture/nature, mind/body, individual/collectivity, and so on.

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<sup>37</sup> Original quote: “cria-se a ilusão de um território inclusivo, e é nessa espacialidade na qual se exerce a expulsão de todos os outros que são pensados e produzidos como ambíguos e anormais. A inclusão, assim, não é mais do que uma forma solapada, às vezes sutil, ainda que sempre trágica, de uma relação de colonialidade com a alteridade. E é uma relação de colonialidade pois continua exercendo o poder de uma forma bipolar dentro do qual todo o outro, todos os outros, são forçados a existir e subsistir”.

In that context, the notion of individual as detached from the world was promoted by humanism. As the author argues, it has been assumed that such a human being is authorized to control, extract, and consume resources from those whose existence he denies. That is, the “superior” beings would be entitled to *use* the “inferior” beings – human and nonhuman – according to their will and needs. In this regard, Menezes de Souza and Monte Mor (2021, p. 664) stress that we should question “how violent our construction of reality, our very own onto-epistemologies are” because of our particularly individualized, self-centered outlook.

As Pessoa (2019b) would put it, humanism and anthropocentrism promote colonialities that affect every dimension of our existence. Consequently, in order to minimize their effects, studying our history so as to understand the genealogy of our subjectivities is vital. For Urzêda-Freitas (2021, para. 3, emphasis in original, my translation), we need “to build a *responsible collective memory* that encourages us to look at our history critically”<sup>38</sup>, so that we can recognize its tragedies, identify its heritage in us and, above all, take responsibility for the ways through which we reiterate colonialities and different kinds of violence in everyday life. In doing that, we might move toward “delinking ourselves from the modes of living, thinking and being (MIGNOLO, 2007) that were built as a result of the process of colonization and have been maintained even after the end of colonialism” (SOUSA; PESSOA, 2019, p. 521).

### *Thinking otherwise from posthumanism*

As Pennycook (2018c, p. 9) claims, posthumanism closely “follows a line of thought running from Spinoza to Deleuze”, and sometimes its ideas are not only connected with but also referred to as new materialisms. However, it is important to stress that the contributions of old materialisms, whose main arguments range from Hegel to Marx, are not disregarded but addressed through broader, post-anthropocentric lenses (BENNETT, 2010). In the words of Patel (2016, p. 3),

there are conceptual limits to deconstructive analyses, particularly considering that many of the most popular deconstructionist theories (e.g., Marxism) work from an anthropocentric stance, which compromises their abilities to reach far enough into the contours, functions, and imperative of coloniality. [...] As a critical scholar, I contend that this [...] has oftentimes led to critical scholarship doing more work that ultimately recenters colonial projects of categorizing rather than generating spaces beyond.

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<sup>38</sup> Original quote: “construir uma *memória coletiva responsável*, que nos encoraje a olhar criticamente para a nossa história”.

Therefore, following the author's contentions, focusing solely on human beings limits the process of deconstructing coloniality, which permeates practically everything in human life, including our relations with the nonhuman world. Posthumanist scholars then "address more directly the question of anthropocentrism, while remaining committed to social justice and ethical accountability" (BRAIDOTTI, 2017a, p. 85).

Critical strands of posthumanism recognize that humanism cannot be simply erased, since we are onto-epistemologically constituted by it. Nevertheless, this framework seeks to mitigate the effects of humanism by identifying the processes that underlie its materialization in our lives and proposing different possibilities of action accordingly. One of the ways of moving forward concerns thinking in terms of relationality, realizing our inextricable entanglement with others. In this respect, posthumanism encourages post-dualistic and post-hierarchical perspectives – in keeping with Freire (2004, p. 7), "if it is not possible to change the world without a certain dream or vision for it, [we] must make use of every possibility there is not only to speak about [our] utopia, but also to engage in practices consistent with it".

Braidotti (2013, p. 40) argues that, currently, there have been many discourses on "a global sense of inter-connection", but that most of them are negatively framed, as they are "based on a shared sense of vulnerability and fear of imminent catastrophes" and on a "new global proximity [that] does not always breed tolerance and peaceful co-existence". As the author asseverates, this ends up being just a reformulation of the humanist perception of "self", which rejects otherness and does not recognize itself as ethically and politically accountable for the practices enacted in the world. Following a similar line of thought, Barad (2007) underscores that the kinds of connections we make with others as well as our responsibility to them in our intertwined relations are intimately linked with justice. From her point of view, practices matter, including boundary-making practices, inasmuch as they delineate and define our relations in some ways rather than others.

Further, Wolfe (2010), Colebrook (2014), and Daigle (2021) claim that we have always been posthuman in the sense that we were never just humans, as independent entities, separate from the rest of the world. In the same vein, Ailton Krenak (2020a) underlines that human beings are not autonomous agents but rather beings located within an extensive network of relations. Consequently, it is important to adopt political-ethical perspectives that encompass nonhumans (BRAIDOTTI, 2013), as they are "part of our construction as a collectivity"<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Original quote: "parte da nossa construção como coletivo".

(KRENAK, 2019, p. 21). We thereby need to reconfigure our existence and the way we engage with it (KRENAK, 2020d).

For Pennycook (2018c), posthumanism can help us deconstruct, expand, and reformulate our understandings of human being, language, objects, space, and agency. The author argues that this orientation promotes problematizations such as why we think of humans the way we do and why we assume particular boundaries between humans and nonhumans. He adds that this perspective tackles human hubris head-on. In this sense, this praxiology urges us to question what we have failed to notice because of our humanist and anthropocentric way of looking at life.

Barad (2003, p. 801) offers the following critique: “Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter”<sup>40</sup>. Accordingly, two key elements in posthumanist discussions are matter and processes of materialization, since we are not only surrounded by, but also immersed in and composed of matter (COOLE; FROST, 2010). Here my focus is on the sociomateriality of bodies, based on the empirical material generated throughout this language education experience. In the words of Daigle (2017, p. 185), “[t]he body is our anchor in the world, our location in the world”, it is from where we perceive things, others, and ourselves.

In line with a decolonial viewpoint, Menezes de Souza (2019a, n.p., my translation) asseverates that “[w]hile the focus on epistemologies emphasizes knowledges and utterances, the focus on ontologies emphasizes the bodies and spaces of (non)existence of the subjects that produce these knowledges and utterances”<sup>41</sup>. In general, in the field of applied linguistics, particularly in language education, albeit scholars have moved toward relational propositions that address epistemological issues, they have kept humanist ontological assumptions intact. Thus, this chapter actualizes an effort to bring forward ontology to the discussion – and hence bodies and spaces that have been historically overlooked.

For Pennycook (2021a, p. 21), “critical applied linguistics has to be an emergent program from the contexts in which it works”. In this light, reflections from other contemporary orientations, particularly those that concentrate on issues of embodiment and politics of location, are assimilated into the posthumanist framework proposed in this dissertation. While

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<sup>40</sup> In this dissertation, I draw on the Baradian concept of *matter* in order to focus on human and nonhuman entities and space as elements that are fundamental to processes of materialization, i.e., to our constitution and transformation. It is worth adding, however, that spirituality and nonmatter are not excluded, neither are they seen dichotomically in relation to matter.

<sup>41</sup> Original quote: “[e]nquanto o enfoque sobre epistemologias enfatiza saberes e dizeres, o enfoque sobre ontologias enfatiza os corpos e espaços de (não) existência dos sujeitos produtores desses saberes e dizeres”.

still maintaining the focus on inequities and injustices, this chapter is intended to offer a different ontoepistemological perspective that construes matter and discourse as constitutive elements in social relations.

In addition to this introductory section, this chapter is divided into six other sections. In the first one, I provide a contextualization of the classes that were taught. The second section focuses on a discussion about bodies and first impressions. In the third section, I look at issues of identity. The fourth section is centered on topics pertaining to race and ethnicity. In the fifth section, I address gender, and more specifically, sexism and hegemonic masculinity. The sixth section concerns the issue of be(com)ing an older student, which is related to the matter of ageism. All these themes emerged from the empirical material generated during the course.

## 2.1 Setting the tone for critical language classes

First of all, it is important to accentuate I did not teach posthumanist classes. In order to do that, a syllabus based on this framework would need to have been devised, and this was not the case. For this dissertation, my objective is to draw on posthumanism to offer a different perception of the classes taught. As explained in the previous chapter, there was a mandatory core curriculum focused on grammar and vocabulary, which was accompanied by some constraints placed on the work I could do with the students. However, I had the permission to add some extra topics to be discussed with them. Following Duboc (2012, 2013, 2014), I tried to work with cracks in the curriculum. The author defines *cracks* (or *gaps*) as opportune moments to encourage reflections, problematizations, and consequently the expansion of perspectives. Similarly, Pennycook (2012, p. 131) refers to these opportunities as *critical moments*, which for teachers imply seizing “the chance to do something different”. I tried to adopt this teaching practice throughout the course. In this chapter, as the reader moves on to the next sections, it will be possible to observe how the activities and their purposes intersected, i.e., the rhizomatic construction of the course.

Our first planned discussion was about the short movie *The Cave: An Adaptation of Plato's Allegory in Clay* (2008)<sup>42</sup>. In summary, according to its producers, it is “a classic commentary on the human condition. [...] It is a story of open-mindedness and the power of possibility” (BULLHEAD ENTERTAINMENT, 2008, para. 1). I had prepared a set of questions on the video and asked the students to watch it and answer them at home. In class,

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<sup>42</sup> Retrieved from: <https://youtu.be/69F7GhASOdM>. Access on: 22 Aug. 2019.

they shared their answers and interpretations. After that, I asked them to read Maurício de Sousa's (2002) comic strip *The Shadows of Life*, which is another adaptation of Plato's allegory, and compare it to the story from the video. This activity was done in pairs, and then the students shared some of their ideas with the whole group.

Before presenting the cuts made from this intra-action, Elton's comment offers a helpful contextualization of events that were taking place in Brazil back in 2019:

[1]

Elton: O momento que nós vivemos hoje no país - aspectos de sociedade, até no meu meio profissional mesmo [entre professoras/es] - que é difícil dialogar. O que é realmente buscar uma possível verdade, da ciência, e essa coisa do diálogo aberto, chamar o outro para dialogar e discutir coisas e trocar ideias. Eu vejo como uma possibilidade de provocação. Achei até corajoso - vivemos em um tempo que tudo dá mimimi, né? Tudo dá treta, dá alguma coisa. mas eu gostei muito dele [referindo-se à aula sobre a alegoria de Platão], da forma que ele foi apresentado, e discutimos isso em inglês. Foi muito agradável mesmo, positivo mesmo.

[Elton: The moment we are living today in the country - social aspects, even in my professional environment [among teachers] - which has made it difficult to discuss things. What it is to really look for a possible truth, from science, and this thing of open dialogue, asking others to talk and discuss things and exchange ideas. I see it as a possibility of raising provocative questions. I even thought it was brave - we live in times when everything is seen as whining, right? Everything causes problems, it brings on something. But I liked it a lot [referring to the class on Plato's allegory], the way it was presented, and we discussed it in English. It was really pleasant, really positive.]

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter a, Dec. 17, 2019)

In sociohistorical terms, this language course took place during “[t]he rise of the far right to power and institutions’ tolerance toward its anti-democratic premises”<sup>43</sup> (PESSOA; URZÊDA-FREITAS, 2021, p. 218, my translation). Meanwhile, the formulation of “conservative counterproposals [...] [has been] accompanied by the growth of intolerance towards difference” (MENEZES DE SOUZA; MONTE MOR, 2018, p. 446). In general, these aspects delineate what has been taking place in educational institutions in the country, especially in recent years.

For Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980], p. 214), when such a movement gains momentum in history, it has at its disposal microorganizations that give it an “ability to penetrate every cell of society”. Thus, given that schools work as extensions of society, as Elton

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<sup>43</sup> Original quote: “[a] ascensão da extrema direita ao poder e a tolerância das instituições às suas premissas antidemocráticas”.



mentions, even among teachers, it might be difficult to propose critical reflections. Brazil is a country whose education was founded on ideologies promoted by Jesuit priests and the military (REZENDE et al., 2020), and consequently their presence still pervades society in the form of conservative views on education and attitudes toward it.

Elton, who is a geography teacher and works at public schools, mentions the adjective “brave” to characterize my teaching practice, in cut 1: “I even thought it was brave – we live in times when everything is seen as whining, right?” From my vantage point, considering the aforementioned sociopolitical context, this relates to the fact that doing critical work may entail the need to not just deal with school constraints but sometimes also with complex social situations – in Elton’s words, “Everything causes problems, it brings on something”. This has been one of the many challenges posed as a result of the current political configuration of the country, since “repertoires [have been] mobilized and measures [have been] taken by the [...] government to restrict the construction of critical meanings in educational contexts” (PESSOA; URZÊDA-FREITAS, 2021, p. 217). Although this was not the case of the school in question, a feeling of apprehension has therefore hovered over educational institutions in Brazil.

At the same time poststructuralism has made important contributions to the studies of language and society, it has opened a space that allowed, for example, people aligned with the far right to appropriate discourse and its arguments with an eye to justifying their projects of violence and actualizing them (LATOUR, 2004). Put differently, the overemphasis on language – solely understood as a discursive phenomenon, and consequently seen as disconnected from the material world that is embedded in and intertwined with it – has acted as one of the catalysts for the sociopolitical crises that we have been facing over the last years. A current example is the growth of anti-vaccine movements during the COVID-19 pandemic (2019-2022). In view of this argument, Latour (2004, p. 227) underscores that graduate programs make sure their students learn that

facts are made up, that there is no such thing as natural, [...] unbiased access to truth, that we are always prisoners of language, that we always speak from a particular standpoint, and so on, while dangerous extremists are using the very same argument of social construction to destroy hard-won evidence that could save our lives.

Elton’s assertion – “What it is to really look for a possible truth, from science” – is located within this complex discussion. The problem here is that, although language is treated as a sociohistorically constructed phenomenon, it also works as something relatively abstract, immaterial, since it is detached from the materiality from where it derives (not at the individual

but at the assemblagic level). In this regard, Barad (2007, p. 133) develops a different concept of *performativity*, which according to her, “[it] is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; [...] performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real”. Following Barad (2003, 2007), Pennycook (2018c, p. 31-32) argues that discourse “should not be reduced to a notion of language (this would be to fall into the representational trap), and material should not be seen as some inanimate world of objects out there waiting to be described”. Thus, there is a shift of focus from “questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices, doings, and actions” (BARAD, 2007, p 135).

In Pennycook’s (2018c, p. 110, emphasis in original) words,

[we] need to get ourselves out of the supposed opposition between relativism and realism that is so often invoked in these discussions (constructionism, postmodernism and so on are labelled *relativist* in opposition to a more solid realism). [...] As a number of writers from a posthumanist perspective (Barad, 2007; Bogost, 2012) have suggested, this division is a product of humanist thought that is, at the very least, unhelpful.

In general terms, relativism refers to the understanding that knowledge, truth, and ideas are not universal or absolute, and hence that they are only valid for those who believe them; while realism concerns the comprehension that reality exists independently of people perceiving it or not. According to the author, we ought to reflect on and problematize the effects of the linguistic or discursive turn in the field of applied linguistics, in light of frameworks such as posthumanism, in order to identify what we have missed. For Pennycook (2018c), we should engage with material conditions, which involve discussions from both old and new materialisms. Lather (2015) explains that, as a relational ontology is taken seriously, a comprehension of intra-relationality can help us avoid dichotomies such as discourse and materiality.

Last but not least, while referring to micro and macro aspects can be useful to make certain points, here I move toward a different, less dualistic understanding of the relation between school and society. For instance, when we mention “how macrorealities and microrealities are related to each other”<sup>44</sup> (SOUSA, 2017, p. 53, my translation), and albeit we discuss how they affect another other, well-defined lines that divide them into two different realities remain. Elton’s statement shows how things are more complex than that, as they intermingle and work as extensions of each other, that is, we cannot clearly see where the

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<sup>44</sup> Original quote: “como as macrorrealidades e microrrealidades se relacionam”.

microreality of a school, or the macroreality of society, begins and ends. In ontological terms, things are not as separate as they seem to be.

The class on Plato's allegory is an example of how our discussions worked during the semester. By and large, in this intra-action, the students emphasized the importance of being open to different possibilities in life:

[2]

Teacher: What does the allegory of the cave mean? This is open to interpretation. What does it mean, [Elton]?

Elton: Means it's possible..., analyses?

Teacher: To analyze.

Elton: ... to analyze the real world with the allegory. **People choice live in shadows, and life, simple life, without challenges. While other people choice challenges..., aceitar?**

Teacher: Accept.

Elton: ... **accept challenges and know new possibilities.**

Teacher: Okay. What about you, [Helem]? What does it mean?

Helem: Can I read?

Teacher: Yeah, sure.

Helem: For me, this allegory means **if we don't escape of our cave, the new world will never exist for us.**

Teacher: Yeah, nice. So maybe we're living in the shadows, huh?

Helem: Yeah.

Teacher: What about you, [Rubi]? What's your interpretation?

Rubi: The allegory means when **we get so closed in our own world that we don't saw other important things happen beside us.**

Teacher: Uhum. We don't see, okay? We don't see other important things...

Rubi: We don't see, né [right]?

Teacher: Uhum, we don't see. [Rubi nods her head]

Rubi: **And we don't see when someone present another way of life.**

Teacher: Yeah, it could be. Nice, nice.

(Class 07, Aug. 27, 2019)

In relation to her opinion on this activity, Rubi adds a couple of more ideas in her intraview, which reinforce what she said in class:

[3]

Rubi: Amei. A alegoria, ela trouxe uma releitura, principalmente a questão das sombras, e, depois, quando a gente fez aquela [atividade da Turma] da Mônica, que é uma segunda leitura, releitura, foi muito interessante. **Ajudou a gente a perceber como a gente precisa de sair dessa caverna às vezes.**

[Rubi: I loved it. The allegory, it showed a rereading, especially the issue of shadows, and then, when we did that Monica [Gang's] activity, which is a

second reading, a rereading, it was very interesting. **It helped us realize we need to get out of the cave sometimes.**]

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter a, Dec. 17, 2019)

Critique has been growing in importance day after day in the field of applied linguistics, in Brazil. As a result, there has been a proliferation of studies related to critical language education in the country, especially over the last decade. As a rhizomatic consequence of this movement, for example, the group of students that participated in this inquiry had previously had critical classes with other teachers in this school. In our first classes, I noticed that they had developed a sense of critique, as they often questioned things which other teachers and I did and asked questions to clarify things; and that they regularly also provided self-critiques when sharing reflections on their language learning (especially by talking about what they saw as their strengths and weaknesses). In other words, they often did not take things for granted. Some of their critiques and self-critiques will be particularly visible in the next sections and chapter.

The key objective of this class was to work with the expansion of perspectives, which in a way prepared the ground for the critical classes we would have later on. In cuts 2 and 3, when Helem and Rubi talk, their attention is linguistically drawn to themselves and the group: “if *we* don’t escape of our cave, the new world will never exist for *us*” (Helem); “when *we* get so closed in our own world that *we* don’t saw other important things happen beside *us*”, “*we* don’t see when someone present another way of life”, and “[the activity] helped *us* realize *we* need to get out of the cave sometimes” (Rubi). As they present their reflections, we see the acknowledgement of one’s ignorance in relation to other possibilities of perceiving life. Menezes de Souza and Duboc (2021, p. 905) stress that it is important that teachers show how knowledge is always incomplete and relational in order “to break with its illusion of universality”. In her intraview, Flávia offers a general argument concerning the videos we had discussed in class, which indicates the students realized the aforesaid aspect underlined by the authors:

[4]

Flávia: [...] **A gente sabe, assim, uma versão da história**, que também abrange o último vídeo [da Chimamanda (ADICHIE, 2009)], né? A gente nunca sabe o que realmente se passa. Então, eu gosto desse tipo de coisa, [dessas discussões].

[Flávia: [...] **We know, like, a version of the story**, which is also related to the last video [Chimamanda’s (ADICHIE, 2009)], right? People never know what is really going on. So, I like this kind of thing, [these discussions].]

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter b, Dec. 12, 2019)

In cut 2, Elton draws a contrast between “living in the shadows, living a simple life” and “accepting challenges, knowing new possibilities, living a complex life”. The latter requires an active engagement with which not everyone feels at ease. In general, we are socially taught to feel comfortable with what is already known, to fear change, to be afraid of losing our ground, albeit these are but misapprehensions, “given the impermanence of our ontological constitution” (SOUSA; PESSOA, 2023, p. 208). Moreover, in Elton’s assertions, a dichotomic relation between “I” and “the Other”, who are seen as contrasting subjects, is implied: “People choice live in shadows, and life, simple life, without challenges. While other people choice challenges, [...] accept challenges and know new possibilities”. Accordingly, though dealing with divergences might be seen as difficult, it is something necessary since intra-acting with other humans and nonhumans is inevitable. In this sense, teachers are in a position to help students to better understand and negotiate differences.

As it is possible to notice, the posthumanist enterprise I propose in this dissertation does not entail an outright rejection of critical frameworks that came earlier, despite their ontological dissimilarities. As I reject any kind of totality, I draw on a comprehension that we inhabit in-between spaces, that is, my position does not disregard the orientations previously mentioned but rather works with them and from them in order to make new contributions to language education, based on an understanding of ongoing becoming. Braidotti (2017a, p. 85) explains that critical movements and projects have been precursors of posthumanist studies, or that they have worked concomitantly with them, for example, by rejecting the “humanistic Man”, opposing “anthropocentrism, on the one hand, and in-built Eurocentrism [...], on the other”, stressing “situated knowledges”, being “firmly grounded in the world” (meaning “that they take real-life events and, by extension, power seriously”), working from the perspectives of “marginalized subjects”, and so on. In view of this, following Pennycook (2018c, 2019a), I see the posthumanist framework developed here as a contribution to discussions that have been held within the purview of critical applied linguistics.

Menezes de Souza directs our attention to the fact that when we, applied linguists, claim that “everything is a matter of interpretation”<sup>45</sup> (FERRAZ; DUBOC; MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2020, p. 2334, my translation), we might overlook ontological issues, since things have always been seen from a human perspective. The author goes on to question:

What can we not think? If we have naturalized – as indeed we did with constructivism – in our concepts of meaning making, we have eliminated the possibility of

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<sup>45</sup> Original quote: “é tudo uma questão de interpretação”.

understanding nature without the presence of the human being, because if meaning making needs a human interpreter, nature with the absence of the human being has no expression. [...] [W]e need to think the unthinkable. What is missing in our philosophies? Thinking as nonhuman is missing, so... [...] How can we think in a different way? If we don't identify the flaws, the dogmatism that our constructivism has put us in, we won't be able to think otherwise, we won't accept our inability to think otherwise.<sup>46</sup> (FERRAZ; DUBOC; MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2020, p. 2334, my translation).

His argument refers to the need to acknowledge the limitations of our own epistemologies. In this respect, this study is engaged in a movement that seeks to decentralize the human and to move toward a less hierarchical perception of our relationship with the non-human, as suggested by the author. At the same time, I try to be attentive to the narrowness of my own understanding (i.e., my socially localized *human* perception of things). As Barad (2007) reminds us, a human interpreter is just one of the elements in an assemblage, and irrespective of humans, the world's ongoing intra-activity remains. The author mentions the brittlestar as an example of a nonhuman that produces material-discursive practices through "boundary-drawing practices by which it differentiates itself from the environment with which it intra-acts and by which it makes sense of its world" (p. 375). Its bodily structure has a particular way of seeing and knowing "as part of the world's dynamic engagement in practices of knowing" (p. 375). As she goes on to explain, "its bodily materiality is not a passive, blank surface awaiting the imprint of culture or history to give it meaning" (p. 375); rather, "its very substance is morphologically active and generative and plays an agentive role in its differential production, its ongoing materialization" (p. 375-376).<sup>47</sup> This exemplifies that sense making is not just a human activity.'

Last but not least, by the end of the activity on Plato's allegory, I asked the students to share some of the ideas they had discussed in pairs, and they brought up another subject, which is introduced by Elton:

[5]

Teacher: I would like to know what you said to each other. I'd like to know your opinions. How is this story related to Plato's allegory? What did you say?

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<sup>46</sup> Original quote: "O que que nós não conseguimos pensar? Se nós naturalizamos – como de fato fizemos com o construtivismo – nos nossos conceitos de significação, nós eliminamos a possibilidade de entender a natureza sem a presença do ser humano, porque se a significação precisa de um intérprete humano, a natureza com a ausência do ser humano não tem expressão. [...] [P]recisamos pensar o impensável. O que falta para as nossas filosofias? Faltou pensar como não-humano, então... [...] Como é que podemos pensar de uma forma diferente? Se nós não identificamos as falhas, o dogmatismo que o nosso construtivismo nos colocou, nós não vamos poder pensar de uma forma diferente, nós não vamos aceitar a nossa incapacidade de pensar de forma diferente".

<sup>47</sup> For a detailed discussion on this matter as well as more examples, see Barad's (2007) chapter entitled "The ontology of knowing, the intra-activity of becoming, and the ethics of mattering".

Helem: We say was related because **the guys don't want to see the real life, just the wall**. And in the final part too, because the guys again want to see, but a fantastic life.

Teacher: Yeah, what about you guys? [asking Mark and Rodrigo] What did you discuss?

Mark: The first part, in the past, is the allegory. And the second is the satirize. The four boy say, **"I watch the fantastic show of life". So this boy don't live the fantastic side of life. He just watch. So, this boy imagine the fantastic side of life, but he don't live this fantastic life.**

Teacher: Yes. What about you? [asking Elton and Rubi]

Elton: This is comic story is similar the allegory of the cave of Plato, with humor. In time, three people [??]. **Our evolution changed every things? Algumas coisas?**

Teacher: Changed some things.

Elton: **Some things, but now the shadows continued with other technology.**

Teacher: Yeah, **what other technologies are there nowadays that replace that?**

Helem: **Social media.**

Mark: **Smartphones.**

Teacher: Yeah, I think we're still doing it, aren't we?

Students: Yeah!

Teacher: Yeah? Do you think we live real life, or that we live in the shadows? What do you think?

Helem: It depends on the person. [laughter]

Teacher: **How much time do you spend on your smartphone?** [students' facial expressions indicate they are thinking about what the teacher asked] **How much time do you spend on your computer?**

Mark: **Oh, much time.**

[...]

Elton: **In lunch, the family, relationships, wife and husband in lunch not speak.**

Teacher: Yes.

Elton: **But social media...** [indicates the use of a smartphone by gesticulating]

Teacher: Yeah, everybody is connected. Everybody is using their smartphones. [Elton nods his head in agreement]

(Class 07, Aug. 27, 2019)

Our discussion on Plato's allegory progressed from seeing shadows on the wall (first reading, from the video) and watching TV (second reading, from the comic strip) to using new technologies and social media (third reading, from the group's reflections). By addressing the latter, the students touched on the kind of relationship we have with new technologies and on how they have changed the way we interact (or intra-act) with others. Pennycook (2021a, p. 8) maintains that "[t]he vast changes to modes of communication and the organization of knowledge that have occurred over the last twenty years" – "through targeted news and information feeds in social media – present [...] a difficult problem for critical work". For Kellner and Share (2019, p. xi),

[t]he convergence of information, media, and technology has created the predominant ecosystem of our time. Since 2018, more than half of the world's population (over 4 billion people) are using the Internet. From cradle to grave, we are interconnected

through a globally-networked media and consumer society. Media and information communication technologies can entertain, educate, and empower or distract, mislead, and manipulate. They are a profound and often misperceived source of cultural pedagogy that educate and socialize us about how to behave and what to think, feel, believe, fear, and desire. These complex systems of communication, representation, production, distribution, and consumption are forms of pedagogy that teach us about ourselves and the world around us.

In cut 5, the students draw a relation between shadows and social media. This is directly related to literacy, i.e., to how we read the world, which has been more connected than ever, as the authors underline. In cut 1, Elton mentions “[t]he moment we are living today in the country [...], which has made it difficult to discuss things. What it is to really look for a possible truth, from science [...]”. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially in recent years, science has been uncritically questioned and “purposefully fictitious media posts”<sup>48</sup> (KELLNER; SHARE, 2019, p. xvi) have been spread unprecedentedly. Consequently, we are now confronted with new social problems, which go hand in hand with colonial projects that seek to maintain the status quo, reinforcing and reworking discriminations, inequities, and injustices. As the authors state, media culture has provided “materials out of which we forge our sense of selfhood; our notions of gender; our conceptions of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, and of sexuality” (KELLNER; SHARE, 2019, p. xi). Given these circumstances, critical media literacy can work as an option to help us better deal with the pressing problems of our infodemic times.

For instance, in Finland, there have been many initiatives launched by the government to teach people “how to counter false information” (MACKINTOSH, 2019, para. 5). Since 2016, in secondary schools, critical media education has become a cross-subject component in the curriculum. In the early years of elementary education, children already learn about the structures of “fake news” and what questions they should ask to factcheck information; and in primary and secondary education, in almost all subjects, discussions are stimulated so that they can read news critically and reflect on their effects on both their country’s and the world’s geopolitical history (BARBER, 2019; HENLEY, 2020; MACKINTOSH, 2019). In order to give a typical example of actions that are part of teachers’ practices, Henley (2020, para. 18, emphasis in original) mentions they encourage their students to ask questions such as: “Who produced this information, and why? Where was it published? What does it *really* say? Who is it aimed at? What is it based on? Is there evidence for it, or is this just someone’s opinion? Is it verifiable elsewhere?”

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<sup>48</sup> Kellner and Share (2019, p. xvi) advise against the use of the term *fake news*, or at least to use it carefully, on account of the cooptation of the term by conservatives: “a label that was once useful to identify false information has now become a tool of propaganda and disinformation”.



Pennycook (2021a, p. 9) reminds us that those who control the flow of information, especially those with pernicious objectives, “[...] are engaged in neither truth nor falsehood, but rather discourse[s] that they hope will produce certain effects”. As the relationship between information and power has been complexified, Kellner and Share (2009) argue that educators should work with critical media literacy along with information literacy and technological literacy. The authors stress that different forms of mass communication, information, culture, power, and domination constitute these spaces, and that addressing them in class is of paramount importance, insofar as “below the surface of that iceberg lies deeply embedded ideological notions of white supremacy, capitalist patriarchy, classism, homophobia, and other oppressive [systems of discrimination]” (KELLNER; SHARE, 2009, p. 288).

By the end of cut 5, Elton gives an example of how our relationships and interactions have changed on account of the presence of new technologies in our lives: “In lunch, the family, relationships, wife and husband in lunch not speak. [...] But social media... [indicates the use of a smartphone by gesticulating]”. These changes in society have altered our lives, transformed our relationships, and shaped the way we think and relate to both human and nonhuman others. As technologies have been acknowledged as extensions of ourselves, the lines that separate different social spaces have also become blurred.

As Wineburg et al. (2016, p. 5) state, “[n]ever have we had so much information at our fingertips. Whether this bounty will make us smarter and better informed or more ignorant and narrow-minded will depend on our awareness of this problem and our educational response to it”. Seeing that new elements are added to our assemblages, our intra-actions also change. Latour (2004) warns us that in order for critique not to run out of steam, since contemporary times pose new challenges, we need to continually revise our praxes so that we can keep them up to date in relation to sociomaterial transformations.

The material-discursive cuts of this section set the tone for what we did throughout the semester: problematizing taken-for-granted meanings in our classes. Following an understanding of *critical* with which I have worked and tried to develop over the years, my praxis was based on an ongoing questioning of topics pertaining to society and deconstruction of naturalized notions (SOUSA, 2017). In the next section, I promote an initial discussion on bodies and social identities, which illustrates how I understand critique.

## 2.2 Bodies and social identities: first impressions

Our group has been engaged in addressing identities in the classroom, as we relate them to social issues, for the past two decades (PESSOA, 2019a). We see it as an important movement toward creating opportunities for students to talk about themselves as well as understand alterity and differences and their relations along the way. These were some of the main topics my students and I discussed during the course, in 2019. Although we have worked with conceptions of identity that privilege its historicity, fluidity, contingency, and relationality, as I look at my master's thesis (SOUSA, 2017), however, I notice an overemphasis on social aspects as discursive, inasmuch as bodies and materialities are largely overlooked.<sup>49</sup> By taking notice of this ontological separateness, I attempt to address such praxiological shortcomings in this dissertation.

In order to introduce the discussion about identity that my students and I would have in later classes, I prepared the following activity:

[6]

Teacher: Alright, now you'll work in pairs. I'm going to project some images, pictures of some people, and then you're gonna talk about it, OK? So, I want you to do that [pointing at the first slide]. You're gonna work in pairs. I want you to write your answers, because maybe you disagree. So, you can have different first impressions of them, OK? [...] So, you're gonna see some pictures and you're gonna think of adjectives, because we are gonna work on them in the following classes. I want you to **mention at least two adjectives for each person**, but you can think of more. I'd like you to discuss: **"What do you think? Why?"**, so that you can share your ideas and write them; and **"Where do you think he or she is from?"** and **"Why do you think that?"**, **based on what you see, okay? "What do you think his or her job is and why?"**

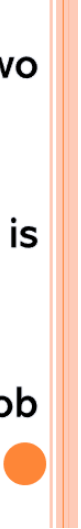
Students: Okay.

(Class 23, Oct. 22, 2019)

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<sup>49</sup> This reflection was inspired by Toohey's (2018, 2019) review of her own work through a new materialist/posthumanist lens.

**Movement-image 4 – Activity on appearances and first impressions**

- 1) Mention at least two adjectives for each person.
  - 2) Where do you think s/he is from? Why?
  - 3) What do you think her/his job is? Why?
- 

Source: Empirical material.

The following cut presents some notes that I wrote down after the class had finished, which help contextualize and justify the choices made in the creation of this activity:

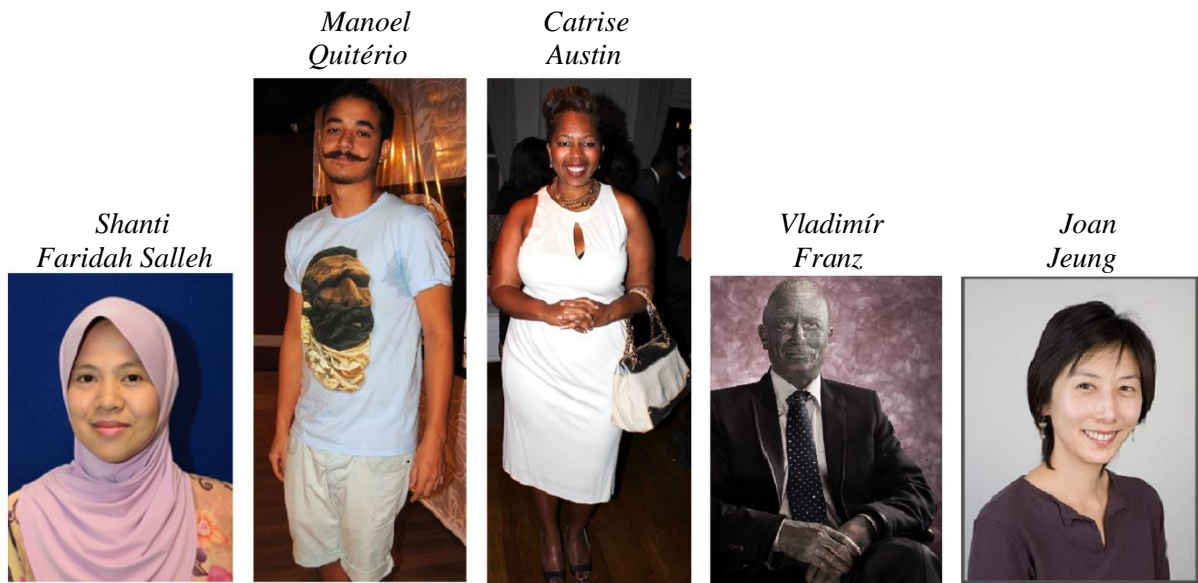
[7]

*Throughout the years, I have used the pictures of real people in different activities with my students, as an alternative to hegemonic bodies of characters often displayed in ELT [English Language Teaching] textbooks (Western, white, heterosexual, middle- and upper-class people). By relying on this activity, my intention was to review adjectives, nationalities/countries, and jobs, and at the same time to observe the relations established between social discourses and bodies from the students' utterances.*

(Field notes, Oct. 22, 2019)

In the following movement-image, I present the first set of slides with the pictures used in this activity:

### Movement-image 5 – Activity on first impressions of people



Sources: from left to right, Unimas ([2012?]), Quitério ([2013]), Austin ([2013]), Franz (2012), and University of California ([200-?]).



Sources: from left to right, Lago (2013, as cited in HAPPY, 2013), Njeuma (2012), Nyind (2008, as cited in BARNETT, 2008), Quist-Arcton (2013), and Vaughan (2013, as cited in WATTS, 2013).

At that moment of this activity, these people's names were concealed, and only their pictures were shown. However, their names are displayed here with the purpose of providing some initial information on these professionals, who are well-known in their respective fields.<sup>50</sup> This was a two-part activity: first the students talked in pairs, and then they shared their answers with the whole group. In order to situate the reader, I organized the next cuts according to these two moments of their impressions. It is worth mentioning that they were talking more quietly while they were working in pairs, and consequently, even though there were two cameras and

<sup>50</sup> Their profiles and news about them can be easily found on the Internet.

one voice recorder in the classroom, not all that was said could be captured by these devices. In addition, at the first moment, only the first picture of each movement-image below was displayed; at the second moment, their names, jobs, and another picture of them (at work) were shown. The projection of the pictures covered the whole board to help the students see them well.

Notwithstanding the whole activity encompassed the work with pictures of ten different people, I divided this section into three examples. First, I focus on our discussion about the picture of Malaysian Chemical Engineer and Professor Shanti Faridah Saleh. Secondly, I direct our attention to the picture of Italian Ballet Master Raffaele Morra. Thirdly, I address a cluster of pictures of well-known black professionals. The latter was arranged in a different way in order to introduce a topic that gained a great significance in our classes later on.

Therefore, the intra-actions discussed in this section demonstrate what was done in class. These are followed by reflections on what I could have done differently, especially in relation to the first two examples. Here we start with Saleh's pictures:

**Movement-image 6** – Muslim Chemical Engineer and Professor Shanti Faridah Saleh



**Shanti Faridah Saleh**

**Head of the  
Department of  
Chemical Engineering  
& Energy  
Sustainability**

**Chemical engineer  
and professor**



Sources: Unimas ([2012?]) and Calm (2018).

[8]

Rodrigo: Teacher, how can I say *simpática*?

Teacher: Nice, nice.

Mark: Teacher, intelligent is with double L?

Layssa: Yes, double L.

Mark: Where is her from? [talking to Elton]

Teacher: Oh, where is she from?

Mark: É [Right], where is she from? I think she is from India, no?

Elton: No. **She's Muslim.**

Mark: Muslim? What's Muslim?

Elton: *Muçulmana.*

Mark: Oh! Yes.

Teacher: You can google it. If you don't know something, you can google it. Use your phones. If you don't know something, it's okay. Then you'll teach us what you've learned. [Flávia grabs her smartphone and seems to be searching for something]

Mark: Arabic, no?

Elton: Possible. The face remember Indonesian [/,ɪndə'neziən/] people.

Mark: Yes, Indonesia [/,ɪndə'neziə/].

Flávia: Uhum. [she overhears them talking and nods her head]

Teacher: Indonesia [/,ɪndə'ni:ʒə/], or Indonesia [/,ɪndə'ni:ziə/].

Mark and Elton: Indonesia [/,ɪndə'ni:ziə/].

Teacher: Yeah, that's the pronunciation. Done with the first one?

Flávia: Yes.

Mark: No.

Teacher: Yeah, you can write down what you talked about.

Mark: Okay. Where do you think that she works? [asks Elton, but he is writing something and does not reply Mark] I think that she is a teacher. I don't know, but I think that.

(Class 23, Oct. 22, 2019)

[9]

Teacher: So, the first one. That's her name: Shanti Faridah Saleh. What adjectives could you think of?

Flávia: **Different**, friendly, nice.

Mark: Happy, intelligent.

Teacher: What about her job?

Mark: Teacher.

Elton: Student.

Flávia and Rodrigo: **Housewife**.

Teacher: **Housewife? Why housewife?**

Flávia: I don't know.

Mark: **Because she is from a country that is machista?**

Teacher: Sexist.

Flávia: Yes.

Mark: **Sexist, and in this country the women are submissa?**

Teacher: Submissive.

Mark: **Submissive of men?**

Teacher: Submissive to men. [Flávia nods, showing she agrees with Mark's remarks] Alright. I'm gonna tell you. So, you're kind of right. She's a university professor and the head of the Department of Chemical Engineering & Energy Sustainability of Malaysia. She's Malaysian. Did it surprise you she works with chemical engineering?

Students: Yes.

Elton: I put student.

Teacher: Because she seems young, right? [Elton nods] But she's a university professor.

Mark: Teacher, I put near to Malaysia. [laughter]

Teacher: Here you can see her working. [shows the next slide]

(Class 23, Oct. 22, 2019)

We can infer that everything that the students said is associated with the materialities in the picture – her face, her hijab, her religion, her country, and so on – which the learners relate to broader social practices. Flávia and Rodrigo both mention housewife as Saleh’s likely occupation. Mark explains their answer is reasonable, as she seems to have been raised and be living in a very sexist society, in which women are taught to be unquestionably submissive. The answers they gave are directly linked to the fact she is donning a hijab. To their surprise, she is a chemical engineer and professor. Further, Elton deduces that she is probably Muslim because of her headscarf; and Flávia utters the word *different* (from what she is used to seeing), presumably, owing to her hijab.

The majority of the population in Malaysia is Muslim. In this country, most Muslim women wear hijabs. There has always been a religious-governmental enforcement of a strict female dress code – women should preferably be fully clothed (FARHAN, 2019; NG; MOHAMAD; BENG HUI, 2006; WION, 2020). Several overt and veiled government-controlled body policies not only still exist but have been revitalized by conservatives over the last years (BANGKOK POST, 2020; ELLIS-PETERSEN, 2019; WION, 2020). Attempting to wield power over the female body, either by religion, society, or the government, is a deep-rooted practice. In this respect, Malay-Muslim activist Maryam Lee sees de hijabbing, based on her own personal story, as an act of “resistance against patriarchy in religion and wider society” (BANGKOK POST, 2020, para. 12).

As I ruminated on this activity done with the students, I noticed that I could have done some things differently, like asking other questions. In Murriss’ (2016, p. 287) words, “[o]ur entire educational system is built around a logic of representation”, and consequently we are caught up in the construction of meanings through particular humanist practices. She adds that, “from a semiotic point of view”, “[i]t is hard to resist a humanist analysis” of humans and nonhumans and wonder what they represent or symbolize (MURRIS, 2016, p. 287). As a result, alternative readings of phenomena are challenging. Although I had been studying posthumanism for a little more than two years back then, many of its ideas and concepts only began to effectively sink in later. In light of the author’s arguments, and inspired by her reflections, I look at this activity and see that, for example, I could have asked not only “What does the hijab mean to Saleh?”, but also brought up questions such as: “What does the hijab *do* to her?”, “What does the hijab *do* for her?”, and “How do you think the hijab *works* in her life?” These would be better aligned with the objective of being more “attentive to, and responsive/responsible to, the specificity of material entanglements” (BARAD, 2007, p. 91),

thus drawing the students' attention, for instance, to the agentic capacity of an object<sup>51</sup>. In this sense, our intra-action with the sociomateriality addressed could have been more productive.

Muslim scholar Mehjabin (2020) claims that she sees hijab as a deep and complicated topic. For her, “[a] single piece of cloth narrates the course of history, culture, heritage, religion, social stability or chaos, political ideologies, and personal spatial freedom or confined oppression” (MEHJABIN, 2020, p. 57). In the 1970's, there was a movement of women that saw the hijab “not only as a symbol of Muslim women's public assertion of their religious identity but also of their active participation in the fight for social justice and against wealthy elites, ‘western’ imperialism and secularisation” (OPENLEARN, 2016b, p. 23). In recent decades, many “Muslim women have adopted the hijab [...] for similar reasons”, such as “in response to and resistance against Islamophobia [...] and as a symbol of pride and solidarity with Muslims that have been the target of hostility, abuse or discrimination” (OPENLEARN, 2016b, p. 23, 24).

In Mehjabin's (2019) master's study, she talked to female students from different Muslim countries, who were living in the United Kingdom. The women that took part in her study presented different perceptions of what the hijab is, and their conversations were infused with ideas about “emancipation, colonization, imperialism, misrepresentation of Orient, political agenda, Islamophobia, feminism and more”, which led the inquirer to question herself “while writing, reading, and researching for this analysis”: “Is hijab out of political context? Is it solely my personal choice, or right? Is this how I want to portray myself, or embracing it as my identity, without feeling religiously obligated?” (MEHJABIN, 2019, p. 22). By posing questions such as these, the author explains why we should not see the hijab as a fixed social element.

In the West, especially in European countries, there have been many debates over freedom of religious expression and women's rights. While women are not allowed to wear their hijabs in schools in France, in other countries, such as Belgium, Denmark, Austria, and the Netherlands, there has been “a total ban on wearing the niqab or burqa in public” (BANGKOK POST, 2020, para. 14). One of the participants in Mehjabin's (2020, p. 61) study claims that “[if] wearing scanty clothes or no clothes is allowed in many European countries, then the regulation of clothing worn by Muslim women violates their human right”. As Ramírez

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<sup>51</sup> Although I am aware of the individualistic undertones of the word *capacity* in the field of language education, and that it might denote the idea that agency is inherent in independent entities and space (a topic that will be discussed later), I use this term here to indicate that humans, nonhumans, and space play active roles in the (trans)formation of material-discursive practices and relations.



(2014, p. 671) explains, the regulation of clothing – both its requirement and restriction – “[...] share[s] the same goal: the control of women’s bodies”. For her, one way or another, “[d]ress codes are designed to normativise the female body” (RAMÍREZ, 2014, p. 681).

Further, we can see the intersectionality between religion, race/ethnicity, and gender, and their complex intra-action, inasmuch as some people are “considered dangerously different” on account of what they wear, the language(s) they speak, and their forms of worship (LENTIN; TITLEY, 2011, p. vi). Mehjabin (2020, p. 64) accentuates that

Islamophobia as a unifying concept develops from Europe’s stereotyping profile of [the] Muslim world. [...] Anti-Muslimism fundamentally attacks Muslim women, because a woman with [a] hijab is the physical embodiment of Islam. [...] Regulating the headscarf becomes a visible device that underpins the inequality between them and us, West and East.

In this regard, Lentin and Titley (2011, p. 69) highlight that “[t]he tendency to racialize hijab-wearing Muslim women, [...] to see the woman as the veil, is evidence of the fact that cultural tropes can just as easily serve as racial signifiers as skin colour”. The authors add that, however, “[o]f course, this does not deny the fact that an item of clothing, such as a veil, may be removed, while skin colour is almost impossible to conceal, rendering black and brown people as still the most likely victims of racism” (LENTIN; TITLEY, 2011, p. 231). As Ramírez (2014) explains, while in Muslim countries there is a sexual and social hierarchization, in non-Muslim countries there is a sexual and ethnic stratification.

Mehjabin (2020) argues that the West has many misconceptions of the East, and that consequently it often adopts salvationist policies.<sup>52</sup> In this respect, we should understand that the will to decolonize may also be a colonizing attitude (REZENDE et al., 2020). According to Mehjabin (2019), whereas the West sees the East, and more specifically Muslim women, as backward, ignorant, and oppressed, these very women see themselves as honorable, respectful, decent, noble, dignified, and modest. The author reminds us that, for some women, oppression would be not to have the right to wear their hijabs – this is an instance when a woman’s personal choice becomes her political right. In thinking we know what is best for the Other, as a result of our arrogance, instead of negotiating differences, we might thus end up imposing our own worldview.

The way people dress is intricately connected with their values, cultures, and identities. In this sense, identities work as social locations; and the spaces they occupy in the sociomaterial

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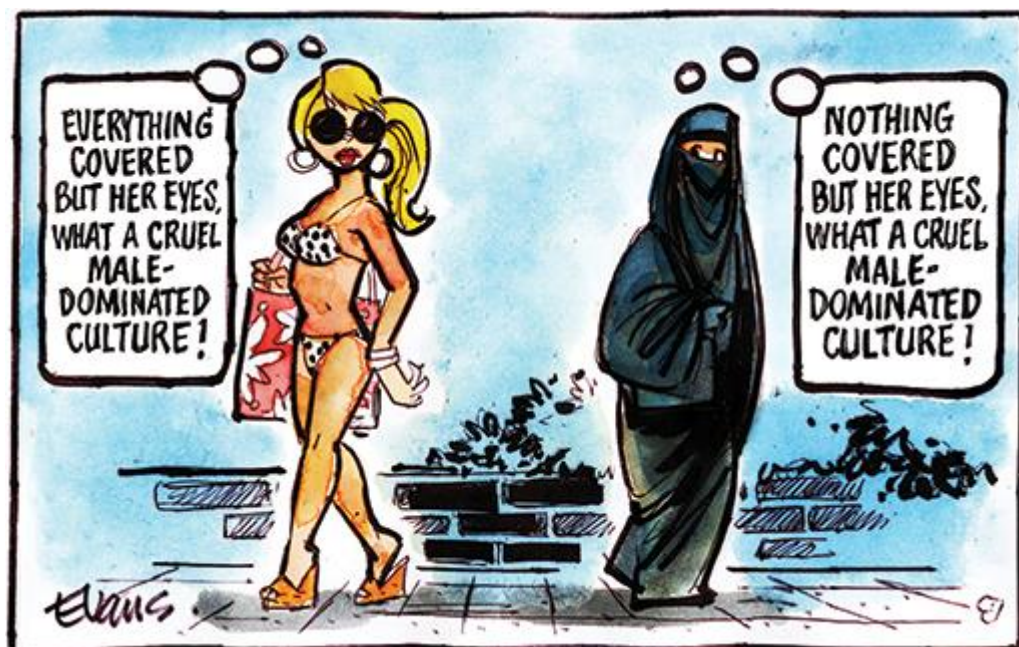
<sup>52</sup> See Rosenberger and Sauer (2012) for an in-depth discussion on this topic.

world as well as how they occupy them are always somehow regulated. This is why one of the participants in Mehjabin's (2019) study stresses that, even when it seems women have the right to exercise their choices, despite religious, cultural, and social circumstances, oppression against them ends up permeating social practices. In this respect, Mehjabin (2020, p. 60) adds that "[a] woman with or without [a] headscarf or [a] hijab is always the object of subjugation, sexual disparity, and gender dominance". For Ramírez (2014), this shows how female bodies are seen as inferior and subaltern, as well as bodies which can legitimately be regulated.

Critical language education involves ongoing study on historical, cultural, and political issues so that teachers can be better prepared to approach social aspects with their students (SOUSA, 2017; SOUSA; LIMA NETO, 2022). I need to acknowledge that during this specific intra-action with Saleh's movement-images, I missed the opportunity to promote a more constructive discussion with the learners. Some of the aforementioned reflections could certainly have helped me achieve that.

Moreover, as I reflected on my latest posthumanist readings and on what I could have done differently, a vivid memory of Evans' (2011) famous cartoon *Bikini vs. Burqa* kept coming to my mind:

**Movement-image 7 – *Bikini vs. Burqa***



Source: Evans (2011).

The same questions concerning Saleh's hijab, addressed previously, could be asked about both the women in this cartoon. Like Saleh, what they are wearing work as extensions of

themselves – i.e., what we see is part of their sociomaterial existence. Their clothes are not simply objects that are fulfilling certain functions; they are social and cultural artifacts, and hence they are not neutral. As Pennycook (2018c, p. 121) would put it, these nonhuman actors “interpellate us into forms of socialization”. In this sense, these women’s bodies and their apparel form intricate assemblages here.

According to Mehjabin (2019, 2020), Islamist ideologies also impose restrictions upon women’s body movements and the way they speak, which are associated with their sexuality. In this regard, I could have also discussed with my students how there is a kind of parallel control over women’s bodies in the Western world. To some extent, who we are/become is built on what we do with our bodies and other bodies, which are constantly recreated through sociomaterial intra-actions.

Next, further reflections are prompted from Morra’s pictures<sup>53</sup>:

#### Movement-image 8 – Ballet Master Raffaele Morra



**Raffaele  
Morra**

**Ballet  
dancer**



Sources: Vaughan (2013, as cited in WATTS, 2013) and Orselli (2017, as cited in BRICE, 2017).

[10]

Teacher: Done? I'm gonna change it. [displays the next slide] The last one.

Mark: How can I say *palestrante*?

Teacher: Lecturer. [writes it on the board]

Flávia: **Esquisito. Weird.**

Mark: Where is he from?

Elton: *Itália?*

Teacher: Italy.

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<sup>53</sup> Morra is dressed as a ballerina, but we did not talk about it because this was the last slide, and when we got to it, there were only a couple of minutes left for the class to end. Thus, as the students had not touched on the subject, I decided not to ask more questions.

Mark: Italy person.  
 Teacher: An Italian person. [laughter] And the job?  
 Mark: *TI* programmer. [IT programmer]  
 Teacher: Programmer, okay.  
 Mark: Is *TI* before? *TI* programmer?  
 Teacher: Yeah, I-T. IT programmer. Information technology. [...]

(Class 23, Oct. 22, 2019)

[11]

Teacher: And the last one. His name is Raffaele Morra.  
 Rodrigo: He's tall.  
 Teacher: Yes. What else? Adjectives!  
 Flávia: **Nerd**.  
 Mark: **Exotic**.  
 Teacher: **Exotic? Why?**  
 Mark: I don't know.  
 Rodrigo: He's from Canada?  
 Teacher: Canada? He's from Italy. You were right, [Elton]. You said it first. He's Italian. What's his profession?  
 Rodrigo and Flávia: Physician.  
 Mark: IT programmer.  
 Elton: Driver?  
 Teacher: **He's a ballet dancer**, yeah?  
 Students: Oh!  
 Teacher: He played in *Swan Lake* (*O Lago dos Cisnes*), the play.  
 Elton: Oh, yes.  
 Teacher: **He's an artist, a famous one**. Let me show you. [projects the next slide]  
 Students: Oh!  
 Teacher: So, that's his profession. [Elton expresses surprise and seems to gaze at the last image with admiration]

(Class 23, Oct. 22, 2019)

Flávia says she thinks he seems weird and associates it with being a nerd; and Mark adds the word *exotic*. Although Elton thinks he could be a driver, the social image of what a nerd looks like (a person who wears glasses, is studious, and lacks social skills) and the way he is dressed (formal shirt tucked in, pants and a belt, and a necklace (not commonly seen with this outfit)) are apparently related to their ideas about what his occupation could be: lecturer and IT programmer (Mark) and physician (Flávia and Rodrigo). Like Magalhães and Silva (2022), I also perceive artifacts, such as clothes, as actors that create meanings, since they are part of our socio-semiotic relations at all times. This conversation about Morra's picture with my students exemplifies the fact that semiotic landscapes accompany us in our everyday intra-actions with others, convey countless different meanings, and are interpreted in many ways.

We consciously and unconsciously thereby form associations between people (human bodies) and nonhuman elements (clothes, objects, and so forth).

For Barad (2003, 2007), bodies exist through material and discursive relations. In this regard, materiality should not be simply seen as context, background, or conditions in which human beings live, but as something that intra-acts with us and constitutes us. Morra's pictures, for instance, prompt the reflection that the way we dress can be related to gender, race, class, age, and so on, and people tend to interact with us depending on the kind of bodies they perceive (e.g., a wealthy male body, a well-dressed female body, a body with certain ethnic accessories, a tattooed body, a religious body, etc.). Therefore, one's body is not read as a unitary part but as an assemblage with everything that is presented with it to others.

In this sense, since there is no body as a separate entity, our bodies only exist as corporeal performances. The body is "a constant, eternal, perennial performance, deconstructed or not, deconstructive or not, but always a performance, a stylization of social reproduction and/or resistance"<sup>54</sup> (SOUSA; LIMA NETO, 2022, p. 91, my translation). In the case of Morra, there are two distinct examples of his corporeal performances (first with formal clothes and then with a ballet tutu), as well as the way the students construct them sociomaterially (even though the second one is not linguistically elaborated). Therefore, from a rhizomatic viewpoint, for these students, the intra-actions between his body and the elements in each picture seem to semiotically indicate the kind of person he seems to be and some of the social practices he might enact.

Making headway on this discussion, Peck and Stroud (2015, p. 133) provide an insightful perspective on "the body as a corporeal landscape", or a *moving material-discursive locality*. According to the authors, linguists have been trying to be more "attentive to the mobility and materiality of spatialized semiotics as performative, that is, as partially determining of how we come to understand ourselves 'in place'" (PECK; STROUD, 2015, p. 133, emphasis in original). Morra's pictures, shown one at a time, perfectly illustrate

how the body as a site or nexus for social discourses of identity is a *fragmented* body. [...] Body fragmentation [works] in conjunction with identity [...], [and] different body parts come with different geosemiotics, giving rise to different readings of an inscription, with the body part itself also becoming refigured in the process. [...] [These body parts] are regimented by corporeally distributed social discourses of sexuality, gender and race, [for example,] in different ways. What is also happening here is that the body parts are performing identities (or potentially performing identities). (PECK; STROUD, 2015, p. 139, 140, emphasis in original).

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<sup>54</sup> Original quote: "é uma performance constante, eterna, perene, desconstruída ou não, desconstrutiva ou não, mas sempre uma performance, uma estilização de reprodução social e/ou de resistência".

Accordingly, the concept of *inscriptions in place*, offered by the authors, can be helpful to address this process of (re)semiotization. Based on these reflections, and like the questions proposed in Saleh's case, I could have asked the students, for instance: "How do these different outfits *work* in his daily life?" (to bring forward a notion of relationality); "Do you think he might feel more comfortable in the first or the second outfit? Why?" (to stress the relation of affect); "How do you think the space of a theater is different from the space of his home, for him?" (to broaden the scope of social spaces that bodies occupy). I agree with Magalhães and Silva (2022) that language education should be engaged in mobilizing diverse bodies in the production of meanings. The aforementioned questions are instantiations that gesture toward this direction. In the authors' words, from a posthumanist viewpoint, such a praxis can entail "a rhizomatic movement of teaching-learning-thinking-knowing-feeling-affecting-with the assemblages with which we become entangled"<sup>55</sup> (MAGALHÃES; SILVA, 2022, p. 112, my translation).

Finally, as the last example discussed in this section, I present a cluster of ten pictures used in this activity with the students. As an alternative against the invisibilization, marginalization, stereotyping, and underrepresentation of black people in the context of education, especially in language education materials, such as textbooks, by doing this introductory activity with the learners, my objective was to work with positive images of non-hegemonic bodies. As critical race scholars stress, since racism pervades social relations, including those at schools, language teachers have a social responsibility to address it in the classroom (FERREIRA, 2006, 2014, 2021; FERREIRA, A., 2020; MELO, 2015; SILVA, 2009; SILVA; TEIXEIRA; PACIFICO, 2013).

Pessoa (2014) discusses some events that happened in Andrade's (2011) and Estevão's (2011) classrooms, while the teachers were working on issues of identity: in short, their preteen and teenage students made racist remarks about black people (referring to their own bodies, their classmates', and other people's), which engendered feelings of shame, fueled resentment, and subjected their classmates and themselves to ridicule. In this study, however, the students referred to all people of color in the pictures with positive comments. They mentioned the following adjectives, remarks, and professions:

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<sup>55</sup> Original quote: "um movimento rizomático de ensinar-aprender-pensar-conhecer-sentir-afetar-com as assemblagens com as quais nos emaranhamos".



**Movement-image 9** – Pictures of well-known black people



**Catrise Austin**

**Dentist**

**Dr. Catrise Austin**



Sources: Austin ([2013]) and Campbell (2019).

**Adjectives:** ethical and polite (Mark).

**Guesses at the profession:** journalist/businesswoman (Flávia), reporter/politician (Mark), and teacher (Elton).  
Catrise Austin is an American dentist.



**Felipe da  
Conceição**

**Bartender**



Source: Lago (2013, as cited in HAPPY, 2013).

**Adjectives:** handsome (Elton), nice (Flávia), cool (Flávia and Rodrigo), and stylish (Mark).

**Guesses at the profession:** painter (Mark) and rapper (Elton and Rodrigo).  
Felipe da Conceição is a Brazilian bartender.



**Christine Njeuma**

**Pilot**



Sources: Njeuma (2012) and Cameroon Civil Aviation Authority (2015).

**Adjectives:** nice and funny (Flávia), hardworking (Rodrigo and Flávia), and “I think she’s tired” (Mark).

**Guesses at the profession:** “I think she travels a lot” (Mark), businesswoman (Mark and Flávia), and cashier (Elton).

**Obs.:** Owing to her apparel, the students seemingly associate it with the working class.  
Christine Njeuma is a Cameroonian pilot.



David  
Adjaye  
Architect



Sources: Nyland (2008, as cited in BARNETT, 2008) and Solway (2011).

**Adjectives:** handsome (Elton and Flávia) and photogenic and serious (Mark).

**Guesses at the profession:** model (Mark), businessman (Elton), and administrator (Flávia).

**Obs.:** The frame, clothes, and his posture seem to have influenced their perceptions.

David Adjaye is a Ghanaian-British architect.



Sandra Aguebor  
Mechanic



Sources: Quist-Arcton (2013) and Gists (2015).

**Adjectives:** friendly (Flávia), peaceful (Mark), and calm (Elton, Rodrigo, and Flávia).

**Guesses at the profession:** writer (Elton), lecturer (Mark), and psychologist (Flávia).

**Obs.:** The students think her profession might be associated with her clothes and the objects behind her.

Sandra Aguebor is a Nigerian mechanic.

Source: Empirical material.

Even though our intra-actions were very positive at this moment, we need to bear in mind that race is a humanist construction that expresses “the basic experience of colonial domination, [...] [and that it] permeates the most important dimensions of world power”<sup>56</sup> (QUIJANO, 2005, p. 107, my translation). Thus, this group of students is not exempt from it, one way or another. In the following sections, I discuss some events of racism from my students’ personal experiences in detail, which they shared with the group during the semester.

For the time being, it is important to stress that, even though I directed our attention to the relationality between human and nonhuman elements, and in the case of this introductory activity, the intra-actions with clothes, artifacts, and space, the process of racialization needs to

<sup>56</sup> Original quote: “a experiência básica da dominação colonial e que [...] permeia as dimensões mais importantes do poder mundial”.



be brought into focus. In their studies, Rosa and Flores (2017) and Rosa and Díaz (2020) mention several examples of how the racialization of people of color – i.e., racial profiling practices – especially men's, affected the outcome of their encounters with the police. For example, as Vicky Guerra, mother of photographer Chris Guerra (struck by a car and killed in 2013), reports:

It never occurred to me how Chris looked. He usually didn't wear a hoodie on shoots, but it was January and cold. He had a baseball cap under the hood also. The more I pictured what he must have looked like, the more... it makes even more sense that this officer thought Chris was a Hispanic nobody from the "hood," similar to Trayvon [Martin], who was perceived as trouble as he was just innocently walking home from the store. (ROSA; DÍAZ, 2020, p. 126).

Within this discussion, the authors explore the concept of *raciontologies*, defined by them as "the fundamentally racialized grounding of various states of being – that sheds light on complex forms of institutional racism and white supremacy" (ROSA; DÍAZ, 2020, p. 120). In their words, this perspective

[...] attends to the central role that race plays in constituting modern subjects and objects in relation to particular states of being. Raciontologies powerfully shape how entities become endowed with the capacity to engage in particular acts, while also conditioning perceptions, experiences, and material groundings of reality. (ROSA; DÍAZ, 2020, p. 120).

Since we are constituted by humanist perceptions, which are hegemonically racialized, genderized, sexualized, and so on, we cannot disregard their intra-actions and effects in the world. The authors argue that, for instance, perceiving male black bodies as weaponized is a discriminatory semiotic process, which is often institutionalized. Things are seen as "regular objects" when used by whites but might be possibly seen as weapons when used by blacks. In other words, being a black man is a precondition that may (trans)form people's ontological perception of an object, when associated with that body, into something dangerous, like a weapon. This is normative whiteness/white supremacy in effect.

As Rosa and Flores (2017, p. 629) claim, clothes, cameras, smartphones, to name but a few things, exemplify how artifacts might not be recognized as functioning the same way, depending on the kind of bodies seen with them. The authors provide several examples of situations in which this took place, and among them, they address an episode involving Trayvon Martin:

[I]n 2012, when George Zimmerman killed Trayvon Martin, another unarmed African American teenager, in Sanford, Florida, Zimmerman purportedly perceived the candy

and soft drink Martin was carrying as potentially dangerous weapons. When political commentators such as Geraldo Rivera suggested that Martin's hooded sweatshirt was 'thug' wear, others noted the racial double-standards at work in interpretations of this allegedly threatening apparel, which is in fact a normative youth style of dress throughout the US. (ROSA; FLORES, 2017, p. 629, emphasis in original).

Unfortunately, similar cases happen in Brazil regularly. In 2012, during a stop-and-frisk, 42-year-old Antônio Santos was killed by the police, when he reached for his bible (G1, 2012; MEIONORTE, 2012). In 2016, 16-year-old Jhonata Alves was walking with a popcorn bag, which he was taking for a party at the day care center where his little brother stayed, but the police officers mistook it for drugs and killed him with a headshot (ARAÚJO, 2016; SOARES, 2018). In 2018, 26-year-old Rodrigo Serrano was waiting for his wife and children with an umbrella (as it was raining) and a kangaroo baby carrier, but what the police saw was a machine gun and a bulletproof vest, and they shot and killed him (MOURA, 2018; SOARES, 2019). What did these men have in common? All of them were black.<sup>57</sup> In all these instances, the police officers' "misperceptions of objects" were used as a justification for manslaughter. And, for the most part, no one was punished for their deaths. As Rosa and Díaz (2020, p. 121) explain, "the ontological statuses of bodies, practices, and various materialities are racially constituted in relation to the institutionalized modes of perception through which they are apprehended". For S. Silva (2022), such a biased perception results from structural racism. Society condemns individual racism, but it conceals the fact that it derives from structural and institutional racism – i.e., grounded in neoliberalism, it solely blames individuals, hence neglecting it as a systemic problem (SILVA, S., 2021a, 2022). As the author underlines, such individuals are socially formed by material-discursive practices that construct them, leading them to become individual racists. Therefore, for her, unveiling and combating structural and institutional racism are of paramount importance.

From the aforementioned examples, we can observe how racism is relationally constructed, insofar as different kinds of factors participate in the events in question. Therefore, I argue that such an intricacy needs to be looked at in its assemblagic intertwining so that changes can be made in the system, and justice can be obtained. In this regard, I offer the concept of *racioscape*<sup>58</sup>, which I frame as a complex sociomaterial space in which race – a colonial product of Eurocentric humanism – is conceived in its intra-action with humans and nonhumans. In this sense, inspired by Haraway (1997) and Barad (2003), I argue that a

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<sup>57</sup> For more details on these cases as well as many others, see Carvalho (2021).

<sup>58</sup> Here in Brazil, members of my adviser's group and I have referred to it as *paisagem racializada*. I would like to thank Camila Capparelli for her assistance with the translation of the term into Portuguese.

potentially fruitful perspective might be attending to race-in-the-making. The aforesaid cases do not only demonstrate blatant state-sanctioned institutional racism but also indicate that ontological boundaries should not be set in advance: the well-worn human/nonhuman binary separates humans from artifacts as individual, discrete entities, leading their constitutive entanglement to be overlooked. As Toohey (2017a, p. 14) maintains, we should question “for what purposes people, discourses, and things are separated from one another, how such separations are effected”, and the sociohistorical consequences of them. Concurrently, paying heed to “local determinations of boundaries, properties, and meanings” in their differential enactment would provide a more comprehensive understanding of phenomena (BARAD, 2003, p. 828).

As Barad (2003, p. 826, emphasis in original) explains, intra-actions have the potentiality to “remake the boundaries that delineate the differential constitution of the ‘human.’ Holding the category ‘human’ fixed excludes an entire range of possibilities in advance, eliding important dimensions of the workings of power”. The author adds that focusing exclusively on “the materialization of ‘human’ bodies miss[es] the crucial point that the very practices by which the differential boundaries of the ‘human’ and the ‘nonhuman’ are drawn are always already implicated in particular materializations” (BARAD, 2003, p. 824, emphasis in original). This highlights the necessity of visualizing and addressing the subject differently, given the fact that the police officers who killed those black men were acquitted or did not face any kind of harsh punishment based on the allegation that “it was just a misperception of objects”. Further, no institutional changes were made to tackle this systemic problem. For Braidotti (2013, p. 165), coping with such a challenge requires assuming “an altogether different form of accountability” that is post-anthropocentric, thus “foregrounding the ontological role played by relationality” (p. 93), in which the transversal nature of affects and interconnections and the complex workings of power are recognized. Therefore, devising new mechanisms and strategies is fundamental to fighting against white supremacy.

In summary, this activity on appearances and first impressions presented in this section preceded the discussion on identities which would take place in the following classes. As a whole, from the examples displayed, it shows that when we read the world, we do not read individual entities but rather assemblages – multiplicities of beings and elements that can only be understood in their entanglements with others (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2005 [1980]). In order to answer the questions that I had asked the students, they read all the bodies in the pictures (perceived here as semiotic entities) in unison – people, clothes, and objects. All these together, interlaced with the students’ prior knowledge, composed their interpretations on those

people's characteristics, nationalities, and occupations. We can thereby observe how such a materiality is intertwined with discourses that are permeated by social, cultural, and historical aspects, "distributed across human and non-human beings, meanings and agencies" (BUZATO, 2017, p. 74).

Pictures of people and their surroundings were the main material used in this activity. From them and the events entailed by them, one can see how issues of gender, race, social class, and sexuality (some directly and others indirectly mentioned) cut across our intra-actions. This exercise was not intended to promote neoliberal multiculturalism – which celebrates differences and encourages ideas of inclusion, tolerance, congenial coexistence but completely neglects power relations (KUBOTA, 2004; PENNYCOOK, 2021a; WALSH, 2007). Rather, it worked as a prelude to topics focused on social identities which would be problematized later. As Braidotti (2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2022) claims, working with posthumanism does not mean being post-power and/or post-violence, post-class, post-gender, post-race, etc., but on the contrary, for in some ways the contemporary globalized world exacerbates certain relations of power and domination. After all, we all have been historically measured against the average adult Western, educated, industrialized, wealthy, Christian, white, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied male, speaker of a standard language (BRAIDOTTI, 2013, 2016; DAIGLE, 2021; DAIGLE; MCDONALD, 2022; DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2005 [1980]; PENNYCOOK, 2018c).

In the following section, I present our conceptual discussion about identity, the subsequent activity with examples related to the topic, and some of my students' perceptions of these activities.

### **2.3 "What is identity?": conceptual reflections**

My students and I discussed issues of identity in several classes during the second part of the semester. As the reader will be able to see, the learners brought many different conceptions with them to the classroom, some of which were deconstructed and reconstructed, and others that were reinforced or developed during the classes.

First, a contextualization of what we did is necessary. After the activity presented in the previous section, we had an initial conversation about identity and topics related to it. The students shared their ideas about the following questions in pairs: 1) What is identity?; 2) What is the difference between identity and personality?; 3) What is your identity?; 4) What identities do you have in common?; 5) Can you have any identity you want? (Can you be whatever you want?); 6) What limitations do we have when it comes to personality? What limits your

choices? For each question (written one at a time on the board), I asked them to talk with a different person.

Due to the great extension of the empirical material generated in this class and the processual nature of their construction around the idea of identity (i.e., the hazy nature of their replies), the display of a movement-image is useful here. These are the main definitions, notions, and impressions brought up by the learners at this first moment:

#### Movement-image 10 – General ideas on identity conveyed by the students

[What is identity?]

Flávia: "I think **identity is personality** of the person."

Mark: "And your **identity card**. I think **the things you know, the things you do, your habits**."

Flávia: "**The way you treat people**."

Mark: "I think **the words that define you**."

Flávia: "The **physical [features]**."

Flávia: "**Race**."

Rodrigo: "**Feelings you have about yourself**."

Elton: "I think **the first impression** about me."

[What is your identity?]

Rodrigo: "I think **identity is more about cultural identity**. Personality is more... [moves his hands toward himself]."

Rodrigo: "My identity is... **I am Brazilian, Goiano** [someone born in the state of Goiás]."

Mark: "**I am a mixture of Brazilian and Japanese**. [laughter] **I'm from Goiânia. I am student**."

Elton: "**How I see myself, my profession**. In general, **I see myself a person in construct[ion]**."

[What identities do you have in common?]

Mark: "**We're from Goiânia. We are Brazilians**."

Rodrigo: "**English students**."

Mark: "Yeah, English students. **We are in high school**."

Rodrigo: "**We have people in family in common**."

[referring to their siblings]"

Mark: "Yeah, yeah. Also, **we have a dog**. [Rodrigo nods]"

[Can you have any identity? (Can you be anything you want?)]

Flávia: "No, **we have some rules**. We can't do anything we want."

Elton: "I have many **experiences in life**."

Mark: "Yeah, **many experiences in life [...]** compose your identity."

[What limitations do we have when it comes to personality? (What limits your choices?)]

Mark: "You have to [...] **fit in society, like to groups.**  
Some people want to change your [their] personality to  
fit in society."  
Flávia: "**Standards.**"

(Class 27, Nov. 07, 2019)

Why do we ask our students about identity *and* personality? Because they tend to mistake one for the other, like Flávia does in her first answer. In my master's study, one of the teachers who took part in the investigation shared a similar experience that relates to Mark's first answer:

[W]hen I was teaching, implementing the lessons I [had] prepared [while getting her bachelor's degree], [...] I asked them [her students] what identity is, because that was my theme [she was studying it to write her final paper]. Nobody knew. Nobody could answer. But then a student raised his hand and said, "Identity is your document, teacher". (SOUSA, 2017, p. 89).

Flávia's and Mark's statements illustrate some of the general notions that students might bring with them to the classroom. Nevertheless, based on the learners' other utterances, I offer some different possibilities of reading what they said. Their mention of practices, routines, habits, and interactions with others can be seen as *performances*, i.e., what we do with our bodies. Flávia thinks of physical features and brings up race, which can be understood as one of the elements of *the sociomateriality of bodies*. Rodrigo and Elton add feelings and first impressions, which can be associated with *movements of affect in relationality*. Rodrigo talks about cultural identities, and he and Mark mention nationality and regionality as identity markers, which are instances of *situated and localized social positions*. Mark, Rodrigo, and Elton touch on their occupations and profession, respectively, which refer to *specific practices enacted by subjects within a Western capitalist society*. Elton emphasizes the comprehension that we are beings in construction, stressing *the impermanence of our constitution*; while Mark says our experiences make up who we are, which can be linked to *entanglements and connections*. Finally, Flávia mentions social rules and standards, which concern *regulatory power* in society.

Hall (1992) asseverates that the conceptualization of the subject has a history, which needs to be understood. He explains that identities were seen as "fully unified and coherent" in the modern age, that they acquired "a more sociological or interactive definition" later, and that they have been seen as "de-centred", "totally dislocated" in late modernity (HALL, 1992, p. 281). The students' answers show traces of these three different historical conceptions of the

subject: the modern individual, their relationships with others in society, and their postmodern constitutive becoming.

After their exchange of ideas in the first class, I asked them to read the text *Questions of Identity* (OPENLEARN, 2016a) and summarize each paragraph in one sentence, as homework. In a nutshell, the text elucidates differences between identity and personality, as it draws on personal and social aspects; it explains the importance of active engagement when it comes to identity; it addresses similarities and differences among social groups, as it focuses on their use of symbols and representations; and it briefly discusses agency and structures, i.e., “how much control [one has] in constructing [their] identities and how much control or constraint is exercised over [them]” (OPENLEARN, 2016a, p. 8). By the end of this activity, the students asked me a couple of questions about specific parts of the text that they had not understood.

Again, since the empirical material generated in this second class was also extensive, and there were many digressions as well as examples given by the learners (some of which will be discussed later), I rely on another movement-image to sum up the main ideas shared by the students about the text:

**Movement-image 11** – Ideas on the text *Questions of Identity* presented by the students

Flávia: “So, **personality is individual qualities, and identities involve a group.**”

Helem: “On this part here, it’s saying that it’s really important to **have different identities**. Like, **the way you talk to your friends doesn’t, don’t have to be the same, like, when you talk to your sister, to your family, to your best friends** because it’s different. **It’s different people**. And you have to know how to talk to them.”

Helem: “On the last part, it’s saying that it’s important to know that **the way I see myself is different than the way other people see**. It’s the main idea.”

Rubi: “Characteristic different people. **Different places, different characteristics.**”

Elton: “Continues the question about the difference identity and personality. **It’s possible see stereotypes. [...] The worst of us. It’s common in job, and religious community, and mass media. [...] This is when the people judge other persons [...] without being careful.**”

Rodrigo: “And in the other paragraph, the text say **you can’t be, like, a businessman, if you don’t [...] practice things that businessmen make [do].**”

Helem: “For me, **identity is who I am**. But **personality is the things that I choose, good to me and bad, like things that construct me.**”

This series of statements, especially Helem's last words, shows that there is not a smooth transition from one state to another (i.e., from not knowing something to knowing it). In other words, one should not expect that they would instantly change their perceptions only because they had read a text and discussed it. As my students told me several times inside and outside the classroom, the process of engaging themselves with understanding a complex topic such as identity would take time. What occurred were encounters among their prior knowledge, other students', the teacher's, and nonhuman entities (like the text), and from them they constructed new comprehensions throughout the semester.<sup>59</sup> For Barad (2007, p. 91), this kind of intra-action refers to "specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world".

As Rodrigo mentions an example of a profession, he reinforces the idea of the recurrence of practices adopted within particular social domains, which refers to enacting certain performances in the world – i.e., this is an instance of material-discursive practices in the form of specific iterative enactments (BARAD, 2003). Moreover, as one can see, after reading the text, a greater focus is placed on how we relate to others. Flávia, Helem, and Rubi bring social relations to our attention: how society is organized into groups as well as its heterogeneity, depending on the kinds of relationships we have with others and places where we might be. As Hall (1992, p. 277) argues, we enact "different identities at different [space]times". This second moment reiterates the notion of mutability of identities mentioned in our first class.

Elton connects some of the ideas from the text with his previous knowledge and makes an insightful remark on differences: he comments on the creation and perpetuation of stereotypes and their negative consequences in society. The relation between "I" (identity) and "the Other" (difference) is implied here. In this regard, Hall (1996) underscores that identity has been historically placed in a hierarchical position to the detriment of difference. The author provides us with the following example:

new identities [...] emerged in the 1970s, grouped around the signifier 'black', which in the British context provide[d] a new focus of identification for both Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities. What these communities ha[d] in common, which they represent[ed] through taking on the 'black' identity, [was] not that they [were] culturally, ethnically, linguistically or even physically the same, but that they [were] seen and treated as 'the same' (i.e., non-white, 'other') by the dominant culture. (HALL, 1992, p. 308, emphasis in original).

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<sup>59</sup> Here I obviously address identity from my own praxiological background. Thus, this process I mention should not be seen as going from a "naïve thought" to an "elaborate thought", but rather as undergoing ontoepistemic transformations through one's experiences.



Since the concept of identity has often been criticized in the literature, other terms such as (*point of*) *identification*, *position(ing)*, *positionality*, and *subject position* have been offered as alternatives (HALL, 1990, 1992). These other words are meant to convey a less essentialist, ingrained, and overbearing tone. However, Barad (2007, p. 223) argues that, in Western epistemology, such notions “often implicitly rely on a container model of space and a Euclidean geometric imaginary”, and that “time is [usually conceived as] divided into evenly spaced increments marking a progression of events”. According to her, consequently, issues of connectivity, boundary formation, and exclusion tend to be oversimplified.

By and large, contemporary critical perspectives reject identity as something given, stable, fixed, coherent, unified, permanent, homogenous, definitive, and finished (SILVA, 2000). Accordingly, they move toward a comprehension of identity as a construction, a production, a relation, a performance, embracing its instability, fragmentation, inconsistency, contradiction, and incompleteness (HALL, 1990, 1992). In general terms, identity is linked to belonging to social groups and occupying social locations as individuals, which are the definitions the students found in the text we read and discussed. Further, identity is understood as permeated by relations of power and as historically and culturally constituted.

So, what does posthumanism bring to the table? It rests on the valuable reflections prompted by other praxiologies and movements, but it criticizes the conception of identity within a framework of representation and its detachment from materiality. In this sense, Barad (2003, p. 801) problematizes the overemphasis on “language or some other form of cultural representation” at the expense of matter/materiality, that is, “the representationalist belief in the power of words to mirror preexisting phenomena” (p. 802), which treats matter as something inert, passive, and immutable.<sup>60</sup> By offering a performative understanding of material-discursive practices, she seeks to redirect our attention from correspondence and description of reality to “matters of practices, doings, and actions” (BARAD, 2007, p. 135).

It is often unquestionably assumed that representations can be captured by subjects (with or without the aid of an object) and then reproduced (note the underlying assumption about individual, separate entities here). Nevertheless, the process is much more intricate than that. What is conceived as representation is actually a new assemblage in its intra-acting with different entities. Within a rhizomatic purview, it works as one of the actualizations that are

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<sup>60</sup> For Barad (2007, p. 47), the issue is not that representations are meaningless or unimportant, but rather that their ontological constitution is taken for granted, since they “are presumed to serve a mediating function between independently existing entities”.

possible. It is a movement from the rhizome. Therefore, this new becoming “should be understood as a complex practice in its own right” (BARAD, 2007, p. 51).

Barad’s (2003, 2007) perspective is inspired by insights from the Bohrian philosophy-physics<sup>61</sup> (which, for both authors, are two inseparable domains). In addition, especially when it comes to her discussion about material-discursive practices, her arguments are heavily influenced by her readings of Foucault’s (1977, 1978) and Butler’s (1990, 1993) works. However, the theoretical physicist and feminist philosopher reformulates some of their anthropocentric ideas focused exclusively on the social aspects of human agency, practices, and relations. Barad (2007, p. 34, 35) argues that the main issue is that, to some extent, they end up privileging “discursive over material concerns”, consequently reinscribing “the nature-culture dualism”. She reminds us that “the matter of bodies [has] its own historicity” and that “its very materiality plays an *active* role in the workings of power” (BARAD, 2003, p. 809, emphasis in original). Once we take ontological relationality seriously, we understand the need to address the materiality of human and nonhuman bodies as agentive and co-constitutive.

Identity turns into an essentialized notion when it closes off possibilities of becoming, i.e., when it is approached as a fixed element. Rather, it should be seen as embedded in and constituted by mutable relations, and not as a quiescent and an unresponsive category. In this sense, posthumanism does not perceive “individually determinate entities with inherent properties” (BARAD, 2003, p. 812). It stresses “the *provisional* nature of both identity and body boundaries” (DE FREITAS; CURINGA, 2015, p. 259, emphasis in original) and maintains that our focus should be on phenomena in their relationality, and not on individual entities. As Barad explains (2003, p. 815, emphasis in original):

*phenomena are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting “components.” [...] The notion of intra-action (in contrast to the usual “interaction,” which presumes the prior existence of independent entities/relata) represents a profound conceptual shift. It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the “components” of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful.*

Thus, our intra-actions bring about the establishment of boundaries in-phenomena, which necessarily lead to exclusions for which we are ethically accountable. However, it is important to notice that such boundaries can be rearranged, rearticulated, and reworked in each new intra-action, that is, intra-actions constrain but do not determine phenomena. These posthumanist

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<sup>61</sup> “Niels Bohr (1885-1962), a Danish physicist and contemporary of Einstein’s, was one of the founders of quantum physics. He won the Nobel Prize in 1922 for his quantum model of the atom” (BARAD, 2007, p. 405).

reflections are resumed in the following sections, which were especially constructed from the students' speeches on their identities. Unlike their understandings of identity as a relatively more fixed category, as shown in the movement-images 10 and 11 (the first classes in which the topic was discussed), their perceptions moved toward a more fluid comprehension of the concept.

Nonetheless, at this point, given the discussion presented so far, one might be wondering: "If identity is such a problematic term, why are we still talking about it? Why are scholars still discussing it?" In order to answer this question, I rely on a conversation I had with my students on the text *Questions of Identity* (OPENLEARN, 2016a) by the end of the class and on Mark's reply in his intraview:

[12]

Teacher: What questions do you have? [Flávia] said she has some.

Flávia: The text says, "Identity requires some element of choice". I didn't understand this.

Teacher: The choice?

Flávia: Yeah. [...]

Teacher: So, there are some things you can choose, and some things you can't. There's a space of choice. But **identity is more related to groups, social groups.**

Rubi: Oh, social groups.

Teacher: Yes, for example, **if I look at you, the first thing I see is that there are four women and three men here. For me, being a woman is a very strong identity.** Why? People have had prejudice against me because I am a woman. For example, when I started driving, whenever I took the car to go somewhere, I always heard snarky remarks, criticism, yeah? But nobody has ever said anything about my brother. So, this is a kind of prejudice, just because I am a woman. See? Or... **Do you remember Tony Porter talking about his son?** [referring to a video they had watched and discussed in class]

Students: Yes.

Teacher: **Just because his son cried, he wasn't "manly enough". That's identity. You see how identity is strong? It's related to the social groups to which you belong. So, you, guys, you belong to the male social group** [talking to the boys], **and girls, you belong to the female social group** [talking to the girls]. **But the element of choice is this: you have to identify with that identity.** Because, being a woman, for you [referring to the girls]... Maybe that doesn't matter. You don't see that as something that makes a difference in your life, in a way or another. You don't think you suffer because of that. You see? For example, a person who is black, you can't choose not to be black. You're black, you're gay, and so on.

Flávia: So, this is personality?

Students: No!

Teacher: No, I'm talking about identity. Identity is related to social groups. A group that is heterosexual, a group that is made up of women... Women constitute a group in society, right? Being black, people that are black constitute a group, right? [referring to how society divides people into social groups] People that are white...

Mark: **Teenagers.**

Teacher: **Yes, teenagers belong to a group. For example, being a parent, like [Rubi] and [Elton]... They belong to that group.** [both students were actively engaged in their identities as

parents] We don't belong to that group. [referring to the other students and herself] **We don't have children. See? See the difference now?**

Flávia: Yeah.

[...]

Helem: I have a friend that she passes for a lot of trouble. And she grows up too faster. She was an adult in a body of a teenager. And it was very bad. So, she doesn't belong to her identity group.

Teacher: Yes, so it's also, it's **ALSO about the way you see yourself and others see you**. For example, do I see myself as a Brazilian? Do you see yourselves as Brazilians? So, **there's this part you need to see yourself as that, and that other people have to identify you as that. There are these two things. They compose your identity, both of them.**

Elton: Yes.

(Class 27, Nov. 12, 2019)

[13]

Mark: Eu demorei um pouco para pegar a questão da identidade. Mas eu gostei, depois que eu entendi. Eu gostei, eu entendi do que se tratava. Eu achei bacana também **trabalhar, assim, como forma a sua identidade**.

Teacher: E o que você achou de falar sobre as suas?

Mark: Eu achei bacana, porque, igual, é um negócio que, assim, **é um negócio impacta muito na sua vida – você ser, ter tal identidade, pelo mal ou pelo bem**. Então, foi bastante legal.

[Mark: It took me a while to get the identity issue. But I liked it after I understood it. I liked it, I understood what it was about. I also thought it was cool to **study, like, how identity is formed**.

Teacher: And what did you think of talking about yours?

Mark: I thought it was cool, because, like, it's something that, well, **it's something that impacts your life a lot – you being, having an identity, for better or for worse**. So, it was pretty cool.]

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter f, Dec. 12, 2019)

The arguments I presented to my students and Mark's answer justify why working with identities is something important: we are “not free of identity markers – like gender and race” (DE FREITAS; CURINGA, 2015, p. 261), which have been “forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism” (HARAWAY, 2008, p. 16), and that “continue to enable inequity and injustice” (DE FREITAS; CURINGA, 2015, p. 261). In the words of Richardson and St. Pierre (2018, p. 1422), identities are “the shape markers of our lives”. The way people interact (or intra-act) with us is largely based on how they read our identities (race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, age, and so forth). In this respect, St. Pierre (2000, p. 260) underlines that “we can never control the forces of the outside”, i.e., social forces, which are exactly the ones that “fold us into identity”. Racialization and genderization, for instance, are material-discursive practices of disciplinary power, “concerned with the regulation, surveillance and government of, first,

[...] whole populations, and secondly, the individual and the body” (FOUCAULT, 1975, as cited in HALL, 1992, p. 289).

In cut 12, as Flávia questioned me about the text, I took the opportunity to explain how identities are socially constructed. In this intra-action, one can notice the several elements entangled with the topic at hand, such as belonging, choice and engagement, prejudice and inequity, intersectionality, the I-Other relation, among others. It is important to add that, given the movements of fixity and fluidity by which we are traversed and formed and the contradictory nature of our affiliations, albeit we might often find ourselves conditioned by identity markers, we can also use them strategically<sup>62</sup> (BRAIDOTTI, 1994; DAIGLE, 2018b; SPIVAK, 2009 [1993]). In fact, since we are enmeshed in sociopolitical relations that are permeated by power, we need to claim identities regularly, for instance, to take collective actions and to fight for the rights of minoritized groups. Therefore, drawing on insights from Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980]), we need to work with both desessentialization and strategic reessentialization. These processes are contingent upon the relations developed with those involved in them and excluded from them and dependent on different situations and spaces that are created and altered accordingly.

Following Pennycook (2021a, p. 83), this experience of language education was politically committed to working with understandings of belonging aligned with the use of “language against the grain, [...] [by] taking up and using a language that has been a tool of oppression, colonialism, or rigid identity and turning it against itself”. As Mark claims in cut 13, we worked with issues such as identity formation and how identities are entangled with our lives. The activities I did with the students on this topic highlight the importance of addressing sociohistorical and cultural aspects, insofar as they can help us understand the way we perceive others and ourselves as well as why our perception has been shaped in such a way. As Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980]) argue, in order to criticize, deconstruct, and resignify something, we first need to understand it. Further, we should not think of becoming in terms of returning to a desirable former state, inasmuch as the presence and effects of colonial and humanist onto-epistemologies in our lives cannot be erased and overlooked – for the authors, since “we are born into them”, then “it is there we must stand battle” (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2005 [1980], p. 189). Thus, we need to work from and with what we have got so as to propose and enact other forms of critical and creative engagement with the world (BARAD, 2007; BRAIDOTTI, 2013; MURRIS, 2016). For Haraway (in conversation with WOLFE, 2016, p. 289), this implies

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<sup>62</sup> The concept of *strategic essentialism* was coined by Spivak (2009 [1993]).

an ontological commitment to engaging oneself in “different compositions, different worldings”.

As I noticed some aspects of the discussion were still somewhat unclear to them, in the following class, I prepared a set of slides with pictures of celebrities and unknown people. I asked them to tell me the identities they could think of when they saw those pictures. We talked about the following identities: people with disabilities, Latinx<sup>63</sup> singers, black male comedians and actors, people with autism, lesbians, gays and drag queens, poor people, people with Down syndrome, black female singers and journalists, fat liberation advocates and actors, Brazilian indigenous people, people with short stature, and child actors and actors in their forties. As one might expect, the students and I commented on how identities of race, gender, sexuality, class, nationality, age, profession, and so on, intersect. In order to exemplify what we did, here I present two examples in which the students mentioned race and class:

[14]

Teacher: I brought something to help us think about identity. **I'm going to show you pictures of people, and I want you to tell me the first identity you can think of when you see these people, okay? The first thing that comes to your mind. [...]**

**Movement-image 12** – Activity on people’s identities: black actors and comedians



Tyler James Williams  
*Chris Rock*  
(Everybody hates Chris)



*Will Smith*  
(The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air)

Sources: Everybody Hates Chris (2005-2009) and The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air (1990-1996).

<sup>63</sup> As there were pictures of a woman and a man, I use the term Latinx as a gender nonbinary alternative here.

Teacher: [...] So, the actor who plays Chris Rock in *Everybody Hates Chris*, and *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* [two well-known series in Brazil, broadcast in national free-to-air television networks]. So, what identity...

Mark: They are comedians.

Teacher: Yeah, they are comedians...

Flávia: **Black.**

Helem: **Black men.**

Teacher: Yes, they are black. And they talk about it [being black] in the series.

Helem: They are amazing, both of series.

Teacher: **And in both series they talk about racism.**

Elton: In my case, I *identification*?

Teacher: I identify...

Elton: **I identify with Chris Rock. My childhood [...] is very similar, in Jardim Novo Mundo [a district in Goiânia], 70's, 80's. Oh, similar!**

Helem: **My father always say that the way Rochelle raised Chris is the same way my grandmother raised my father.** [laughter]

Elton: **Do your husband have two jobs, or no?** [asking Rubi in a playful way] *Eu acho que a gente está muito preguiçoso* [I think we're too lazy]. [says it playfully] [laughter]

Rubi: **My husband has one.** [laughter]

Teacher: **But, [Elton], there's a difference. You're not black.**

Elton: Oh, yes.

Teacher: **Maybe you identify with him because of poverty, because you grew up in poor environment, right?**

Mark: Yeah.

Elton: Yes. [nods while he says it]

Teacher: I did too. So, you might've identified with them because you were poor.

Elton: Yes.

Teacher: And they talk about poverty as well. Like, "I don't have enough money to buy something, to buy anything", yeah?

(Class 29, Nov. 14, 2019)

In general, the students' speeches indicate an entanglement of discursive and material aspects since what they see are those people's bodies as their point of reference to answer my question. Again, as Rezende (2020a, online, my translation) maintains, "[o]ne's body is the first thing that is seen"<sup>64</sup>, and sometimes the body that enunciates matters more than the content of what is said (for instance, who is entitled to speak and be actually heard in society?). Such a reading always implies assemblages of bodies, their sociomaterial relations to each other, and the spaces they occupy in their intra-actions. Put differently, the construction of our comprehension of social dynamics always involves multiplicities of different kinds of elements (whether or not we are aware of them).

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<sup>64</sup> Original quote: "[o] corpo, quando chega, é o primeiro a ser visto".

When Elton mentions the issue of class, as he relates it to his own story, I call his attention to the fact that although his family and mine were poor when we were children, he and I are white. This is an example of the kind of connections and reworkings of identity categories that are materialized in the dynamics of everyday life (FERNANDES, 1997). My statement makes an agential cut that produces *a particular material-discursive boundary that matters*; still, the positions we take should always be seen as produced, contingent, and contested categories. They do not refer to fixed and unitary properties of human bodies but to unsettled and disunified arrangements that pertain to “particular phenomena (not individuals)” (BARAD, 2007, p. 243).

As Fernandes (1997, p. 10) stresses, “‘the working class’ does not represent a singular unit but is constituted by status differences”. My students could be considered working class, lower middle class, and middle class (see Map 1). Flávia is an administrative assistant, Elton is a geography teacher, and Rubi is an accountant. Helem, Mark, and Rodrigo were teenagers, and hence just students, by the time of this study. Since everyone in the classroom was acquainted with the TV series, they were familiar with the fact that the character Julius (Chris’ father) has two jobs. As Helem talks about her family (her father is *pardo*, and here I should mention that Rubi is her mother), Elton asks Rubi about how many jobs her husband has, and since he and her husband only have one job each, he says in a playful way: “I think we’re too lazy”, even though Elton works at two schools. The underlying assumption is that, since one is from a working-class/middle-class family, for them to move up in life, they should work harder than others. According to Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980], p. 80), “it is the assemblage”, the “collective assemblage of enunciation”, “that explains all the voices present within a single voice” – in this case, Elton’s.

Silva (2016) underscores that neoliberalism permeates social life, leading us to see ourselves as individuals in upward social mobility, who comply with market forces that promote competitiveness and actions that are profit-oriented, filling us with a perpetual longing to earn more and be the best workforce. This is done not by coercion or repression but by the exercise of disciplinary power over bodies, making people accept the social structures imposed on them, without threatening the system (ALVES, 2019; FOUCAULT, 1977). In this sense, we are all enwrapped by capitalism and thus become part of the problem, as our neoliberal society continually fosters a kind of “*homo economicus* subjectivity” (PENNYCOOK, 2020a, p. 191).

As Lander (2005) and Thurlow and Jaworski (2017) explain, neoliberal ideologies that are embedded in the very fabric of society create not only a desirable social order but make people recognize their place in this order and see it as the only possibility. Although Elton was



joking, his statement shows the naturalization of such a discourse. His utterance relates directly to how our subject positions are structured by power, emplacing us in particular sociopolitical spaces and historical moments (BRAIDOTTI, 2013). Based on Foucault's (1978) work, Barad (2007, p. 235) claims that "power in its stabilizing and sedimenting effects" should be seen as "a reiterated acting", "not limited to the social". For her, we need to understand "the productive nature of regulatory and other naturalcultural practices" (p. 235) in their intra-activity.

Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2013) are some of the scholars who argue that, in these times we are living, new materialisms should work in tandem with old materialisms so as to understand these naturalcultural practices. As stated before, new materialisms recognize the contributions of old materialisms and build on them. Thus, we cannot only focus on economic and social aspects (as detached from other factors), since many of these elements draw lines and foster divides that prevent us from reaching a broader understanding of how things work. According to Barad (2007, p. 226), addressing class in its "cultural, ideological, and discursive dimensions" should be done along with "a thoroughgoing analysis of economic capital in its materiality", while also taking "the material dimensions of cultural economies" into account. Here we should remember that social, political, economic, and technological factors are naturalcultural elements formed in their entanglement of material relations, and consequently that these elements produce humans as much as humans produce them. In the words of Barad (2007, p. 244, emphasis in original),

[m]aterial conditions matter, not because they "support" or "sustain" or "mediate" particular discourses that are the actual generative factors in the formation of subjects, but because both discourses *and* matter come to matter through processes of materialization and the iterative enfolding of phenomena into apparatuses of bodily production. The material and the discursive are mutually implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity and enfolding.

Further, Braidotti (2013, 2022) reminds us that capitalism is opportunistically post-anthropocentric since its profit-driven logic of market forces commodifies all bodies, animate and inanimate. In line with her arguments, Susen (2022, p. 67) adds that "[t]he potential to commodify everything – including life itself – represents a constitutive feature of an economic system in which all aspects of existence can be governed by the pursuit of exchange value". Accordingly, he goes on to claim that we need to be attentive to how capitalism co-opts and reappropriates "the critical, cognitive, responsive, adaptive, and creative faculties of ordinary actors" (SUSEN, 2022, p. 68).

Still in relation to this discussion, here is another moment of the class when the students and I briefly talked about class:

[15]

Teacher: Okay. And then... [shows next slide]

**Movement-image 13** – Activity on people's identities: homeless people



?????

Sources: Pastoral da Comunicação (2010) and McWilliams (2019).

Helem: **They are poor.**

Mark: **They're poor.**

Flávia: **Poor.**

Teacher: Yes, so **being poor is also an identity. See? We don't even know their names.**

Mark: Yeah. [the students take on downcast facial expressions]

Teacher: It's sad, isn't it? **We know the others' names, but theirs... [referring to the people shown on the slides] Who are they? We don't know.** So, being poor people.

Rubi: Teacher, **I think interesting in United States, the poor people...**

Elton: Homeless?

Teacher: Yes, the homeless, people who live on the streets.

Rubi: **They speak with people normal[ly] in the street. In Brazil, we feel medo [fear]?**

Teacher: "We are afraid of homeless people"?

Rubi: **In Brazil, [yes,] but in United States, no.**

Helem: **It's because there they're just next to you. They don't start to persuade you to give your money.**

Elton: *Parece...?*

Teacher: It looks like...

Elton: **It looks like invisible people.**

Teacher: Indeed, and **these people [pointing at the image] live in subhuman conditions.**

Students: Yes.

Teacher: And one of the reasons I'm showing you this is because, maybe, like you said, you were poor during your childhood. [talking to Elton] Maybe you want to talk about that...

Elton: Oh, yes.

Teacher: About being poor, and how that's impacted your life.

(Class 29, Nov. 14, 2019)

According to Ailton Krenak (2020c), the fact that there is a subhumanity that lives in extreme poverty has been naturalized in society, and as Elton and I mention, to such an extent that those people have been invisibilized. Alves (2019) explains that since all demographic censuses are carried out in residences, the homeless are necessarily excluded from them. The author concludes that, as the law does not recognize them as part of the human population of the country, there is no formulation and implementation of public policies for them. In her study, she presents and discusses stories told by a group of homeless people that live in a relatively big city in the state of Goiás, in Brazil. In her words, their “life stories are permeated with situations of violence, fear, cold, hunger, and death”, which are “generally ignored by the State and by the civil society” (ALVES, 2019, p. 9). She adds that, most of the time, the media tends to justify and naturalize their situation.

In Brazil, most of the homeless are nonwhite. That is, we cannot disregard the evident intersection of class and race here.<sup>65</sup> Alves, Silvestre, and Lima (2019, p. 15, my translation) assert that “the homeless population inherited the social abandonment of the periods of slavery and post-abolition”<sup>66</sup>. Given the deep-rooted prejudice of the time, blacks were denied the right to enter the job market, and as Alves (2019) claims, there were many attempts to whiten the Brazilian population by bringing immigrant Europeans to work here, leaving black people unemployed. Such actions have profoundly influenced their marginalization in the country. As a result, still nowadays, the majority of the poor are black and *pardx*, whereas the wealthiest people in the country are white (SANTOS; MASTRELLA-DE-ANDRADE, 2016). For Rosa and Flores (2017, p. 639), such a situation highlights “the structural logics of racial capitalism”, which perpetually marginalizes particular populations.

As Alves (2019) stresses, besides what they go through due to their class and race, women are prone to suffer even more because of the male domination within this subaltern group. In her work, the author shows examples of intergroup and intimate partner violence, such as (attempts of) rape and spousal abuse, respectively. Further, the denial of rights is

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<sup>65</sup> For an in-depth discussion on this issue, see Alves (2019).

<sup>66</sup> Original quote: “a população em situação de rua herdou o abandono social do período escravocrata e pós-abolição”.

inherited by their children, who are seen as outcasts and delinquents since the moment they are born.

Brum (2019) underlines that, in Brazil, the homeless have been attacked, hurt, and killed by a sick society filled with hate – from January to April 2019, at least ten homeless people were burned alive in the country. As discussed in section 2.1, our current sociopolitical situation has just reinforced and accelerated the process of dehumanization and death of the homeless (ALVES; SILVESTRE; LIMA, 2019). Therefore, the less human a body is considered, the more it is tolerable to harm and violate it. For Rezende (2017) and Alves, Silvestre, and Lima (2019), as sidewalks, streets, and viaducts are spaces where the homeless often suffer violence and are eliminated, they end up constituting a *social morgue*. In this respect, Alves (2019) emphasizes that since the homeless's social death has already occurred, their existence does not matter to society; consequently, they are frequently murdered, and no one is punished for the crime.

Urzêda-Freitas (2020) insightfully addresses how the normalization of poverty and death are associated with neoliberalism. He argues that the concept of private property forms the basis of the capitalist system. As the author explains,

[t]he right to property has never been an absolute and universal right. On the contrary, it was built by and for specific groups, from the exploitation, enslavement, expropriation, and extermination of individuals considered nonhuman – such as women, peasants, the urban poor and native peoples from Africa, Asia, and the Americas – and, therefore, unworthy of the rights that human individuals could have.<sup>67</sup> (URZÊDA-FREITAS, 2022, para. 8, my translation).

As a result, nowadays there are many things that seem to be more important than people's lives, especially things dear to capitalism. In this group of students, Rubi and Helem were the only ones who had ever traveled abroad and who could afford it. In cut 15, on the one hand, Helem's statement indicates one's concern about their money; on the other hand, it suggests, as it happens most of the time, that we do not give the same kind of attention to the lives of those living on the streets. This demonstrates that the more invisibilized homeless people are, the less their presence disturbs others. Alves (2019) stresses that, as the middle class and the elite are unfamiliar with misery, seeing it makes them feel uncomfortable. Following Urzêda-Freitas

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<sup>67</sup> Original quote: “[o] direito à propriedade nunca foi um direito absoluto e universal. Ao contrário, ele foi construído por e para grupos específicos, a partir da exploração, escravização, expropriação e extermínio de indivíduos considerados não humanos – como mulheres, camponeses, pobres urbanos e povos originários da África, da Ásia e das Américas – e, portanto, indignos dos direitos que indivíduos humanos pudessem ter.”

(2022), this instantiates how we incorporate the logic of capital into our ways of being, thinking, feeling, and acting.

Moreover, Buarque (2003, p. 73, my translation) underscores that “[p]overty is seen as an unpleasant nuisance to be avoided rather than a problem to be solved. The aim is to eliminate the inconvenience that the poor cause to the rich, not the social degradation that poverty entails for the poor”<sup>68</sup>. Accordingly, instead of seeking to combat poverty, which is a structural problem, society attempts to dispose of the bodies of the poor, perceived as a blemish on the urban space. For Alves (2019), this process of dehumanization adds to society’s lack of empathy.

Individualism, the way we see it today, is a Western conception. It has become more accentuated with the advent of neoliberalism, which gave rise to the neoliberal individual (KRENAK, 2020b). The neoliberal system promotes hyper-individualism (BRAIDOTTI, 2013), both by encouraging people to believe and adhere to meritocratic discourses (e.g., “You are responsible for your own failure or success, regardless of your socio-economic conditions”) and by making them value their lives while disregarding others. In Motyl’s (2019, p. 14) words,

neoliberalism has resulted in an affective regime in which corporations are to be afforded empathy [...], while the poor, particularly those racialized as nonwhite, are dehumanized [...] and not only denied empathy, but even punished for their poverty, for which, the neoliberal narrative maintains, they only have themselves to blame.

Braidotti (2013, p. 139) emphasizes that we need to devise “practices to counteract the necro-political economy we are caught in”. For Susen (2022), this necessarily involves critique, deconstruction, and subversion of neoliberal ideas. In this line of thought, Krenak (2020a) proposes, in opposition to the colonial Western notions of progress and development, the conception of *involvement*, that is, involving ourselves with one another and with life and expanding our affective fields. Thus, while development is individually oriented, involvement is collectively oriented.

Had I read, studied, and known what I do today, I would have problematized Rubi’s and Helem’s statements. For example, I could have asked them questions such as: “What do you think of the homeless?”; “Why are we afraid of them?”; “Why do you think homeless people in Brazil are different from those in the United States?”; “Why do you think we tend to care

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<sup>68</sup> Original quote: “[a] pobreza é vista como um estorvo desagradável a ser evitado, e não como um problema a ser resolvido. Deseja-se eliminar o incômodo que os pobres representam para os ricos, e não a degradação social que a pobreza significa para os pobres”.

more about our money than their lives?” Further, I could have prepared a class based on the discussion presented in the preceding paragraphs.

After the class with the movement-images previously shown, the students prepared speeches so they could talk about their own identities (these are addressed in the following sections). As a final topic, however, now I shall focus on the relation between “I” and “the Other”, touched upon throughout this section. In his intraview, when I asked Elton to share his opinion on the short movie *Validation* (2007)<sup>69</sup>, which we had watched and discussed in class, he sagaciously connected our discussion on identity with the issue of alterity:

[16]

Elton: Nossa, eu gostei demais. Eu chamei o pessoal em casa para assistir, esposa e as duas filhas, e foi interessante. E coincidiu de estar sendo, sempre é difícil, mas de **ver o cuidado que tem que se ter de conversar**. [...] Nossa preocupação... Nós estávamos apostando na escola para o tema da redação desse ano, para o Enem, que poderia ser sobre empatia, ou resiliência. E até caiu na prova da redação do concurso de Senador Canedo [um município de Goiás] – **alteridade, que está ali junto com identidade. As pessoas se sentem no lugar do outro**, e o cuidado do elogio [questão tratada no vídeo], de **ver com olhos diferentes. Eu estava precisando também de ver aquilo**. [...] Esse [vídeo], eu fiz questão de chamar a esposa e as duas filhas para assistir. Foi ótimo.

[Elton: Gee, I liked it so much. I called the people at home to watch it, my wife and two daughters, and it was interesting. And it happened to be, it's always difficult, but **to see the importance of handling our interactions with others carefully**. [...] Our concern... We were taking guesses at the topic of this year's essay at school, for Enem [Brazil's National High School Exam], that it could be about empathy, or resilience. And it happened to be the topic of the essay in a civil service examination in Senador Canedo [a municipality in Goiás] – **alterity, which is there together with identity. People putting themselves in another person's shoes**, and the importance of compliments [an issue presented in the video], of **seeing things through someone else's eyes. I needed to see that as well**. [...] This one [video], I urged my wife and two daughters to watch. It was great.]

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter e, Dec. 17, 2019)

Not only do Elton's statements indicate that identity and alterity are current themes, but he also notices that talking about them was something particularly important for him. In discussing these topics in the classroom, we aim to show our students that the meanings we construct – i.e., the way we perceive ourselves and others – not just influence our actions but also condition how we see the world. In ontological terms, once we take into account that “[b]eings do not preexist their relatings” (HARAWAY, 2016 [2003], p. 98), we understand that we can only be who we are in relations with others – whom we cannot be – and that when we

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<sup>69</sup> This is explained in detail in the next chapter.

deny the Other, at the same time we deny ourselves. Murris (2016) refers to this co-constitution as mutual relationality. For the author,

[people and] things ‘are’ because they are in relation to and influencing each other. [...] [T]hat is, nature and culture, nonhuman and human exist interdependently [–] they are ontologically (‘onto’ means being) always in relation and affected by each other. The entanglement of all human and non-human phenomena intra-acting with one another means that it is impossible to say where the boundaries *are* of each person [or thing]. (MURRIS, 2016, p. 280, emphasis in original).

Moving this discussion forward, Patel (2016, p. 90) claims that the problem with most projects that support social justice is their focus on the logic of individuality, which according to her “cannot dismantle coloniality because it was created to foment it”. Her argument highlights the need to consider “a post-individualistic notion of the subject” (BRAIDOTTI, 2013, p. 87). This position does not imply a disregard of social structures and categories, insofar as relations of power and hierarchies as well as their effects are fully acknowledged. It is an attempt to move beyond the exclusively human sphere, seeking to reconfigure the relations between humans and nonhumans. In addition, the underlying assumption of bodies as enclosed, bound, determinate, with inherent boundaries and properties, is deconstructed. For Daigle (2017), such a reconceptualization expands and complexifies the ethical and political demands and relations in which we are involved.

From this viewpoint, even though we cannot *know* others, we should try to be attentive to our intra-active becomings, which Haraway (2016 [2003], p. 141) defines as “alertness to otherness-in-relation”. Hence, instead of focusing on individual others, we could turn our attention to who and what emerges from relations, thus opening possibilities of sociomaterial reconfigurations. Accordingly, given our inevitable entanglements, which increase our ethical accountability, the author emphasizes that “[b]ecoming-with, not becoming, is the name of the game” (HARAWAY, 2016, p. 12). We are always becoming at the material-discursive level – we constitute and are constituted by others at the same time.

Braidotti (2013, p. 100, emphasis in original) offers an insightful perspective on this issue:

[we ought to] endure the principle of not-One at the in-depth structures of our subjectivity by acknowledging the ties that bind us to the multiple ‘others’ in a vital web of complex interrelations. This ethical principle breaks up the fantasy of unity, totality and one-ness, but also the master narratives of primordial loss, incommensurable lack and irreparable separation. What I want to emphasize instead, in a more affirmative vein, is the priority of the relation and the awareness that one is the effect of irrepressible flows of encounters, interactions, affectivity and desire, which one is not in charge of. This humbling experience of not-

Oneness, which is constitutive of the non-unitary subject, anchors the subject in an ethical bond to alterity, to the multiple and external others that are constitutive of that entity which, out of laziness and habit, we call the ‘self’.

Similarly, Fenwick (2015) perceives us as *effects* of connections and activities. She then argues that “everything is *performed* into existence in webs of relations” (p. 88, emphasis in original), and that entities act together excluding, inviting, and regulating each other. Once we consider our ontological constitution is spatially distributed, we realize that the sociomateriality of bodies is not defined by humans alone, but also by other nonhuman actors that are involved in meaning making *with* us.

Moreover, we should have in mind that being derives from becoming, and that being is only actualized in material-discursive practices whereby agential cuts are made. For Daigle (2018a, p. 156), being relies on “its affecting and being affected by other beings, subjectively, socially, materially”. As a result, since “our relationality is essential to our becoming”<sup>70</sup>, Daigle (2018b, p. 9, my translation) suggests the term *affectability* to refer to this relation. This specific video was very meaningful to Elton, *affecting him and making him affect others* in rhizomatic ways – in the words of Haraway (2008, p. 4, emphasis in original), “[t]o be one is always to *become with* many”. He even sent a message to our WhatsApp group complimenting the choice:

**Movement-image 14** – Elton’s comment on the short movie *Validation* (2007)



Source: Empirical material.

<sup>70</sup> Original quote: “notre relationalité est essentielle à notre devenir”.



At other different moments, he reiterated that he had enjoyed watching and talking about the topics presented in the video. As Toohey and Dagenais (2015, p. 313) underline, “when learners understand the social uses of that which they are learning, their engagement and learning are enhanced”. This short movie called the students’ attention to the power of language, which will be addressed in the following chapter. However, for the time being, it is worth mentioning Elton’s intra-actions. In addition to discussing the video in class with his classmates and me, this activity led him to involve his family in it, as he stresses in cut 16, and reflect on his work environment, as he told us during the class. According to him, this discussion was important for his personal and professional life.

Now, we should remember that the notion of *subjectivity* (as we conceive it nowadays), usually linked to individuality, originated from Western conceptions of the self. Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980]) comment on the nonsubjective aspect present in non-Western societies, for whom collectivity, corporeality, and polyvocality were/are the most important elements. With the purpose of destabilizing the idea of the individual as the center, and at the same time not completely doing away with the concept of subjectivity, Daigle (2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2020) offers the notion of *transsubjectivity* to help us distance ourselves from humanist understandings of the subject. Following Braidotti (2013), the author reinforces the fact that we are always caught up in a field of forces, tensions, and flows, and that the material entanglements in which we exist need to be taken into account.

Braidotti’s (2016, 2022) work redefines subjectivity in terms of a non-unitary, expanded relational self, seen as an effect of countless entanglements and relations. Moreover, for her, “subjectivity is not the exclusive prerogative of *anthropos*” (BRAIDOTTI, 2022, p. 27). The kind of ethics proposed by the author includes the principle of non-profit, emphasis on collectivity, engagement with relationality, experimentation with different ways of doing things, and critique and creativity as its driving forces (BRAIDOTTI, 2013). Still, from Elton’s statement, some additions can be made to this list: given his conscious attempt to displace his own perception, his words suggest the importance of elements such as empathy, sensitivity, attention and care, and willingness to engage oneself with another.

The reflections presented in this section offer ways of seeing and constructing who we are/become differently, with a focus on relationality and contingency, which might help us better understand the complexities of the trajectories of our identity (trans)formation. In the following section, I specifically focus on the discussions we had on race and ethnicity.

## 2.4 Race and ethnicity: some reflections from the students' speeches on identity

For Muniz (2020), we cannot think about decoloniality without bringing those socially marginalized into the debate. Similarly, Rocha (2020) argues that, as educators, by not talking about those that hegemonic discourses invisibilize, we end up reinforcing their ostracism. Therefore, it was a political choice to present different intersectional topics discussed by black people in the classes taught:

### **Movement-image 15** – Black speakers who were present in our classes



Source: Kakenya Ntaiya (2013).



Source: Tony Porter (2010).



From left to right: Brian, Gabriel, Derrick, and Bernard.  
Source: Mama Hope (2012).



Source: Chimamanda Adichie (2009).

Tony Porter's (2010) and Kakenya Ntaiya's (2013) Ted Talks were discussed in class, and Chimamanda Adichie's (2009) and Mama Hope's (2012) videos were used in the listening activities prepared for the tests. For Rezende (2019c), working with decoloniality does not mean to just talk about certain topics and propose critical discussions; rather, this is a project engaged in decolonizing people's minds and subjectivities. In her words, "it is essential to adopt postures

and attitudes toward confronting inherited models and promoting problematizations based on experiences and place of existence of political bodies made subaltern by the *colonial difference*”<sup>71</sup> (REZENDE, 2019c, p. 3, emphasis in original, my translation). From what some of my students shared, especially in their speeches, I noticed the course moved toward the direction proposed by the author. After we discussed the topics addressed in the previous sections, I asked them to talk about their identities. Here I present my instructions and Flávia’s speech:

[17]

Teacher: I’ll give you a piece of homework now. Do you remember what you did with the LLP [Language Learning Project]? That you talked about it from three to five minutes?

Students: Yes.

Teacher: **I want you to choose... You’re going to think about your identities**, and it can be about any kinds of groups to which you belong. **And then you’ll talk about them**, the same way we did with the LLP, okay? **You can talk about your experiences with that identity**. They can be good. They can be bad. [...] **Talk about those that are important to you**, okay? And this is an option: if you think it can help you with your speech, you can bring photos or objects to illustrate your presentation.

Mark: Related to...?

Teacher: ...related to yourself. If you want, okay? So, **you’re going to prepare a speech about who you are**. You’re going to choose from one to three identities. **It can be about something that happened to you, and that you’d like to share**. And, if you want, you can bring photos or objects.

(Class 28, Nov. 12, 2019)

[18]

*Instructions written on the board by the end of the class: Choose from one to three identities that stand out to you (in any area of your life). How does it feel to have that identity? Why? Have you had any experience involving this identity that has had an impact on you?*

(Field notes, Nov. 14, 2019)

[19]

Teacher: Okay. [Flávia], would you like to be next? [Flávia nods]

Flávia: I chose two identities to talk about. **The first one is about being white person. It’s not about prejudice against me, but I see the injustice and racism with the black people. And I think it’s like I am contributing to this inequality just for being a white**. So, I’m thinking about

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<sup>71</sup> Original quote: “é fundamental assumir posturas e atitudes de enfrentamento aos modelos herdados, e promover a problematização, a partir de vivências e do lugar de existência dos corpos-políticos subalternizados pela *diferença colonial*”.

some situations. And I think, it's like, if I and a black person do a job interview, and I... How can I say, *eu ser escolhida*?

Teacher: If I am chosen.

Flávia: **If I am chosen, I feel like I'm taking the place of this person just because I'm white. I don't know.**

Teacher: Have you ever been faced with a situation like that? I mean, a situation that actually occurred and in which you felt like that?

Flávia: Yeah, I will...

Teacher: Oh, you'll tell us. Okay.

Flávia: **Once I went to watch a football game, and there was a line to *revistar*...?**

Teacher: Pat down, or frisk. [writes the words on the board]

Flávia: **...pat down, and behind me there was a black girl, and in my turn they don't search me, and in her turn she had to take off her coat and her sneakers, and I was so ashamed of this. They treated us so differently. [...]**

(Class 30, Nov. 19, 2019)

From her vantage point as a black woman and scholar, Rezende (2020b) argues that people's place in the world and the value attributed to them are defined by their bodies. For the author, bodies convey meanings, and those are interpreted in certain ways that define one's worth in and to the world. I add that it is important to understand that this takes place in webs of relations and not among individuals. As Ferreira (2021) underscores, we are all racialized. Consequently, in addition to discussing race and combating racism, we also need to address white privilege (FERREIRA, A., 2020). M. Ferreira (2020) asserts that talking about whiteness is something that might make people uncomfortable because we are not used to doing it. As she explains, in Brazil, when the topic race is mentioned, the first idea that usually comes to people's mind is that the discussion is likely to revolve around black bodies. The author then draws attention to the fact that, like any other social normativity, white privilege is invisibilized, naturalized, unquestioned.

Bearing in mind a kind of ethics grounded in notions of affect, relationality, accountability, and that immerses us in processes rather than distinguishes us from them (DAIGLE, 2018a; SOUSA; PESSOA, 2023), I suggested that the students should share experiences they had had, their impact on them, and how they felt about them. Therefore, albeit they were supposed to talk about *their* identities, about who they were, what we had done in the previous classes and my instructions led them to look beyond the individual sphere.

Flávia's personal experiences as well as the way the course was constructed and conducted (notice the rhizomatic constitution of intra-actions in the cuts) drove her to talk about her white privilege explicitly. By drawing her reflections from recollections, she narrated a story of how her white skin privilege indirectly affected the sociomaterial life of a black woman

– indicating the entanglement of relations. Why did Flávia make this choice? As social actors, we are affected and affect other bodies and lives. Following Barad (2007, p. 391), “[s]ubjectivity is not a matter of individuality but a relation of responsibility to the other”. In her words,

the ethical subject is not the disembodied rational subject of traditional ethics but rather an embodied sensibility, which responds to its proximal relationship to the other. [...] [Therefore,] responsibility is not a commitment that a subject chooses but rather an incarnate relation that precedes the intentionality of consciousness, ‘an obligation which is anachronistically prior to every engagement’. (BARAD, 2007, p. 391, 392, emphasis in original).

In cut 19, Flávia notices that the woman’s black body was treated that way because of the existence of her white body, both of which were material-discursively conveying meanings that permeate society.<sup>72</sup> She understood that her presence makes her part of the problem. In this very contradictory world, she lives a comfortable life, in terms of race, at the expense of those who cannot; on the other hand, the same is true for her in terms of gender (Flávia elaborates on this idea in cut 28).

The officers that did the stop-and-frisk at the stadium were interpellated into enacting different performances in relation to those women’s bodies, making prominent the unconscious “habits of white privilege that organize our patterns of social interaction”, i.e., “bodily practices below the level of conscious intent that involve forms of attentiveness, assumptions of entitlement to space and to freedom of movement” (SULLIVAN, 2006, 2014, as cited in ALCOFF, 2015, p. 84). The entanglement of those bodies thereby led to different material-discursive practices in that space, which in turn created different effects and affects. Rendering such practices visible is a way of making them accessible for reflection and problematization.

Furthermore, following Daigle (2017, 2018a, 2018b), moving toward transsubjectivity might entail “painful desubjectification” (ST. PIERRE, 2000, p. 260). Unveiling her white privilege engendered feelings of guilt and shame for Flávia: “[I]f I and a black person do a job interview, and [...] [i]f I am chosen, I feel like I’m taking the place of this person just because I’m white”; and “I was so ashamed of this. They treated us so differently”. Following Sullivan (2014), despite the student’s good intentions, these kinds of feelings can only be productive for racial justice movements if they are translated into actions aimed at dismantling structural and

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<sup>72</sup> Here I stress that “[t]o be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating” (BARAD, 2007, p. ix).

institutional racism. However, it is important to point out that those underlying feelings were not the focus of her speech: since I had asked them to talk about their identities, and given everything we had seen and discussed throughout the semester, her speech was centered on how her identity formation is entangled with others and hence connected with social injustices. Silva (2021a) adds that, since our social structures and institutions are racist and rely on racism to sustain themselves, if one is not antiracist, then they end up contributing to the maintenance of the status quo – i.e., their inaction expresses and enacts their racism. Therefore, taking a stand against this systemic problem is crucial.

What I am/become is intertwined with what the other is/becomes – it is not possible to disentangle one from the other. Consequently, we cannot talk about ourselves without also talking about others. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980]) and Braidotti (2017b) asseverate that *becoming* does not concern individual trajectories but rather alliances. Flávia chose to talk about the Other, hence stressing how our lives are interconnected and affect each other. Her speech thus raises the issue of accountability. For Patel (2016, p. 74),

[t]here is an answerability in the roles we have with each other. How we interact is not just about that specific moment and context but echoes across contexts. It is always connected to figurations that have come before but do not statically predict what can transpire. In other words, matter, energy, and information exchanges and transformations [take place continuously].

This echoing mentioned by the author can be seen in Flávia's speech, as she re-members the event, traces entanglements, responds to “yearning for connection, materialized into fields of longing/belonging” (BARAD, 2015, p. 407). For Alcoff (2006), connection to community involves becoming aware of our violent past and envisioning different possibilities for our future. In this respect, Sullivan (2014, p. 145) stresses the importance of whites “becom[ing] more intimately acquainted with their whiteness” and developing a different kind of relationship to it “in order to transform it”. For the author, such movements might be helpful in formulating and implementing affirmative actions.

Now, the following cuts focus on our conversations about being Latin Americans. As we talked about identity, Rubi shared an experience she and Helem had had in Portugal. Then, in the next class, I addressed the topic *be(com)ing Latina* so that I could relate it to what they had told the group, explain the element of choice (as defined in the text *Questions of Identity* (OPENLEARN, 2016a)), and show how identities emerge relationally from intra-actions and are contingently reconfigured.

[20]

Teacher: I'm gonna give you a good example. **[Rubi] and [Helem] travel a lot. They don't think about being Brazilian when they're here** because it doesn't matter. They might not identify with it. They don't take on that identity. They don't say, "I am Brazilian". You don't need to do that. **But if you travel abroad, that's so strong.**

Helem: Yeah!

Teacher: Because... "Oh, the two Brazilians are coming", see? **"They're Brazilians", and they suffer prejudice because of that.**

Helem: Yeah! **[her gestures suggest she seems to remember something that happened to her and her mother, indicating she is disturbed by that memory]**

Teacher: "Latinas", right?

Helem: Yeah, **they do that.**

Teacher: Because they belong to a certain group. So, when you are not part of a certain group on the hierarchical social scale, you might suffer because of that. Maybe for not belonging to a group or not being at the top. That's related to identity. Do you see the difference [between identity and personality] now? [students nod]

Flávia: Yeah, but **why the text said identity requires an element of choice?**

Teacher: Because you need to choose. For example, **if they don't want to be identified as Brazilians, if they don't want to be called Brazilian...**

Flávia: Ah, okay.

Teacher: They travel abroad, and say, "No, I'm not Brazilian". [laughter] **Maybe they choose not to be identified as Brazilians in that context. They try to hide it, or something like that. That's why it requires an element of choice. Because you need to choose to take on that identity, in a way that matters to you.**

Flávia: Okay.

Rubi: **I felt this in Europe, the station, the train station. Portuguese guard?**

Teacher: Uhum, a Portuguese guard.

Rubi: **In Portugal, he hates Brazilians, because we are a group of Brazilians...**

Elton: **Identity.**

Teacher: Identity, exactly. It was not because of their personality. It was because of their identity. Because they are part of that group he hates.

Rubi: Yes, **he said, "I hate Brazilians".**

(Class 28, Nov. 12, 2019)

[21]

Teacher: I brought something to help us think about identity. **I'm going to show you pictures of people, and I want you to tell me the first identity you can think of when you see these people, okay? The first thing that comes to your mind. [...]** Okay, this one. [showing the second slide]

**Movement-image 16** – Activity on people's identities: Latinx singers



Shakira (singer)



Ricky Martin (singer)

Sources: Waka Waka (2010) and Art House Academy (2012).

Rubi: Hmm. Shakira.

Teacher: You're supposed to mention the first identity you see. [telling Rodrigo, who arrived later]

Mark: Who is the second? [asking the teacher]

Teacher: Ricky Martin. He's a famous singer. He's from Puerto Rico, and she's from Colombia.

Rubi: Yes.

Teacher: So, what's their identity?

Mark: She's a Latina, Latin people?

Teacher: Yes. As the word comes from Latin, and hence from Spanish and Portuguese, so Latina for women, and Latino for men, okay? [students nod] So, Latino people, or you could even say Latino singers, because they're both singers, right?

Flávia and Mark: Yes.

Teacher: It's two things, right? They're identified by people as Latin American singers [in the Global North]. They also sing in Spanish, unlike other singers in the United States, where they live or lived (I don't know). See? **They are seen as Latinos because they live in a place that isn't their home country. Because they live in the United States, they are identified as Latinos. See? It also depends on where you are. If they lived in their home countries, they'd just be singers.** See the difference? [students nod] So it depends on where you are as well. Oh, and talking about another identity, what identity does [Elton] and I have in common?

Mark: You are teacher.

Teacher: Teachers. So, it can also be related to a profession, see? [Elton] and I are both teachers. So, we have the same identity, as teachers. But now I'm going to show you the difference: you could say they're charming, extroverted, friendly - these are characteristics of their personality. [students nod]

Flávia and Rubi: Personality.

Mark: Yeah.

Teacher: See the difference now? Is it clearer now?

Students: Yes.

Teacher: And about what you asked, [Flávia], about the [element of] choice, imagine they go to the United States, but they don't want to be recognized as Latinos. So, maybe they deny it, they



try to hide it. But Shakira, for example, talks about her culture in her songs. So, she self-identifies as a Latina.

Flávia: Oh, yes.

Teacher: It's a choice she's made. That's the idea of choice. [Flávia nods] **We don't normally talk about being from Goiás. Because, as everybody is [referring to the students in class], we don't even think about it, see?**

Flávia: Uhum.

Teacher: **But maybe when you're talking to someone from another state, then you might notice:** "We talk like this. They talk like that". [referring to different accents] And then you compare, yeah? [students nod]

(Class 29, Nov. 14, 2019)

In the relation between "I" and "the Other", when they were in Portugal, Rubi and Helem were the embodiment of the Other, marked by the colonial difference. As S. Silva (2022) states, it is important to have in mind that identity concerns who identifies whom – that is, we are sociomaterially read by others, and this reading is permeated by relations of power. In cuts 20 and 21, when we talk about Latinxs, we are looking at these people from the perspective of the Global North. In both classes, I tried to show to my students that, given our relational existence, we need the Other (who is different) to be aware of our own identities. In addition, they could see how identities are not fixed categories and vary according to the context. For this reason, Barad (2007, p. 471) proposes seeing identity as "specific connectivity", that is, contingent connections that emerge from intra-actions between non-dualist subjects. As Haraway (2016 [2003], p. 104) stresses, "[h]istorical specificity and contingent mutability rule all the way down".

Following Butler (2009, p. 33), as "the body is a social phenomenon", "it is exposed to others, vulnerable by definition". Seeing the body as a non-unitary entity implies understanding it as: an assemblage of human and nonhuman elements (in the case of Rubi and Helem, their clothes, accessories, luggage, objects, etc.); an enactment of certain performances; and a sociopolitical place that produces situated knowledge and draws on specific semiotic and linguistic repertoires to convey meanings. In this light, De Freitas and Curinga (2015) suggest a comprehension of identity as *sociomaterial expression*, shifting the focus from relations among human subjects to relationality in assemblages (thus encompassing both humans and nonhumans).

One's attitude toward others (i.e., toward who they are and what they know) might reveal their prejudice. What the Portuguese guard said to Rubi and Helem's group – "I hate Brazilians" – involves all the elements mentioned in the previous paragraph. His words and conduct, however, are explicitly framed in racialized terms. Going beyond "skin color, hair

texture, physical and bodily features”, and so on, race is associated with “ways of speaking, systems of representation, and social practices” (HALL, 1992, p. 298). Although Portuguese is the language spoken in Brazil and Portugal, language practices cannot be disassociated from the bodies that produce them. As Rosa and Flores (20017, p. 625) add, “[e]ven when colonized subjects complied with the imposition of European languages, they continued to be positioned as racial Others who would never be fully European – and, by extension, fully human”. Despite being “white”, Rubi is not a white European but a white Brazilian, a Latina, which makes all the difference. Peck and Stroud (2015, p. 139, emphasis in original) explain that “[t]he gate-keeping mechanism at play reveals that what appears to be an unmarked body, is actually already clearly *marked*, illustrating how the materiality of the body works in a whole range of semiotic systems that extend beyond the boundaries of the body itself”. Therefore, belonging to a certain social group or having a certain social identity “does not matter in itself so much as it matters in relational terms” (PENNYCOOK, 2021b, p. 6). Identity markers take on different statuses in different sociospaces.

In the words of Gilroy (1990, p. 75, emphasis in original), racism “avoids being recognized as such because it is able to line up ‘race’ with nationhood, patriotism and nationalism”. Quijano (2005) reminds us that the category of *race*, as it is used nowadays, emerged from the invasion and colonization of the Americas. As a concept that configured relations of domination, race was associated with hierarchies, places, and corresponding social roles. It was thereby established as “[an instrument] of basic social classification of the population”<sup>73</sup> (QUIJANO, 2005, p. 107, my translation). In a similar vein, Veronelli (2019b) claims that race is a fiction, and that racialization, in turn, is the process that makes race real. This has been historically characterized as a process of dehumanization, i.e., a colonial project intended to make society see certain marginalized groups as less than human.

As the last part of this section, I draw attention to Mark’s speech on his ethnicity and a brief conversation he and I had about race focused on his answer in the initial questionnaire:

[22]

Teacher: [...] [Mark], can it be you now?

Mark: Okay. The first identity than I choose is my descent. Because **I am descent of Japanese. The person looks for me and see my descent. So, it's the strongest identity in me.** Because, like, when I go to school, when I start to meet, met my friends, the person look, and **my name is... “Oh, how can I pronounce this name? Is [says his last name in different ways]?”** [laughter] “Are you a descent of China, or a descent of Japanese, Korean?” **It's good because I think that I different of the many,** more than, the... How can I say the many people?

<sup>73</sup> Original quote: “[um instrumento] de classificação social básica da população”.

Teacher: *Maioria?*

Mark: Yeah.

Teacher: Majority, or most people.

Mark: **The majority of people. And I think it's really good.**

Teacher: **How do you feel about this identity?** Do you like it? **Did you have any problem in your life because of it?**

Mark: **No, I like because my family like to guard? It's like, to trazer os costumes.**

Teacher: Okay, keep our traditions.

Mark: Yeah, **keep our traditions.** And have years that **I go to Bon Odori [a festival celebrated every year in Japanese communities in Brazil]. And I like very much. [...]**

(Class 30, Nov. 19, 2019)

[23]

Teacher: **You wrote *brown*, right?** [showing Mark his questionnaire] **How would you say it in Portuguese, your race in Portuguese?**

Mark: Yeah, **I would say *pardo*.**

Teacher: *Pardo*. [writes it on the questionnaire] Okay. I just wanted to know that. Thanks.

Mark: Because I don't know how can I say *pardo* in English. And I searched in Google Translator.

Teacher: Well, some people like the term mixed-race.

Mark: Mixed-race?

Teacher: Yeah, mixed-race because it's a mix, right?

Mark: Yeah...

Teacher: It's like this... [writes it on the board]

Mark: Oh!

Teacher: Because it's a mix, yeah?

Mark: Right.

Teacher: But, in Portuguese, it's different because **the people that make up our population are different from the ones of other countries, you know? So, it's *pardo*.**

Mark: Ah, okay.

(Informal conversation, Aug. 20, 2019)

A small note is important here: mixed-race is a broad category, and it varies, depending on the country. The term *pardx*<sup>74</sup>, however, is

[...] commonly used to refer to Brazilians of mixed ethnic ancestries. Pardo Brazilians represent a diverse range of skin colors and ethnic backgrounds with a skin tone darker than white and lighter than black. It can also be used for people from Asia with darker skin tones or other ethnicities with the same color. (PARDO, 2022, para. 2).

In Brazil, the term *yellow* is used to refer to people of Asian descent. Mark shared with me and his classmates that he self-identifies ethnically and culturally as of Japanese descent, since he

<sup>74</sup> Pardx is “an ethnic and skin color category used by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in the Brazilian censuses” (PARDO, 2022, para. 1).

and his family often take part in Asian traditions and activities. However, he told me that he saw himself as *pardo* based on his physical traits, such as skin color and hair, which resemble features of black Brazilians.

Hall (1992, p. 297, emphasis in original) defines ethnicity as “the term we give to cultural features – language, religion, custom, traditions, feeling for ‘place’ – which are shared by a people”. Therefore, ethnicity is associated with both racial and cultural ties, background, allegiance, and affiliation. The issue of identity becomes explicitly distributed as he mentions a well-known festival organized by the Japanese community, which he and his family sometimes attend. Following Pennycook’s (2018c, 2021b) arguments, it is possible to assert that Bon Odori is a festival in which deeply social practices and elements, like dance, art, food, and drinks, bring aspects of embodiment to the fore, such as smell, taste, and touch. Further, Bon Odori (Obon, or just Bon) materializes a Japanese Buddhist practice aimed at honoring the spirits of their ancestors.

Mark’s surname indicates his geo-epistemic roots, making him stand out from the majority of people he knows in Goiás. However, he emphasizes that he enjoys “being different”: “‘Are you a descent of China, or a descent of Japanese, Korean?’ It’s good because I think that I different of the [...] majority of people. And I think it’s really good”. Here I question, however: when is it positive to be different? In our visibly heterogenous society, that is only the case when one does not face discrimination. When I asked him how he felt about his identity, if he had ever encountered any problem because of it, he stressed: “No, I like because my family like to guard? It’s like, to [...] keep our traditions”. Why are some people entitled to maintain their traditions while others are attacked when they follow theirs?

Unlike Mark’s community, Afro-Brazilian cultures, religions, and spirituality are often assailed. According to the Report on Religious Intolerance and Violence in Brazil (2011-2015), Candomblé, Umbanda, and other African diaspora faiths are the ones that are assaulted the most (FONSECA; ADAD, 2016). In addition to daily violence and intolerance on social media, the perpetrators carry out attacks on buildings, temples, *terreiros* (places where Umbanda and Candomblé encounters are held), other religious spaces, and on symbolic-sacred objects. Most of the time, this violence occurs at the victims’ homes and in public spaces (FONSECA; ADAD, 2016; RIBEIRO, 2017). From 2011 to 2015, as highlighted in the aforesaid report, most complaints made to ombudspersons concerned acts of psychological, material, and physical violence. Nogueira (2009) adds that cases of attempted murder and homicide, especially of priests and priestesses (known as *pais de santo* and *mães de santo*, respectively), are not uncommon.

In Goiás, many cases of harassment and destruction of property have been reported. Recently, Candomblé *terreiros* were invaded and destroyed in Valparaíso (MINC, 2016), depredated and burned in Luziânia (VELASCO, 2017), and ransacked and graffitied in Aparecida de Goiânia (DIAS, 2022); however, no one was held accountable for any of these crimes. In 2022, in Planaltina, an evangelical pastor armed with a machete invaded an Umbanda *terreiro*, verbally attacked people there (including children), and destroyed statues of *orixás* (orishas); later, the man was arrested, and the crime was classified as religious racism<sup>75</sup> (VILELA, 2022). It is important to emphasize that some of these *terreiros* have been attacked more than once. As a result of a sudden surge in this kind of crimes, the *Delegacia Especial de Repressão aos Crimes por Discriminação Racial, Religiosa, ou por Orientação Sexual, ou Contra a Pessoa Idosa ou com Deficiência*<sup>76</sup> (DECRIN) was created in 2016. Nevertheless, Bernardes (2017) stresses that although many incidents of discrimination have been reported, especially after a considerable increase in news media coverage, attacks such as the ones mentioned happen daily.

The Report on Religious Intolerance and Violence in Brazil (2011-2015) also shows that Christians, and especially white Christians, are the main aggressors in the case of attacks against African diaspora faiths (FONSECA; ADAD, 2016). Acts of religious intolerance and racism have been committed especially against socially marginalized people: blacks, indigenous peoples, the poor, immigrants, and ethnic and religious minoritized groups (RIBEIRO, 2017).

Nogueira (2009) presents several documents and reports of religious repression and persecution unleashed by Christian groups, especially Pentecostal ones. For Silva (2007, p. 10-11, my translation), the theology of such groups is “based on the idea that the cause of most of the evils in this world can be attributed to the presence of the devil, who is usually associated with the gods [and deities] of other religious denominations”<sup>77</sup>. Nogueira (2009) asseverates that these ideological constructions, together with other racist practices, created negative images of African peoples and were used to justify barbaric acts such as the colonial slave trade in the past. As Rodrigues (2021, para. 15, emphasis in original) argues,

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<sup>75</sup> “‘Religious racism’ is a term used to refer to discrimination against African-based religions and other minority faiths” (CERQUEIRA, 2019a, para. 1). For a detailed discussion on the issue, see Cerqueira (2019b), Cerqueira and Boaz (2021), and Rodriguez (2021).

<sup>76</sup> Special Police Station for Repression of Crimes Against Racial, Religious or Sexual Orientation Discrimination, or Against the Elderly or Disabled People (DECRIN).

<sup>77</sup> Original quote: “assentada na ideia de que a causa de grande parte dos males deste mundo pode ser atribuída à presença do demônio, que geralmente é associado aos deuses [e deidades] de outras denominações religiosas”.

[c]ertain people have waged crusades and holy wars against a common enemy. The enemy has different ethnic origins yet has been very well defined geographically: *it is from Africa*. These enemies also have a color of skin or a color of faith. The victims of racist religious intolerance are (almost) always the sacred black entities of religions brought from Africa. [...] Racism naturalizes oppression of black people in all areas of their lives, including in their spirituality and faith.

The author adds that, as Brazil is a secular country, “[it] does not officially claim any faith”, and that, consequently, “discriminating someone based on their faith is forbidden”<sup>78</sup> (RODRIGUES, 2021, para. 18). Victims of crimes like the ones previously mentioned claim that the religious, cultural, and racial persecution they face causes deep sorrow and constant fear. Although Mark does not belong to a hegemonic community in Brazil, the feelings to which he refers in his speech differ greatly from those of people in African diasporas.

Following Rodrigues (2021, para. 5), “[r]eligion is a manifestation of a specific people’s culture and is connected with these people and with the territory where they live. Religion is the result of a people’s relationship with what is sacred to them”. From a posthumanist viewpoint, we can observe that discriminatory actions such as the ones addressed in the preceding paragraphs entail attacks against people’s ontoepistemologies – spirituality, like other elements, is not seen as dissociated from being, but as constitutive of it. These people’s cultures and beliefs, embodied in the materiality of spaces and objects like the ones mentioned, work as extensions of them, of their way of existing in the world. In this sense, coloniality prevents the acknowledgment of alterity (i.e., the engagement with different ontoepistemologies), for instance, by prohibiting, excluding, and persecuting other ways of being that it finds unacceptable (RIBEIRO, 2017).

In the next section, I address some of my students’ perceptions of the discussions on gender that we had in class and some of their personal speeches on the subject.

## 2.5 Gender: sexism and hegemonic masculinity

Following Pessoa (2019b), whenever we talk about ourselves, we inevitably address issues of gender, sexuality, race, etc. Therefore, these are not topics that might be brought to class by the teacher, but issues already entangled with our bodies and performances. As the author stresses, we may not realize it because we tend to see things from the lenses of normativity (an example is when a female teacher talks about her life and mentions her

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<sup>78</sup> “It is a crime according to Law 7716, of January 5, 1989 [...], [which was] amended by Law 9459, of May 15, 1997” (RODRIGUES, 2021, para. 18).

boyfriend). Therefore, as an ethical responsibility, “the school cannot exempt itself from the role of creating a safe space for all students and for the discussion of different life experiences”<sup>79</sup> (PESSOA, 2019b, p. 39, my translation).

With the purpose of addressing some issues of gender with my students, we watched and discussed two Ted Talks: *A Call to Men*, by Tony Porter (2010), and *A Girl Who Demanded School*, by Kakenya Ntaiya (2013). Both talks revolve around the speakers’ personal experiences. The choice of these videos was in line with the materials used in the school: the book series *World English*, second edition (CHASE; JOHANNSEN, 2015; CHASE; MILNER, 2015; CHASE; MILNER, JOHANNSEN, 2015a, 2015b), since Ted Talks are presented throughout the textbooks. Porter’s (2010) and Ntaiya’s (2013) videos were also selected so that the students could review some grammar contents (such as simple present, simple past, and wh-questions), which were in the list that was given to me before the classes had started. I prepared sets of questions about their talks and asked the students to answer them at home while watching the videos, and I also asked them to write questions, which should be answered by their classmates in the following classes.

The next statements concern Tony Porter’s video and our discussion on Plato’s allegory, which are shown together because they are complementary. In her intraview, Flávia offers two answers that express her overarching thoughts on the classes:

[24]

Flávia: Do machismo, né? [referindo-se ao vídeo de Porter (2010) – *A Call to men*] Na verdade, todos eles eu acho importantes, porque eu acho que, de uma certa forma, **abrange o conhecimento. E a gente discutir isso em inglês** [isto é, tópicos relacionados a questões sociais como gênero], ver isso em inglês, **é uma forma de a gente tornar mais... como se fosse rotina mesmo.**

[Flávia: The one about sexism, right? [referring to Porter’s (2010) video – *A Call to Men*] In fact, I think all of them are important, because I think that, in a way, **they broaden people’s knowledge. And discussing it in English** [i.e., topics related to social issues such as gender], seeing it in English, **is a way for us to make it more... as if it were part of our routine.]**

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter c, Dec. 12, 2019)

[25]

Flávia: Eu gostei. Tem como a gente discutir sobre isso em português também, mas a gente não faz. Então, assim, **às vezes algumas críticas que eu acho que deveriam ser feitas também em colégio, a gente não tem esse acesso, né?** E eu acho que, tipo assim, **abrange também o conhecimento da pessoa para ela não ficar alienada a uma coisa só.**

<sup>79</sup> Original quote: “a escola não pode se eximir da função de criar um espaço seguro para todas/os as/os alunas/os e para a discussão de experiências de vida diversas”.

[Flávia: I liked it. We could discuss it in Portuguese as well, but we don't. So, **sometimes we don't have access to some critiques that I think should also be developed at schools, right?** And I think, like, **it also broadens one's knowledge so that they don't see things from a narrow perspective.**]

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter a, Dec. 12, 2019)

In general, for Flávia, our classes created a space that allowed the expansion of knowledge and perspectives, the discussion of relevant topics related to their everyday life, and the problematization of taken-for-granted assumptions. Here I draw the attention to the fact that it is not uncommon for students to talk about themselves, their families, and their affective relationships in language courses, but these topics are not usually addressed as issues of gender because they have been naturalized within frameworks of hegemonic discourses (PESSOA, 2019b). As Pessoa (2019b, p. 37, emphasis in original, my translation) maintains, “*gender* is a fundamental classroom content, since there is no way to ignore our bodies and who we are in this context”<sup>80</sup>. I add that not only are our bodies always present but also several extensions that work with them, i.e., everything with which we intra-act, such as clothes, accessories, objects, etc. In relation to the classroom, we can see how gender is constructed when it comes even to school supplies (pens, pencils, erasers, notebooks, and so on), since based on their colors, for example, some are associated with girls (e.g., pink) and others with boys (e.g., blue). This instantiates how something from the human sphere cuts across nonhuman elements and the kinds of relations we develop with them.

Now, I shall focus on my students’ perceptions of the first video that we discussed on issues of gender. Kakenya Ntaiya (2013) was born in the late 1970’s in a Maasai village, in Kenya. In her talk, she mentions some differences between the girls’ and boys’ upbringing, addressing harmful traditional practices adopted in her community, in relation to women. In summary,

Kakenya Ntaiya made a deal with her father: She would undergo a traditional Maasai rite of passage, female circumcision, if he would let her go to high school. Ntaiya tells the fearless story of continuing on to college, and of working with her village elders to build a school for girls in her community, changing the destiny of 125 young women. (NTAIYA, 2013, para. 1).

The following cuts refer to Mark’s reply and then Rubi’s answer in their intraviews when I asked them what they thought of our discussion:

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<sup>80</sup> Original quote: “*gênero* é um conteúdo fundamental de sala de aula, já que não há como ignorar os nossos corpos e quem somos nesse contexto”.



[26]

Mark: Eu achei legal também, porque era **um assunto, assim, muito polêmico – que é mais lá na região dela, que não é tão aceito, assim, como independente na sociedade [referindo-se às mulheres]**. Eu achei bacana também, trabalhar em inglês também.

[Mark: I thought it was cool too because it was **a subject, well, highly controversial – which happens more in her region, where they don't readily accept them [referring to women], like, to be independent in society**. I thought it was cool too, working with it in English too.]

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter b, Dec. 12, 2019)

In Mark's answer, he uses the word “controversial” to refer to the topic discussed – this explains why Elton said he thought my teaching practice was brave, in cut 1. Mark makes an implicit comparison: “[it is something that] happens more in her region, where they don't readily accept them [referring to women], like, to be independent in society”. Thus, taking into account the sexist practices that we were discussing, the student recognizes they are more spread in Ntaiya's region, but that they are also promoted in other places. Addressing gender in Brazil, especially after the rise of the far right over the past years, has become something quite challenging, even a taboo subject, depending on the educational context. In discussing gender, my classes were aimed at problematizing social inequalities and injustices and questioning hegemonic discourses (gender norms). We should have in mind that “we are [inevitably] formed and produced as gendered subjects” (HALL, 1992, p. 290), who are constantly becoming and emerging from intra-actions among discourses and materialities, always permeated with power.

Rubi shared how the story had affected her directly, seemingly because she put herself in Ntaiya's (2013) place, as a woman:

[27]

Rubi: Muito bom! **Eu amei a história. Chorei junto. Assim, teve o momento que, quando ela começou a falar do ritual de cortar o clítoris, eu fiquei super inquieta com a forma brutal com que aquelas meninas são mutiladas. Eu fiquei muito triste. Mas, assim, aprendi.** Eu já tinha visto falar sobre o assunto, mas nunca tinha visto tão profundo, como ela falou.

[Rubi: Very good! **I loved the story. I cried while watching it. Well, there was a moment when she started talking about the ritual of cutting the clitoris, I felt extremely uneasy about the brutal way those girls are mutilated. It made me very sad. But, well, I learned.** I had already heard about it, but I had never seen it in detail, the way she talked about it.]

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter b, Dec. 17, 2019)

In language schools, as English is usually approached as a neutral means of communication, “an acritical and apolitical atmosphere for students ‘to have fun’” is often

fostered (SOUSA; PESSOA, 2023, p. 207, emphasis in original). The aim is to “keep the clientele pleased”, and consequently, serious discussions, which might make students feel uneasy and uncomfortable, are discouraged. However, as we see ourselves as ethically responsible for what we do in and with the world, politicizing language, our semiotic productions, and performances, and understanding their sociomaterial effects, affects, and entanglements are particularly important actions. For this reason, I proposed the discussion of a video such as Ntaiya’s (2013), in which a young woman shares how she had to negotiate her rights over her body so that she could get an education. Rubi says she liked the story because it had a happy ending, but she also shares that she was devastated by what Ntaiya and the other girls had to go through. Many things happen in encounters with otherness. Following Barad’s (2020) reflections, intra-action implies a kind of infinite alterity in webs of relations, since when we intra-act with another, there are always many others involved in the emerging assemblages. Rubi’s statement exemplifies that.

Pessoa and Urzêda-Freitas (2023, p. 13) show examples of how a great deal of “[humanity’s] tragic history has been hidden or denied in mainstream education” and in our collective memory, while colonial history has been revered. This accentuates the fact there is a series of actions in society that try to cover up humanity’s violent past by means of historical erasure and that neglect the (re)production of acts of violence in its many forms in current times. Therefore, in critical language education, instead of disregarding and/or denying marginalized others and their experiences, we acknowledge them, engage ourselves with them, and seek to become-with them. Rubi recognizes the importance of this movement when she claims: “It made me very sad. But, well, I learned”. Finally, this activity demonstrates that we were in fact discussing socially relevant topics (MONTE MOR, 2021).

Still on the issue of gender, the following cut concerns the second part of Flávia’s speech on identity:

[28]

Teacher: Okay. [Flávia], would you like to be next? [Flávia nods]

Flávia: I chose two identities to talk about. [...] And the second thing is being a woman. **I love to be a woman. But there’s some stuffs, and it bothers me, because sometimes we can’t wear some clothes because the people judgment. We can’t behave the way we want because of this too. We suffer many abuse every day: physical, psycholog[al], verbal abuse.**

Teacher: Do you have that problem at work?

Flávia: No, at work, not. **But at gym, in the streets.** Not my actual [current] work, but **my last work I suffered too much because I am garçonete?**

Teacher: Waitress.

Flávia: **Waitress.**

Mark: Oh!

Flávia: It's hard. That's it.

(Class 30, Nov. 19, 2019)

“What does it mean to be a woman?” This is a question many feminist scholars have asked. As Flávia addresses issues of gender in her speech, we notice how her identity as a woman is both claimed and questioned simultaneously (HARAWAY, 1992), in the sense of self-identifying with it and pointing out some of the problems that arise as unfoldings of the heteropatriarchal system. Based on Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980]), Holland (2013, p. 108) stresses that, “girls grow up to be women, [and that,] ordinarily, this is a process whereby [...] certain of their bodily capacities (affects) are captured and placed in the service of hetero-normative reproduction”. Given the current arrangements that structure our lives, he underscores the importance of (re)gaining access to possibilities of becoming otherwise. In this respect, the author stresses that, on a more personal level, “ethics is ultimately a matter of desire rather than obedience”, of what one wants to do rather than what one must do – “of what [one] would really want to do, if [they] fully understood the causes and consequences of doing so and not doing so” (HOLLAND, 2013, p. 109). In other words, this movement implies the need to understand what led us to be the way we are as well as its effects.

For Takaki (2021), with one's body, one tells a story. The student's speech highlights this aspect of speaking from a particular place, from a particular political body. According to Braidotti (2017b, p. 17), at the same time we consider “the specificity of one's locations and the complex web of social relations that compose the self”, we need to work with a comprehension of “matter as a multilayered and multidirectional relational force”. Thus, I would like the reader to consider the kinds of violence mentioned by the learner, in cut 28, as actions that intra-act with other elements.

It is important to note Flávia's marked social status as a working-class woman. As a waitress, her job of serving food and drinks at tables made her body somehow more exposed and vulnerable to others than in her current work, as an administrative assistant. The student complained about being subjected to continual harassment in public and private spaces. These are not inert sites but rather political environments, fundamentally pervaded by power structures, which shape, condition, and promote particular social practices (PAGE; THOMAS, 1994; ROSA; DÍAZ, 2020). Page and Thomas (1994, p. 111) argue that there are material-discursively constructed “patterns, configurations, tactics, [and] devices that routinely, [...] and sometimes coercively privilege” some people over others. In the case of Flávia, we could ask:

How does the arrangement of spaces privilege men and create situations like the ones the student encountered? Peck and Stroud (2015, p. 148) propose the notion of *corporeal landscapes*, which supports “the dissolution of boundaries between bodies and places”. In their words, the concept of “corporeal landscapes suggests inserting the study of signs and inscriptions into the swell of multisemiotic accounts of bodily and spatial and further developing a praxeological and non-representational account of linguistic landscapes” (p. 148). Therefore, language is considered only one of the elements in the assemblage, and what takes place in phenomena are material-discursive movements embedded in social practices. From these reflections, we can question: How do some spaces foster more prejudice/discrimination than others? What are the sociomaterial elements in these spaces that promote it?

Barad (2007, p. 243) underlines “the need for an ethics of responsibility and accountability not only for what we know, how we know, and what we do but, in part, for what exists”. This argument and Flávia’s statement – “[W]e can’t wear some clothes because the people judgment. We can’t behave the way we want because of this too” – indicate the importance of genealogical analyses of bodily production (BARAD, 2007), that is, understanding how human and nonhuman bodies are sociohistorically produced. To exemplify this aspect, I draw on Semmelhack’s (2008, 2015, 2020) comprehensive work, which shows how heels have played complex roles in the construction of gender in the West. Although nowadays heels are normally associated with women, Jenner (2021, p. 157) claims that

[h]eels were originally for men; in fact, not just any men, they were for warriors. We don’t know exactly when heels first showed up, but they were being worn by medieval Persian cavalry troops a thousand years ago. The heel safely wedged the soldier’s feet in the stirrups while he let go of the reins and drew his bow. According to Dr Elizabeth Semmelhack – who curates the massive collections at the Bata Shoe Museum in Canada – this distinctively Persian footwear arrived into Europe at the very end of the sixteenth century.

As the author explains, heels were first worn in the battlefield so that men could look taller and hence convey a sense of power and authority. According to Semmelhack (2020), in the seventeenth century, heels became prominent in upper-class men’s fashion; soon aristocratic women’s fashion began incorporating some elements of men’s attire, including the heel. Therefore, by that time, donning heels was related to elite’s social status and political power. During the Enlightenment, linked to principles of rationality, new ideals emerged, and “[m]en’s fashion began to move toward a kind of democratic sameness and was contrasted to the ‘frivolous’ fashion, which [...] came to be defined as an exclusively feminine interest” (SEMMElhack, 2020, p. 63, emphasis in original).

Jenner (2021, p. 159) adds that later “[t]he democratisation of the camera also led to a surge in Victorian pornography, plenty of which featured nude ladies posing in nothing but their heeled boots – it was an erotic trope which still endures today”. In this respect, Semmelhack (2008) explains that high heels were then associated with ideas of female desirability, seduction, and sexual manipulation. She asserts that, after the Second World War, a larger cultural agenda was set to promote gender difference and solidify more traditional gender roles, thus reinforcing the gender binary. The author concludes that “[t]he long history of the heel in western fashion illustrates how it has been used in the construction of male and female gender through its embrace and its rejection” (SEMMEHACK, 2020, p. 72). This example demonstrates how nonhuman elements index greater social worlds, like gender, patriarchy, class, and so on. Moreover, it shows “the productive, constraining, and exclusionary nature of naturalcultural practices, including their crucial role in the materialization of all bodies” (BARAD, 2007, p. 225). Therefore, the experiences of bodies (re)configure their boundaries in phenomena.

Following Peck and Stroud (2015, p. 144), “features become resignified and gain new values as they travel across [...] contexts” in shifting semiotic landscapes. Daigle’s (2017) notion of *transjectivity* is helpful here. For her, whenever we focus on the discussion of any entity (e.g., heels), we should note that such an actor is not ontologically dissociated from others, given their inherently relational sociomaterial constitution. Social semiotics thereby involves both humans and nonhumans in their entanglement and the emergence of dynamic relations among semiotic resources, activities, artifacts, and spacetime. For this reason, we need to work and engage with the constant resemiotization of meaning.

Now I shall present Rubi’s speech, which had as its focus the issue of gender:

[29]

Teacher: So, who’s gonna be the first? Can it be you, [Rubi]?

Rubi: Yes. **The groups I identity: this is my family [showing a picture] - my husband, my daughter, and I. [...] The second group I identify is the church [shows another picture]. I participate in the community. [...]**

Teacher: So, you’re Catholic, right?

Rubi: Yes. **The others I participate, I identify, is again the church, [...] the youngs group? Grupo de jovens, how can I say?**

Teacher: Youth group, or youth ministry.

Rubi: **Youth group I identify. And I identify again the profession. [...] In the profession, I identify with this group [shows an image of accountants] - the accountant, with mans and womans. But a lot of time ago, my profession is dominate for men. I have many difficulties in inserir... how can I say inserir?**

Teacher: To be.

Rubi: **To be for groups because I am woman. [...]**

Teacher: Did you have those problems when you were in college? You said you went through some things because you are a woman, an accountant, in your company, right? [Rubi nods] Was it the same when you were at college?

Rubi: No, in college I identify the groups.

Teacher: Were there many women?

Rubi: Yes, many women students, many women. In my classroom 60% is women.

Teacher: Oh, okay.

Rubi: **Today is more easy, my profession.** But for *último*?

Teacher: Last.

Rubi: Last I identify prof...?

Helem: Deeply.

Rubi: ...deeply with mother.

Teacher: Ah, **as a mother.** Okay.

Rubi: This is my daughter baby. [shows Helem's picture as a baby]

Teacher: Now [Helem]'s the topic of the presentation. [laughter] [referring to the fact that Rubi started talking about Helem as a baby, relating it to her identity as her mother]

Rubi: **Be mother for me is impactful because my life changed very, very, very much – because I felt very happy – for have the child. It's my dream.** This is the first day is born [shows the group a picture], the [Helem]. Yes, that's it.

(Class 30, Nov. 19, 2019)

The student's presentation was filled with affect. Rubi seemed to have enjoyed showing the pictures to the group and talking about them. She was one of the learners who drew on other resources to give her speech. Given the way it was presented, we can notice “a host of indexicalities or ‘traces’ (excess meaning) that are subject to insertion into social discourses and normative regimes” (PECK; STROUD, 2015, p. 138, emphasis in original). As the student said, she cherishes her identities as a mother, a wife, and a Catholic, which are roles that make her fit perfectly into what is socially expected from her.

On the other hand, as accounting has been historically associated with men, Rubi claims to have experienced some discrimination throughout her professional life. In relation to the latter, in her speech, she refers to it in different spacetimes. As Barad (2007) emphasizes, spacetime is not a place where bodies are or a space through which they travel. Space, time, and matter are “reconfigured through the ongoing intra-activity of the world” (BARAD, 2007, p. 376). Rubi compares the environment of her profession some decades ago to how it is nowadays. From her statements and the author's arguments, it is possible to notice that spacetime does not sit still but rather is active in the making and remaking of bodies, their performances, and relations, insofar as human and nonhuman elements are reconstituted in their intra-actions.

When I asked Rubi about the group's reflections as well as her own thoughts on talking about her identities, this is what she told me:

[30]

Rubi: Muito legal, com certeza.

Teacher: Por que você gostou de discutir identidade?

Rubi: Porque **às vezes a gente passa por um monte de situações, e você não percebe onde você está. E, ali, me deu, me trouxe a realidade para eu conseguir perceber em quais grupos que eu estou e quantos grupos que eu estou, que eu nem percebia que eu estava imersa naquela quantidade de grupos, e como eu me identifico com cada um, com cada situação.** Achei muito interessante.

Teacher: O que você achou de falar das suas identidades?

Rubi: Maravilhoso! Principalmente quando **eu descobri que eu tenho o grupo de mães, eu tenho o grupo de mulheres que trabalham, eu tenho o grupo das mulheres da minha profissão, não só do trabalho, mas da minha profissão, tenho o grupo de mulheres da igreja.** Então, assim, tem “n” grupos [de] que eu participo, que eu nem percebia. Não só de mulheres, mas também de homens. Mas, assim, **eu tentei identificar mais com as mulheres, tentar fazer essa leitura.**

[Rubi: Very cool, for sure.

Teacher: Why did you enjoy discussing identity?

Rubi: Because **sometimes you find yourself in a lot of situations, and you don't realize where you are. And there, it gave me, it made me acknowledge reality so that I could see in which groups I am and in how many groups I am; and I hadn't even realized that I was immersed in that number of groups, and how I identify with each one, with each situation.** I found it very interesting.

Teacher: What did you think of talking about your identities?

Rubi: Wonderful! Especially when **I found out that I am in a group of mothers, I am in a group of women who work, I am in a group of women in my profession, not only at work, but in my profession, I am in a group of women from the church.** So, well, there are “n” groups in which I participate, which I didn't even realize. Not only of women, but also of men. But, well, **I tried to identify more with women, see it from this viewpoint.]**

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter f, Dec. 17, 2019)

Rubi chose to work with her identity as a woman. This helped her decentralize a more individualized view and move toward the notion of community, which she associated with belonging. Her assertions indicate how her “personal and collective identity” as a woman is “precariously and constantly socially reconstituted” (HARAWAY, 1992, p. 96). Our discussion on identity and the activities that the students did prompted Rubi to realize several spaces that she occupies in society. Put differently, she could better see her place in the world. Peck and Stroud (2015, p. 146) argue that we should understand bodies in their continuous state of transformation, “carry[ing] along with them their own history, trajectory and semiotics”. The student shared some of these aspects in her speech. For the authors, this might help us comprehend “where one stands and how one sees the world from that place” (p. 146).

Rubi also mentioned this experience had helped her see “reality”. Following Barad (2007), what makes up reality are phenomena. In her words, “[r]eality is composed not of things-in-themselves or things-behind phenomena but of things-in-phenomena” (p. 140).

Boundary-drawing practices that divide us into sociomaterially specific entities are always set in the intra-activity of dynamic processes in which we participate. In this sense, “subjects and objects do not preexist as such but are constituted through, within, and as part of particular practices” (p. 208). The way this part of the course (focused on identity) was constructed led Rubi to realize her experiences-in-phenomena. Further, the student claims that she started noticing the particularities of each situation and what role she was playing in it. In addition, she could better understand the meanings of those relations to her life.

The final part of this section focuses on the second Ted Talk that was discussed in class. Tony Porter was born in the late 1950’s in New York. In the video, he talks about “the collective socialization of men”, also known as the “man box”, which is directly linked to violence against women (PORTER, 2010, 05:51-05:57). He urges people to challenge and deconstruct what has been sociohistorically understood as manhood, thus redefining what it means to be a man. It is worth mentioning a comment made by Helem, in her intraview, when I asked her opinion on the activity we did: “*Adorei. Achei diferente, porque eu nunca tinha visto um relato de um homem falando sobre estereótipos. Então, eu achei muito massa!* [I loved it. I thought it was different because I had never seen a man talking about stereotypes. So, I found it was really cool!]”. What called the student’s attention was the sociopolitical body that approached the issue of gender. In this regard, M. Ferreira (2020) stresses that when we mention gender, people usually assume that topics which directly affect women will be discussed. Again, this occurs because we are not used to addressing normativities, which is something essential if we intend to question and disrupt hegemonic social structures. In this light, the following cuts are some of the other students’ thoughts on our discussion about Porter’s (2010) video:

[31]

Mark: Eu achei legal também, porque igual, **muitos homens ainda têm essa questão de ser mais durão, não demonstrar sentimentos**. E a gente acaba vendo que não é só aqui, né? Porque era um assunto de língua estrangeira que a gente trabalhou, dos Estados Unidos. Não é só aqui. **Aqui tem muito ainda, mas lá também tem.**

[Mark: I thought it was cool too, because, like, **a lot of men still have this thing of being tough, not showing their feelings**. And we saw that it's not just here, right? Because it was a foreign language subject that we discussed, from the United States. It's not just here. **There's still a lot here, but there too.**]

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter c, Dec. 12, 2019)

[32]

Rubi: Interessante que, durante o processo que ele estava fazendo, ele não percebeu. **Com o tempo**, parece que foi após a morte do irmão, o contato dele



com o pai, **que ele foi perceber que ele precisava mudar de direção, que ele estava repetindo o que era passado para ele.** Eu achei interessante essa questão de ele conseguir perceber que ele precisava de mudar, que ele não poderia continuar repetindo o que fizeram com ele.

[Rubi: Interesting that, during the process he was going through, he didn't realize it. **Over time**, it seems that it was after his brother's death, his contact with his father, **that he came to realize he needed to change what he was doing, that he was repeating what was passed on to him.** I found it interesting that he was able to realize that he needed to change, that he couldn't keep doing what was done to him.]

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter c, Dec. 17, 2019)

Mark's observations indicate the ubiquitousness of hegemonic masculinity, at least in Brazil and the United States. Rubi's assertion gestures toward the need to decolonize the mind, i.e., to unlearn and dis-identify oneself with familiar habits of thought. This implies interrupting violent behaviors toward oneself and others. I display their answers to my question because they provide a general contextualization of the discussion. However, as Rodrigo was the student who could more intimately relate what was approached in class to his own experiences, I shall focus on his reflection. In addition, the answer he gave me about the discussion of the video *Validation* (2007) is also shown here, since it amplifies the reflections that he shared with me:

[33]

Rodrigo: Aquele lá [referindo-se ao vídeo de Porter (2010) - *A Call to Men*] também é outro que eu achei muito interessante, que **eu acho que me ajudou até a ter uma visão dessa masculinidade [hegemônica] que a gente tem hoje em dia, e não só hoje em dia, desde sempre. Nem tanto das coisas que eu faço, porque, se você for parar para pensar, quando eu me observo com os outros homens, eu não me identifico muito com a masculinidade do mundo. Eu me sinto diferente. Mas, mesmo assim, eu tive a oportunidade de prestar atenção nisso, até mesmo nos meus pais - algumas coisas que eles acham que um homem deve fazer, mas que um homem não é obrigado a fazer.**

[Rodrigo: That one [referring to Porter's (2010) video - *A Call to Men*] is also another one that I found very interesting, which **I think helped me to see this [hegemonic] masculinity that there is today, and not just today, but that has always existed. Not so much of the things I do, because if you think about it, when I compare myself to other men, I don't really identify with the masculinity of the world. I feel different. But still, I had the opportunity to pay attention to that, even when it comes to my parents - some things they think men should do, but men shouldn't be forced to do.]**

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter c, Dec. 17, 2019)

[34]

Rodrigo: Eu acho que aquilo lá [referindo-se ao vídeo *Validation* (2007)] mostra um pouco da realidade do mundo, assim, em geral. Porque **a gente vê hoje em dia as pessoas basicamente procurando por isso na internet: a validação dos outros.** Elas postam coisas para ganhar "likes". Então, acho que isso é uma forma de validação, tipo assim, de ver se as pessoas estão

contentes com as coisas que você está fazendo. **E às vezes você deixa de fazer aquilo que você gosta, de ser você mesmo para ter a validação das pessoas.** Então, é um assunto muito importante a se tratar também.

[Rodrigo: I think that [referring to the video *Validation* (2007)] shows a little of the reality of the world, in general. Because **these days we see people basically looking for that on the internet: validation from others.** They post things to get “likes”. So, I think this is a form of validation, like, to see if people are happy with the things you’re doing. **And sometimes you stop doing what you like, being yourself to have people's validation.** So, it's a very important issue to address as well.]

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter e, Dec. 17, 2019)

As one can notice, albeit the videos and texts approached in class referred to different topics, at different moments, like Rodrigo, the students could make connections among different discussions and events going on in their lives. This shows that addressing such themes was not only linguistically meaningful to them (since we talked about authentic stories and everyday life events), but also that it was important for them on a personal level, leading them to the problematization of taken-for-granted assumptions, hegemonic social behaviors, and acts of explicit and implicit violence.

Fabício (2017) asseverates that social norms create practices of division and classification, caught up in a dichotomic logic that sees existence in a binary fashion which does not admit nuances, imprisoning us in totalizing categories. In gender relations, the dualism “he” or “she” (man or woman) exemplifies the materialization of that. However, the process of subject formation is highly more complex than that. Rodrigo claims, “[W]hen I compare myself to other men, I don’t really identify with the masculinity of the world. I feel different”. Braidotti (2022, p. 25) emphasizes that who we become “gets actualized transversally [...] in assemblages that flow across and displace the binaries”, which is an aspect that we can see from the student’s speech.

Rodrigo’s statement also shows how identities are negotiated in assemblages that involve power relations (normative discourses and local acts of resistance), contradictions, conflicts, struggles, unfulfilled aspirations, among many other elements, which are sociomaterially enacted (BARAD, 2007; PECK STROUD, 2015). Santos (2018, p. 89) adds that “bodies are as much at the center of the struggles as the struggles are at the center of the bodies. The bodies are performative and thus renegotiate and expand or subvert the existing reality through what they do”. What the student shared suggests these movements.

Further, albeit this was not directly approached in the video and in the discussion in class, Rodrigo made a pertinent observation: “[T]hese days we see people basically looking for

that on the internet: validation from others. [...] And sometimes you stop doing what you like, being yourself to have people's validation". This assertion can be related to something he said in the previous answer: "I had the opportunity to pay attention to that, even when it comes to my parents – some things they think men should do, but men shouldn't be forced to do". Peck and Stroud (2015, p. 141) provide as examples "strong emotions of disappointment and shame" that "normative regimes and social censorship" stirred in the people who participated in their study. It is essential to understand that some of the suffering inflicted on people's lives comes from binary constructions of social life, such as man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, able-bodied/disabled, and so on. Instead of engaging with difference, society keeps trying to put others into fixed categories that fit their (pre)conceptions of things. By and large, dealing with fluidity and instability has not been society's strong suit.

Haraway (2016 [1985]) argues that, although we often need to fall back on identities, it is important to deconstruct them, i.e., to destroy boundaries. Identity formation is a constant process of transformation not only in itself but also in what it represents for people in specific spacetimes. While we struggle with identities in the present, we also create conceptions of them by thinking and rebuilding past experiences and considering possibilities for their future (re)configuration. These should not be seen as linear processes but rather as movements that coexist in phenomena in messy ways that we can barely grasp. Following Barad (2007), this is spacetime-matter in its actualization.

In this regard, Braidotti (2013) suggests that we should try to dis-identify ourselves with binaries and move toward rhizomatics: detaching from static understandings of sex and gender and engaging with processes of genderization and sexualization. Following Butler (1990, 1993), Barad (2007, p. 57) reiterates gender is a doing, and "not an inherent feature of individuals". In this sense, gender does not just concern bodies and discourses but pertains to everything that constitutes us in certain ways in our sociomaterial relations. As Barad (2007, p. 243) addresses events in-phenomena, she adds that gender "[...] is itself a contested category whose intelligibility depends in part on the specifics of materializing structural relations". Therefore, embodied enactments and practices produce subjects and identities, and such performances should be seen as situated and moving corporealities.

In the following section, I focus on age as an issue that emerged from the course.

## 2.6 Be(com)ing an older student

The group of students who took part in this inquiry consisted of: a) three teenagers – Helem (14), Mark (15), and Rodrigo (16); b) one young adult – Flávia (21); and c) two older adults – Rubi (46) and Elton (49). Being an older student, in relation to most of the group, was something I only realized as an important issue halfway through the semester, when I noticed discomfort especially on the part of Elton. He elaborated on this point in the feedback sessions and in his intraview. It is worth mentioning that, when we talked about identities, and I showed them pictures of people, I made sure that images of individuals around Rubi and Elton's age were included. In this class, we briefly discussed ageism and the labor market, and I emphasized that if they wished, they could address age discrimination in their speeches on identity. In the following class, I expected Elton to talk about it, since he had already shared something with me concerning this issue. This was a way I could find to gauge whether the student felt comfortable to present that subject to the group. However, he did not approach it in his speech.

The division of the group into two subgroups based on age became clear over the semester. In the class we discussed the text *Questions of Identity* (OPENLEARN, 2016a), I asked the learners to work in pairs to talk about it, summarize specific parts of the text, and then share their reflections with the group. Helem and Rubi worked together, and this is a cut from their intra-action:

[35]

Teacher: Okay. [Helem] and [Rubi], what can you tell us about the following paragraphs?

Helem: So, about the third part, they are saying like, **some symbols determinate [determine] some groups. Like, teenagers dress differently than adults. [while she is talking, she subtly moves her left hand the following way: when she says the word "teenagers", she gestures at the teenagers and the young adult in class - that is, herself, Mark, Rodrigo, and Flávia, respectively - and when she says "adults", she does the same with Rubi and Elton]**

**Movement-image 17** – Helem gesturing toward the teenagers



**Movement-image 18** – Helem gesturing toward the older adults



Source: Empirical material.

Helem: Those symbols determinate.

Teacher: Determine. [writes the word on the board]

Helem: Determine.

Rubi: The symbols determine different groups. For example, **I don't use [wear] short shorts and curt [short] clothes because my age is avançada?** [laughter] [while she is saying it, she points at Helem (her daughter), who is wearing shorts, and then at herself]

**Movement-image 19** – Rubi pointing at Helem's shorts



Source: Empirical material.

**Movement-image 20** – Rubi pointing at herself to indicate age-appropriate dressing



Source: Empirical material.

Teacher: Because you are older.

Rubi: **I'm older**, yeah. **So, I determine in how group I stay?**

Helem: Which group...

Rubi: Yeah, which group...

Teacher: To which group you belong.

Rubi: **...to which group I belong**, yes.

(Class 28, Nov. 12, 2019)

The age difference was something not only discursively but also visually present in class in material terms, as we can see in the students' semiotic productions. Helem's hand gestures in this case index a group division by age. Had I not video recorded the class, I might have not been able to see this semiotic nuance – that is, what Helem said could be easily interpreted as a statement about people in general. However, her different gestures toward the teenagers and then the older adults show that, when she said that “some symbols determinate [determine] some groups. Like, teenagers dress differently than adults”, she was referring to the students in class, even if it was only to exemplify her argument.

Rubi's statement highlights the entanglement of human and nonhuman elements in the construction of her identity: “I don't use [wear] short shorts and curt [short] clothes because [...] I'm older”. Her claim demonstrates how “identities emerge as aesthetic and affect-laden projects, spatio-temporally constrained and framed by normative regimes and social discourses” (PECK; STROUD, 2015, p. 146). In this sense, it can be fruitful to address bodies as corporeal semiotic landscapes, thus disrupting the notion of body as something individualized and detached from its relations with other entities. De Freitas and Curinga (2015) add that identities therefore should be seen as assemblages, hence not beginning or ending in the individual, but partaking in a dynamic affective force field that lures subjects into activity.

As Barad (2007) puts it, discourse (i.e., meaning making) is always produced from material bodies that are semiotically laden. Therefore, social processes, which are built from naturalcultural relations, are immanently self-organized, insofar as their semiotic chains work like “tuber[s] agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive” (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2005 [1980], P. 7).

While we were working on a review of comparatives, superlatives, and equatives, the issue of age came into sight once again, at two different moments of the class:

[36]

Teacher: Any question?

Students: No.

Teacher: Are you following, [Rubi]? [she was the only one that had not answered the question]

Helem: Do you understand?

Rubi: *Eu tô tentando ler, gente. Calma! Eu não sou igual a vocês, não.* [I'm trying to read, guys. Take it easy! I'm not like you.] [laughter]

Teacher: Would you like to get closer or farther? I don't know which one would be better for you. Yeah, because I have both problems [short-sightedness and long-sightedness]. So, in my case... [Rubi laughs]

Rubi: No, it's okay.

Teacher: Can you read it? [referring to the slides she was showing]

Rubi: Yes.

Teacher: Okay, then.

(Class 17, Oct. 01, 2019)

[37]

Teacher: [Rubi], let's listen to yours. [referring to the sentences she wrote]

Rubi: My dog is as smart as yours. [laughter]

Teacher: Okay, your dog? Is your dog smart? [Rubi and Helem nod]

Helem: It's family! [laughter]

Teacher: Yeah, okay.

Rubi: **I am... is as old as [Elton].** [looks at Elton and laughs]

Mark: Oh! [laughter]

Teacher: **I am as old... I am as old as [Elton].** [Rubi corrects it on her notebook] **Did you listen, [Elton]? [Elton was writing his sentences]**

Elton: **What?**

Teacher: **"I am as old as [Elton]".**

Elton: **No.** [shakes his head, looks down, and smiles] [Rubi laughs]

(Class 17, Oct. 01, 2019)

As one can notice, the issue was not that Rubi and Elton were "old", but that they were older than the other students. This is an example of identity created in locus. In addition, it shows how place plays an important role in constructing bodies and "partially determining [...] how we come to understand ourselves" (PECK; STROUD, 2015, p. 133). How one feels about a place and a situation is also relational, not something individual, but constructed from intra-actions. In this respect, Shankar and Cavanaugh (2017, p. 7) argue that "places and people's relationship to them is part of dwelling, part of how the material is shared and made social". Therefore, in their case, "be(com)ing old" concerns their relations with the place and other human bodies, technologies, objects, and so on.

It is important to stress that, during the course, there were moments of veiled ageism (implicit discrimination based on age difference), which was enacted by both the younger and older students. Once we observe the context of the classroom attentively, we can see that the issue was not necessarily their age but their linguistic production and their relation to language



learning (i.e., their performances in the classroom). The group seemed to have a different pace, especially compared to Elton, as he took longer to do the activities in class. In the previous cut, he had not listened to Rubi mentioning his name precisely because he was still writing his sentences, and this happened quite often. This aspect of having a different pace is also corroborated by Rubi's statement, "I'm not like you" (referring to the other students), in cut 36. All these elements worked as markers of visible difference (PECK; STROUD, 2015).

As their teacher, I tried to acknowledge their language learning trajectories and encourage them to value the different experiences they brought with them to the classroom. I support the idea that we should not compare students. Rather, we ought to acknowledge their distinct ways of learning and work from and with them (some examples are discussed in detail in the next chapter). This movement can help us better respond to their local needs and contingencies of the situated contexts in which we work. Further, it can foster the creation of a more ethically accountable space of language education.

Now I shall focus specifically on a couple of Rubi's claims: "I'm trying to read, guys. Take it easy! I'm not like you" and "I am as old as Elton". Her words reiterate the division of the group into younger and older students. As Costa-Silva (2021) asseverates, society has a stigmatized perception of what it means to grow old. In the binary relation young/old, the latter usually carries a negative connotation. As the author explains, due to prejudice, older people tend to agree with and reaffirm things like, "I'm too old for this or that", leading them not to partake in many activities and spaces of social life. The context of language education is no exception: the older the students, the fewer of them there are in schools. Following Peck and Stroud's (2015) reflections, this is directly related to the social perception that specific bodies fit into certain spaces, while others do not. The authors add that, when unwanted bodies insist on being in spaces where they are not welcome, what generally happens is that they end up "fitting under friction". As a counteraction, Costa-Silva (2021) suggests that teachers should deconstruct prejudices that associate older people with notions of unproductivity and incapability. In this regard, he encourages educators to promote the idea that older students are "capable and productive *in their own way*"<sup>81</sup> (COSTA-SILVA, 2021, p. 54, emphasis in original, my translation).

In the feedback sessions and in his intraview, Elton complained about the feeling of being an older student. From his viewpoint, he came to terms with the process of becoming

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<sup>81</sup> Original quote: "capaz e produtiva à sua maneira".

older in this English course. When I asked him about his interactions with the group and how he felt about the other students, these were his answers:

[38]

Elton: Como eu comentei contigo, foi o primeiro lugar que me fez sentir velho. Foi aqui. Começou nessa turma, quando nós nos conhecemos há um ano, um ano e meio atrás. Eu achei que nem ia dar liga com essa meninadinha, com esse pessoal. Até funcionou, aqui, acolá. [...] No começo, tinha alguns risinhos, até algumas coisas meio irônicas. Não era com maldade. A gente vê essas coisas, não gosta. Então, foi o primeiro lugar [em que me senti velho]. E os 50 chegaram. Mas, eu sinto muito é o cansaço mesmo. [...] Eu achei que não iria dar certo, mas está acontecendo.

[Elton: As I've told you, this was the first place that made me feel old. It was here. It started in this group, when we met a year ago, a year and a half ago. I thought it wouldn't work with these kids, these people. It kind of worked now and then. [...] In the beginning, there were some derisive laughs, even some ironic things. They weren't ill-intentioned. We see these things, and we don't like them. So, it was the first place [where I felt old]. And now I'm 50. But what I've been really feeling is exhaustion. [...] I thought it wouldn't work, but it's sort of working.]

(Class 22, Feedback Session I, Oct. 17, 2019)

[39]

Elton: É uma turma que, não sei se já comentei contigo, foi o primeiro lugar - e olha que eu lido com gente demais e em lugares múltiplos -, mas foi o primeiro lugar que eu me senti velho. Essa turma são todos [...] sobreviventes de suas turmas. Eu sou sobrevivente de uma turma, o [Mark] e a [Helem] são de outra, a [Flávia] é de outra, a [Rubi] e o [Rodrigo] são de outra. Não tínhamos estudado juntos antes. Nós fomos aglutinados num Basic II. Aí, o começo, eu senti risinhos, quando eu dava os vacilos, as coisas.

Teacher: Mas esse semestre?

Elton: Esse semestre foi bem menos, porque agora alguns colegas começaram a ter uma vida mais puxada, porque eles estão no ensino médio ou quase no final, ou alguém [...] arrumou um emprego, e chegou e começou a dar umas derrapadas também. Aí eu vi a pessoa se colocando no meu lugar. E aí pararam. Era muito leve, aqui, acolá. Eu até ficava me perguntando [o] porquê isso me influenciava, e tal. Eu não esperava ser, me sentir, ser tratado como velho. Fiz 50 anos agora em outubro, mês retrasado. Eu sabia que isso iria acontecer em algum momento, esse processo interno, né? Mas eu achei estranho. [...] Uma afinidade para ajudar mesmo, eu senti de vez em quando da [Helem], muito gentil, [...] e do [Mark], que sempre foi um parceiro muito grande. A gente sempre tentava um ajudar ao outro, mas ele sempre tentando muito me ajudar. [...] Então, em relação à turma, eu não sinto [que é] uma turma. [...] São pessoas que se juntam duas vezes por semana, tentam ser gentis umas com as outras, assim, civilizadas, e pouco passa disso.

[Elton: It's a group that, I don't know if I've already told you, it was the first place - and I deal with many people in several places - but it was the first place where I felt old. This group is made up of [...] survivors from other groups. I am a survivor from one group, [Mark] and [Helem] from another, [Flávia] is from another, [Rubi] and [Rodrigo] are from another. We hadn't studied together before. We were put together in a Basic II. Then, in the beginning, I noticed derisive laughs when I made mistakes, things like that. Teacher: But what about this semester?

**Elton: This semester it happened a lot less, because now some classmates started to have a harder life, because they are in high school or almost at the end, or someone [...] got a job, and started to make some mistakes too. Then I saw the person putting themselves in my place. Then, they stopped. I could barely notice it, here or there. I even kept asking myself why that affected me, and things like that. I didn't expect to be, to feel, to be treated like an old man. I turned 50 in October, the month before last. I knew this would happen at some point, this internal process, right? But I found it strange. [...] In relation to being willing to help, I noticed that [Helem] tried from time to time, she's very kind, [...] and [Mark], who has always been a great partner, did too. We always tried to help each other, but he was always trying to help me. [...] So, in relation to the group, I don't feel it's a group. [...] These are people who get together twice a week, try to be nice to each other, like, civilized, and that's it.]**

(Intraview, Question 5, Dec. 17, 2019)

Although some of the information is repeated, I chose to keep both cuts because they serve as a complement to each other, insofar as together they provide a better contextualization of the issue at hand. In the first feedback session, halfway through the semester, Elton shared with me that, “In the beginning, there were some derisive laughs, even some ironic things. They weren't ill-intentioned. We see these things, and we don't like them”. Later, by the end of the semester, he reinforced this very statement in his intraview. At another moment, he told me he saw this behavior just as a matter of lack of maturity, on the part of some students. Ferreira (2018) stresses that hierarchical relations are commonly established among Brazilian students when they cannot express themselves in English the way that they would like and that their interlocutors would usually expect. As the author claims, there seems to be an underlying need to sound like someone who speaks standard English – who in this relation is the subject considered “superior”. In this respect, Elton feels that sometimes he was oppressed and marginalized.

In the dynamics of the intra-actions among the students, their linguistic and epistemic productions were inseparable from their generational relations. In other words, the younger students seemed to feel more comfortable to speak and express themselves than the older students. As Rubi and Elton demanded a lot of themselves and did not want to make linguistic mistakes, they often refrained from speaking and sharing what they thought. Conversely, given the cuts presented thus far, the reader may not agree this observation, as it seems that these students participated actively in the classes. Indeed, Rubi and Elton started talking more after having several conversations with me. Those talks helped them better understand their own language learning processes and acknowledge their strengths and potentialities (for more information on the unfoldings of this experience, see next chapter).

In cut 38, Elton states that, “[T]his was the first place that made me feel old. It was here. It started in this group, when we met a year ago, a year and a half ago”. Further, in cut 39, he adds, “I even kept asking myself why that affected me, and things like that. I didn’t expect to be, to feel, to be treated like an old man”. Therefore, for Elton, what happened in class was directly connected with his age. Peck and Stroud (2015) underscore that when we address the materiality of bodies, we cannot disregard their sensibilities, such as their discomfort, pain, desire, and so forth. Here I would like us to focus on how the way he feels and perceives the experience brings to the fore “the embodied and embedded, relational and affective structures of subjectivity” (BRAIDOTTI, 2017b, p. 14). First, it is essential to note that people always experience and see the world from their bodies, which are not only their locus of enunciation but also their locus of existence. In this sense, Grosfoguel (2007, p. 213) accentuates “the geo-political and body-political location of the subject”. Embeddedness refers to situated grounding, in political terms; relationality concerns our mutual constitution in relation to both human and nonhuman others; finally, affect shows that entanglement is not a one-way process since we always affect and are affected by others somehow. All these aspects stress the primacy of ontological inseparability.

Age is not about individual bodies but about how these bodies relate to the world. Elton’s experience did not take place among independent, separate, detached entities but occurred in webs of relations, intra-actions, and entanglements with countless others. It is important to notice that the configuration of the classroom, the way the classes were conducted, the encounters with other bodies (i.e., the use of objects, how artifacts were arranged, and so on) might all have influenced his perception and the way he felt. After all, age relations were (re)produced in this space.

Nevertheless, it is worth adding that, when I asked the other students their opinions on their interactions with the group and how they felt about their classmates, their answers differed significantly from Elton’s. They all said that they felt comfortable in class. Helem replied, “*Eu acho que a gente melhorou bastante quanto a tudo, [...] porque você estava sempre estimulando a gente.* [I think we improved a lot in terms of everything, [...] because you were always encouraging us]”. Rodrigo claimed, “*[Mesmo que eu seja] uma pessoa muito mais na minha, [...] eu acho que a gente começou a interagir mais. [...] [Então,] se precisa de ajuda, se perguntar, eles estão sempre dispostos a ajudar. [...] É uma turma boa.* [[Even though I am] a person that keeps it to himself, [...] I think we started to interact more. [...] [S]o, if you need help, if you ask, they’re always willing to help. [...] It’s a good group]”. Mark mentioned, “*[S]empre me tratam muito bem, e converso bastante com as pessoas* [[T]hey always treat me

very well, and I talk a lot to them]”. Finally, unlike Elton, Rubi declared, “[*O*] grupo não deixou de se ajudar, que é uma característica desse grupo – de estar dando apoio. Eu sou uma pessoa que depende muito desse grupo, e eles me ajudam bastante. [...] Eu sempre [me] sinto acolhida por eles. Eles, sempre que eu preciso, me ajudam. Então, eu gosto muito dessa turma, gosto de estar nessa turma e tenho aprendido muito com eles. Eles estão num nível maior e acaba me puxando, eu tento correr para ir junto. Mas eu me sinto bem junto com eles. [[T]he group helped each other, which is a characteristic of this group – giving support. I’m a person who relies a lot on this group, and they help me a lot. [...] I always feel welcomed by them. They help me whenever I need it. So, I really like this group, I like being in this group, and I have learned a lot from them. They know more than I do, and that ends up pushing me. So, I try really hard to keep up. But I feel comfortable around them]”.

Although Flávia said she did not have any problems with the group, she made a remark that resonates with Elton’s complaints: “*Eu acho que a gente deveria ter interagido mais em sala, e fora da sala também. [...] Talvez a gente mesmo [ter] ajuda[do] mais um ao outro, porque a gente sente que algumas pessoas ficam um pouco para trás, né? E talvez se tivesse mais dessa interação, a gente poderia [ter] ajuda[do] mais um ao outro. [I think we should have interacted more in the classroom, and outside the classroom too. [...] Maybe we [should have] help[ed] each other more because we notice that some people fall behind, right? And maybe if there was more of this interaction, we could [have] help[ed] each other more]*”. In cut 39, Elton states, “[I]n relation to the group, I don’t feel it’s a group. [...] These are people who get together twice a week, try to be nice to each other, like, civilized, and that’s it”. Therefore, the lack of support and understanding from the group might have been the main reason why Elton felt so uncomfortable throughout the course.

On the other hand, the student maintains, “[N]ow some classmates started to have a harder life, because they are in high school or almost at the end, or someone [...] got a job, and started to make some mistakes too. Then I saw the person putting themselves in my place”. For Elton, these events engendered feelings of alterity, sensitivity, and understanding toward him (COSTA-SILVA, 2021). In addition, in cut 38, he claims, “But what I’ve been really feeling is exhaustion”. In this regard, there is a clear intersection between age and work that seems to have affected the relations within the group. Some of my field notes expand this observation:

[40]

[Rubi], who is a forty-six-year-old accountant, told me she had missed last class because she was feeling a lot of pain in her right shoulder and arms. She has tendinitis. She said

she had missed some classes because of that. Similarly, [Elton], who is a forty-nine-year-old geography teacher, complained he cannot follow the classes like the younger students because he's been *feeling absolutely exhausted from work*. The teenagers are in secondary school and high school. They do not work. And Flávia has just started working. *It would be unlikely for teenagers to be in a similar condition or to have physical problems comparable to those of older adults. So, these aspects in relation to the body should not be overlooked.*

(Field notes, Oct. 29, 2019)

[41]

By watching the camera recordings, as members of the working class, during the classes, I noticed how Elton strives to listen to his classmates and to me, while trying not to close his eyes, because he is always exhausted. Rubi's facial and body expressions often convey the same, and a couple of times she told me she was feeling pain in her shoulders and arms due to *overworking*. This makes me think about the time of this class – it occurs in the evening, after a long day's work for some of the students. *Feeling constantly exhausted does hinder language learning*, which was something Elton has emphasized several times throughout the semester.

(Field notes, Nov. 12, 2019)

In the language schools where I taught English, there were always working-class students, many of whom had overuse injuries. This is an issue usually associated with older students, and not teenagers. Fortunately, like Elton and Rubi, it seems that my students have always felt comfortable to share with me what goes on with them. These field notes materialize one of the outcomes of these information-sharing moments. Following Barad (2007, p. 65), “the body's materiality (including, for example, its anatomy and physiology) and other material forces as well (including nonhuman ones) actively matter to the processes of materialization”. In this sense, as I mentioned, *physical aspects matter*, and that includes the students' bodily and studying conditions.

The underlying neoliberal idea of *production* pervades several of our sociomaterial practices. Hence, we are valued for what we produce. In language education, it is not different. Many students long to speak and write like the ones whose linguistic production they deem better. Accordingly, when they do not “produce language” like those classmates, they might feel inferior. As it is possible to notice, in this group, the binary relation young/old was related to such a production. For them, the issue was not that they did not produce enough, but that they did not produce like the teenagers. In response to that and to the hegemonic power that

seeks to homogenize and invisibilize differences, as their teacher, my actions encompassed: respecting their different language learning trajectories; valuing what they knew and did; listening with care; being attentive to their needs and particularities; being open to their creative ideas; assisting them in overcoming difficulties and fears; boosting their confidence; and supporting their personal projects. Such actions and some of their unfoldings are particularly visible in the next chapter, especially in section 3.4, which focuses on the language learning projects created and conducted by the students.

In Chapter 3, based on the language education experience the students and I had, I develop the concept of material-discursive ideologies.

### Chapter 3

#### Material-discursive ideologies of language and language education

Throughout the English course that I taught at the language school, I noticed how the students' perceptions, attitudes, and actions, as well as my own, were imbued with different notions of language and language education. In general terms, these revolved around ideas of language as a structure/a closed system, a means of communication, and social practice. Nevertheless, as I ruminated on the events that took place, I perceived how such ideologies involve both discourses and materiality. For this reason, in this chapter, I work with the conception of language ideologies as material-discursive phenomena. In this sense, I propose and seek to develop an understanding of language as *sociomaterial practice*<sup>82</sup>.

Some authors might claim that they do consider material aspects, but my argument is that the main issue lies in the fact that there is a prior ontological separateness among entities – the focus is usually on individuals and not on relations. In addition, although relationality is often considered, material elements are not perceived as entangled, intra-active, agentive in our ontoepistemological constitution, insofar as there is an overemphasis on how human beings influence everything, but not the other way around. Accordingly, it is important to underline that our ideas about language and communication are intertwined with the experiences we live, which are not only linguistic and discursive, but also material. Language is produced from physical bodies in their relations. These are some of the reflections I attempt to address in this chapter.

Based on these arguments, I focus on topics pertaining to: cognition; the materiality of language; the participation of human and nonhuman entities in language education; the concept of *language as mutual misunderstanding*; the classroomscape (the schoolroom and other language learning spaces); the students' relationship with technologies; the assessment and relations of affect; the tests and my teaching praxis; and the learners' language learning projects.

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<sup>82</sup> It is worth stressing that this concept refers to semiotic productions, and that it is not just restricted to humans. Nonetheless, given the context of this study and the agential cuts made (with a focus on the students and the teacher), although the agentive role of nonhumans is taken into account throughout the course and the inquiry, I do not particularly expand upon the sense-making of nonhumans in this study. Examples of discussions that address this subject matter can, however, be found in Barad (2007) and Haraway (2008, 2016).



### 3.1 Language and language learning ideologies: some reflections

As I have already mentioned, especially since I started working with posthumanism, I have been reading about and studying ontology. Consequently, as an applied linguist and English teacher, I have also been interested in discussions centered on ontologies of English (CANAGARAJAH, 2020a; PENNYCOOK, 2020b), which are intimately connected with language ideologies. In the initial questionnaire and in the first class, I asked some questions to help me see how the students understood English as well as how they regarded their relationship with this language. In this section, I thereby focus on their answers and on some events from the classroom. First, from their replies, I approach their perceptions of the importance of English in their lives:

[42]

Rodrigo: **Ele me ajuda a entender muitas coisas, como filmes e séries, jornais, vídeos, livros, além de se um dia for viajar para fora do país, vou saber me orientar.**

[Rodrigo: **It helps me understand many things, like movies and series, the news, videos, books, and if I travel abroad one day, I will know how to get my bearings.**]

(Questionnaire, Question 3, Aug. 06, 2019)

[43]

Elton: **I love listening to English songs and watching movies and TV series in English.**

(Questionnaire, Question 3, Aug. 06, 2019)

[44]

Mark: **I don't remember when I start to learn English, but I learn English for travel abroad and know other cultures. I like to see movies in English.**

(Class 01, Aug. 06, 2019)

[45]

Rubi: **The English is important in my life to travel abroad, to help in my work, for me to connect with the world. I love English and believe that learning other language enriches our life and give us more opportunities, especially at work.**

(Questionnaire, Question 3, Aug. 06, 2019)

[46]

Flávia: **I think learning English will help my undergraduate degree and help to have a differential [advantage] in my curriculum. And it's a personal achievement.**

(Questionnaire, Question 3, Aug. 06, 2019)

[47]

Helem: The importance of English in my life is to everything I do, because I know **English is really important in any situation**, both **professional** and **my knowledge**.

(Questionnaire, Question 3, Aug. 06, 2019)

Before addressing the previous six cuts as a cluster, I shall draw attention to a specific factor that concerns the first three cuts. In cultural aspects, over the past decades, English has dominated media entertainment. In this respect, it is worth observing that things like movies, TV series, music, information, etc., mentioned by the students, are especially linked to sight and hearing, which have been historically considered higher senses in the Western world (PENNYCOOK, 2018c). Such a comprehension is interlaced with our notion of humanity, and consequently with what we value the most in education. Senses play an extremely important role in how we relate to others, and image- and audio-based semiotic practices are those that predominantly construct the way we see and intra-act with the world. Haraway (2010 [1991], p. 190, emphasis in original) stresses that eyes, both organic and artificial, “[...] are active perceptual systems, building in translations and specific *ways* of seeing, that is, ways of life”. She adds that through them we construct “highly specific visual possibilities, each with a wonderfully detailed, active, partial way of organizing worlds” (p. 190). It is important to bear in mind that visual language, as well as auditory skills, are elements that are learned – that is, we are socially and culturally taught to see and hear things and act in certain ways rather than others (MONTE MOR, 2021).

Following the work of McLuhan (1964), Kellner and Share (2009) remind us that the invention of print literacy along with the phonetic alphabet changed our relations with others and the world. Fragmentation, separateness, uniformity, and repeatability were absorbed into our perception of life, fostering a “culture of homogeneity and lineal organization” (KELLNER; SHARE, 2009, p. 283). For reasons such as these, McLuhan (2013 [1964], p. 153) sees “all media [as] extensions of our own bodies and senses”.<sup>83</sup> These arguments cannot be disassociated from what the learners shared, since we are educated through cultural pedagogies spread through the media. As one can see, the fact that the students related their experiences and trajectories with language to visual, auditory, and audio-visual media productions shows how their understandings of English and relationship with it are deeply influenced by them. To

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<sup>83</sup> I am aware McLuhan has been critiqued for his reductionism and technological determinism (GOURLAY, 2015). However, I mention some of his ideas here because they emphasize that the media is not transparent and neutral, and that it thus participates actively in the construction of society.

put it differently, “the entanglements of English combine at multiple levels across multiple material and semiotic domains” (PENNYCOOK, 2020c, p. 230).

Now, in relation to the cluster of cuts as a whole, the learners enumerated several personal and professional reasons for learning English, which involve doing it for recreation, studies, and work. In their answers, we can notice that English is seen as a means that could make some of their dreams come true. From their standpoint, English can: a) give them access to different kinds of entertainment (movies, TV series, music, videos, books, and so on) (Rodrigo, Elton, and Mark); b) keep them informed on the news in the world (Rodrigo and Rubi); c) help them to communicate with others and get to know other cultures and peoples (if/when they travel abroad) (Rodrigo, Mark, and Rubi); d) be useful in their studies at school and college, and provide them with work opportunities (Rubi, Flávia, and Helem). I must add that, although I connect individual statements with specific students here, all these aspects were directly and indirectly mentioned by the group throughout the course.

The learners believe that English can assist them in their upward social mobility (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2019b; SILVA, 2016), getting them places they would not be able to be or go if it were not for this language. As Ferreira (2018) underlines, students are often led to see English as a necessity, especially because of its association with ideas of professional opportunities and career advancement. Thus, in their claims we can notice reverberations of discourses from the globalized world, “sustained by socioeconomic and market forces” (DUA, 1994, p. 132, as cited in PENNYCOOK, 2021a, p. 67). Rubi, for example, declares: “English is important in my life [...] for me to connect with the world”. In her statement, there is an underlying assumption that “the world speaks English”, but here we might ask, “Which world?” Some of their answers therefore hint at how we become engrossed in hegemonic narratives of neoliberalism.

In educational contexts like private language schools, the status of English is generally unquestionably accepted, and its assumed neutrality frequently induces learners to adhere to the dominant world order (PHILLIPSON, 2008). In the words of Pennycook (2021a, p. 70), “English is promoted through multiple agencies”, and these do not refer to discursive *or* material forces as separate domains (which have been the arguments offered by most poststructuralist and Marxist viewpoints, respectively). Rather, such multiple agencies are enacted by material-discursive practices of different kinds that configure our everyday life. In this regard, Fenwick (2015, p. 84) argues that seeking to understand how matter matters can help us unpick “abstractions that blind us to the micro-dynamics”, which affect everything we do. Working with perspectives from both old and new materialisms may be useful to this end.

The students' claims are examples of ideas and practices that are interlaced with a specific notion of English as a means of communication.

Regarding how the learners feel about this language, in cut 45, Rubi asserts, "I love English". This very statement was reiterated by this group of students on different occasions, and they also verbalized that they often associate English with their dreams:

[48]

Flávia: Since I was a child, **I loved English**.

(Class 01, Aug. 06, 2019)

[49]

Helem: My mom and my father said it to me, "You're gonna start doing English to travel when you're 15". So, I actually traveled. But **I really love the language. Now I am here not with a proposal [purpose], just because I love**, because I want to improve.

(Class 30, Nov. 19, 2019)

[50]

Elton: My dream is do a master's. My only moment for study English is here. **It's a dream to speak English** since [I was] a boy.

(Class 01, Aug. 06, 2019)

[51]

Rubi: I study English because **my dream is learn English**.

(Class 01, Aug. 06, 2019)

As we can see, their relationship with English leads some of them to even declare their love for the language (Rubi, Flávia, and Helem). Further, Rubi and Elton were not the only ones who claimed that speaking English is their dream, as Helem and Mark also mentioned it in their language learning projects. Interestingly, we could question: Why do they use these lexical items ("love" and "dream") to refer to English? What do these choices mean? How do these elements work in their lives? How does this kind of attachment to this language affect them? Following Pennycook (2021a, p. 74), in order to address questions such as these, we need

close and detailed understandings of the ways in which English is embedded in local economies of desire, and the ways in which demand for English is part of a larger picture of images of change, modernization, access, and longing. It is tied to the languages, cultures, styles, and aesthetics of popular culture, with its particular

attractions for youth, rebellion, and conformity; it is enmeshed within local economies, and all the inclusions, exclusions, and inequalities this may entail; it is bound up with changing modes of communication, particularly Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media; it is increasingly entrenched in educational systems, bringing to the fore many concerns about knowledge, pedagogy, and the curriculum. We need to understand the diversity of what English is and what it means in all these contexts, and we need to do so not with prior assumptions about globalization and its effects but with critical studies of the local embeddedness of English.

Dreams are intimately connected with desire. For Braidotti (2013, p. 134), desire concerns “an ontological drive to become”; and in the case of these students, “to become a member of a language community” (KRAMSCH, 2019, p. 51). Thus, they expect to draw on their communicative ability to access spaces, be in places, and participate in different kinds of activities. However, it is important to remember, as Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980], p. 229) maintain, desire is not an individual matter, but “what the assemblage determines it to be”. That is, the learners’ perceptions, expectations, and desires are unfoldings of their intra-actions with the world, traversed by power relations, contradictory movements, and competing interests. With regard to language, more specifically, Bastos (2019) shows in his study with Brazilian students that they tend to long for a nativized standard English, preferably from England or the United States. Therefore, in keeping with Pennycook (2021a), especially when issues of language and power are addressed, it is worth including discussions that problematize this desire and question the ways it permeates language courses.

Still on this subject, Helem and Rodrigo chose to talk about being an English student as one of their identities in their speeches. However, as Rodrigo shared a particularly important reflection, I will just focus on his speech here:

[52]

Teacher: [Rodrigo], please, go on.

Rodrigo: Chose identity is difficult for me because I don't have anything interesting to speak. [laughter] But I chose two identities, simple identities: **study English** and military school<sup>84</sup> student. **About the English, I think the English is important develop in my life. But sometimes I have difficult, and it helps to discourage me. But I try learn more because I know that learning English is for a few. For example, in my classroom [at the public school he attends], only I do a English course.** And I like studying English.

Teacher: Why do you think it's important? You said speaking English is important to you. Why?

Rodrigo: Because in my future, I think it's help me in my job, and because *eu quero*?

Teacher: I want...

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<sup>84</sup> In Brazil, a military school is a kind of public school especially known for its exertion of discipline. The principal is a military police officer. However, the Department of Education assigns all the teachers, administrative staff, cooks, security guards (civil servants of the state) to the school. Students can attend this institution if they are selected through a draw system.

Rodrigo: I want be a federal police. And I have a possibility for work in another country, and I need to learn English.

Teacher: Okay.

Rodrigo: And, yeah, **I like learning English, and I feel it's a part of my identity.**

(Class 30, Nov. 19, 2019)

According to Robins (1991, p. 25), “global capitalism has in reality been about westernization – the export of western commodities, values, priorities, [and] ways of life”. In this sense, despite our efforts and the important critical work that we try to do in our classrooms, we should have in mind that “far from being a solution to the dismantling of unequal power relations in the world, English is in fact often part of the problem” (RUBDY, 2015, p. 43). Therefore, since we are all enmeshed in sociomaterial processes that (re)produce neoliberal ideologies and colonial knowledge projects, our objective should not be just providing students with a means to move to and fro in communicative terms. Teaching English as an apolitical means of communication implies not only the strengthening of inequities, injustices, and dominant viewpoints (i.e., the maintenance of the status quo) but also a particular construction of the neoliberal individual. After all, when we teach a language, we educate people to be a certain kind of subject in society (ROCHA, 2020).

For Kubota (2016, p. 484), we ought to be careful not to fall prey to discourses that argue for teaching students “the language of power” so they can “gain cultural capital, and eventually economic and symbolic capital, for socioeconomic success”, while at the same time valuing their cultural and linguistic personal trajectories. Neoliberal multiculturalism, with its celebratory discourses of diversity and neglect of power relations, is a characteristic example of the makeshift nature of capitalism. Accordingly, in order to move away from profit-oriented and market-driven educational tendencies, when we teach English, we should acknowledge its effects of power, problematize its status, and help students understand that by using it they are acting *with* language in the world. From the previous speeches presented by the learners in Chapter 2, as well as Rodrigo’s statements in cut 52, the reader can see that I tried to move toward this direction.

Rodrigo says thoughtfully, “I know that learning English is for [...] few. For example, in my classroom [at the public school he attends], only I do a English course”. In Brazil, as Mastrella-de-Andrade (2020) points out, since English is commonly treated as a commodity, having the chance of learning it is considered a privilege, and not a right (even though it is taught at regular schools as a foreign language). Given the neoliberal logic, people’s stances are usually seen as embedded in an individual sense of “self”. However, at different moments,

coming from middle-class families, like Rodrigo, the students demonstrated their awareness of privileges and places they occupy in society. As Rodrigo talked about his identity as an English language student, he mentioned those who do not have the same opportunity as he does. Thus, his claims also indicate how his perception of himself is entangled with his view of others.

By and large, in the cuts shown thus far, the learners referred to English as communication. In the initial questionnaire, when I asked them which topics they enjoyed discussing in class and that they would like to discuss in my classes<sup>85</sup>, Elton stated, “I would like to practice more moments of group immersion [i.e., interactions]”. Mark claimed, “*Eu gostaria de ver tópicos relacionados à cultura de um país, tecnologia, entre outros*. [I would like to see topics related to a country’s culture, technology, among others]”. And Rodrigo wrote, “*Questões tecnológicas, lugares novos e novas culturas, questões ambientais, já na aprendizagem gosto de falar de vocabulário, gramática*. [Technological issues, new places and new cultures, environmental issues, and while learning[about them], I like to talk about vocabulary, grammar]”. Although Elton’s, Mark’s, and Rodrigo’s answers relate to interaction and more general social issues, by the end of his reply, Rodrigo mentions linguistic elements, for which the other students even provide some examples:

[53]

Rubi: More reading many themes. **Phrasal verbs. Indefinite pronouns.** Musics and videos (to improve my listening). **Wh-questions and yes or no questions.**

(Questionnaire, Question 4, Aug. 06, 2019)

[54]

Flávia: I would like to talk about **prepositions, phrasal verbs and make a review of all verb tenses.**

(Questionnaire, Question 4, Aug. 06, 2019)

[55]

Helem: The kind of topics I like to discuss in class are **vocabulary, like phrasal verbs**, different things to read and how I find it, and about **grammar**. I would like to study **prepositions and present perfect**. And the last thing is improve my writing.

(Questionnaire, Question 4, Aug. 06, 2019)

The conception of English as a set of structures/a pre-given stable system pervades their answers. As Jordão (2020b) claims, students want to learn compartmentalized grammar

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<sup>85</sup> The latter (i.e., what the students would like to see in my classes) was something added by the general coordinator while they were answering the initial questionnaire.

structures because they are taught to want that. Again, this is not a choice made by an independent, self-contained, conscious individual, but an unfolding from assemblages. The book series and other teaching materials, curricula, tests, school procedures, and so on, are the foundations that structure this language course. Hence the force of their presence is echoed in the learners' statements. Likewise, my practice was not exempt from it (as the reader will see in the following sections). As Monte Mor (2021) stresses, in language schools there is a highly visible fetish about standard language and normative grammar. For Canagarajah (2018a), this happens because of the implicit (and sometimes explicit) idea that learning a language primarily means mastering its grammar. Here it is important to recognize the historical participation of grammar books and dictionaries as key elements in the promotion of ideologies linked to standard language (MILROY, 2001).

Süssekind (2019) argues that in contexts such as the one in question, there is generally a focus on lists of grammar contents, which set particular trajectories and expected results. As the author underlines, when there is overemphasis on grammar, the curriculum becomes predictable, prescriptive, and controlled. In this respect, as everything is predetermined, negotiation of meanings is normally foreclosed. Language is then connected with notions of unicity, autonomy, stability (SIGNORINI, 2002), homogeneity, and standardization (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2019b). Two other ideas working in tandem with these assumptions are the claims that languages are separate entities, and that mutual intelligibility/understanding can be achieved by using the same linguistic code. Jordão (2021) points out that these constructions of language end up driving teachers to a monolingual orientation of language education. Veronelli (2019a) adds that, especially in language courses, language then tends to be seen as a finished product with inherent properties, and as something that *belongs* to certain peoples. As a result, this often leads students and teachers not only to value but also to advocate for a kind of teaching focused on the purity and precision of language, fueled by the desire to reproduce native speakerism (DUBOC, 2019b).

Concerning this discussion, Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980], p. 139) reiterate some of the points previously addressed and asseverate that “language is a political affair”:

the scientific model taking language as an object of study is one with the political model by which language is homogenized, centralized, standardized, becoming a language of power, a major or dominant language. Linguistics can claim all it wants to be science, nothing but pure science – it wouldn't be the first time that the order of “pure science” was used to secure the requirements of another order. [...] The scientific enterprise of extracting constants and constant relations is always coupled with the political enterprise of imposing them on speakers and transmitting order-words. (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2005 [1980], p. 101, emphasis added).



In this regard, for Bastos (2019), *language as communication* and *language as a pre-given system* are complementary modern ideologies, which sustain metadiscursive regimes that uphold language control and colonial practices of knowledge production. Based on the conception of the native speaker as a model, these become forces that establish hierarchies, not only in linguistic but also in social terms, between this “language” and its nonnative speakers. As Rezende and Dias (2018) remind us, throughout the construction of what we have come to understand as humanity, not only were other humans considered inferior but so were their languages, behaviors, knowledges, cosmovisions, aesthetics, and so on. In language education, it is important to observe that sociomaterial elements such as textbooks, assessment, grading, the phonemic chart, activities, the arrangement of the classroom, and the physical spaces occupied by teacher and students may all be involved in oppressive structures that fuel certain beliefs and perceptions of language and language learning.

However, how did we get here? As Severo (2017, p. 70, my translation) states, as a field of scholarship grounded in a modern project, linguistics built our understanding of language as “an object to be scrutinized, classified, named, riven, analyzed, and described according to certain rules”<sup>86</sup>. Saussure’s (2011 [1916]) speaking circuit was created from a very specific Western perspective, which endorsed the conception of language as an abstract, fixed system, detached from society, and hence free from relations of power. Pennycook (2018c) explains that Chomsky (1986, 2000) in turn gave a cognitivist and even more individualized twist to this view of language, reinforcing its conception as a code that makes it possible to pass messages back and forth among human heads.

As we have seen, notions of humanity and language have always been connected. The figure of the Vitruvian Man, with all its humanist assumptions, is incorporated by Saussure’s (2011 [1916]) model of communication and Chomsky’s (1986, 2000) understanding of language. Their work contributed to the promotion of human exceptionalism, based on the argument that language is what separates us from other animals, positioning us above or outside the world (MURRIS, 2016; PENNYCOOK, 2018c). Thus, as a field, linguistics has contributed to fostering processes of exclusion of human and nonhuman others since the beginning.

Further, in addition to the aforementioned hierarchies that they helped to establish and consolidate, both structuralist and cognitivist views follow a Cartesian line of thinking that enforces the dichotomy of mind/body. This leads language to be seen as “a mediating tool between the internal (individual) and external (the outside world) domains” (FABRÍCIO, 2017,

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<sup>86</sup> Original quote: “um objeto a ser escrutinado, classificado, nomeado, destrinchado, analisado e descrito segundo certas regras”.

as cited in SOUSA; PESSOA, 2019, p. 530). In this respect, Canagarajah (2020a, p. 296) criticizes representationalism, a perspective according to which “the grammatical structure located in our mind encodes the knowledge that shapes meanings and activities in our social and material life”. This is a framework that disregards relations among bodies, objects, and space, and as Pennycook (2018c, p. 93) stresses, a frame of reference that ignores “the context of communication, the messiness of communication, the conflict, ambiguity and uncertainty of communication”. Therefore, despite their effects in our lives, language as a pre-given system and a neutral means of communication are nothing but abstractions, fictions,<sup>87</sup> insofar as they are conceptions isolated from the world and that hence cannot account for what takes place in everyday life.

The ideas addressed in the previous paragraphs are within the scope of humanist comprehensions of language and language learning. Conversely, Canagarajah (2018a, 2018b, 2020a), Pennycook (2018b, 2018c, 2020b), and Toohey (2018, 2019) argue that seeing language in terms of its entanglements with human and nonhuman others could help us move away from individualistic and anthropocentric understandings of language education. Posthumanism proposes different conceptions of cognition, communication, and context. In the following sections, I thereby address examples from my classes so as to explore other ways of looking at what is involved in the teaching and learning of English. However, now I shall focus on some sociomaterial aspects of modern ideologies from Elton’s intra-actions in the classroom, as they exemplify how materiality played a very important role in his relationship with English. The following cuts concern field notes that I made at different moments during the course:

[56]

*I asked the students to work in pairs and groups so they could share what they remembered about the use of comparatives, superlatives, and equatives (these were in the list I was given), which were structures they had already studied and should then review. This activity worked as a warmer. In order to try to explain them, the learners used examples (e.g., “He’s not as tall as me”). [Mark] and [Flávia] worked with [Elton]. After they [Mark and Flávia] shared what they remembered, they asked questions to elicit answers from [Elton], who was quiet. They asked questions such as: “What do you know about it, [Elton]?” Although I had just asked them to talk about what they remembered, he was quiet for most of their interaction, skimming through his notes. As [Elton] feels insecure about structures, he does that very often: sometimes I just ask them to talk, but he keeps going back to his notes to check specificities related to grammar and vocabulary.*

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<sup>87</sup> For thorough discussions on the language myth, see Harris (1981, 2002) and Makoni and Pennycook (2007).

*Today, while I was showing slides with examples and talking about them, he was making notes. And as I noticed he was not paying attention to me and his classmates, to what we were saying, I asked him to put away his notebook and just listen and talk to us.*

(Field notes, Oct. 01, 2019)

[57]

*I noticed [Elton] has difficulties to follow instructions, to understand what I ask them to do sometimes. For example, in the last classes, I asked them to write sentences using the structures learned (related to “questions with how” in the simple past, simple present, and present perfect). When I asked them to write a couple of questions about their classmates, [Elton] wrote them about himself; when I asked them to write questions about themselves, he wrote random sentences. [Elton] focused a lot on form. While we were talking and interacting, he was often writing on his notebook. He would not normally follow what was happening in class.*

(Field notes, Sep. 17, 2019)

In his intraview, when I asked Elton his opinion on the classes that we had, he made the following remark, which corroborates my observations:

[58]

Elton: [...] O outro professor até falava, **me cobrava muito para eu parar de anotar coisas do quadro, que isso me atrapalhava.**

[Elton: [...] The other teacher even said, **he often told me to stop writing things down from the board, for that hindered me.**]

(Intraview, Question 7, Dec. 17, 2019)

These instances refer to particular assemblages of people and objects and practices of language learning in a classroom (PENNYCOOK, 2020a). Sociomaterial relations and their affects and effects emerge from entanglements of human and nonhuman beings and space, which produce forces that make themselves present in certain ways rather than others. Following Takaki's (2022) arguments, it is important to bear in mind that, in these particular events, there are actant forces to which we do not usually pay heed but that lead to Elton's silence and resistance – in this sense, absence also needs to be seen as an actor.

MacDonald et al. (2020, p. 45) observe that objects can be powerful entities within certain entanglements. The authors thus suggest that in addition to helping students individually with their difficulties (through scaffolding, modelling, changes, etc.), we could also look

attentively at their intra-actions and work from them. In cuts 56 and 57, I comment on Elton's primary concern with form (i.e., structures) in lieu of listening, talking, interacting, and paying attention to others and their exchanges. Further, his actions are enwrapped in and concentrated on specific materialities in the classroom: the notebook seems to be the most important object of attention (together with his pens, mechanical pencil, eraser, and correction fluid), followed by what was written on the board and shown on the slides, while the human bodies and their exchanges are given low priority. Therefore, it is important to note that our material entanglements might both promote or hinder learning, insofar as humans and nonhumans do not simply relate to each other but rather become part of each other, constitute each other, and hence construct knowledge together.

As a 49-year-old geography teacher who has always worked at public schools, Elton seems to be used to the practice of writing down everything from the board. His actions indicate an underlying assumption that "learning is copying". As Dickinson (2017, p. 265) explains, practices of reading and writing – and, we can add, copying – "[...] are embodied phenomena formed and constrained by cultural practice, social norms, and language ideologies". Although the activities mentioned were supposed to lead the students to listen to others and speak to them, Elton chose to read, write, and copy. Why did he do that? It seems that he regards certain spaces in the classroom as "the place of knowledge" (the notebook, the board, the slides) to the detriment of others as "the place of ignorance" (the other students, their intra-actions, their language productions) (SOUSA; PESSOA, 2023). This example not only justifies but also substantiates my argument for why we should think in terms of material-discursive ideologies. In the words of Pennycook (2020a, p. 183),

once we start to consider the social, spatial and embodied dimensions of language learning, an understanding of second language development as a distributed process starts to open up a range of new possibilities for thinking about what language learning and teaching are about.

From the cuts displayed above, we can see how the ideology of language as form/a pre-given system is heavily supported by the material objects present in the classroom: notebooks, board, slide show presentation, etc. Here there is a strong relation between writing, linguistic structures, and normative grammar. As Menezes de Souza (2019b, p. 256-257, my translation) states, in the context of language education, especially in language schools, "[w]riting is a kind of language that does not allow variation. It is right or wrong"<sup>88</sup>. Students hardly ever focus on

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<sup>88</sup> Original quote: "[a] escrita é um tipo de linguagem que não admite variação. É certo ou errado".

language form while they are talking, for instance. In this sense, for its closeness to standard language (TAKAKI, 2020), some students tend to particularly value the practice of writing because it involves more structuration, order, regulation, making them feel more secure about their linguistic productions. This is intimately related to our humanist longing to control things at all times. Last but not least, as I reflect on the events in the classroom, I cannot overlook the fact that perhaps my instructions, when mentioning “the review of certain structures”, might have had some effect on Elton as well. After all, we are always interlaced with different kinds of flows and forces that contribute to how language and language learning are materialized (SHANKAR; CAVANAUGH, 2017).

Now, I will present what the students said when I asked them what they liked the most in the classes at the school, before the experience they would have with me:

[59]

Rodrigo: Gosto das **explicações de matéria usando o quadro, aulas usando o projetor de vídeo.**

[Rodrigo: I like **explanations about the subject matter written on the board, lessons using the video projector.**]

(Questionnaire, Question 2, Aug. 06, 2019)

[60]

Elton: **Activities in group and presentations.**

(Questionnaire, Question 2, Aug. 06, 2019)

[61]

Mark: **Atividades dinâmicas**, pois mesmo as aulas sendo bem dinâmicas, alguns dias acabam sendo bem pacatos, e eu acredito que com essas atividades melhoraria o rendimento da aula.

[Mark: **Dynamic activities**, because even though the classes are very dynamic, some days end up being very quiet, and I believe that these activities would improve the classes.]

(Questionnaire, Question 2, Aug. 06, 2019)

[62]

Rubi: I liked **the dynamics in class. They helped me learn more easily. I liked listen musics. I liked speak with my classmates and teachers.**

(Questionnaire, Question 2, Aug. 06, 2019)

[63]

Helem: I like most in the classes **the dynamics and the way the teachers give us the content, always bringing new stuffs and topics to discuss.**

(Questionnaire, Question 2, Aug. 06, 2019)

[64]

Flávia: I like most the games because this is the moment when we learn English without feeling that it's obligatory.

(Questionnaire, Question 2, Aug. 06, 2019)

When I asked the students what topics they liked to discuss in class, and what they would like to discuss in my classes (a question regarding their wants and expectations, added by the general coordinator), four out of the six students mentioned topics of grammar and vocabulary (see cuts 53-55 and their discussion); and when I asked them what they liked most in the classes they had had at the school (a question concerning their past experiences), almost all of them explicitly mentioned interactive activities. Rodrigo was the only one who brought up the board and the projector, which seemed to be more focused on the figure of the teacher. Interestingly, although Elton wrote, “I would like to practice more moments of group immersion [i.e., interactions]”, in question 4, and “[a]ctivities in group and presentations”, in question 2, as we could see in cuts 56, 57, and 58, it does not seem that he made the most out of those opportunities, when he was given the chance. Besides highlighting “dynamic activities” (Mark, Rubi, and Helem), Flávia states that she enjoys “games because this is the moment when we learn English without feeling that it's obligatory”. Here there is an implicit comparison between participating in interactive activities (which are more open and less controlled) and studying grammar and vocabulary (which tends to revolve around prescribed and predictable activities).

Therefore, from the cuts displayed above, we can see that the students did not mention structural aspects of language but rather student-student(s) and student-teacher interactions. This shows that although some of their answers and actions were imbued with the modern ideology of language as a pre-given system/set of structures, they longed for a kind of language learning that distances itself from it. In relation to the question concerning the importance of English in their lives, their answers underlined communicative purposes, as well as knowledge access and expansion. Their responses resemble the claims of student teachers that took part in Ferreira's (2018) study.

In addition to the issues of identity addressed in Chapter 2, in the course we also talked about language. It seems the learners could see it from a different perspective, as we watched and discussed the short movie *Validation* (2007). In summary, this video is “a fable about a parking attendant who gives his customers real validation – dispensing both free parking and free compliments” (TVTROPES, 2007, para. 1). As we have seen, this activity led Elton to

reflect on the relation between identity and alterity (see cut 16 and its discussion) and encouraged Rodrigo to question society's validation (see cut 34 and its discussion). Moreover, the following cuts show that, in engaging with the ideas presented in the video, this group of students could also see language as power. I draw on my field notes to contextualize the activity, display part of our intra-action that concerns this discussion, and then present a comment made by Mark in his intraview:

[65]

*I asked the students to work in pairs to share their ideas about the video, which revolves around validating people. Then, I asked them if they would like to share what they had discussed, but they just made some brief remarks. However, while they were working in pairs, I overheard them talking about language and how it can affect people's lives – as they gave both positive and negative examples of how they felt when people talked to them in certain ways.*

(Field notes, Oct. 31, 2019)

[66]

Teacher: Would you like to highlight something?

Helem: I think the power of... **what people say is really powerful**. So, it makes **for good and bad**. [...]

Flávia: I think the same way. I think the humor spread, and **the way we treat people too**. [...]

Teacher: Okay. What about you? [asking Mark and Elton] What did you discuss?

Mark: Yeah, it's similar to them, them say.

Teacher: To what they said. Uhum. [...] Would you like to add something, [Elton]?

Elton: Oh, yes! I think is possible other person see **the body language**. **The body speak**. [...] [It] is necessary have careful with words, more careful. [students nod in agreement] In my case, I am teacher. Oh, have been, *acontece muito? Está acontecendo?* Happening?

Teacher: Yeah, it has been happening.

Elton: It has been happening in my workdays, and I need speak more serious with my students. Oh, very serious. But I need remember, "[Elton], keep calm! **Your words have power**." [laughter]

(Class 25, Oct. 31, 2019)

[67]

Mark: Esse vídeo [...] passa uma mensagem muito boa. Acho que é mais que **a palavra tem um poder nas pessoas**.

[Mark: This video [...] conveys a very good message. I think it's more that **words have power over people**.]

(Intraview, Question 3, Letter e, Dec. 12, 2019)

By talking about language and how it can affect our lives, the students indicate they are aware that language is not neutral. Helem, Elton, and Mark mention that “words have power”, and when Helem adds “for good and bad”, Flávia relates it to “the way we treat people” – that is, she recognizes that language plays an important role in our social relations. Further, Elton presents a broader view of language, as he draws our attention to the body: “the body language”; “[t]he body speak”. In the field of applied linguistics, this has been treated as an instance of semiotic resources (CANAGARAJAH, 2018a, 2018b, 2020a). In the following section, I discuss their presence in our classroom intra-actions in detail.

When teachers work with premises from critical language education, even when they do not directly address issues of power (as it was the case of this class), students note this aspect of language.<sup>89</sup> However, as Pennycook (2021a, p. 118) maintains, viewing language as something embedded in social practice “[...] does not in itself suggest a critical stance”. According to the author, in order to move toward such a direction, it is necessary to connect it with and problematize issues of discrimination, inequity, and injustice. In relation to the “good and bad” effects of language mentioned by Helem, we can observe that the learner sees its potential for encouragement and discouragement. Even more than that, from examples provided in Chapter 2, it is possible to note that the students perceived that language can both empower or marginalize people (BASTOS, 2019; FERREIRA, 2018; HAWKINS; NORTON, 2009).

Now, how would we conceive power from a posthumanist perspective? Barad (2007) draws on the work of Foucault (1977, 1978) and Butler (1990, 1993) to offer what she calls a new materialist understanding of it. In her words,

power is not restricted to the domain of the social but is rethought in terms of its materializing potential. That is, power operates through the enactment of natural as well as social (indeed natural/social forces) and the productive nature of regulatory practices is to be understood more generally in terms of causal intra-actions. [...] To put it bluntly, if not crudely, the material dimension of regulatory apparatuses, which is indissociable from their discursive dimension, is to be understood in terms of the materiality of phenomena. (BARAD, 2007, p. 210).

For the author, power is embedded in material-discursive relations. In this respect, based on Fernandes’ reflections (1997), she argues that instead of focusing on how power produces and is produced by individual subjects, we ought to consider how it operates by constraining or stimulating positions and movements and changing or stabilizing spaces in assemblages. Accordingly, Barad (2007, p. 230) claims we should pay heed to “the dynamic intra-workings

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<sup>89</sup> See Pessoa and Urzêda-Freitas (2016), Ferreira (2018), Pessoa, Borelli, and Silvestre (2018), and Bastos (2019), for examples.



of [...] power through which particular meanings, bodies, and boundaries are produced”. As one can see, she expands Foucauldian and Butlerian arguments concerning power by relying on perspectives that take the immanent force of matter seriously. In a similar vein, Patel (2016, p. 93) adds that “humans’ relation to matter is pivotal to colonial, neocolonial, and potentially decolonial stances”.

The reflections presented here demonstrate that language ideologies are multifaceted phenomena that involve “the contradictions of living with fragmented selves”, which have “different degrees of presence and visibility” (PECK; STROUD, 2015, p. 146), thus destabilizing the notion of unchanging, coherent, and unified individuals. As we go through life and have different experiences, we construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct language ideologies. Some of them, however, become more noticeable depending on the kinds of intra-actions that we have with people, objects, and space. In this regard, following Bastos (2019), I do not see language ideologies as separate from each other, since they often overlap and might assume multiple, unstable, and contradictory forms.

After reading and rereading the empirical material, as I noticed that these ideologies affected the course significantly, in this first section, by addressing the students’ answers from the initial questionnaire, along with some events from the classroom, my objective was to prepare the ground for the succeeding discussions. Moreover, I also aimed to contextualize from where the students and I enunciate, both in terms of personal perceptions and experiences and institutional factors. Finally, I must underscore that, as a learner who also studied in a language school, like my students, such conceptions have also influenced me, one way or another.

### **3.2 Language in intra-action: cognition in the wild and mutual misunderstanding**

The discussions in this section are particularly inspired by posthumanist ideas proposed by Pennycook (2018b, 2018c) and Canagarajah (2018a, 2018b), respectively. First, I address issues of cognition, and then I direct the attention to the complexity of semiotic productions from the experience the students and I had. They did several different kinds of writing activities throughout the semester, which helped me rethink some aspects of language education. In the following cuts, I share some of my observations, from field notes, and something Rubi and Helem told me in one of our feedback sessions in relation to the topic in question:

[68]

*In the second class, as I placed different pictures of cartoons on the board, I asked the students to work in pairs so they could create short stories. Then, I paid close attention to their written output while I was correcting their texts in order to prepare the following classes. In their productions, they showed me some things related to language they thought they knew, but they didn't, like spelling and the misuse of some words. So, when they used the sheets of paper and the (mechanical) pencils, with each other's help, each other's scaffolding, as well as with the aid of dictionaries and their smartphones (for online searches), they could create texts.*

(Field notes, Aug. 08, 2019)

[69]

Rubi: [...] [P]ara mim, estudar... Eu não consigo fazer exercícios que eu não estudei. Não, **eu tenho que praticar, praticar para eu gravar.**

Helem: Ela tem que escrever.

Rubi: Eu tenho que escrever. **Eu gravo é escrevendo, é fazendo.**

[Rubi: [...] [F]or me, studying... I can't do exercises that I haven't studied. No, **I have to practice, practice so that I can memorize it.**

Helem: She has to write.

Rubi: I have to write. **I memorize it by writing it, by doing it.]**

(Class 39, Feedback Session II, Dec. 19, 2019)

Although these cuts pertain to distinct moments, I present them together because they both refer to the practice of writing. As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, together with colleagues, I have done some studies grounded in sociocultural perspectives (BASTOS; SOUSA, 2021; SOUSA; FIGUEREDO, 2017), especially with a focus on collaborative language learning (SOUSA, 2016; SOUSA et al., 2019; TIRABOSCHI et al., 2019). For this reason, in cut 68, I comment on the students' "written output" and "scaffolding". In the works mentioned, as we analyze classroom events, we address elements such as co-construction of knowledge, meaning making negotiation, collaborative and cooperative attitudes and actions, and the authentic use of language for problem solving, which are very important aspects. Nevertheless, we strictly focus on human interactions (i.e., student-student(s) and student-teacher), thus overlooking the agentic capacity of nonhumans and space (COOLE; FROST, 2010). These are seen in our studies as background, and not foreground, as suggested by Pennycook (2021c). Therefore, since our discussions on cognitive development and language

learning are based on humanist assumptions, they end up reinforcing many dichotomies like interior/exterior, mind/body, and individual/assemblage, consequently reinscribing hierarchies.

Now, a conception that might help us look at classroom events differently is the notion of “cognition in the wild”, proposed by Hutchins (1995). For the author, objects and sociomaterial spaces get entangled with our thinking. In cut 68, the fact that the students relied on each other and on dictionaries and smartphones to write their texts demonstrates how humans and nonhumans can provide different kinds of feedback, by confirming, refuting, or questioning things. This indicates that they actively participate in learners’ knowledge construction and language learning. In line with this discussion, Canagarajah (2018a, 2018b, 2020a) and Pennycook (2018b, 2018c, 2021c) argue that cognition should be seen as distributed across space. In cut 69, when Rubi says, “I have to practice, practice so that I can memorize it” and “I memorize it by writing it, by doing it”, she shows us that thought processes do not take place exclusively inside our heads, indicating that learning is an extended process as well. Further, her words underscore the importance of corporeal engagement, movements, and experiences for learning. In this respect, Barad (2007, p. 379, emphasis in original) asserts that “the ‘mind’ is a specific material configuration of the world, not necessarily coincident with a brain”, and that “[b]rain cells are not the only ones that hold memories, respond to stimuli, or think thoughts”.

Another point that needs to be stressed is that we are not fully able to express what takes place in our minds, since the ideas we convey are just a fragmented part of what we experience mentally (SOUSA; PESSOA, 2019). This can be noticed when I remark, in cut 68, that in the writing of their texts, the students “showed me things related to language they thought they knew, but they didn’t”. Therefore, even though we do not normally recognize it as such, “there is a necessary limit to what we can know about mental states (such as thoughts, intentions, and motivations), including our own” (BARAD, 2007, p. 7). For instance, sometimes we can only realize some things as mistakes when we see them written on a sheet of paper or typed on a screen.

The arguments presented thus far prompt a reconceptualization of “where thought and language occur” (SOUSA; PESSOA, 2019, p. 532). In keeping with these ideas, the following cut refers to some aspects of the materiality of language, which are intended to encourage some further reflections. The themes approached in this class were “making complaints” and “describing problems”. Here the students were telling each other stories about problems they had when they traveled, and one of the topics was related to food:

[70]

Helem: Teacher, how can I say *lula*?

Teacher: Hmm. **Squi...**, **squi...**, **[seems to be thinking]**, **squid**, **squid**. [writes it on the board]

Helem and Mark: Squid.

(Class 31, Nov. 21, 2019)

As Bucholtz (2017, p. 261) underlines, “language is not simply linked to materiality; it is, in itself, inherently material”. Moreover, in cut 70, the sonic materiality of language – “[s]qui..., squi..., [seems to be thinking], squid, squid” – shows that “language is in and of the body; always issuing from the body; being impeded by the body; affecting other bodies” (MACLURE, 2013, p. 663). Pronouncing the first sounds of the word helped me remember it, which indicates that this information was recalled by my body and not just my mind – or, put differently, by my bodymind, thus destabilizing the perception of them as separate units. In other words, from this instance, we can see how sound aids in thinking. According to Rotman (2008, as cited in DE FREITAS; CURINGA, 2015), as one listens to the movements of others’ body parts or their own, one makes sense of the meanings being conveyed. The author goes on to argue that, therefore, this comprises “a complex material engagement at the molecular level, beneath the level of a sonic unit of meaning, where one absorbs the pauses, accelerations, fallings away and other bodily performances that produce the sounds” (ROTMAN, 2008, as cited in DE FREITAS; CURINGA, 2015, p. 257). Following Faudree (2017, p. 257), we should also see language as “grounded in embodied processes of vocal production”.

The students did a lot of pair and group work, and one of the exercises was the correction of their language learning projects, after I had highlighted the linguistic aspects, ideas, and arguments that should be reviewed. The next cut and movement-image refer to this moment. They provide an illustrative example of the issues addressed in the previous paragraphs and reveal some other nuances of the cognitive process:

[71]

*I printed the students’ LLPs [Language Learning Projects] and asked them to review them in pairs so they could help each other to correct linguistic mistakes and rethink some ideas. The pairs were [Rubí] and [Flávia], [Helem] and [Elton], and [Rodrigo] and [Mark]. During their intra-actions, I could notice the entanglement of human and nonhuman bodies, as the learners held sheets of paper and used markers, pens, (mechanical) pencils, while they talked about their texts. In this activity, the students relied on several objects to assist their cognitive process of correction, addition, and substitution. For example, each time*

*they highlighted (and hence shifted the focus of) what they needed to review and discuss, their texts seemed to change. Thus, the objects were not tools but rather constructed meaning with the learners.*

(Field notes, Dec. 12, 2019)

**Movement-image 21** – Flávia and Rubi correcting their LLPs



Source: Empirical material.

It is worth observing that some objects, like the ones mentioned in the last cut, become part of our cognitive routines in the classroom (CLARK, 2008). They are used for different kinds of things such as “correction, addition, and substitution”, which take part in the language teaching and learning process. As one of these practices, in cut 71, I underline that the act of highlighting parts of their texts, consequently leading the students to shift their focus, helped them reconfigure their thinking and writing. For Gourlay (2015), material objects thereby do not merely convey meanings but transform them. In line with these arguments, following Canagarajah (2018b), as my perception of this activity distances itself from a representationalist framework, it exemplifies how communicative activities are performative and demonstrates that meaning making is emergent.

As one can see, in my undertaking of this study, as suggested by Appleby and Pennycook (2017, p. 239, emphasis in original), I tried to overturn “the assumptions of human centrality that have underpinned much educational thought and practice” and question “the ways in which the *human* and *nonhuman* are defined”. In this respect, the next cut and movement-image draw attention to the agentic capacity of nonhumans:

[72]

*Today I handed out pieces of paper with definitions and synonyms of phrasal verbs to the students. I told them to work together so they could match ideas with phrasal verbs, which were placed one on each desk in the classroom. After they did what I had asked them, I gave them a worksheet with all the content of the activity. Like columns in exercises, the desks made up spaces to “tick”, “fill in the gaps”, “match information”. The students had to walk around the classroom to put ideas and phrasal verbs together. This class exemplified to me how knowledge and cognitive processes are scattered all over the place, and that we keep making new assemblages out of them.*

(Field notes, Oct. 15, 2019)

#### **Movement-image 22 – Phrasal verbs activity**





Source: Empirical material.

As Canagarajah (2018b, p. 33) states, although the importance of “space, materiality, and environment” has been recognized in language studies, they are still usually seen as “passive, inert, static, and pliant”. Conversely, in some of his most recent works, the author has emphasized they are rather active, agential, and generative (CANAGARAJAH, 2018a, 2018b, 2020a, 2020b). For him, the significance of each entity’s participation cannot be determined in advance but just gauged in situated analysis. As a classroom event, cut 72 and its respective movement-image corroborate the author’s arguments.

All entities have dispositional properties. For example, desks are used to sit, rest, place objects, and so on. However, in this activity, they worked like columns in a worksheet, and the whole classroom then became our sheet of paper. As Pennycook (2021c, p. 115) would put it, when students and teacher “encounter the variable affordances of [objects and spaces], they [can] enter into new and momentary sets of relationships within semiotic assemblages”. Thus, those desks were actors that interpellated us into another form of socialization, as we inscribed new temporary meanings to them. Following Barad (2007, p. 150), from this example, we can see that “[t]hings’ don’t preexist; they are agentially enacted and become determinately bounded and propertied within phenomena”. She adds that “[m]atter is therefore not to be understood as a property of things but, like discursive practices, must be understood in more dynamic and productive terms – in terms of intra-activity” (p. 150). The resemiotization of desks thereby rearranged the relations among entities in the classroom space. They acted upon the students by setting boundaries so they could achieve a certain goal – trying to figure out the



meanings of phrasal verbs by relying on their previous knowledge and corporeal-cognitive exchanges with others. In other words, the desks played an important role “as part of our thinking and doing and languaging” (PENNYCOOK, 2018c, p. 46).

Taking into account we should “change the terms and not just the content of the conversation” (MIGNOLO, 2007, p. 459), I must develop a (self-)critique here. Applied linguists, including myself, have worked with the problematic idea that “humans and nonhumans *have* agency”, which bears traces of humanist understandings.<sup>90</sup> However, as Barad (2007, p. 218, 235, 214, emphasis added) explains,

agency cannot be designated as an attribute of subjects or objects, which are themselves constituted through specific practices. [...] Crucially, *agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has*. Agency is doing/being in its intra-activity. It is the enactment of iterative changes to particular practices – iterative reconfigurings of topological manifolds of spacetime-matter relations through the dynamics of intra-activity. [...] [Therefore,] if agency is understood as an enactment and not something someone has, then it seems not only appropriate but important to consider agency as distributed over nonhuman as well as human forms.

The supposition that we “have agency” is premised on our Western way of conceiving our relations with the world – “a profoundly settling, anthropocentric, colonial view” (TUCK; YANG, 2012, p. 24). Obviously, this argument might be useful in certain political contexts (see the discussion on strategic essentialism in Chapter 2, for examples). Nevertheless, the deconstruction of this form of looking at agency may help us get closer to a critical posthumanist project. As we have seen, for Barad (2007), agency occurs intra-actively. Thus, in keeping with the author, as an alternative to the notion of agency as a property of individuals, Coole and Frost (2010) suggest we see it as an agentic capacity. From this perspective, entities can act upon and with each other in different forms but always in entangled relationality. In the case of the activity previously addressed, for example, we did not “give agency” to the desks, but rather human and nonhuman agencies took place in intra-action.

The ideas constructed thus far have paved the way for the subsequent discussions on language and language learning. As Pennycook (2018c, 16) contends, traditional perspectives have assumed that “humans routinely understand each other”. However, over the past decades, many studies have pointed out that the complexity of communication requires more thorough analyses. Therefore, following the author, in this dissertation, I tried to work with the notion of language as mutual misunderstanding so as to conceive the communicative process differently.

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<sup>90</sup> See Canagarajah (2018a, 2018b, 2020b), Pennycook (2018b, 2018c), and Sousa and Pessoa (2019), for examples.



The next cuts demonstrate how the students apparently aligned themselves with each other and misaligned with me. In class 17, we reviewed comparatives, superlatives, and equatives. The following refers specifically to a moment we were talking about superlatives:

[73]

Teacher: Superlative – when you are comparing something to the whole, right? For example, **[Mark] is the tallest one here, I think... [the students nod their heads in agreement with the structure but at the same time disagree with my perception of who's the tallest person in class]**

Helem: No.

Teacher: Or maybe [Flávia], I don't know. Or maybe [Helem], I don't know. [both girls smile and shake their heads]

Mark: **I think it's [Rodrigo]. [all students nod their heads, hence showing they agree with Mark's statement]**

Helem: Yeah, it's [Rodrigo].

Teacher: **Oh, I'm talking about the ones that are here [in class]. [Rodrigo was not present]**

Mark: Okay, okay.

Helem: Oh, okay.

(Class 17, Oct. 01, 2019)

This event involved looking at each other to check their heights, while sitting at their desks (which seemed to make it a bit more difficult to determine who was the tallest student), and recalling the physical presence of a classmate who was not in class. The fact that they aligned themselves with each other but at the same time misaligned with me shows that the construction of perceptions is a complex phenomenon, which depends on intra-actions with various entities and elements, and that communicative events are semiotically multifaceted. Further, this instance indicates that teachers do not have control over what happens in the classroom, let alone over students' comprehensions. Since we have different conceptions, values, worldviews, and so on (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2020b), i.e., as a result of our differences, when we intra-act with others, we make different connections and thus might have dissimilar interpretations. In this sense, our understandings always align or misalign to some degree.

The concept of *mutual misunderstanding* promotes the appreciation of differences and suggests we should work from them. Accordingly, it offers a point of view that disturbs notions of transparency, clarity, homogeneity, and linearity associated with language. In the words of Pennycook (2018c, p. 107, emphasis in original),

a posthumanist applied linguistics does not assume rational human subjects engaged in mutually comprehensible dialogue. It does not start from a premise of human

universality but instead from a point of difference, from a position that demands we understand the *alterity* of the other.

Another example of misunderstanding, which took place on account of a linguistic aspect, is displayed in the next cut. In class 29, I asked the students to write sentences about themselves using the structure “preposition + verb-ing” so they could practice what they had studied in the previous semester (this topic was on the list of contents I had been told to review with the students). Here I ask Helem to share with us the sentences that she wrote:

[74]

Teacher: [Helem], could you read your sentences?

Helem: I learned how to dance by seeing people dance.

Teacher: Okay.

Helem: **I'm living without saying nothing.** [the teacher seems to be thinking] Without saying nothing, I'm living.

Teacher: **What do you mean?**

Helem: **Saying nothing, like...**

Flávia: Without saying.

Helem: Yes.

Teacher: **Without saying nothing?**

Flávia: **Anything.** [looks at Helem]

Helem: **Yeah.**

Teacher: **Please, read the sentence again.**

Helem: **I'm living without saying nothing.**

Teacher: Do you mean you're not complaining, right?

Helem: Yeah?

Teacher: **Sem reclamar** [without complaining]... **Is it in this sense?**

Mark: **I think is, like, to live to a party, living a party without saying to anyone.**

Helem: **Yeah.**

Teacher: **Ahhhh, okay. You're leaving a place. Oh, that's the thing about pronunciation... [laughter] [writes on the board the words "live" and "leave"] So, leaving and living.**

Mark: Oh, okay.

Flávia: Ah, okay.

Helem: Okay.

Teacher: Now I understand it, [Helem].

(Class 29, Nov. 14, 2019)

In response to humanist conceptions of language and communication, Pennycook (2018c, p. 99) argues we should consider “mutual misunderstanding [as] our communicative norm”. In line with the author’s arguments, we claim that “what happens in communication”, as we can see in cut 74, are “attempts by the speakers to flexibly adapt to each other’s speeches, so they can try to reach some form of understanding, which is always constituted by conflicts, negotiations, and adjustments” (SOUSA; PESSOA, 2019, p. 533-534). There were three

distinct moments of negotiation in this intra-action: I asked a couple of questions (“What do you mean?”, “Without saying nothing?”) to elicit further information from Helem; then I asked her to repeat what she had said (“Please, read the sentence again”), so I could reassess my own comprehension; and, finally, I resorted to Portuguese (“*Sem reclamar* [without complaining]... Is it in this sense?”). However, despite my efforts, Mark was the one who provided a context in a way I could get the gist of what Helem meant. These movements suggest that, in order to arrive at a certain intelligibility, flexibility, adaptation, sensibility, and willingness to engage are very important elements (ATKINSON et al., 2007; BASTOS, 2019; BASTOS et al., 2021; CANAGARAJAH, 2013a, 2018a, 2018b).

Once we look at communication not as a straightforward, accurate message-exchange system, but rather as an opaque, ambiguous, uncertain, messy, complicated, and conflicting process, we reach a more realistic understanding of language. For Otsuji and Pennycook (2021), what takes place in communication is thereby translation, which involves moves of alignment and misalignment in varying degrees. Based on Santos (1999), Menezes de Souza (2019c, 2019d, 2020b) adds that we should not see translation as “going from a lack of meaning to full meaning”, but in terms of problematic dialogs, which have comprehension gaps. As the author argues, translation refers to promoting a bridge between what is known and unknown, making an effort to meet others in the middle. In the words of Menezes de Souza and Monte Mor (2018, p. 449, emphasis in original), in regarding “all knowledge as partial and incomplete”, one should have in mind that translation “[...] *ethically* demands an attitude for accepting and attempting to deal with one’s own ignorance and that of others, without expecting to overcome [them]”. In keeping with this idea, Lopes and Borges (2015) underscore that even though we cannot mutually understand each other, put ourselves in someone else’s place, and feel and think what another feels and thinks, we are impelled to do so to live together.

Whenever there were explicit misalignments, especially like the one in cut 74, I could notice how heterogeneity, dissent, and confusion in language led me to reflect on my own praxis. This exemplifies how such movements can be productive, insofar as they have the power to destabilize us. Even more than that, as I see it, this negotiation over meanings was a literacy event for me, as their teacher. It seems that, in this intra-action, my attention was more directed to pronunciation – the phonemic structure of a specific word – than to the communicative event, to meaning making as a socially situated practice (GOURLAY, 2015). After the class had ended and the students had left, I remember I sat at my table and ruminated on my actions. I wondered: “Why did the students understand each other, but I didn’t? What led me to perceive it

differently? What entailed my comprehension?” As an English teacher, because of my own education, I was unconsciously caught in a more structural, systemic perspective of language.

These last cuts and discussions have prepared the way for an important argument articulated by Barad (2007): once we consider language does not exist before the action – and that it is part of intra-actions, not something separate from them – language cannot be seen as playing a mediating role. In her words,

the geometrical optics model that positions language or representation as the lens that mediates between the object world and the mind of the knowing subject [is] a geometry of absolute exteriority between ontologically and epistemologically distinct kinds. The history of Western epistemology displays great diversity and ingenuity in generating different kinds of epistemological and visualizing systems [...], but as long as representation is the name of the game, the notion of mediation – whether through the lens of consciousness, language, culture, technology, or labor – holds nature at bay, beyond our grasp, generating and regenerating the philosophical problem of the possibility of human knowledge out of this metaphysical quarantining of the object world. [...] [Therefore,] [t]he ubiquitous pronouncements that experience or the material world is “mediated” have offered precious little guidance about how to proceed. The notion of mediation has for too long stood in the way of a more thoroughgoing accounting of the empirical world. [...] Incorporating some of the most important insights of poststructuralism, feminist science studies, and other critical reconsiderations of the body, of matter, and of nature, [a] reconceptualization of materiality [...] makes it possible to take the empirical world seriously [...], with the understanding that the [...] referent is phenomena. (BARAD, 2007, p. 374-375, 152, 244, emphasis in original).

As the author explains, the idea of language as a medium is premised on Newtonian conceptions that presume “the prior existence of separately determinate bounded and propertied entities and practices” (p. 231). Cartesian habits of mind have influenced us in such a way that we tend to assume, for example, that knowledge is mediated through our senses and by means of language, as if they were not already involved in its production. Therefore, from Barad’s (2007) point of view, language does not mediate things because it becomes-with them, it gets entangled with them. In other words, once we look at phenomena as the referent, we see that language is also (trans)formed in intra-action.

The following cuts refer to some particular postures that I adopted throughout the course. The first one concerns a class in which we reviewed a grammar topic; and the second one refers to a conversation I had with Rubi in our first feedback session. By the end of it, Rubi exemplifies her use of semiotic resources in communication, which is displayed in the movement-image shown sequentially.

[75]

Teacher: So, I want to tell you something. You might've seen **people don't exactly follow these rules [referring to normative grammar, specifically in relation to comparatives, superlatives, and equatives]. [...] It's like we do it in Portuguese all the time, yeah?** [students nod] **But I have to teach you this [pointing at the slides], because when you do a test, some things might be considered mistakes, like in a TOEFL test.** [By the end of the course, students are prepared to take this kind of test] But it's not that it is wrong. People use that [*more simple*, referring to the example on the board: *simple, simpler/more simple*]. [students nod] And if you don't know something, you can use "more" with anything. [Mark laughs] **If you travel, you do it a lot, right, [Helem] and [Rubi]? [they nod] If you travel, and you don't remember something, use "more". They will understand you. That's what matters.**

Helem: **It is. Uhum.** [nods in agreement and laughs]

(Class 17, Oct. 01, 2019)

[76]

Teacher: **Fluência.** Então, assim, **eu acho que é você conseguir falar o que você queria falar.** Entendeu? Então, **isso, para mim, é o que vale.** Fluência é você conseguir...

Rubi: **Expressão.**

Teacher: Isso. O mais importante... Você sabe, quando vocês viajam [Rubi e Helem], **eles não estão nem aí para a gramática.**

Rubi: **Querem entender o que você está querendo dizer.**

Teacher: Exatamente.

Rubi: Eu já percebi isso. Para você ver, **lá em Orlando**, a gente estava no parque, e eu precisava de talheres. Eu me esqueci como é que falava faca, garfo. Eu não me lembrava. E eles não sabiam o que eu estava falando, né? Aí eu me lembrei, eu acho que eu [me] lembrei [d]a "faca". Aí eu falei, e eles entenderam. Aí, **eu queria falar o garfo, e não consegui, e aí eu peguei assim... de cortar... [gesticula cortando e movendo a mão à boca] e aí eles entenderam.** Aí eles falaram. **Eu consegui me expressar.**

[Teacher: **Fluency.** So, well, **I think it's you being able to say what you wanted to say.** Do you understand? So, **for me, that's what counts.** Fluency is you being able...

Rubi: **Expression.**

Teacher: Yes. Most importantly... You know, when you guys travel [Rubi and Helem], **they don't care about grammar.**

Rubi: **They want to understand what you have to say.**

Teacher: Exactly.

Rubi: I've already seen that. **Back in Orlando**, we were at the park, and I needed some silverware. I forgot how to say knife, fork. I did not remember. And they didn't know what I was talking about, right? Then I remembered, I think I remembered "knife". Then I said it and they understood it. Then **I wanted to say fork, and I couldn't, and then I was like... to cut it... [mimics cutting and moving her hand toward her mouth] and then they understood it.** Then they said it. **I could express myself.]**

(Class 22, Feedback Session I, Oct. 17, 2019)

**Movement-image 23** – Rubi mimicking the use of a knife and a fork



Source: Empirical material.

In cut 75, I argue that “I have to teach you this [referring to normative grammar], because when you do a test, some things might be considered mistakes, like in a TOEFL test”. As I attempted to show to my students, in order to achieve some of their goals in the neoliberal,

globalized world and in academic spaces, they would have to comply with certain rules. Over the years, I have taught several groups in this school, especially those designated as *advanced* (groups of learners who would soon finish the course). Many of my students have explicitly told me that, for example, they were there because they wanted to be prepared to pass tests (such as TOEFL and IELTS), enter international undergraduate and graduate programs, and work for multinational companies. I still keep in touch with some of them who did succeed in their objectives. Hence, I mentioned standardized tests as an instance of these hegemonic forces, which take part in coercive sociomaterial practices, especially in the context of private language schools.

Coloniality cannot be erased or disregarded not just because it is embedded in institutions and social structures, but also because it constitutes our thinking as modern subjects (MENEZES DE SOUZA; DUBOC, 2021). Therefore, as a teacher aligned with critical projects, albeit I was aware of the need to “negotiate with dominant norms and values” (BRAIDOTTI, 2022, p. 35), I also tried to engage in and promote politics of affirmative alternatives. In this vein, Menezes de Souza and Duboc (2021, p. 880) argue that “[t]he knowledges of coloniality and the effects of their historical violence can at least be reduced and diminished when they are juxtaposed with other previously excluded knowledges”.

I noticed that, as the learners did some activities, whenever they were not sure of a linguistic structure or lexical item, they would just stop speaking. Thus, I told them to rely on what they had access as a way of encouraging them not be afraid of expressing themselves on account of not knowing certain aspects of normative grammar. In cut 75, I said, “[P]eople don’t exactly follow these rules [referring to normative grammar, specifically in relation to comparatives, superlatives, and equatives]. [...] It’s like we do it in Portuguese all the time, yeah? [...] If you travel, and you don’t remember something, use ‘more’. They will understand you. That’s what matters”. As Helem and Rubi were the only ones who had ever been abroad, I turned to them, hoping they would support my argument, based on their own experiences. Helem is a talkative student who likes to share stories of her travels, and who would always support her classmates in their language learning. Here, she shows that she agrees with the strategy I suggested and confirms that trying to get one’s message across is more important than standard language when it comes to communication. Through what I said, I was trying to make the students feel more comfortable with the hybridity of English and to hint that their focus should be on meaning negotiation (PESSOA, 2018).

In my conversation with Rubi, in our first feedback session, I reiterate some of my claims from the previous cut. The student then provides the following example to show me that

she was not only keeping up with my argument but also that she agreed with me: “Back in Orlando, [...] I wanted to say fork, and I couldn’t, and then I was like... to cut it... [mimics cutting and moving her hand toward her mouth] and then they understood it. [...] I could express myself”. In everyday life, conscious and unconscious movements of our bodies aid us in the process of dealing with meaning making. Our understandings are thereby constructed not simply by means of linguistic practices but through language embedded in bodies, objects, and activities (APPLEBY; PENNYCOOK, 2017). In this regard, as Canagarajah (2018a, p. 289) maintains, we should promote the idea that what matters is not “the knowledge of norms, grammars, and conventions as a product”, but one’s “procedural dexterity to emplace oneself in relevant social, material, and semiotic networks and engage strategically for one’s objectives”. In other words, we ought to work toward a comprehension that, in communication, the most important thing is to adopt “ongoing, responsive, and distributed strategies for situated meaning negotiation” (CANAGARAJAH, 2018a, p. 289).

Moving away from the notion of *competence*, grounded in representationalism and cognitive individualism, the author argues that we should rather think in terms of *emplacement*. According to Canagarajah (2018a), this concept takes performativity and embodiment in activity seriously, as well as the understanding that semiotic processes are socio(discursive)materially distributed across space. He adds, however, that “eschewing predefined structures does not mean that we abandon any attempt at discovering patterns and organizing principles. ‘Structures’ will simply be more situated, emergent, and dynamic” (p. 271, emphasis in original). In keeping with these ideas, I present the next cut, which sets the scene for the deconstruction of languages as separate entities:

[77]

Rubi: The symbols determine different groups. For example, **I don't use [wear] short shorts and curt [short] clothes** because my age is *avançada*? [laughter] **[while she is saying it, she points at Helem (her daughter), who is wearing shorts, and then at herself]**

Teacher: Because you are older.

Rubi: I'm older, yeah.

(Class 28, Nov. 12, 2019)

Before reading on, I suggest the reader see movement-images 19 and 20, in Chapter 2, in which Rubi points at Helem’s shorts, and then at herself to indicate age-appropriate dressing. Here I asked Rubi and Helem to share their ideas on the text *Questions of Identity* (OPENLEARN, 2016a). In this cut, Rubi draws on her repertoires in English and Portuguese



(“I don’t use [wear] short shorts and curt [short] clothes”), gestures, visual clues, facial expressions, and objects (their clothes) (“[while she is saying it, she points at Helem (her daughter), who is wearing shorts, and then at herself]”) to construct meaning and express her thoughts. This event shows how language entangles and assembles with other dynamic ecological entities (TOOHEY; SMYTHE, 2022). In this sense, Pennycook (2021b) suggests considering the concept of semiosis from a posthumanist perspective. As he puts it, semiosis involves human and nonhuman entities in their entanglement with linguistic and other semiotic resources, social practices, relations, and networks, and “affective and somatic domains” (p. 5). The mother-daughter relationship between Rubi and Helem was an important factor which clearly made her feel more comfortable to express herself.

Further, as cognitive processes work in a nonlinear manner, they encounter the languages we speak in unpredictable ways. Rubi’s statement is an instance of how “selective words from different languages” (“*use* short shorts” and “*curt* clothes”) “find coherence for situated activities in combination with other nonverbal resources” (CANAGARAJAH, 2018a, p. 275). Thus, following Jordão (2019), the student’s assertion – “I don’t use short shorts and curt clothes” – does not show failure or lack, but creativity and intelligence. The fact that there was an alignment between Rubi and her interlocutors indicates that she was communicatively successful. In line with this idea, Magalhães (2021) points out that although our language practices are traversed by colonialities, they are also cut across by mixtures and creation. As Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980], p. 100) state, “language is not universal, or even general, but singular; [...] it has, not invariable or obligatory rules, but optional rules that ceaselessly vary with the variation itself, as in a game in which each move changes the rules”. Therefore, from this viewpoint, rules can be semiotically remade in each new intra-action.

As Portuguese speakers, whether we want it or not, Portuguese does not disappear when we speak English. Diverse semiotic repertoires constitute us – they get intertwined with our experiences and partake in the formation of who we become. In this sense, what takes place in cut 77 is not the use of English as something closed, contained, separate; rather, Rubi’s repertoires are visibly entangled. There are relations and connections, and things emerge from them. Moreover, as we look at the cut as a whole, we see that more than a translingual relation, what occurs is a translingual entanglement (PENNYCOOK, 2020c), in an assemblage that involves languages, bodies, gestures, and clothes. These arguments help to deconstruct the idea of languages as separate entities.

Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980]), more than offering alternative ways of looking at language, my main goal with the discussions and movements proposed here is to

destabilize the hegemonic structure of language, i.e., to destabilize humanist and colonial assumptions of language. As the authors asseverate, in order to undermine the power of standard language, we must promote change, and one way of doing that is to legitimize different ways of languaging. For Haraway (2016 [1985]), such productions are violations of the conqueror's language, which ensure survival. She goes on to argue that, as we cannot (fully) escape coloniality, we can at least seek possibilities that living on the borders creates.

Finally, there is one final point I would like to make. In the words of Pennycook (2021a, p. 81), although arguments concerning “English [as] a property of all” (referring to native and nonnative speakers) have provided important insights, “they lack a more incisive understanding and critique of global power structures”. In this line of thought, Patel (2016) emphasizes that seeing language and knowledge as property is a remnant of settler colonialism. As Braidotti (2013, 2019) explains, cognitive capitalism co-opts and shapes even our perceptions of relations established with human and nonhuman others. An example is the way we usually see our relationship with English, as something we own, something we have. From this viewpoint, knowledge is then regarded as a kind of capital in the form of an immaterial asset. In this regard, Moulner Boutang (2012, p. 56) declares that “cognitive capitalism is a different system of accumulation, in which the accumulation is based on knowledge”.<sup>91</sup>

For Barad (2020, p. 107), the notion of property is tied to “individualism and capitalist modes of production and exploitation”. Again, like many other arguments addressed in this dissertation, this is another one that could be used strategically, for example, in fights for the rights of minoritized groups. Nonetheless, we should bear in mind that such a notion is embedded in a humanist and neoliberal perception of the world and of our relations with it. Patel (2016) thus maintains that we should restructure our relationship with knowledge. According to the author, we need “a radical reconfiguration of being and being-in-relation-to knowledge and learning [...] to strip off the layers of the colonial view of education” (p. 81). From these reflections, more than a resource that we would supposedly acquire or something we would own, I propose that we see English as something with which we intra-act, get involved, and become. This perspective is aligned with Patel's (2016) arguments that we should see knowledge and learning in terms of relationality, answerability, and transformation. For her, these elements are interlaced with how we politically and ethically engage with others and the world.

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<sup>91</sup> Cognitive capitalism is a far more complex topic than the narrow definition I offer here. Therefore, I suggest seeing Moulner Boutang (2012) for a detailed discussion.

In the next section, I develop the idea of classroomscape and focus on how the students and I intra-acted with technologies during the course.

### 3.3 Classroomscape and technologies

What is a classroom? What role does it play in language education? What constitutes the landscape of a classroom? What if we looked at it as foreground rather than background (PENNYCOOK, 2019b, 2021c)? In this section, I try to work with the idea of *classroomscape* to destabilize the dichotomy of inside/outside the schoolroom as a space of language education. The one in question is a typical example of those we can see in private language schools; however, in order to eschew generalizations, I stress that the discussions held here refer to a situated experience. From events of the course, I draw our attention to issues concerning the use of the board, the absence of a textbook, the teaching of the phonemic chart, the seating arrangement, and our intra-actions with Google Drive and WhatsApp. Then, I address the students' relationship with technologies (a question I asked them in the initial questionnaire) and how they are related to and affected their language learning. As one can see, the concept of *classroomscape* that I present is not limited to the schoolroom, since it tries to account for entanglements of humans and nonhumans involved in the language education process in different spaces.

In line with Deleuze and Guattari's (2005 [1980]) reflections, I propose seeing the classroomscape as political, sociocultural, and physical semiotic assemblages that foster flows and movements of both stability and change. This is based on an understanding of semiotic assemblages as "entangled groupings of different elements", which "allows for an appreciation of the ways in which different trajectories of people, semiotic resources and objects meet at particular moments and places" (PENNYCOOK, 2021c, p. 111). In this sense, in this dissertation, the classroom(scape) is not seen as a container where language education occurs, but rather as an actor that actively takes part in the process (BUZATO, 2007; SCHEIFER, 2014). Likewise, the objects in the classroom are not perceived just as artifacts; rather, they are conceived as sociomaterialities that perform roles in the teaching and learning of English.

In this language school, there are feedback sessions twice a semester. Before talking to the teacher, the students need to fill in a feedback report card about their language learning. In this report, they are supposed to reflect on the following topics: self-evaluation of their skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing); use of grammatical structures; commitment to classes; and social and affective involvement. In addition, they need to express their opinions

on the methodology and approach adopted and activities and classes prepared by their teacher. There is also a final space for the educator to comment on their language development. The next cut concerns a remark Rodrigo made about my classes:

[78]

Teacher: Eu gostaria que você me falasse sobre isso que você escreveu no feedback: **"Sinto falta de mais explicações usando o quadro, estruturas"**.

Rodrigo: Acho que isso é uma coisa que... **Na escola é sempre assim: muito quadro, muito quadro. Mas é psicológico mesmo.**

[Teacher: I would like you to tell me more about what you wrote in your feedback report card: **"I wish there were more explanations written on the board, structures"**.

Rodrigo: I think this is something that... **At school it's always like this: a lot of boardwork, a lot of boardwork. But it's really something psychological.**]

(Class 22, Feedback Session I, Oct. 17, 2019)

There is a clear relation here between a physical element of the classroom and Rodrigo's conception of language learning. Rather than taking the presence of the board for granted, we could ask: "What meanings does the board, as a sociomaterial element, convey? How is the board connected with language learning?" In this cut, we can see how Rodrigo's personal trajectory with this materiality has affected him when he claims, "At school it's always like this: a lot of boardwork, a lot of boardwork. But it's really something psychological". As Scheifer (2014) stresses, the way we see the classroom and its elements is entangled with our language learning stories.

For Gourlay (2015, p. 490), we should not overlook "the influence of physical surroundings" and objects associated with social practices, insofar as meanings are ascribed to nonhuman actors, which constantly intra-act with us. Rodrigo perceives the board as a central artifact in language education. In his statement, "I wish there were more explanations written on the board, structures", there seems to be an idea of rigidity that refers both to the board and to language as a pre-given system. As Kumaravadivelu (2016, p. 72-73, emphasis in original) stresses, "[t]he hegemonic forces in our field keep themselves 'alive and kicking' through various aspects of English language education", and as examples he mentions "curricular plans, materials design, teaching methods, standardized tests, and teacher preparation". I argue that we should add classroom objects to this list, like the board, since nonhuman actors often play important roles that can both reinforce or undermine dominant forces, depending on the relations we establish with them. Following Fenwick (2015, p. 89, emphasis in original), objects are "*heterogenous assemblages*" – "gatherings of *heterogenous* natural, technical and cognitive

elements” that “embed a history of these gatherings in the negotiation of their design and accumulated uses”.

In their study, Kuby and Christ (2020) show that students tend to be socialized into believing that certain practices should be the norm, and that, as a result, when they are presented with different possibilities, they promptly disapprove of them, in general. As my intra-action with the board was different from what Rodrigo was accustomed to seeing (i.e., not focused on presenting normative grammar), this made him feel uneasy. However, the fact that I questioned his comment led the learner to reflect on it and realize he had just gotten used to that way of looking at language teaching. It seems he became aware he had been schooled in overestimating the board and the knowledge that comes from it when he says: “But it’s really something psychological”. This cut is an example that justifies the importance of working with material-discursive practices (BARAD, 2007) and regarding language as part of semiotic assemblages (PENNYCOOK, 2021c). Accordingly, when students intra-act with materials, they do not just learn language but also engage in particular social practices and construct perceptions of language education. From this viewpoint, not only is what students learn important, but also *how* they learn it.

Most of the time I taught at this school, whenever I was allowed, I always chose not to work with a textbook. As I explain in my master’s thesis, textbooks used in private language schools usually promote hegemonic ideas and idealized views of life and communication; besides, whenever issues of difference are addressed, this is normally done from the perspective of multicultural neoliberalism (SOUSA, 2017). In this respect, I agree with Pessoa (2009), Silvestre (2016), and Bastos (2019) that teachers should prepare their own materials based on the specificities of their groups of learners. As this has been part of my praxis, I did not ask my students any questions related to the absence of a textbook that semester. However, Rodrigo and Flávia brought up this subject in their intraviews, when I asked them about their opinions on the classes that they had had with me. In addition, Helem and Rubi also mentioned it in our second feedback session. The next cuts concern what the students shared with me in this regard:

[79]

Rodrigo: Assim, eu acho que eu fiquei um pouco, **no início, eu fiquei um pouco, meio com um pé atrás, assim, pelo fato de ter falado que não iria ter livro, essas coisas. Mas depois eu fui vendo que você estava sempre trazendo materiais, e até demais.** [risos] E, principalmente agora, no último [referindo-se à segunda parte do semestre], **tinha muita tarefa para fazer.**

[Rodrigo: So, I think I was a bit, **in the beginning, I was a bit, kind of apprehensive, well, since we were told there wouldn’t be a textbook, things like that. But then I saw that you were always giving us materials,** and maybe

too many. [laughter] And, especially now, in the last one [referring to the second part of the semester], **there was a lot of activities and homework.**]

(Intraview, Question 7, Dec. 17, 2019)

[80]

Flávia: Gostei. Gostei muito de a gente não ter livro, não ser aquela coisa, assim, **"tem que ver isso daqui [só] porque está no livro".**

[Flávia: I liked it. I really liked the fact that we didn't have a textbook, that it wasn't a thing like, "We have to see this [just] because it's in the textbook".]

(Intraview, Question 7, Dec. 12, 2019)

[81]

Helem: Achei diferente dar aula sem livro.

Teacher: Como?

Helem: Eu nunca tinha tido aula sem livro, mas foi legal.

Rubi: Porque o livro, ele limita, né?

Helem: O que é ruim é porque ele quer ensinar um vocabulário e a gramática dentro de algum tema. Isso é ruim, porque não explora outra fonte. Por exemplo, quando a gente aprendeu *phrasal verbs* [nos semestres anteriores], a gente sempre aprendia dentro de algum tema. E você mostrou o tanto de significados que têm, coisas que a gente nunca tinha visto.

Rubi: Sim, foi legal.

[Helem: I thought teaching without a textbook was different.

Teacher: How so?

Helem: I had never had a class without a textbook, but it was nice.

Rubi: Because the textbook, it constrains, right?

Helem: The bad thing is that it teaches vocabulary and grammar within a theme. This is bad because it doesn't explore another source. For example, when we learned *phrasal verbs* [in the previous semesters], we always learned them within a theme. And you showed us so many meanings they have, things we had never seen.

Rubi: Yeah, it was cool.]

(Class 39, Feedback Session II, Dec. 19, 2019)

In a similar way it happened to his perception of the board, in the beginning, Rodrigo also did not feel comfortable with the absence of the textbook. This element is a familiar structure that provides both teachers and students with control, security, and guidance, which they tend to desire, in general (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2005 [1980]; PESSOA, 2009). Rodrigo, however, claims that I replaced the textbook with other activities, which for him seem to have been satisfactory. On the other hand, the force of the book series used in this institution inevitably affected my practice, as I could not approach topics that the students would study in the next levels. In addition, as Murris (2016) reminds us, removing an object from a place does

not necessarily entail the removal of what it stands for. In this vein, as Barad (2010) would put it, its hauntological presence remains. It is worth stressing, therefore, that changing physical aspects of a classroom(scape) does not in itself eliminate, or even challenge, dominant ideologies.

As we can see in cuts 80 and 81, Flávia, Rubi, and Helem apparently had a different experience in comparison with Rodrigo. Flávia claims that she does not like to do things just because they are in a textbook. This statement resonates with what she wrote in the initial questionnaire, in cut 64: “the moment when we learn English without feeling that it’s obligatory”. Her complaint is probably associated with the fact that private language schools usually work with “centrally produced global textbooks” (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2016, p. 75), which often address topics that are unrelated to students’ lives. In this respect, Rubi says, “[A] textbook, it constrains, right?”, and Helem adds, “[I]t teaches vocabulary and grammar within a theme. This is bad because it doesn’t explore another source”. Their statements indicate that textbooks are limiting and that, especially in language schools, they tend to prevent other possibilities, which could foster motivation (PESSOA, 2009).

Moreover, as Pessoa, Borelli, and Silvestre (2018, p. 83) underline, textbooks create an organization that establishes particular didactic sequences of linguistic topics, “presupposing that we cannot engage in communication unless we have acquired a linear set of grammar rules; it is as if they were a precondition of communication”. Thus, depending on the way the teacher works with it, a textbook may have the power to condition behaviors, expectations, and the language learning process. Similarly, Bastos (2019) argues that the language presented in textbooks and the way it is addressed is a poor representation of communication. Helem exemplifies this argument, in cut 81, by saying that, “For example, when we learned phrasal verbs [in the previous semesters], we always learned them within a theme. And you showed us so many meanings they have, things we had never seen”. It is important to add that the students studied many phrasal verbs throughout the semester, and that they had the opportunity to use them in meaningful contexts. For instance, most of the time, they had to create sentences and stories as well as prepare questions to ask their classmates and do activities in which they had to actively intra-act with others, so that they could use what they were studying in class.

The textbook is a very strong material-discursive element that appears to work as an extension of the teacher.<sup>92</sup> In general, the learners seem to have enjoyed the fact that they did not have to follow pre-established structures, contents, aspects, etc., often based on topics of

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<sup>92</sup> At textbook-centered schools, teachers might also work as an extension of textbooks (SILVA, I., 2022).

grammar and vocabulary, as well as a model of the native speaker. Now, one might be wondering what exactly I did in class. I prepared several handouts with explanations and worksheets so that the students could practice the topics that were supposed to be reviewed. However, most importantly, I tried to work from their own productions, thus seeking to value flexibility and creativity. In this sense, we focused on the students' "knowledges, stories, experiences, interests, needs, and so on" (SOUSA; PESSOA, 2023, p. 200), which carried out crucial roles in the semiotic assemblages constructed during the course (PENNYCOOK, 2019b). In other words, the students provided me with the necessary materials to create the classes.

The phonemic chart was another element that took part in the course. Cuts 82 and 83 contextualize the first moments I touched on this subject, and cut 84 explains how it was approached in class:

[82]

Teacher: So, what would you like to study this semester? [the general coordinator and I had talked and decided we should ask the students this question] [...]

Helem: **I wanna learn that [pointing at the phonemic chart on the wall].**

Teacher: Alright.

(Class 01, Aug. 06, 2019)

[83]

Teacher: So, I wish everybody were here because **we're gonna work on this [showing the phonemic chart] today.** [Elton and Rodrigo had not arrived yet]

Helem: Oh!

**[Helem, Flávia, and Rubi smile and nod, showing they seem to like the fact we will be working on pronunciation]**

Teacher: I was talking to [the general coordinator], and we think we should work on pronunciation. What do you think?

Students: Yeah!

(Class 04, Aug. 15, 2019)

[84]

*Over the past weeks, I worked on the phonemic chart with the students by showing them the symbols, pronouncing them, and giving examples of words. After they could identify the differences among the sounds, I asked them to mention examples of words. As intelligibility was a problem that the general coordinator and I noticed in the first classes (for example, we commented that sometimes we had difficulty in understanding [Elton]), we thought that working with the phonemic chart could be a good strategy to help them.*



*Thus, my intention was to show them the existence of different sounds; that is, I wanted them to know that differences exist. For instance, as I noticed they used to pronounce the present and past of regular verbs the same way, in one of the classes, we worked on the /ed/ sound. The students were not asked to transcribe words, neither were they evaluated and/or graded according to the phonemic chart. Pronouncing and repeating sounds and words were just supposed to help them notice nuances of spoken language. By the end of this last class, I gave them some dictionaries and asked them to choose words they did not know, check their transcriptions, and try to pronounce them. They seemed to enjoy doing this activity. Students always ask teachers how to pronounce words, and I wanted them to be able to check their pronunciation by themselves.*

(Field notes, Oct. 08, 2019)

In cut 82, Helem explicitly said she would like to study the phonemic chart. Further, in cut 83, the other students also expressed some interest in it. It is worth adding that in every classroom in this school, there is a phonemic chart on the wall, close to the board. Therefore, since their first class in this institution, the learners already see and tend to associate this materiality with language learning. Some teachers address it in class; others do not. In cut 84, as I mention the matter of intelligibility, I give Elton's example: his pronunciation of some words, especially when he pronounced them without providing a context, as in the case of short answers, sometimes made it difficult for us to "understand" him (or, in other words, to align ourselves with him). Here I do not refer to a humanist notion of intelligibility; instead, I was interested in "intelligibility [...] as a matter of differential articulations and differential responsiveness or engagement" (BARAD, 2007, p. 436).

Both the general coordinator and I saw the phonemic chart as a kind of support that could be useful to the students. In line with Menezes de Souza (2019d), teaching sounds is a political affair, and the way we do it, for which reasons we do it, and who benefits from it are issues that matter. I have wondered: "What language conception was underlying my practice in the classes I approached the phonemic chart?" First, I must stress that the main point is not necessarily the kind of material that is used, but how it is addressed. For example, sometimes teachers need to follow a pre-established syllabus, based on a textbook, and they take the opportunity to question and problematize issues concerning language and society. Conversely, other teachers have complete freedom to design and prepare their own materials but end up just reinforcing the status quo in their classes.

Now, as I return to my question, I do not think our actions in relation to the phonemic chart were negative. The students wanted to study it. Moreover, as I share it in my field notes,

“[they] were not asked to transcribe words, neither were they evaluated and/or graded according to the phonemic chart”. Therefore, I think that different kinds of language conceptions were intertwined with my praxis while working with this artifact. I see it this way because the phonemic chart is a very strong nonhuman actor that has been historically constructed as a system of standardization of phonetic symbols; hence, it has been complicit with dominant forces in the field of English language education (for example, those aimed at persuading students into believing that they should sound like native speakers). On the other hand, I tried to work with it as an element that could serve my students’ interests, assisting them in their communicative process of alignment with others. I felt that I was thereby dealing with a very complex web of relations. Perhaps I was inhabiting “the space of border thinking”, dwelling in and attempting to think and act from the borders (MIGNOLO, 2000, p. ix). As I have learned from Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980], p. 23), this is a question of “perceptual semiotics”: looking down on things from above, or up at them from below, or from left to right, or right to left is easier than seeing them in the middle. I could then argue that we often inhabit in-between spaces, where different and entangled hegemonic and nonhegemonic discourses and materialities coexist.

In cut 85, I present an example of the kinds of corrections that I made during the classes; and, in cut 86, Elton shares his opinion on learning the phonemic chart:

[85]

Teacher: [Elton], could you read your sentences?

Elton: I couldn't [kəʊldz/].

Teacher: Sorry?

Elton: I couldn't [kəʊldz/]. [the teacher's facial expression indicates she cannot understand what he is saying] *Não consegui.*

Teacher: I couldn't [kʊdnt/].

Elton: I couldn't [kʊdnt/].

(Class 29, Nov. 14, 2019)

[86]

Elton: **Eu tinha medo desse negócio.** Apesar de saber que isso é parte [do processo]... Desde quando eu entrei aqui, eu via na sala de aula aqueles símbolos, tinha curiosidade, claro, né? **E, ficava, como é que aquilo iria ser cobrado, né?** Aí eu tentei anotar embaixo como é que eram as pronúncias, até de um jeito, assim, não usando aquele código entre aquelas barras, mas um jeito bem pessoal mesmo, /ɔ:/, /i:/, /tʃ/... **Eu tentei colocar, para eu entender, aos meus olhos e ouvidos, como é que seria, e ficou um bom começo. Desmistificou.** Eu achei que seria mais complicado, depois eu achei muito simples. E foi um bom começo. [...] **[A] forma que foi trabalhado, do jeito que foi apresentado,** aquele bicho de sete cabeças, para mim, passou a ter

uma ou duas cabeças só. **Passou a ser mais familiar, e eu vê-lo como aliado, e o medo acabou.** Eu tinha medo.

Teacher: Que bom que você ficou com essa impressão.

Elton: **Ele é parceiro mesmo. É para ajudar.**

[Elton: **I was afraid of this thing.** Despite knowing that this is part [of the process]... Since I started the course, I saw those symbols in the classroom, I was curious, of course, right? **And I wondered how that would be assessed, right?** Then I tried to write down their pronunciation, even in a way, like, not using that code between those slashes, but in a very personal way, /o:/, /i:/, /tj/... **I tried to do it, for me to understand what it would sound like, and it was a good start. You demystified it.** I thought it would be more difficult, then I found it very simple. And it was a good start. [...] **[T]he way it was done, the way it was presented,** that seven-headed beast, for me, then became a one- or two-headed beast. **It became more familiar, and I started seeing it as an ally, and the fear was gone.** I was afraid.

Teacher: I'm glad you have this impression.

Elton: **It's like a partner. It's meant to help.]**

(Intraview, Question 2, Dec. 17, 2019)

Cut 85 illustrates my corrections of pronunciation in class: whenever the students said something that was unintelligible, I corrected them. In relation to the work that we did with the phonemic chart, in their intraviews, the other students voiced similar perceptions. Although some of them said that they had found it difficult in the beginning (Flávia, Rubi, and Rodrigo), all of them stated that they thought it had helped them. Mark even mentioned an example: *“Ajudou um pouco até em algumas palavras, igual, as palavras no passado. Tinha algumas que eu tinha dificuldade de falar, e aí [...] eu aprendi mais um pouco só pelo fonêmico.* [It helped me a little even with some words, like the words in the past. There were some that I had difficulty in saying, and then [...] I learned a little more just through the phonemes]”. When I worked with the phonemic chart, my objective was not to make my students “sound like native speakers”, but rather promote their linguistic sensibility (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2019b): “my intention was to show them the existence of different sounds; that is, I wanted them to know that differences exist”, as I declare in cut 84. As Menezes de Souza (2019b, p. 253, my translation) exemplifies: “‘cat’ is different from ‘can’t’ or ‘Kathy’. So, you have to use your teeth, your tongue”; “to say this word you have to move your mouth differently”<sup>93</sup>. My corrections gestured toward this direction, grounded in the idea that differences matter.

In cut 86, Elton says, “I was afraid of this thing. [...] The way it was done, the way it was presented, [...] [i]t became more familiar, and I started seeing it as an ally, and the fear was gone. [...] It's like a partner. It's meant to help”. As their teacher, I believe that the student saw

<sup>93</sup> Original quote: “*cat* é diferente de *can't* ou de *Kathy*. Então você tem que colocar os dentes, a língua”; “para falar essa palavra você tem que mexer com a boca de forma diferente”.

this experience as something positive because I did not impose it on them: my intentions and actions were supposed to help them figure out a way the phonemic chart could serve their interests (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2012; NORTON; PAVLENKO, 2004). Here Elton shares with us the strategies he used and that worked for him. In this sense, the presence of the phonemic chart in our classes worked as a resource that assisted the learners in their process of alignment with others (CANAGARAJAH, 2018b; PENNYCOOK, 2018c).

In the intraview, I also asked the students what they thought of the seating arrangement, in a semicircle, and how they felt in the classroom. All of them said they liked the fact that it had allowed them to see their classmates, and that it had helped them to better interact with each other. They contrasted it with the classroom layout of desks in rows, which privileges teacher-student interactions. In the next cuts, Helem and Rubi reiterate some of these points and add a couple of others:

[87]

Helem: Eu acho que interage mais do que ficar um atrás do outro, tipo numa escola normal. Acho que isso é bom, porque, a gente, por exemplo, **se ficar um atrás do outro, não vai perceber quando a pessoa está insegura, quando está falando alguma coisa, assim, que não tem muita certeza. [...]** [Em semicírculo,] **a gente consegue ajudar.** Então, é muito importante.

[Helem: I think we interact more than sitting behind each other, like in a regular school. I think that's good because, for example, **if we are behind one another, we won't see when someone is insecure, when they're saying something, like, that they're not really sure of. [...]** [In a semicircle,] **we can help.** So, it's very important.]

(Intraview, Question 6, Dec. 17, 2019)

[88]

Rubi: Eu me sinto tranquila. **Eu acho que a organização circular permite que a gente [se] sinta mais tranquilo para poder falar, para poder até pedir ajuda. Aquela forma de fila de cadeira é muito formal.** Então, eu gosto desse estilo.

[Rubi: I feel comfortable. **I think that the circular organization allows us to feel more relaxed to talk, and even to ask for help. That row configuration is very formal.** So, I like this arrangement.]

(Intraview, Question 6, Dec. 17, 2019)

The classroom is a place where, following Daigle's (2020, 44:14-44:23) reflections, we have particular embodied experiences of "being in the presence of [human] others, sharing the same space, smellscapes, soundscapes, perceiving the movement of bodies, encountering nonhuman others". As the author explains, this becomes part of our fabric of existence. In this

respect, it is important to bear in mind that space arrangement actively participates in the establishment of relations and intra-actions. Consequently, as Takaki (2020) and Pennycook (2021a) stress, politics cannot be disassociated from the physical configuration of places, especially on account of the effects they foster.

As Bastos (2019) claims, seating arrangement is an aspect that has to do with the conception of education a teacher has and how they see their role in the work done with their students. From my vantage point, the semicircle arrangement promotes more horizontal relations both between teacher and students and among students, allowing power to be seen in a more distributed way; also, as I was interested in their language and semiotic productions, the way I organized the classroom also indicates my resistance to the rigid structure of the board as the center of the classroom, on which the teacher's knowledge is focused. Further, this configuration seemed to have made the students feel more comfortable to express themselves, as Rubi points out, in cut 88.

Both Helem's and Rubi's statements draw our attention to the closeness that the semicircle promotes, especially so that students can assist each other. In this kind of arrangement, learners have more access to each other's posture, demeanor, attitudes, gesticulation, gaze, and so on. As Daigle (2020) would put it, intra-actions with space and others lead students to experience certain psychological responses. It appears that the learners were not only willing to be engaged with others in communication but were also inclined to get involved in their classmates' language learning process. Interestingly, Rubi says she feels that desks in rows create a formal atmosphere in the classroom. This might be indirectly linked to her language conceptions, insofar as more rigidity and formality are associated with the idea of language as a pre-given system/set of rules, and flexibility and informality with the notion of language as communication. In this respect, Smythe, Toohey, and Dagenais (2016, p. 744, emphasis in original) argue that educators should pay heed to how actors such as objects are "set in motion or *mobilized* within the network to participate in the production of a particular social order".

As Blommaert and Makoe (2012) add, the way a teacher organizes a classroom is also related to their view of the disciplining of bodies and their comprehension of which arrangements facilitate learning. In this sense, according to the authors, teachers may directly and indirectly condition a specific learning ethos by regimenting, censoring, and silencing certain performances; or, conversely, they might help students construct their own ways of learning by opening spaces for and encouraging them in their projects. Therefore, the relations established can promote either "the feeling of belonging or alienation with respect to place"

(PECK; STROUD, 2015, p. 136). In keeping with these ideas, Canagarajah (2018b) underscores that spaces and materiality thereby contribute to shaping us both as educators/learners and people who participate in society. In other words, spatial practices are social practices that (trans)form semiotic productions (SCHEIFER, 2015).

Accordingly, as teachers, we are partially responsible for the traces our classroomscapes leave onto the bodies of our students. For Barad (2007, p. 393, emphasis in original),

[w]e (but not only ‘we humans’) are always already responsible to the others with whom or which we are entangled, not through conscious intent but through the various ontological entanglements that materiality entails. What is on the other side of the agential cut is not separate from us – agential separability is not individuation. Ethics is therefore not about right response to a radically exterior/ized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part.

As the author stresses, attentiveness and responsivity to our entangled relations are therefore crucially important elements.

Google Drive (an online file storage service) and our WhatsApp group (an instant messaging (IM) service) worked as extensions of our classroom, constituting our classroomscape, along with other spaces that were incorporated into the course through the development of my students’ language learning projects (these are addressed in the following section). Now, it is important to bear in mind, however, that the creation and use of technologies are interlaced with social transformations permeated by neoliberal interests. For instance, Google Drive and WhatsApp are within the purview of Digital Information and Communication Technology (DICT), which in turn is immersed in the process of big data generation. As Buzato (2018, p. 124, emphasis in original, my translation) explains, “big data is basically the ‘market name’ of a set of extremely powerful techniques and tools for ‘knowledge extraction’ from large masses of data that arise from the discursive productions and bodily, social, and spatial behaviors of DICT users”<sup>94</sup>. In this regard, the author adds that “the more we harbor the illusion that the technical layer is neutral in relation to the functioning of the cultural layer, not interfering in our worldview, nor leading us to naturalize algorithmic and rationalized ways of acting and thinking”<sup>95</sup> (BUZATO, 2018, p. 87, my translation), the more we become sociable,

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<sup>94</sup> Original quote: “Big Data é basicamente o ‘nome de mercado’ de um conjunto de técnicas e ferramentas extremamente poderosas para ‘extração de conhecimento’ de grandes massas de dados oriundas das produções discursivas e comportamentos corporais, sociais e espaciais dos usuários das TDIC[s]”.

<sup>95</sup> Original quote: “quanto mais nos filiamos à ilusão de que a camada técnica é neutra em relação ao funcionamento da camada cultural, não interferindo em nossa visão de mundo, nem nos levando a naturalizar formas algorítmicas e racionalizadas de agir e pensar”.






close, and intimate with technologies such as computers and smartphones. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that technologies partake in the (trans)formation of our subjectivities (including our beliefs, desires, dreams, etc.).

One of the questions in the intraview focused on the students' opinions on Google Drive and WhatsApp as virtual school spaces. As the empirical material from their answers to this question is quite extensive, here I just present the main ideas they shared with me and the names of the students who mentioned them. Regarding Google Drive, the students said that they perceived it as a space where they could: a) post and receive their activities (Flávia, Mark, Rubi, Elton); b) resolve their doubts (Flávia, Helem, Rodrigo); c) see the materials of classes they had missed (Mark, Rubi); d) download and check activities (Mark, Rubi, Elton); and e) find extra materials to support their language learning (Flávia, Helem, Rodrigo, Elton), by watching videos of extra explanations of contents and accessing different dictionaries, books, and websites (Rodrigo). Concerning our WhatsApp group, the students told me they saw it as a space where they could: a) communicate with both the teacher and their classmates (Flávia, Helem, Rubi); b) ask questions and overcome doubts (Flávia, Helem, Elton); c) be informed of the activities and classes (Rodrigo, Elton); and d) speak English (Rubi). The following movement-images will help the reader visualize the spaces in question:

#### Movement-image 24 – Google Drive: Pre-advanced group

Name ↑	Owner	Last modified	File size
 Classes	me	Aug 12, 2019 me	—
 Feedback Card	me	Aug 12, 2019 me	—
 Language Learning Project - LLP	me	Aug 14, 2019 me	—
 Pre-advanced - Schedule.pdf	me	Aug 20, 2019 me	60 KB
 Pre-advanced - Schedule.xlsx	me	Aug 20, 2019 me	55 KB







My Drive > Classes ▾

Name ↑	Owner	Last modified	File size
 01) August 06	me	Aug 12, 2019 me	—
 02) August 08	me	Aug 12, 2019 me	—
 03) August 13	me	Aug 12, 2019 me	—
 05) August 15	me	Aug 15, 2019 me	—
 06) August 20	me	Aug 20, 2019 me	—

 07) August 22	me	Aug 20, 2019	me	—
 08) August 27	me	Aug 28, 2019	me	—
 09) August 29	me	Aug 28, 2019	me	—
 10) September 03	me	Sep 2, 2019	me	—
 11) September 05	me	Sep 2, 2019	me	—

My Drive > Classes > 30) November 14 ▾



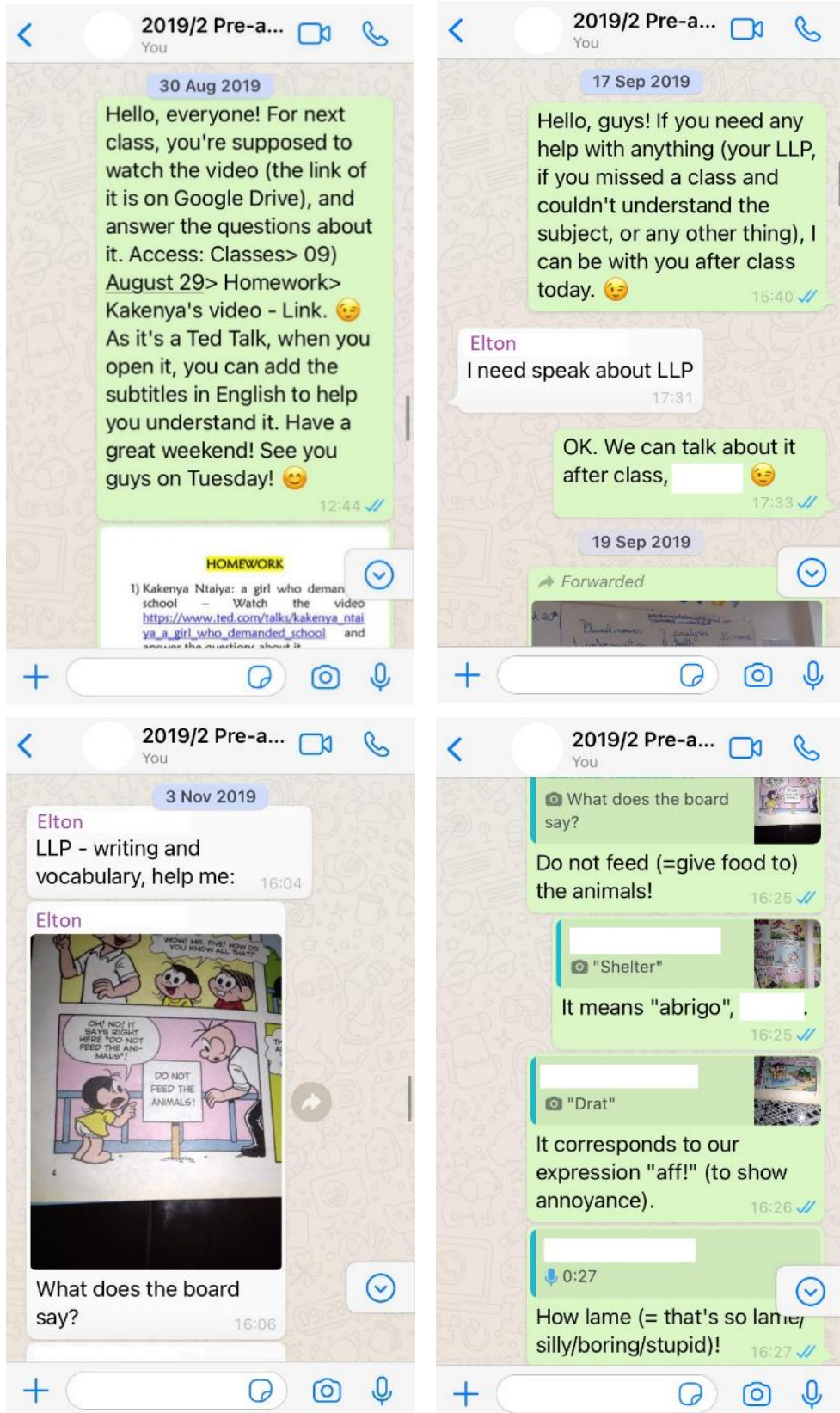
Name ↑	Owner	Last modified	File size
 Homework	me	Nov 14, 2019 me	—
 SOS	me	Nov 14, 2019 me	—
 01) Warm-up - Mention one identity....pptx	me	Nov 14, 2019 me	4.7 MB
 02) Prepositions + verb + -ing.pdf	me	Nov 14, 2019 me	1.7 MB
 03) Phrasal verbs - Friendship.pdf	me	Nov 14, 2019 me	492 KB
 04) Worksheet - Responses with so, too, either and neithe...	me	Nov 14, 2019 me	164 KB

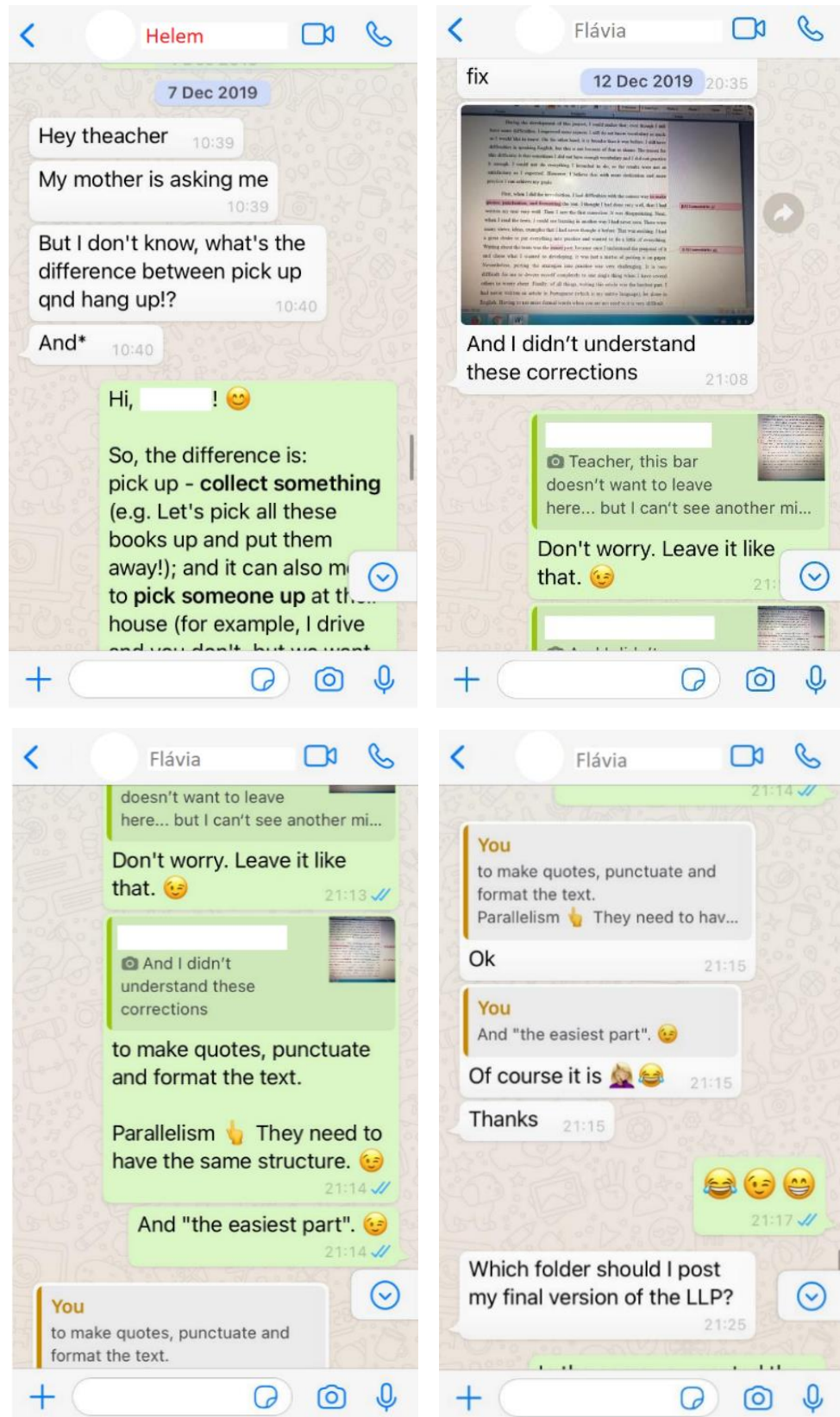
Source: Empirical material.

Every day after the class ended, I always posted the handouts, worksheets, activities, audios, and videos that had been approached in class inside these folders, along with instructions and several extra materials. In addition, I uploaded answers of the activities done in class and assigned as homework so that the students who were not present could access them. The nomenclature used as well as the organization of the classes were established by the school staff. The following is a cluster of messages that the students and I exchanged on WhatsApp, which illustrates how we intra-acted on this space:



**Movement-image 25** – WhatsApp: Pre-advanced group





Source: Empirical material.

For Silva (2021b), the configuration of spaces emerges from agencies in motion, and the movement-images presented suggest these movements. As Scheifer (2014) argues, since

the classroom is usually seen as the only place where the students' language learning occurs, other spaces that might contribute to it tend to be invisibilized. Following Braidotti's (2022) arguments, the students' answers to my question about the virtual spaces show that what constitutes language education are movable assemblages, which we never master nor possess, but merely inhabit, or cross. In keeping with this idea, the author stresses that the individual should be seen as "a transversal entity fully immersed in and immanent" to networks of human and nonhuman relations (BRAIDOTTI, 2022, p. 37). Now, it is worth mentioning something that Rodrigo told me in his intraview: "*[E]u sou uma pessoa, assim, às vezes eu estou com alguma dúvida, [mas] eu não gosto, não sou muito de perguntar, de participar [em sala de aula]. Então, eu acho que isso [o Google Drive] me ajudou bastante nesse quesito – se não fossem esses materiais disponíveis, eu acho que eu iria sentir mais dificuldade. [[I]’m the kind of person, like, sometimes I have questions, [but] I don’t like to ask, to participate [in the classroom]. So, I think that [Google Drive] helped me a lot in this regard – if it weren’t for the materials that were available, I think I would have had more difficulties]*". Here the student highlights the importance of this virtual space, this extension of the classroom, for his language learning process.

As Buzato (2018, p. 8, my translation) underlines, "adopting or creating a technology involves assuming a certain kind of attitude toward reality and, by incorporating the ways of thinking and doing that technical means offer, assuming this attitude to everything else around us"<sup>96</sup>. Thus, it is possible to claim that our practices (everything we did) were partially conditioned by political-economic and institutional forces; and these encountered other forces present in the intra-actions among the group as well as in our personal relationship with technologies. As I see it, like the classroom, Google Drive and WhatsApp were spaces in which we both resisted and (re)produced dominant social and educational discourses and attitudes. For instance, in the virtual environments in question, which are also extensions of society, we might have reinforced modern ideologies of language through the organization of the course, its content, student-teacher and student-student exchanges, etc. In this sense, I should reiterate that the way we work with space matters.

In the initial questionnaire, all the learners said that they had a good relationship with technology. They recognized it as part of their daily lives and emphasized their use of smartphones and computers. In brief, they mentioned that they rely on technological devices to work, study, solve problems, access diverse kinds of knowledge, and have fun. As Buzato

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<sup>96</sup> Original quote: "adotar ou criar uma tecnologia é assumir um certo tipo de atitude diante da realidade e, incorporando os modos de pensar e fazer que a técnica oferece, aplicar essa atitude a tudo mais à nossa volta".

(2018) argues, in general, technology is seen as different types of knowledge materialized into artifacts that can be used to help humans reach certain objectives. He asseverates that such a view, however, promotes an underlying assumption of the relationship between humans and technologies as objective, neutral, and unidirectional, thus disregarding its ties to the social world (its power relations, effects/unfoldings, and changes).

Within the scope of this discussion, Haraway (2016 [1985], p. 7) suggests that we should be seen as “chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism – in short, cyborgs”. Accordingly, in this dissertation, technologies are not conceived as resources that we use, but rather as entities through, in/on, from, with which we experience different processes. Following Buzato (2017, 2018), the way we intra-act with technologies as well as the unfoldings and effects of this process are perceived here in political and ethical terms. As he reminds us, “the school is [also] a technology”, and “[a]s such, it has a certain inertia”; “it restricts certain behaviors and fosters others”<sup>97</sup> (BUZATO; OKUINGHTTTONS; RADIS, 2017, p. 247, my translation). In the classroom, we work with both low-tech artifacts (such as the board, markers, eraser, sheets of paper, pens) and high-tech objects (like data projector, smartphones, and computers), opening up a multiplicity of possibilities. Nevertheless, these should be considered and constructed with attention, since the capitalist system has a way of expropriating things and alienating us by creating conditions that induce us to “stop thinking, imagining, and noticing particular beings and relations” (STENGERS, in LATOUR et al., 2018, p. 590).

In order to write their language learning projects, the students were supposed to read some texts that I had suggested. While the teenagers chose to read them in PDF, the adults requested hard copies of them. The following cuts refer to the answers given by the older students when I asked them why they chose to read printed copies. As Flávia’s answer was very similar to Rubi’s (who elaborated on her reply), here I just present Rubi’s and Elton’s:

[89]

Teacher: I'm gonna ask you something, but you can answer it in Portuguese. It's OK. Vou perguntar para a pesquisa. Eu quero saber o porquê você preferiu a cópia física à [cópia] em PDF. Por que você fez essa escolha?

Rubi: Posso responder em português?

Teacher: Pode ser.

Rubi: Porque **eu acho mais fácil de ler e anotar no papel** do que ler no...

Teacher: ... no PDF? Mas você sabe que em PDF você tem a opção, né?

Rubi: Sei, mas **eu gosto de anotar escrevendo**.

<sup>97</sup> Original quote: “a escola é uma tecnologia. Como tal, ela tem uma certa inércia, ela restringe certos comportamentos e impulsiona outros”.

Teacher: Por quê? [risos] É curiosidade mesmo para a pesquisa.

Rubi: Hábito. **Hábito de leitura e escrita manuscrita.**

Teacher: Ah, OK. Então é hábito mesmo?

Rubi: É hábito.

Teacher: Mas você sabe usar o PDF, os comentários, fazer...

Rubi: Não, não sei. Eu sei [fazer isso] no Word. No PDF, eu não sei.

Laryssa. Ah, sim. OK. Obrigada!

[Teacher: I'm gonna ask you something, but you can answer it in Portuguese. It's OK. I'm going to ask it for the research. I want to know why you chose the printed copy over the one in PDF. Why did you make this choice?

Rubi: Can I answer it in Portuguese?

Teacher: It can be.

Rubi: Because **I find it easier to read and make notes on paper** than to read in...

Teacher: ... in PDF? But you know that in PDF you have the option to do it, right?

Rubi: I know, but **I like to take notes by writing.**

Teacher: Why? [laughter] It's really a curiosity for the research.

Rubi: Out of habit. **Habit of reading and handwriting.**

Teacher: Oh, OK. So, is it really just a habit?

Rubi: It's a habit.

Teacher: But do you know how to do it in PDF, the comments, to make...

Rubi: No, I don't. I know [how to do it] in Word. In PDF, I don't know [that].

Teacher: Ah, OK. Thanks!]

(Informal conversation, Aug. 27, 2019)

[90]

Teacher: Eu vou perguntar em português, já que é para a pesquisa. Daí você pode responder tranquilamente. Por que você fez a escolha de ler uma cópia impressa ao invés de ler em PDF? Por qual motivo você preferiu esse? [aponta para as folhas]

Elton: Bom, eu desconheço, até o momento, até pela correria, não busquei saber se eu conseguiria ler até pelo celular. Agora, eu acredito que sim, se eu abrisse o arquivo lá, né? Em casa, sendo o computador, eu abriria tranquilamente. [...] **Mas esse aqui [a cópia física], eu tenho certeza que onde eu estivesse, até a questão cultural também, essa cultura também do papel e do hábito da época de faculdade, as formações continuadas, de ter o papel, o marcar alguma coisa, essa coisa do contato – colocar debaixo do braço, numa mochila, ir para qualquer lugar, não depender de bateria, de acesso à internet. Mas é isso a cópia física.**

[Teacher: I'll ask it in Portuguese since it's for the research. Then feel free to answer it. Why did you choose to read a printed copy rather than one in PDF? Why did you prefer this one? [points at the sheets of paper]

Elton: Well, I don't know, so far, even for always being in a hurry, I didn't try to find out if I could even read it on my cell phone. I believe so, if I had opened the file there, right? At home, on the computer, I would open it easily. [...] **But this one [the hard copy], I'm sure that wherever I am, even for a cultural reason as well, this cultural thing about using sheets of paper, and the habit of doing it back in college, continuing education, of holding the paper, highlighting something, this contact thing – putting it under your arm, in a backpack, going anywhere, not relying on battery power, internet access. That's it about the hard copy.]**

(Informal conversation, Aug. 27, 2019)



Rubi and Elton (and, we can add, Flávia) mention that having the hard copies of the texts would be easier for them, since they are used to making notes, highlighting, and handwriting. However, outside the classroom, when I asked Helem, Mark, and Rodrigo if they would also like printed copies, all of them said they liked to read texts in PDF because they thought the digital format made it easier. Therefore, both adults and teenagers offered the same argument for different reasons, given their relationship with the technologies in question. In order to avoid generalizations, despite their generational difference, it is important to notice that it is not people's age that determines their relations with things but rather their experiences with them (KRENAK, 2020b).

From what Rubi and Elton shared about their habitual practices, we can assume that, so they can study, they probably rely on pens, pencils, mechanical pencils, erasers, correction fluids, highlighters, sheets of paper, handouts, textbooks, bookmarks, and so on. It seems these students have developed a sense of closeness to the practices of making notes, highlighting, and handwriting. Elton even mentions “holding the paper, [...] this contact thing”, which suggests a feeling of comfort and personal connection when it comes to these objects and the actions they make possible. As Gourlay (2015, p. 496) would put it, this “indicate[s] that the objects themselves are seen as having qualities well beyond their technological functionality”, that the learners see their presence as agentic and positive. In addition, as Jaffe (1999, p. 119, emphasis in original) asserts, “handwriting is one of the physical aspects of texts that gives them an ‘aura’ linked to the ‘history of the hands that have touched them’ ([DANET,] 1997: 9)”. From this point of view, there are no individual entities but emergent assemblages of human and nonhuman beings, who/which together produce certain meanings, affects, and effects. These entanglements highlight especially the process of *becoming-with* nonhuman others (HARAWAY, 2016). In this sense, the students' learning process was not mediated by such technologies but constructed with them in their entanglement.

Rubi claims, “I like to take notes by writing”, and that she thinks she does it out of force of habit. Similarly, Elton explains that he likes hard copies “for a cultural reason [...], this cultural thing about using sheets of paper, and the habit of doing it back in college, continuing education”. These practices are intimately related to these students' schooling experiences. What seems to be just a personal preference, at first glance, becomes much more complex once we pay heed to the agentic capacity of technologies/objects – “the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects” (BENNETT, 2010, p. 6). Agency does not refer to a humanistic understanding of intentionality, volition, and consciousness (BUZATO, 2018; LATOUR, 2005; PENNYCOOK, 2018c). Rather, we should notice that all human and

nonhuman beings afford certain dispositional properties, which do not determine outcomes but condition them, depending on the relations formed. As Buzato (2018, p. 12, my translation) explains, their agentic capacity might be enacted “in the form of resistance, constancy, flexibility, and so on”<sup>98</sup>. These aspects are illustrated by Elton when he says, “I’m sure that wherever I am, [...] putting it under [my] arm, in a backpack, going anywhere, not relying on battery power, internet access”. He contrasts the printed copies with the PDF files by drawing attention to the different types of relations he has with them, based on their affordances and on what they can offer him, given the place where he might be.

Moreover, Elton’s reference to “the habit of doing it [relying on hard copies] back in college, continuing education, of holding the paper” indicates the existence and presence of different overlapping spacetimes (SCHEIFER, 2014). Following Barad (2007, p. 223), this disrupts the “view of space as container or context for matter in motion – spatial coordinates mapped via projections along axes that set up a metric for tracking [...] locations [...], and time divided into evenly spaced increments marking a progression of events”; in other words, reading Elton’s experience from a posthumanist perspective allows us to move toward the deconstruction of spacetime as a linear continuity.

Imposing the use of certain technologies on students is an authoritarian attitude, and as Braidotti (2016) argues, forced proximity can breed resistance and aversion. With regard to this particular classroom event, as their teacher, I tried to be attentive to their specificities and accommodate their preferences/choices, considering their different relations with materialities. It is important to observe that students learn, engage themselves, and produce semiotic repertoires in different ways. Learning is therefore a process that requires negotiation, which can be facilitated by teachers.

In the next section, I focus on aspects pertaining to assessment and discuss some of the outcomes of my students’ language learning projects.

### **3.4 Assessment and the language learning project**

Throughout different moments of the course, all the students mentioned their fear of talking to others and making mistakes. This factor demonstrates the force and effects of ideologies that support standard language and normative grammar. As I asked them to write about their personal trajectories with English in their language learning projects, I could notice

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<sup>98</sup> Original quote: “na forma de resistência, persistência, flexibilidade e assim por diante”.

that several of their statements were associated with the word *fear*. The next cuts concern Flávia's and Rodrigo's assertions about this subject, which illustrate the group's feelings as a whole:

[91]

Flávia: **I am afraid of making mistakes, and it paralyzes me when I have to talk in English. I do not know why I have this fear.** [...] During the progress of this project I expected to have confidence to talk in English, even if I made mistakes [...]. I could see that it is not just me who is afraid of making mistakes, but rather that this is very common to adults. **We are very concerned about doing perfectly all the things we have to do.**

(LLP, Oct. 06, 2019)

[92]

Rodrigo: I hoped I could take advantage of this opportunity to improve my speaking skill, vocabulary, grammar and study strategies, so I could have more confidence when I need to use the English language, without **fear of speaking or forgetting words or structures.**

(LLP, Oct. 06, 2019)

Understanding our sociohistorical material-discursive relationship with education and school can help us make sense of why the students feel this way about English. As Rezende et al. (2020, p. 18, my translation) explain, “[e]ducation in Brazil and colonized America begins with two structures: religion and military force”<sup>99</sup>, that is, school as an institution begins with Jesuit priests and the military. As the authors contend, “this forms consciousness, which later remains in the collective unconsciousness. When we think of education, even without realizing it, we think of the church and the barracks” – “this is how education begins [in Brazil]. This is in the [social] imaginary”<sup>100</sup> (REZENDE et al., 2020, p. 19, my translation). We can see that, at a certain time in history, education was firmly rooted in coercive control that involved regulation, intimidation, degradation, humiliation, physical violence, etc. Paddling (the use of spanking paddles, and similar objects) and forcing students to kneel on grains like rice or corn to inflict corporal punishment are instances of that, which many of our grandparents and parents have suffered and still remember vividly. Vestiges of our colonial heritage of this strict control over subjects can be seen in Flávia's words: “We are very concerned about doing perfectly all the things we have to do”.

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<sup>99</sup> Original quote: “[a] educação no Brasil e na América colonizada começa sobre duas estruturas: a religião e a força militar”.

<sup>100</sup> Original quote: “isso forma consciência, que depois fica no inconsciente coletivo. Quando pensamos em educação, mesmo sem perceber, pensamos na igreja e no quartel” – “é assim que começa a educação [no Brasil]. Isso está no imaginário [social]”.



As objects that fostered and reinforced violent processes of domination in the Brazilian territory, not only in terms of standardization of language but of standardization of subjectivity, Severo (2016, p. 11) mentions “the production of grammars, dictionaries, word lists, catechisms and the translation of religious and administrative European discursive genres to a non-European context”. As one can notice from the students’ utterances, especially Rodrigo’s worry about “forgetting words or structures”, there is a relation between material objects and discourses that contributes to the production of certain performances. We should bear in mind that materially coercive colonial practices are constantly being remade and reconfigured.

As previously discussed, traditional ideologies of language (as a closed, self-standing system and a neutral means of communication) are underpinned by a monolingual orientation (BASTOS, 2019). According to Canagarajah (2013b, p. 20), “efficiency, control, and transparency, features valued by the Enlightenment”, are some of the elements that characterize a monolingual orientation. This relates to Flávia’s assertion about being constantly looking for perfection. One way or another, these ideologies both revolve around and reinforce an underlying notion of *linguacentrism*. In historical terms, once we read and study about language as an invention (BASTOS, 2019; CANAGARAJAH, 2013b; FERREIRA, 2018; HARRIS, 1981, 2002; MAKONI; PENNYCOOK, 2007; PENNYCOOK, 2007), we can better understand how this relation with language came to be as it is nowadays. Not only linguacentrism supports a project that focuses on (abstract) individual entities and completely disregards the assemblagic and rhizomatic nature of its constitution, but it also fosters certain hierarchies such as “language taking center stage” while the people who intra-act with it are sidelined. Posthumanism stresses the need to problematize and deconstruct such ideas by looking at the entangled, embodied, and relational nature of entities.

Although there are always specific contents that are supposed to be taught in this school, when it comes to writing, the teachers can develop a project of their choice with their students. Thus, as I usually worked with “advanced groups”, whenever I had the chance, I taught academic writing. The following cut has to do with some of the points addressed in the preceding paragraphs and draws attention to some other aspects related to the discussion in question. It refers to a classroom event in which we talked about the corrections that I had made in their language learning projects:

[93]

Teacher: OK. **What do you think of the corrections?**  
 Helem: It was really good.

Teacher: Was it good for you, guys? [students nod]

Mark: Yeah.

Teacher: **How did you feel when you saw your text corrected?**

Helem: Normal.

Rodrigo: Normal, but I had a lot of mistakes.

Teacher: Everybody did. Everybody did. That's OK. How did you feel?

Mark: **I feel that my text is very disorganized.** [laughter]

Teacher: Alright. What about you, [Elton]? How did you feel?

Elton: In special, I forgot the form do quotes. [??] Many mistakes. In special, this is.

Teacher: What about you, [Rubi]?

Rubi: **I feel when I stay in sexta série?**

Teacher: Oh, okay, sixth grade.

Rubi: **Sixth grade.** [laughter]

Teacher: She felt like, "I'm in elementary school now". [laughter]

Rubi: **In my test in Portuguese, I get four pontos?**

Teacher: Four points. [which would correspond to "D" or "F" as a grade]

Rubi: **Four points in Portuguese because I had a lot of mistakes, and I don't put the pontos?**

Teacher: Punctuation.

Rubi: **Punctuation in the phrases.**

Teacher: Yeah, all of you, you don't know how to use punctuation, guys. [laughter] [Before the class started, they had compared their texts with their classmates' and told me they saw that they had made the same mistakes about punctuation.]

(Class 18, Oct. 03, 2019)

Inspired by posthumanist perspectives, I argue that we should not see relations of affect and knowledge as separate domains. Accordingly, after the question "What do you think of the corrections?", I also asked them: "How did you feel when you saw your text corrected?" As language learning is a process that is heavily influenced by affective relations with language, perhaps we should look at it as affective-epistemic entanglements. Mark's reply to my question was: "I feel that my text is very disorganized". When the student says, "I feel", his thinking and feeling seem to become intermingled, making it difficult to separate them. His claim that his text is very disorganized characterizes his writing but does not necessarily answer my question. However, I did not question what he said, for he gave an answer that he saw fit at that moment.

According to MacLure (2010, p. 282), as we intra-act, for example, as we ask each other questions, they "[...] do not just prompt thought, but also generate sensations resonating in the body as well as the brain – fissions of excitement, energy, laughter", or anxiety, apprehension, tension, and so on. The students' answers, especially Rubi's, show such reverberations. As Santos (2018, p. 88) underlines,

[t]he epistemologies of the North have great difficulty in embracing the body in all its emotional and affective density [...]. They cannot conceive of the body as an un-narrative [(a kind of narrative of events)], a somatic narrative that precedes and

sustains the narratives of which the body speaks or writes. The fact that the latter narratives are the only ones that are epistemologically relevant is premised upon the concealment of the somatic narrative that grounds them. The body thus necessarily becomes an absent presence.

In my classes, I tried to be attentive to elements related to the body that are often neglected in language education – the kind of questions that I asked the students instantiates this movement. In line with Pennycook's (2021a, p. 17) arguments, I attempted to take into account “linguistic, discursive”, performative, “ecological, spatial, somatic, sensory, affective, and material” factors.

Rezende et al. (2020) concentrate their reflections on Brazilian students who learn English as another language. They explain that sometimes language learners (especially teenagers and adults) might feel uninterested, reluctant, unsettled, distressed, anxious, and even frightened. These feelings lead them to “get stuck” in relation to their language production in English because of negative experiences with their language learning of standard Portuguese. In their words,

[o]ur historical, conflicting, violent encounter takes place with the arrival of Portuguese [in Brazil]. And it is a norm. It is aimed at standardizing, [...] because language standardization is a standardization of subjectivity. It's not only about what you say or write; it's about what you think, what you feel, how you see the world. The teaching of standard language [a norm] means: “You must see the world this way, because this is the correct way to see the world”; “You must think like this, because this is the right way to think”; and “You must feel this way, because this is the right feeling. The rest is sinful”. The feeling of guilt comes with that. So, feeling insecure to talk in English, in Spanish, may be related to their encounter with Portuguese. Thus, we also need to discuss the way the monolingual culture is seen in Brazil.<sup>101</sup> (REZENDE et al., 2020, p. 23, my translation).

Their argument closely relates to Rubi's experiences as a language learner: “I feel when I stay in [...] [s]ixth grade. [...] In my test in Portuguese, I get [...] [f]our points in Portuguese [which would correspond to “D” or “F” as a grade] because I had a lot of mistakes, and I don't put the [...] [p]unctuation in the phrases”. This event disrupts the linearity of time, since there is not a past and a present as separate moments, but rather an assemblage that involves perceptions, relations of affect, the sociomaterial presence of the test, the materiality of

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<sup>101</sup> Original quote: “[o] nosso encontro histórico, conflituoso, violento se dá com a chegada do português [no Brasil]. E é uma norma. Já chega normatizado, [...] porque a normatização linguística é uma normatização de subjetividade. Não é só o que você fala ou escreve; é o que você pensa, é o que você sente, é como você vê o mundo. O ensino da norma padrão é: “você vai ver o mundo desse jeito, porque esse é o jeito correto de ver o mundo”; “você vai pensar assim, porque assim é a forma correta de pensar”; e “você vai sentir isso, porque esse é o sentimento correto. O resto é pecado”. O sentimento de culpa vem com isso aí. Então, a trava no inglês, no espanhol, pode estar no encontro com o português. Assim, precisamos também discutir sobre a posição da cultura monolinguista no Brasil”.

language in the form of punctuation, memories of a school environment, etc. This shows how affect pertains to assemblages and not individuals, and hence involves ongoing relational ontological becomings. In addition, by paying heed to the structures Rubi uses in her speech, her vocabulary, the way she talks, and so on, we can notice how her repertoires in Portuguese and English are present not in a coherent and separate but in an entangled way.

*Feeling fear/being afraid of making mistakes*, something which the students repeatedly stressed, is probably a consequence of our colonial history within the context of education and, more specifically, language learning. Rezende (2015) defines this phenomenon as *linguaphobia*, which engenders a feeling of linguistic insecurity, and even more than that, Ferreira (2018) adds, a feeling of subalternity. In the course, I tried to be attentive and sensitive to my students' trajectories with language. Then, from what they shared with me in class, in their activities, and even on WhatsApp, we worked on their insecurities and difficulties. While we did that, I tried to problematize what entailed such feelings and perceptions and at the same time validate their semiotic productions, so that they could value them too. Following Pessoa and Hoelzle (2017), I attempted to promote a distancing from linguacentrism, which empowers language, and encourage my students to empower themselves. In the intraview, I asked them how their group interactions were, and Helem gave me this answer: *“Eu acho que a gente melhorou bastante quanto a tudo, quanto à conversa, quanto à leitura, porque você estava sempre estimulando a gente. Então, isso ajudou que a gente parasse de ter medo, e falasse, e [se] expressasse. Isso foi muito bom. Acho que melhorou bastante. [I think we improved everything a lot, in terms of talking, reading, because you were always encouraging us. So, that drove us to stop being afraid and helped us speak and express ourselves. That was very good. I think it helped us improve a lot]”*.

These reflections are intimately connected with issues of assessment and how the learners saw it and felt about it. For the purpose of contextualization, so the reader can understand how this school's grading system works, it is worth looking at the next table:

**Table 4** – School grading system

Grammar (6,0)	Listening (1,5)	Reading (1,5)	Vocabulary (1,5)	Composition (LLP) (2,0)
Student's performance (3,0)	Speaking (3,0)	Homework (0,9)	Online homework (0,6)	<b>Final grade (10,0)</b>

Source: Empirical material.

There is a total of 20 points, which are divided by two. In their tests, listening, vocabulary, grammar, and reading are evaluated. As most teachers use textbooks, the audios played for the tests and the texts presented for interpretation come from the book series materials. There are specific sections of vocabulary and grammar, which are focused on the subjects addressed in class in each half of the semester. The composition refers to writing, and the teacher can propose an activity of their choice. For this group, my proposal was a language learning project. Student's performance concerns their language development in general (i.e., participation in class and undertaking of activities). Their speaking is evaluated according to activities selected and prepared by the teacher. My students delivered speeches on their language learning projects and their identities. Finally, the homework is divided into online and offline activities, and again most of the time the teachers use materials from the book series. This grade format clearly affects how the students conceive language and language learning. As the reader will see in the following cuts, I attempted to work from cracks/gaps (DUBOC, 2012, 2013, 2014) within these structures. My focus here is on the test, which was the least flexible sociomateriality of the course:

[94]

*The [first] test was designed according to the marks and guidelines of the school. However, for their "listening", the students watched the video *African Men. Hollywood Stereotypes*, by Mama Hope (2012), and the questions focused on the topics mentioned in the title; and, as their "reading", they were supposed to relate the discussion we had in class on Plato's allegory of the cave to the comic strip "If your life was a reality TV show, would you watch it?", by Randy Glasbergen ([2010?]). Both topics were linked to what we did in class in the first half of the course. **Although I corrected everything, I didn't take any points of grammar mistakes from their listening and reading. I considered if they understood the ideas. I did not evaluate form. I only did that in the section of grammar.***

(Field notes, Sep. 24, 2019)

[95]

*In the second test, for their "listening", the students watched the video *The Danger of a Single Story*, by Chimamanda Adichie (2009), and the questions focused on what a single story is, the single stories she mentions, and on her identities. As their "reading", they read an adaptation of the text *29 Things Women Avoid Doing Because We Fear for our Safety*, by Julie Gerstein (2014), and the questions concentrated on different perceptions people might have depending on their gender and the problem of sexism in society. The learners were asked to make suggestions to mitigate this social problem (the students*

*mentioned teaching respect at home, making investments in education, enforcing more severe laws to punish harassers, and supporting social movements). These topics guided the construction of the test because issues of identity and gender were discussed by the group and individually presented by some of the students in class. In the activities of listening and reading, I did not take any points from their tests based on normative grammar. I graded the content. Even though I had to grade the exercises of vocabulary and grammar according to what they had studied, for most questions there was not only a single answer, as I accepted different possibilities if they made sense; however, I did take points of spelling from vocabulary, as it was a test, and the wrong spelling would change the words. As some questions required deeper reflection (i.e., they were not “technical”), the students seemed to have had more difficulties with them. I think they were more used to structural exercises.*

(Field notes, Dec. 10, 2019)

In this school, the highest grade is given to grammar. Following a decolonial stance, I have opted not assess my students based on normative grammar and standard language, but on the ideas that they convey and their meaning making productions (BASTOS, 2019; FERREIRA, 2018). This was the criteria that I adopted for all the activities that they did, except for the sections of grammar and vocabulary in the test, as I had to comply with some mandatory procedures. Conversely, for example, the students produced a short paper that semester (the language learning project), and even though I corrected everything to provide them with normative structures, I graded them according to the content and argumentation they presented and their effort, dedication, and engagement with the project.

In this sense, despite institutional constraints, I have tried to construct tests that move away from conceptions associated with “reductionist-technicist definitions of learning” (PATEL, 2016, p. 75). As Ferreira (2018) and Bastos (2019) argue, traditional ideologies of language have supported the production of specific kinds of tests, premised on notions of correctness that binarily dictate what is right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable. In the words of Shohamy (1998, p. 331), in the field of English language education, traditional tests “define linguistic knowledge, determine membership, classify people, and stipulate criteria for success and failure of individuals and groups”.

I thereby tried to foster critical reflections in their tests through the kinds of topics addressed and questions asked (DUBOC, 2016, 2019a), as I exemplify in cuts 94 and 95. Posthumanist perspectives have pushed me to look at language learning beyond strictly linguistic aspects and consider semiotic assemblages as spaces of my students’ productions. I

think this somehow was diffracted in the tests that I prepared that semester. As I mention in cut 95, “Even though I had to grade the exercises of vocabulary and grammar according to what they had studied, for most questions there was not only a single answer, as I accepted different possibilities if they made sense”. From my standpoint, this kind of movement involves the acknowledgment of students’ different transjectivities (connections and entanglements made to form meaning) and multiplicity of meanings as possibilities in the process of knowledge construction.

Still in relation to the test, the next cuts refer to a message Rubi left me on the first test, an answer I wrote her on the paper, and a conversation we had about it:

[96]

Rubi: Teacher, sorry. **I studied a lot but I thinking I don't stay this class.** I need to back for learn better.

Teacher: Let's keep going, [Rubi]! 😊 I think you're improving a lot! 😊

(Class 15, Test I, Sep. 24, 2019)

[97]

Rubi: Agora, vou te falar uma coisa. No dia em que eu fiz essa prova e eu fui embora...

Teacher: Eu vi sua mensagem.

Rubi: ...eu fui embora tão chateada! Depois que eu escrevi a mensagem, eu fui embora. **Eu chorei de raiva de mim.** Pergunta para a [Helem]. Eu chorei de raiva. Eu falei para a [Helem]: **"Eu estou chorando de raiva porque eu estudei tanto para essa prova. Queria tanto [me] sair melhor!"**.

Teacher: **Mas você se saiu bem.**

Rubi: **Sim, mas na minha avaliação eu tinha me saído mal, né?** Mas eu [me] saí bem. Mas, para mim, eu tinha [me] saído mal.

Teacher: Está vendo, é porque você tem uma expectativa, e não atendeu a sua expectativa.

Rubi: Exatamente. **Eu aprendi muito. Esse semestre está sendo muito importante para mim, no meu aprendizado. Eu estou percebendo que eu estou aprendendo.** No semestre passado, eu não estava conseguindo acompanhar. Eu acho que não me dei com a metodologia do professor, porque... O que ele fazia? Ele pegava um mais entendido e punha com um menos, quem entendia mais com um [que entendia] menos, para um puxar o outro, e acabava no fim que não puxava. Aí tinha hora que eu bloqueava. Eu prefiro calar a boca.

[Rubi: Now, I'll tell you something. On the day I did the test, and I left...

Teacher: I saw your message.

Rubi: ...I was so upset! After I wrote the message, I left. **I cried out of anger at myself.** Ask [Helem]. I cried out of anger. I told [Helem]: **"I'm crying out of anger because I studied so much for this test. I wanted to do well so badly!"**

Teacher: **But you did well.**

Rubi: **Yeah, but I thought I had done poorly, right?** But I did well. I thought I had done poorly.

Teacher: You see, it's because you were expecting something else, which didn't happen.

Rubi: Exactly. **I learned a lot. This semester has been very important for me, for my learning. I can see that I'm learning.** Last semester, I couldn't keep up. I think the teacher's methodology

didn't work for me, because... What did he do? He asked someone who knew more English to work with someone who knew less, so that one could push the other, but it didn't work for me. Sometimes I got stuck. Then I choose to be quiet.]

(Class 22, Feedback Session I, Oct. 17, 2019)

In cut 96, the materiality of that test, situation, and space entangled with Rubi's story led her to make that comment. Tests have certain dispositional properties, but leaving an informal message to a teacher to get something off one's chest is not one of them, in pedagogical and social terms; on the other hand, she found a physical space in the test where she could leave a message, and she only wrote it because we had built a relationship based on openness and trust. Therefore, what drove the student to do it was not the materiality of the test itself but the assemblage that involved her relationship with tests, her unpleasant memories of assessment, the materiality of the paper touching her hands, the seating arrangement that was stricter, the whole atmosphere around the test, and so on. Such an assemblage brought about different sensations for Rubi, which compelled her to justify her supposed "fail". As Daigle (2017, p. 194) reminds us,

[g]iven that a large part of experiences is had at a pre-reflective, pre-linguistic level, however, many [...] experiences will resist linguistic expression. Yet the impossibility of putting them into words, so to speak, is no indication that they are less impactful in the constitution of our beings. These aspects of our experiences may even have more bearing for our self-constitution.

When we look at affect, which is relational, not subject-centered, we see a complexification of entanglements that indicates the need to address the phenomenon of thinkingfeeling. People carry the relations created with others as well as their effects throughout their lives. What we remember are relations, affective memories of experiences that have the power to act on us and influence us. In this regard, Barad (2007, p. ix) underscores that

[m]emory is not a record of a fixed past that can ever be fully or simply erased, written over, or recovered (that is, taken away or taken back into one's possession, as if it were a thing that can be owned). And remembering is not a replay of a string of moments, but an enlivening and reconfiguring of past and future that is larger than any individual.

In cut 97, Rubi and I talk about the test and the way she felt, and she shares several negative feelings. At other moments, although she did not elaborate on it, she told me about her trauma of tests. As we saw in cut 93, her trauma is associated with the tension and apprehension that she has felt since her early school years. In keeping with a Baradian conception of time,



we can notice here that multiple temporalities meet, overlap, interlace and consequently construct the experience she had (BARAD, 2018). After the fact, we revisited what had happened, and a couple of other times we talked about her emotions, since this was something very important in this particular student's language learning trajectory. I think our conversations drove her to rethink and reconfigure some of her perceptions of assessment – she shares some advances from her point of view, in cut 97.

Now, as the last part of this section, I focus on the language learning project that my students did. It is important to stress that this proposal was originally designed by Pessoa (2006), as a project of self-study. While I was pursuing my bachelor's degree, I had the chance to develop this project twice (in the courses English 5 and 6 taught by the author). Since 2014, I have adapted it to use it with my students at the private language schools where I have worked. In addition, as a student with a scholarship, I did the mandatory teaching practicum, both during my master's and doctoral studies, in Professor Rosane Pessoa's courses of the undergraduate program where she used to teach. There I had the opportunity to also work on the language learning project with pre- and in-service language teachers, who were her students. In this inquiry, I adjusted it to be implemented with my students. In general terms, the guidelines were the following: 1. Choose an area of difficulty in your language skills (listening, speaking, reading, or writing) and another aspect (grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation), which you intend to improve; 2. Read some texts about it (at least two authors') and find out how you can improve the skill and aspect chosen; 3. Choose one or more strategies to put into practice and plan how to do it. Write a chart with date, time, descriptive notes, and reflective notes to organize what you do and to facilitate your analysis; 4. Put your strategy/strategies into practice for about 12 hours; 5. Analyze the results and draw some conclusions about them; 6. Write a paper (Times New Roman 12 and spacing 1,5) describing all the steps of the project (about 6 pages). In Appendix F, the reader can find the complete set of instructions.

After my students told me the skills and aspects on which they wanted to work, I gave them a list of suggestions concerning strategies they could adopt to develop their projects. In line with Toohey and Dagenais (2015, p. 302), I encouraged them to explore how different kinds of technologies could “offer exciting opportunities for achieving new goals and practices”. For example, some of my recommendations were: keeping a diary or a to-do list (which they could write or record); reading and writing short stories, discussing, and even correcting their classmates' productions; choosing different kinds of topics and talking about them with their classmates; recording their conversations and listening to them later on; watching and writing summaries of movies, TV series, videos, songs (or watching and

discussing them); and writing down words they did not know during the process, googling them, and creating new sentences from the meanings that they found. Therefore, following Rocha (2014) and Urzêda-Freitas (2020), this project instantiates a form of recognizing and legitimizing out-of-school literacy practices as part of the language learning process. Further, in line with Kumaravadivelu's (2012) arguments, although the learners were supposed to choose a specific language skill and linguistic aspects (so they could have a focus), for instance, by suggesting such strategies, I intended to show them that listening, speaking, reading, and writing are integrated.

Now, I must develop a (self-)critique. In this private language school, the four skills are present in its whole configuration (syllabus, evaluation, feedback sessions, etc.). There is an explicit focus on the teaching, learning, and (self-)assessment of the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The underlying conception of language in question is thereby based on the communicative approach (RICHARDS; RODGERS, 2014). Nonetheless, although the students were used to perceiving the skills separately, this was also a point I could have problematized with them, both when I provided them with the guidelines and when I offered suggestions so they could put the strategies into practice. As they developed their projects, however, they commented that their practice ended up involving all the skills in a way that it made it difficult for them to set them apart. In the final thoughts of her paper, for example, Helem shares: "[T]his whole project has helped me to improve all the language skills". Likewise, other students also shared similar views in chats that they had with me inside and outside the classroom.

In the intraview, when I asked the learners what they thought of doing the project and what it meant to them, they told me that it had helped them improve their language learning and see other ways of learning English, and that it had promoted their autonomy (which here I address as intranomy, in the following paragraphs). However, Elton and Rubi stressed that they had several difficulties in the beginning. Elton said that he felt very insecure, but that over time he began to realize that he could do it. Rubi's words were:

[98]

Rubi: Primeiro, **eu achei difícil de fazer**, porque, claro, eu já tinha feito projetos nas minhas graduações, mas no inglês, **eu achei difícil no início. Eu não consegui compreender direito. Ai, no decorrer do trabalho, eu comecei a compreender como fazer e a colocar em prática**, principalmente a metodologia, quando, assim, eu comecei a analisar o que eu precisava melhorar, o que eu i[ri]a assistir. Porque, no universo muito grande de muitas coisas que tem em inglês, o que eu poderia trazer para ajudar com o tema que eu escolhi, que foi o *listening* e o *vocabulary*, né? Mas, assim, depois eu consegui trilhar

melhor. **Mas, no início, foi um impacto. Eu pensei que eu não iria dar conta de fazer.**

Teacher: Qual o significado dele para você?

Rubi: Para mim, assim, como eu coloquei no final da conclusão dele, para mim, foi um início – **o início de um aprendizado maior, que eu preciso de me apropriar desse lugar.** Porque, até então, **eu estava muito ligada apenas à teoria, vocabulário, mas não [a] produzir. Então, a produção faz a gente aprender muito.** Quando a gente estuda, lê, ou faz alguma leitura, ou assiste algum filme, que você está focado em pegar um resultado daquilo, é diferente de você ir lá, assistir, e pronto. Mas, não, eu estava assistindo pensando que eu tinha que fazer algum relato daquilo. Então, eu tive que produzir. Então, foi interessante.

[Rubi: First, **I found it difficult**, because, of course, I had already done projects in undergraduate school, but in English, **I found it difficult at first. I couldn't quite understand what I was supposed to do. Then, in the course of doing the work, I understood how to do it and put it into practice**, especially the methodology, when I started to analyze what I needed to improve, what I was going to watch. Because, in the very large universe of many things that there are in English, what could I use to help me with the topics I had chosen, which were listening and vocabulary, right? But then I could do it. **But, at first, it was an impact. I thought I wouldn't be able to do it.**

Teacher: What did it mean to you?

Rubi: For me, as I wrote at the end of the conclusion, for me, it was a beginning – **the beginning of a greater learning process, that I need to see myself in this place and own it.** Because, until then, **I was very focused on theory, vocabulary, but not on producing. So, production makes us learn a lot.** When we study, read, or do some reading, or watch a movie and we are focused on getting a result from that, it's different from just doing it, watching something, and doing nothing after that. But I was watching it and thinking I had to report something. So, I had to produce. So, it was interesting.]

(Intraview, Question 4, Dec. 17, 2019)

In general, in society, we are taught to feel uncomfortable with what is unfamiliar. For this reason, we normally get apprehensive when something is different from what we expect. This relates to why Elton said he felt insecure as well as Rubi's feelings about the development of the language learning project, in cut 98. As Deleuze and Guattari (2005 [1980], p. 227) put it,

[o]ur security, the great molar organization that sustains us, the arborescences we cling to, the binary machines that give us a well-defined status, the resonances we enter into, the system of overcoding that dominates us – we desire all that. [...] The more rigid the segmentarity, the more reassuring it is for us.

People seem to enjoy complete order and predictability. Thus, as it happened to Rubi, sometimes when students are given freedom to do things, they might feel uneasy or lost. I tried to move away from ideas of control and open a space that could welcome a multiplicity of diverse ways of learning, with a view to legitimizing and valuing my students' language

learning differences. As Takaki (2020, p. 139) suggests, I did not impose “fixed rules and a top-down agenda”. I encouraged creativity and flexibility so they could do their projects. Although my intention was to let my students choose what they wanted to do, Rubi said: “I found it difficult at first. I couldn’t quite understand what I was supposed to do. [...] I thought I wouldn’t be able to do it”. As I see it, this need of and desire for not only explicit instructions, but also a completely pre-established course of action forecloses possibilities for learners to work on their imagination and form new ideas. The other students seemed to have felt more comfortable and enjoyed this space where they could have more freedom to direct their own language learning.

In short, the objective of the language learning project was the promotion of learning opportunities. Moreover, it was aimed at teaching students the structure of an academic paper, assisting them to learn how to organize arguments in a longer text, and initiating them into the writing of it. As I mentioned the project several times and addressed some aspects related to it throughout this dissertation, I have selected some pieces so the reader can see its outcomes in the words of the students (their final works ranged from seven to fifteen pages). These are pieces from the final versions of their LLPs<sup>102</sup>:

[99]

[Flávia’s LLP, entitled *A Study on Speaking and Vocabulary*]

Flávia: These authors [Rubin and Thompson (1994)] also suggest, in relation to learning how to speak, some strategies to solve common problems when we learn another language. [...] When you cannot say or explain something, try saying similar words, asking for help, or explaining it in another way. [...]

In this project, I learned new vocabulary by watching series, movies and cartoons. Meanwhile, I wrote all the words I did not know and then I searched for the meaning of each one, and I tried to create sentences by using the words in other contexts. In order to practice speaking, I created an audio diary, in which I recorded myself talking about my daily experiences. [...]

Once in college I had to do a critical review of an article that addresses nutrition. I took the opportunity and I chose an article in English. As the article had a different language than the one I am used to, I had difficulties. I read the whole article while trying to understand the main idea. After that, I selected all the words I did not know, and I searched for their meanings to see if I had understood them correctly. Moreover, I tried to use these words in other contexts. [...]

Date	Time	Descriptive notes	Reflective notes
November 4 <sup>th</sup> to November 19 <sup>th</sup>	Each day: 9 p.m. – 9:20 p.m. Total: 5 hours and 20 minutes	Every day I recorded myself while telling how my day was. After that, I listened to the recordings, corrected the mistakes I had made and researched words and expressions I did not know.	In the early days, it was harder to record it because there were many expressions and words I did not remember anymore for lack of practice. After a while, as I set a specific routine, it was getting easier. However, I was still having difficulties.

<sup>102</sup> In one of our last classes, the students worked in pairs to help each other with their papers, and I assisted them during the activity. We also took this opportunity to try to correct their remaining mistakes.

November 15 <sup>th</sup>	9:30 a.m. – 12:40 a.m. Total: 3 hours and 10 minutes	I chose another article in English in order to prepare for a college exam. Once again I read the whole article while trying to understand the context. Then, I underlined all the words and expressions I did not know and I searched for their meanings.	Like the other article, this one was also very difficult for me. The problems were the same. As the language of the article is academic and it approaches enteral nutritional therapy, there were many words I had never heard. I had to read the article calmly around three times. I had problems with words like: nursing staff, potentially eligible, low headboard diet.
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[...] Despite all the problems and difficulties, writing this paper was a great experience. I had never done anything like it. Seeing the entire structure of a paper, after it is done, is very satisfactory. It felt rewarding to see what I could do “on my own”. Also, writing this paper is something that will help me in my academic life. When I have to do the same at the university, I will have a direction to follow. I see this paper as an achievement.

(LLP, Oct. 06, Nov. 22, 2019)

[100]

[Elton's LLP, entitled *Improving My Writing and Listening Skills*]

Elton: [M]y strategy [...] was to use comic books (something I love reading) to improve my listening [Elton and Mark talked about comic books] and writing skills [...] Studying with the support of cartoons and comic books is an option to study [...] so I can learn, but also enjoy the process while I do it (RUBIN; THOMPSON, 1994). [...]

My expectation of learning English to improve my listening and writing skills is based on establishing a partnership with my classmates, especially [Mark], who is also a fan of comic books, like me. We worked together to make this a reality, also using our cell phones, that is, social medias (like WhatsApp) to practice listening and writing in different ways, such as, for example, by sending voice messages and texts. [Mark] and I thereby took this as an opportunity to use the images and resources from comics in another way: we planned to talk about the stories of the comic books with the use of our cell phones. [...]

My individual theoretical and practical actions were carried out by reading and relying on the authors suggested by the teacher – Rubin and Thompson (1994) – as well as listening to music, watching cartoons and documentaries on TV, reading comic books, writing small texts and poems. [Mark] and I used WhatsApp for the purpose of exchanging messages in audio and in the written form, with the intention of creating a fanzine with part or all of this material. [Mark] and I also made summaries of movies we had watched. [...] Performing such actions individually or in partnership with my classmate [Mark] was successful. The activities in question involved elements that were familiar to both of us, such as Pop Culture productions (comic books, cartoons, TV series, documentaries and films). [...]

Date	Time	Descript notes	Reflexive notes
23 <sup>rd</sup> October	45'	I watched two episodes of the cartoon Star Wars Rebels.	This was the first time that I ever watched a cartoon without subtitles. It was difficult for me, but I was surprised at my understanding of it.
October-November	2hs	[Mark] and I wrote texts in order to make a fanzine with geek themes.	It is a theme that we like, and this motivated us.

[...] I emphasize the importance of this project to learn a foreigner language by using different strategies, as one can use technological resources, and thus create new learning situations, which motivates students to believe in the real possibility of communicating in English with fluency and security.

(LLP, Oct. 06, Nov. 22, 2019)

[101]

[Mark's LLP, entitled *Improving My Writing Skill and Grammar*]

Mark: When I started to think about what I would do in my Language Learning Project, I decided to write about things that I like. [...]

I thought about making a story, and I started to do it. I admit that writing my own story was not an easy work. However, I used a sequence that I thought could help me: I started by the title, then I choose the characters, and finally I started to write the story. [...]

Date	Time	Descriptive notes	Reflective notes
November, 22 <sup>nd</sup>	7 hours	I wrote a story called <i>The Undead Island</i> .	By writing this text, I discovered many new words, like <i>betrayed</i> . I discovered these words by searching different ways to make sentences on the internet.

[...] I deeply liked this experience. I feel that my grammar and my vocabulary expanded by writing this text. I liked the story that I made a lot. I particularly enjoyed the purpose of the project. [...] I improved a lot by doing this project. Now I know how to make biographies, stories, summaries and other types of texts. I discovered many new words, like *villain*, *fellow*, *harass*.

(LLP, Oct. 06, Nov. 22, 2019)

[102]

[Helem's LLP, entitled *A Study on Reading and Vocabulary*]

Helem: I made a mistake while I was trying to improve my skills because I was just searching for the meaning of every word that I did not know, without understanding the whole context of what I was reading. As the authors assert, "[g]ood readers read for meaning; they do not waste time decoding each letter or each word in the text. Instead, they take in whole chunks of the text, relying on their knowledge of the language and the subject matter to make predictions as to what is likely to follow and to interpret what is meant." (RUBIN; THOMPSON, 1994, p. 91). After a while, I started to follow this recommendation, and I could start to read a book and watch series with an advanced language. [...]

Date	Time	Descriptive notes	Reflective notes
17 <sup>th</sup> October	1h 28'	I watched the first episode of a series named <i>Anne with an E</i> , with audio and subtitles in English.	This series is interesting because it talks about a cultured orphan girl. She suffers bullying, and she is always trying to handle it. I learned some new vocabulary: <i>abide</i> , <i>ecstatic</i> , <i>thrill</i> , <i>bench</i> and <i>bride</i> .
16 <sup>th</sup> November	2h 30'	I started to read a book called <i>Red Queen</i> (AVERYARD, 2014). I read 60 pages.	It is a fantasy book. I chose to read this book as the last part of this project because it has an advanced level of language. I learned many new words: <i>deflate</i> , <i>throng</i> , <i>pat</i> , <i>porch</i> , <i>embroidery</i> , and <i>exquisite</i> .

[...] In my opinion, the least difficult part of doing this project was reading the texts, because by doing it, I learned many different ways to improve my reading skill and my vocabulary. Nevertheless, the best part was to put the strategies into practice. I read two books, and many different kinds of texts, watched many things in English, which helped me to improve it.

(LLP, Oct. 06, Nov. 22, 2019)

[103]

[Rubi's LLP, entitled *A Study on Listening and Vocabulary*]

Rubi: [W]e need to adopt strategies for dealing with unfamiliar words indirectly, instead of simply memorizing them. The strategies include reading a series of texts of related topics, guessing meanings of words from context and dividing words into components (RUBIN; THOMPSON, 1994). [...]

In order to develop this methodology, I tried to choose materials according to a suggestion made by Rubin and Thompson (1994): we should choose materials that we will enjoy. [...]

The goal of this project was to help me improve my listening and vocabulary. While I was watching and listening to things, I wrote the unknown words and tried to understand their meanings, and I also listened to them several times until I learned their pronunciation. [...]

Date	Time	Descriptive notes	Reflective notes
14 <sup>th</sup> September	1h	I watched some episodes of the cartoon <i>My Little Pony</i> .	The cartoon has an easy language. Therefore, I started to practice my listening. I did not have difficulty.
30 <sup>th</sup> September	1h	My daughter and I watched the video <i>Kids Meet a Drag Queen</i> , in which they ask a drag queen questions. After watching the video, we talked about the importance of children getting to know a drag queen's life.	The video has an easy language. I did not have difficulty to understand it. I learned new vocabulary, such as <i>wigs</i> and <i>eyelashes</i> .

(LLP, Oct. 06, Nov. 22, 2019)

[104]

[Rodrigo's LLP, entitled *A Study on Speaking, Grammar, and Vocabulary*]

Rodrigo: This project encourages a reflection on our language learning. It presents proposals for improvement, but it mainly takes student involvement into account. [...]

Regarding my methodology, I chose to use more individual methods, because I feel I can do better by myself than with other people. I also used digital methods, like apps. For the development of my speaking, grammar and vocabulary, some apps I used were: *Cake*, *Duolingo*, and *English Expert*. I also watched movies, series, tried to read some books and talked to a friend in English. [...]

Date	Time	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
October 04 <sup>th</sup>	1h	I did an activity for thirty minutes on <i>Duolingo</i> and thirty minutes of conversation practice on <i>Cake</i> .	This was easy because the vocabulary was related to things I already know, such as, for example, routine, emotions and studies.
October 07 <sup>th</sup>	2h 39'	I watched the movie <i>Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone</i> and jotted down some unknown words to search for their meanings.	It was not my first time watching a movie in English, but the first one with subtitles only in English. It was a bit difficult because of the pronunciation.
November 16 <sup>th</sup>	30'	I used the app the <i>English Expert</i> to review grammar.	I reviewed verbs and articles. It was good because I had already forgotten some basic things.

[...] As a result of this project, I learned new words, such as *vent*, *relieve*, *repress*, *embarrass*, revised grammar contents, like *adjectives*, *adverbs*, *verbs*, and *pronouns*, and tried to improve my speech. [...]

It was different from the work I had already done, because it is necessary to practice and not just read the theory.

(LLP, Oct. 06, Nov. 22, 2019)

I have tried to deconstruct the idea of individuality by showing that becoming is a process that occurs in relations with human and nonhuman others. Hence, I have shifted the focus from the individual to assemblages (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2005 [1980]). As I ruminated on Daigle's (2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2020) concept of *transjectivity*, in order to rethink subjectivity from a posthumanist perspective, and Barad's (2007) advocacy for intra-action, I arrived at the idea of *intranomy*, which has assisted me to account for the experience my students had especially with their language learning projects. In this sense, I sought to distance myself from the dichotomy of autonomy/heteronomy<sup>103</sup>, coined by Kant (1998 [1785]), which has heavily influenced Western epistemologies. Autonomy has been associated with self-governance, independence, and it has as its center of attention the individual; heteronomy stresses the influence and power of others over the self, i.e., one is seen as subject to the determinative regulation of an external power (GRIMI, 2017; SENDING, 2016). In the field of education, the dichotomy of agency/structure has similar connotations. Therefore, in this dissertation, I propose the concept of *intranomy* so as to focus on entanglements and relations that support one in managing their language learning process.

From the students' experiences, we can notice that, although they had a specific focus, all of them worked on at least more than one skill in their projects, which demonstrates their inseparability. For example, Flávia kept an audio diary in which she recorded herself and then listened to it; Elton and Mark exchanged text and voice messages to do several different kinds of activities, and both also wrote texts and read them; Helem read books and watched series; Rubi and Helem watched several videos together and talked about them; Rodrigo used mobile applications to practice speaking and listening and talked to a friend.

As we can see in cuts 99-104, this project entailed several rhizomatic movements. Following Toohey (2018, p. 37), I tried to encourage my students to perceive language learning as "a matter of desiring, experimenting and intra-acting in various settings". In their projects, they could work with materials that resonated with their knowledges, interests, experiences, and identities. For instance, Helem read books and watched series and movies that problematize gender roles (see cut 102). Rubi, a white heterosexual woman, chose to watch and reflect on videos of socially marginalized groups, like drag queens (see cut 103). She did that as a way of expanding perspectives, so that she could be educated in relation to things she did not experience herself (as she told me in an informal conversation). It is important to stress these

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<sup>103</sup> Braidotti (2013, 2019) briefly touches on the idea of heteronomy in a couple of her works, but the author does not problematize its construction in the West. In addition, although she reformulates the concept of *heteronomy*, she ends up reinscribing the terms autonomy and heteronomy as two opposites.



were political choices that emerged from different kinds of assemblages in which the students were enmeshed. Many elements, linked by different networks, together with their bodyminds, led them to follow these paths.

Although most students developed more dynamic activities, in cut 104, we can see that Rodrigo's traditional language ideologies strongly influenced him to do some technical exercises. The space changed – he did activities in application programs – but his conception of what language learning should involve remained. In this respect, as Kellner and Share (2019, p. 14) asseverate, “media and technology are not neutral tools”, but entities “embedded within socio-political contexts”, and hence in social practices. Accordingly, they are entities that also enforce meanings (HARAWAY, 2016 [1985]). Nevertheless, as Menezes de Souza (2019b, p. 251) argues, “[s]ome [students] learn by talking, others only learn by following rules, others learn by doing things”<sup>104</sup>, and their processes need to be respected. In keeping with this idea, as Rezende et al. (2020) remind us, we should be careful with our actions because the will to decolonize another might also be a colonial attitude.

Further, I could observe how, one way or another, the electronic resources on which the students relied to do things were agentive co-workers in the creation of the activities presented by them in their projects (GOURLAY, 2015). In line with this idea, the materials with which the students intra-acted extended their learning both in terms of accessing other spaces and reconfiguring “sensory and cognitive apparatus” (PENNYCOOK, 2018c, p. 56), indicating the constitution of embodied relations interlaced in multiple and different spatialities.

We can notice from their claims that, as they did things they enjoyed, this promoted motivation (KUNTZ; PRESNALL, 2012). In his intraview, Rodrigo told me: “[N]a escola a gente faz trabalhos assim, mas acho que nunca tão aprofundado para o desenvolvimento de estudo. Porque, os trabalhos que [a gente] faz, querendo ou não, é só para ganhar [a] nota, e fica por isso mesmo. Esse não. O foco era o desenvolvimento das habilidades que eu tinha escolhido, né? [...] Fiz coisas que eu gosto, igual, assisti filmes. Teve muita coisa lá que eu nem coloquei que eu fiz lá no projeto, porque iria ficar muito tempo escrevendo. [...] [F]oi muito bom. Eu gostei. [At school we do projects like this, but I don't think they are so focused on study development. Because the work we do, whether we like it or not, is just to get a grade, and that's it. This one was different. The focus was on developing the skills I had chosen, right? [...] I did things that I like, such as watching movies. There was a lot of stuff there that I didn't even add to the project, because it would take a lot of time to write everything. [...] [I]t was

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<sup>104</sup> Original quote: “[a]lguns [alunos] aprendem conversando, outros só aprendem seguindo regras, outros aprendem na prática”.

great. I liked it]”. It is possible to note that the space created by this project led the students to feel more comfortable with their own linguistic and semiotic repertoires, as they could do different kinds of activities with them, analyze their unfoldings, and have their productions valued by the teacher.

As Toohey and Dagenais (2015, p. 305) would put it, “when learners are engaged in production work”, they have the opportunity to see themselves as knowledgeable, creative, resourceful, intelligent, and active actors in their own language learning. The cuts displayed from their projects corroborate this argument. Finally, it is important to stress that everything carried out by the students during the course shows that we should look at language learning as a distributed, embodied, and affective practice (CANAGARAJAH, 2018a; PENNYCOOK, 2018c).

### **In-between considerations: a line of flight**

This study is based on a framework that considers that phenomena have no beginning and no end, that they are always in the middle, becoming. For this reason, here I offer my in-between considerations. The introductory chapter worked as a line of flight with its multiple entryways; and now I focus on its multiple exits, its “lines of  $n$  dimensions and broken directions” (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2005 [1980], p. 11). Jackson and Mazzei (2018, p. 1258) maintain that “we alone are not the authors of the [inquiry] assemblages that we create”. For them, “all other texts and agents (both human and more than human) insert themselves in the process – they emerge, bubble up, capture us, and take us onto lines of flight” (JACKSON; MAZZEI, 2018, p. 1258). In this sense, this doctoral dissertation constitutes an unresolved dialogue formed from heterogenous knowledges that point to rhizomatic directions.

Here, I defend the thesis that posthumanist perspectives can help language teachers perceive things in language education that we might not see in other ways. With this study, at no moment have I intended to claim erasing or overcoming humanism, since its notions are deeply ingrained in our ontological and epistemological constitution. Rather, my objective was to draw our attention to the need to deconstruct and rethink certain conceptions and positions so that we can envision other possibilities of being, knowing, thinking, and feeling with the world. Once we consider the notion of ongoing becoming, following Pennycook’s (2019a, 2021a) arguments, the posthumanist ideas proposed in this text can be seen as part of a bigger project of critical applied linguistics, aimed at making it more politically and ethically accountable. As Barad (2007, p. 203) contends, “[w]e are responsible for the world within which we live [...] because it is sedimented out of particular practices that we have a role in shaping”.

In the introductory chapter, I presented the following question, which guided the discussions held in this dissertation: “How does the teacher-inquirer conceive the sociomateriality of bodies and ideologies of language and language education in an English course at a private institution, from a posthumanist standpoint?” In relation to the sociomateriality of (human) bodies, it is worth reiterating that I have been working with ideas from critical language education for years. Thus, I knew that, since we are all racialized, genderized, and classized beings, as I addressed identity, issues of race and ethnicity, gender, and class would be important throughout the course. However, this experience with the students called my attention to how we are also socially agerized – i.e., to how age might also be a relevant factor that affects social relations in the classroom(scape). Unlike most projects in the

field of critical applied linguistics, my reading of the intra-actions that occurred during the course, and especially in the classroom, was imbued with post-anthropocentric reflections that sought to move the discussion beyond a humanist view. As I see it, the ideas developed in this work might contribute to helping us better understand and deal with complex social situations that involve inequalities and discriminations in the context of language education.

Further, instead of working with a comprehension of language ideologies, I proposed the concept of *material-discursive ideologies of language and language education*, as I noticed the entanglement of discourse and materiality. Language was then conceived as sociomaterial practice. I discussed cognition as distributed across space, gave an example of the sonic materiality of language, showed how objects might be performative and transform meaning, and, accordingly, elaborated on the mutual constitution of humans and nonhumans. With respect to semiotic productions, I worked with the concept of language as misunderstanding, as I drew on the notions of alignment and misalignment and focused on semiotic resources (sounds, gestures, images, objects, etc.), semiotic repertoires, and negotiation strategies.

Regarding the classroomscape and technologies, I concentrated on intra-actions with classroom objects and teaching materials, and the students and I worked with spaces beyond the schoolroom as sites for their language learning. Further, I also approached their relationship with different kinds of technologies. As I drew my attention to assessment, I discussed how it is interlaced with relations of affect (which might involve, for instance, linguaphobia and traumatic school experiences). I then looked at tests and their construction and at my teaching praxis. Finally, I addressed my students' language learning projects as different movements that promoted language involvement.

Here, I focused on issues pertaining to language education that emerged from this study. However, as I reflected on the empirical material and on concepts that intra-acted with me as teacher-inquirer, I see that I could have also worked toward generating other onto-epistemic possibilities. Given the chance to do something differently, I would especially ask different questions. For example, in addition to "what does it mean?", I would also ask "how does it work?" Further, I would prepare other activities that could assist my students to better explore their relations with diverse types of materialities. Concerning the apparatuses, I would also answer the questions from the initial questionnaire and intraview, like my students did. As I pointed out in Chapters 2 and 3, humanist assumptions influenced many of my actions as a teacher. Although language is the subject matter with which (applied) linguists work, arguments from non-representational inquiry were significant for the discussions held in this text, as I drew on them to take the edge off the sovereign power of language in our field. That is not to claim

that language is not important, but rather to recognize the need of provincializing it and understanding it as an entity inextricably enmeshed in different kinds of assemblages (PENNYCOOK, 2018c).

Although this dissertation was not focused on teacher education, I see this experience as an educational process. More than anything else, this work led me to an intensive process of *unlearning*. I deconstructed and reconstructed the way I see myself as a teacher and a person as well as how I look at English language education. In addition to seeing the classroom space as a place embedded in social relations permeated by power, now I have come to conceive the classroomscape as a powerful sociomateriality that also affects, shapes, and constructs students and teacher.

It is also worth elaborating on my writing of this experience. According to St. Pierre (1997a, p. 414), “[t]he rhizomatic writing [...] wraps idea around idea in some overloaded imbrication that flies out of control into a place of no return”. The reader might have noticed that throughout this dissertation, my arguments were not presented linearly, as I strived not to let myself be trapped by the conventional doing of analysis, which usually restricts what can be discussed. Thus, I attempted to work with the rhizome as a conceptual practice that could reorient my thinking-writing, as new elements entered the assemblage. In this sense, I did not try to control where the inquiry was taking me. In seeking to see otherwise and do things differently, for example, whenever I read an article, watched a piece of news, or talked with someone who would help me expand my thoughts on something related to this discussion, I endeavored “to meet the universe halfway” (BARAD, 2007, p. 396). From a Baradian perspective,

[i]ntra-acting responsibly as part of the world means taking account of the entangled phenomena that are intrinsic to the world’s vitality and being responsive to the possibilities that might help us and it flourish. Meeting each moment, being alive to the possibilities of becoming, is an ethical call, an invitation that is written into the very matter of all being and becoming. (BARAD, 2007, p. 396).

In order to illustrate this movement, I shall mention one example from the empirical material. While I was writing about the activities that we did in class, which touched on the subject of clothing (cuts 8 and 9), and especially while I was working on my reflections on Flávia’s speech, who also mentioned this topic (cut 28), I came across a feature on high heels (AVENTURAS, 2022). In the same week, I had a long conversation with a colleague-friend whose doctoral dissertation has as its focus the performativity of bodies, and I suggested that he had a look at the piece. We then talked about it. After that, I listened to the podcast that was

mentioned in the feature story (THE HISTORY, 2022). As I did that, I learned especially about the work of Semmelhack (2008, 2015, 2020) on history and fashion. It offered me great insights that drove me to note how nonhuman elements, such as clothing, play roles, for instance, in the formation of social categories such as gender and class. Several other topics that I addressed here intra-acted with me in a similar fashion. As I see it, not only did they expand and redirect my thoughts, but they also enriched the discussions of this work as a whole. And this only happened because I strived to meet the universe halfway, as suggested by Barad (2007).

Several scholars have deeply influenced me throughout the writing/typing of this work. Many of their ideas transformed not only the format, structure, and content of this dissertation but also my relation with it and other entities that took part in the process along the way. Hence, from my vantage point, some artificial divides have been undermined. In relation to my writing of this text as a nonnative speaker of English, I rely on Canagarajah's (2018a, p. 279) argument that "'competence' [(to which he refers in terms of emplacement and alignment)] is distributed across various material and social networks". Many human actors contributed to my writing with their academic and nonacademic productions as well as in the form of comments and conversations about what I had written throughout my Ph.D. However, when it comes to my linguistic production, nonhuman actors were the ones that helped me the most. I shall mention some of them. Different kinds of online dictionaries and Google searches provided me with synonyms, definitions, and other linguistic possibilities of addressing the ideas I sought to convey, and, as a result, they also assisted me to think and rethink about what I was writing. In addition, as we know, computer programs and smartphone applications can even complete phrases, and so did mine while I was thinking-typing.

Therefore, several human and nonhuman actors wrote this dissertation with me. In this respect, my writing-thinking process with this work was not only rhizomatic but also materially distributed. There were various sites, including stacks of paper sheets, notes on books, printed articles, PDF and Word files, and different kinds of smartphone recordings, among others, where I stored chunks of reflections that cropped out fortuitously. These examples demonstrate that this dissertation is certainly a partial result of countless entanglements, or as Canagarajah (2018a, p. 279) would put it, "an assemblage from diverse social, spatial, and material networks".

Moreover, Richardson (1994) and Richardson and St. Pierre (2018) claim that writing can be done as an attempt to understand and learn things. Like St. Pierre (1997a), as I wrote, I thought, I learned, and I changed my mind about what I thought. In this sense, for me, writing produced thinking. More than that, as Barad (2007, p. x, emphasis in original) maintains, the

point is not that an author writes a dissertation, or that a dissertation writes an author, but rather that they intra-actively write each other (“‘intra-actively’ rather than the usual ‘interactively’ since writing is not a unidirectional practice of creation that flows from author to page, but rather the practice of writing is an iterative and mutually constitutive working out, and reworking” of dissertation and author). Therefore, instead of thinking of this dissertation as a representation, I regard it as a material-discursive performance.

In keeping with a broader project of critical applied linguistics, as a teacher-inquirer, I tried to work with and against different forms of power (PENNYCOOK, 2021a). In this respect, more specifically, I aimed to destabilize humanist and colonial structures of inquiry, both through my writing and arguments presented. Consequently, as I relied on my own actions, I attempted to propose other ways of looking at language education. Like Barad (2007, p. 466), I hope the reader does not see the discussions held here as separate passages, “but rather as an entangled state that reworks notions of contiguity and identity much as a poem does not so much touch our lives here and there, offering us individual moments of reflection, but rather gets inside our skin and reworks who we are”.

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<sup>105</sup> In this dissertation, I break with the *Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas (ABNT)* (Brazilian National Standards Organization) format in mentioning the names of all authors in the references so as to highlight the importance of collective and collaborative work, and hence to rightfully recognize the contributions of all scholars involved.



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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A – Research commitment form



UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE GOIÁS  
PRÓ-REITORIA DE PESQUISA E PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO  
COMITÊ DE ÉTICA EM PESQUISA/CEP

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### TERMO DE COMPROMISSO

Declaramos que cumpriremos os requisitos da *Resolução CNS n.º 466/12* e/ou da *Resolução CNS n.º 510/16*, bem como suas complementares, como pesquisadoras responsáveis pelo projeto intitulado “*Uma experiência de etnografia pós-humanista em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa*”. Comprometemo-nos a utilizar os materiais e os dados coletados exclusivamente para os fins previstos no protocolo da pesquisa acima referido e, ainda, a publicar os resultados, sejam eles favoráveis ou não. Aceitamos as responsabilidades pela condução científica do projeto, considerando a relevância social da pesquisa, o que garante a igual consideração de todos os interesses envolvidos.

Data: 03/05/2019

<i>Nome do(a) Pesquisador(a)</i>	<i>Assinatura Manuscrita ou Digital</i>

**Appendix B – Model of school consent form<sup>106</sup>**

**TERMO DE ANUÊNCIA**

A \_\_\_\_\_  
está de acordo com a execução do projeto de pesquisa intitulado *Uma experiência de etnografia pós-humanista em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa*, coordenado pela pesquisadora *Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa*, desenvolvido em conjunto com a pesquisadora *Rosane Rocha Pessoa*, **nas dependências da escola**.

A \_\_\_\_\_  
assume o compromisso de apoiar o desenvolvimento da referida pesquisa pela autorização da coleta de dados durante os meses de *agosto de 2019 a dezembro de 2019*.

Declaramos ciência de que nossa instituição é coparticipante do presente projeto de pesquisa e requeremos o compromisso da pesquisadora responsável com o resguardo da segurança e bem-estar dos sujeitos de pesquisa nela recrutados.

Goiânia, 03 de maio de 2019.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Assinatura/Carimbo do responsável pela instituição pesquisada**

<sup>106</sup> As the original school consent form contains information about the school and the people who run it, in order to preserve their anonymity, only a model of this form is shown here.

## Appendix C – Informed consent form<sup>107</sup>



SERVIÇO PÚBLICO FEDERAL  
UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE GOIÁS  
Faculdade de Letras



### TERMO DE CONSENTIMENTO LIVRE E ESCLARECIDO - TCLE

Você está sendo convidado(a) a participar, como voluntário(a), da pesquisa intitulada “*Uma experiência de etnografia pós-humanista em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa*”, ligada ao projeto “Linguística Aplicada Crítica: Estudos sobre Ensino e Formação de Professoras/es de Língua Estrangeira”, coordenado pela Profª. Dra. Rosane Rocha Pessoa da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade Federal de Goiás. Meu nome é Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa, sou a pesquisadora responsável e a minha área de atuação é a Linguística Aplicada – Ensino e Aprendizagem de Segundas Línguas e Línguas Estrangeiras. Após receber os esclarecimentos e as informações a seguir, se você aceitar fazer parte do estudo, assine ao final deste documento, que está impresso em duas vias, sendo que uma delas é sua e a outra pertence à pesquisadora responsável. Esclareço que em caso de recusa na participação, você não será penalizado(a) de forma alguma. Mas, se aceitar participar, as dúvidas *sobre a pesquisa* poderão ser esclarecidas pela pesquisadora responsável, via e-mail (xxxxxx@gmail.com) e, inclusive, sob forma de ligação a cobrar, através do seguinte contato telefônico: (XX) XXXXX-XXXX. Ao persistirem as dúvidas *sobre os seus direitos* como participante desta pesquisa, você também poderá fazer contato com o **Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa** da Universidade Federal de Goiás, no telefone (62) 3521-1215.

#### 1.1 Informações importantes sobre a pesquisa:

Esta pesquisa, intitulada *Uma experiência de etnografia pós-humanista em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa*, tem o objetivo de investigar os desdobramentos de uma experiência etnográfica pautada pela perspectiva pós-humanista em uma sala de aula de língua inglesa durante um semestre. Os(as) alunos(as) terão a oportunidade de vivenciar novos procedimentos metodológicos durante as aulas. Além disso, a pesquisa configura-se como uma oportunidade de desenvolvimento profissional para a professora do grupo (que é também a pesquisadora deste estudo).

Caso você aceite participar da pesquisa, você responderá a um questionário inicial com as suas informações pessoais (nome, idade, sexo, cor/raça, renda familiar média, grau de escolaridade e/ou universidade onde estuda/estudou e emprego/ocupação). Caso se sinta constrangido(a) e/ou desconfortável, poderá se recusar a responder às questões do questionário.

Todas as aulas do grupo participante da pesquisa serão gravadas em vídeo e áudio, com a utilização de câmeras e gravadores fornecidos pela pesquisadora. Os(as) alunos(as) serão identificados(as) por nomes fictícios e as imagens de seus rostos serão ocultadas para que seja mantido o seu anonimato na pesquisa. A professora-pesquisadora será a única pessoa que terá acesso às gravações em vídeo e em áudio, as quais serão utilizadas para que ela possa refletir sobre as aulas lecionadas durante o semestre. A professora também fará anotações de campo durante a realização das aulas. Em qualquer momento, durante as aulas do semestre, caso sintam-se constrangidos(as) e/ou desconfortáveis pela presença das câmeras e gravadores ou por qualquer outro motivo, os(as) alunos(as) poderão pedir para que não sejam gravados(as).

Ao final, após a implementação de todas as aulas, será realizada uma entrevista individual com cada um(a) dos(as) alunos(as) participantes acerca da experiência de ter

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Faculdade de Letras – Universidade Federal de Goiás  
Campus Samambaia (Campus II) – Av. Esperança, S/N – Chácara Califórnia  
CEP: 74690-900, Goiânia – Goiás, Fone: (55-62) 3521-1160  
E-mail: ppglufg@gmail.com

<sup>107</sup> This was the informed consent form signed by the students above 18 years old. A version of it, with the necessary adjustments, was also signed by the minors' parents or legal guardians.



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vivenciado novos aspectos metodológicos durante as aulas, entrevista que terá como foco as atividades desenvolvidas em sala de aula. As entrevistas serão, também, gravadas em áudio, com a utilização de gravadores fornecidos pela pesquisadora. Caso os(as) participantes se sintam constrangidos(as) e/ou desconfortáveis, poderão se recusar a responder às questões da entrevista.

É importante ressaltar que a primeira aula da professora com seu grupo será reservada para a apresentação da proposta de pesquisa e entrega dos termos de consentimento e assentimento (se for o caso). O(s) termo(s) deverá(ão) ser devolvido(s) na aula seguinte, aula na qual haverá a aplicação do questionário inicial. No último dia de aula serão realizadas as entrevistas individuais.

A pesquisa não oferecerá risco físico ou moral aos(as) participantes. A participação é voluntária e há a possibilidade de desistência em qualquer momento, sem prejuízo ao(à) participante. Para os(as) alunos(as) mais tímidos(as), durante as aulas, pode haver momentos de constrangimento e/ou desconforto, uma vez que haverá a presença de câmeras e gravadores. Além disso, no questionário e na entrevista, precisarão expressar algumas informações pessoais e seus pontos de vista a respeito das aulas dadas.

Como esta é uma pesquisa sem fins lucrativos, não haverá qualquer tipo de remuneração para aqueles(as) que decidirem participar. Não haverá, também, qualquer tipo de ônus caso decidam por tomar parte dela. Como possíveis benefícios, os(as) alunos(as) terão a oportunidade de vivenciar novos procedimentos metodológicos durante as aulas, embasados em teorizações de perspectivas pós-humanistas, em diálogo com a Linguística Aplicada Crítica.

A realização da pesquisa ocorrerá dentro das dependências da escola de idiomas XXX XXX, no segundo semestre de 2019 (de agosto a dezembro), durante o horário das aulas do grupo participante. A participação na pesquisa não é obrigatória e o seu consentimento pode ser retirado a qualquer momento da pesquisa sem qualquer tipo de penalização ou prejuízo caso decida fazê-lo. Há também o direito de pleitear indenização por eventuais danos causados por decorrência da participação na pesquisa.

No início da pesquisa, será pedido aos(as) participantes que escolham nomes fictícios para si, para assegurar que sua identidade seja resguardada. No caso de imagens utilizadas ao longo do estudo, os rostos dos(as) alunos(as) serão ocultados para preservar seu anonimato.

Após o término da redação do texto final desta pesquisa, os dados serão descartados e não poderão ser utilizados em pesquisas futuras.

Esta pesquisa só pode ser realizada com a aprovação do Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa (CEP).

## **1.2 Consentimento da participação da pessoa como sujeito da pesquisa:**

Eu, ....., abaixo assinado, concordo em participar do estudo intitulado “*Uma experiência de etnografia pós-humanista em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa*”. Informo ter mais de 18 anos de idade, e destaco que minha participação nesta pesquisa é de caráter voluntário. Fui, ainda, devidamente informado(a) e esclarecido(a), pela pesquisadora responsável Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa, sobre a pesquisa, os procedimentos e métodos nela envolvidos, assim como os possíveis riscos e benefícios decorrentes de minha participação





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no estudo. Foi-me garantido que posso retirar meu consentimento a qualquer momento, sem que isto leve a qualquer penalidade. Declaro, portanto, que concordo com a minha participação no projeto de pesquisa acima descrito.

Goiânia, ..... de ..... de .....

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Assinatura por extenso do(a) participante

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Assinatura por extenso da pesquisadora responsável

## Appendix D – Informed assent form



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### TERMO DE ASSENTIMENTO LIVRE E ESCLARECIDO - TALE

Você está sendo convidado(a) a participar, como voluntário(a), da pesquisa intitulada “*Uma experiência de etnografia pós-humanista em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa*”, ligada ao projeto “Linguística Aplicada Crítica: Estudos sobre Ensino e Formação de Professoras/es de Língua Estrangeira”, coordenado pela Profa. Dra. Rosane Rocha Pessoa da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade Federal de Goiás. Meu nome é Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa, sou a pesquisadora responsável e a minha área de atuação é a Linguística Aplicada – Ensino e Aprendizagem de Segundas Línguas e Línguas Estrangeiras. Após receber os esclarecimentos e as informações a seguir, se você aceitar fazer parte do estudo, assine ao final deste documento, que está impresso em duas vias, sendo que uma delas é sua e a outra pertence à pesquisadora responsável. Esclareço que em caso de recusa na participação, você não será penalizado(a) de forma alguma. Mas, se aceitar participar, as dúvidas *sobre a pesquisa* poderão ser esclarecidas pela pesquisadora responsável, via e-mail (xxxxxx@gmail.com) e, inclusive, sob forma de ligação a cobrar, através do seguinte contato telefônico: (XX) XXXXX-XXXX. Ao persistirem as dúvidas *sobre os seus direitos* como participante desta pesquisa, você também poderá fazer contato com o **Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa** da Universidade Federal de Goiás, no telefone (62) 3521-1215.

#### 1.1 Informações importantes sobre a pesquisa:

Esta pesquisa, intitulada *Uma experiência de etnografia pós-humanista em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa*, tem o objetivo de investigar os desdobramentos de uma experiência etnográfica pautada pela perspectiva pós-humanista em uma sala de aula de língua inglesa durante um semestre. Os(as) alunos(as) terão a oportunidade de vivenciar novos procedimentos metodológicos durante as aulas. Além disso, a pesquisa configura-se como uma oportunidade de desenvolvimento profissional para a professora do grupo (que é também a pesquisadora deste estudo).

Caso você aceite participar da pesquisa, você responderá a um questionário inicial com as suas informações pessoais (nome, idade, sexo, cor/raça, renda familiar média, grau de escolaridade e/ou universidade onde estuda/estudou e emprego/ocupação). Caso se sinta constrangido(a) e/ou desconfortável, poderá se recusar a responder às questões do questionário.

Todas as aulas do grupo participante da pesquisa serão gravadas em vídeo e áudio, com a utilização de câmeras e gravadores fornecidos pela pesquisadora. Os(as) alunos(as) serão identificados(as) por nomes fictícios e as imagens de seus rostos serão ocultadas para que seja mantido o seu anonimato na pesquisa. A professora-pesquisadora será a única pessoa que terá acesso às gravações em vídeo e em áudio, as quais serão utilizadas para que ela possa refletir sobre as aulas lecionadas durante o semestre. A professora também fará anotações de campo durante a realização das aulas. Em qualquer momento, durante as aulas do semestre, caso sintam-se constrangidos(as) e/ou desconfortáveis pela presença das câmeras e gravadores ou por qualquer outro motivo, os(as) alunos(as) poderão pedir para que não sejam gravados(as).

Ao final, após a implementação de todas as aulas, será realizada uma entrevista individual com cada um(a) dos(as) alunos(as) participantes acerca da experiência de ter





vivenciado novos aspectos metodológicos durante as aulas, entrevista que terá como foco as atividades desenvolvidas em sala de aula. As entrevistas serão, também, gravadas em áudio, com a utilização de gravadores fornecidos pela pesquisadora. Caso os(as) participantes se sintam constrangidos(as) e/ou desconfortáveis, poderão se recusar a responder às questões da entrevista.

É importante ressaltar que a primeira aula da professora com seu grupo será reservada para a apresentação da proposta de pesquisa e entrega dos termos de consentimento e assentimento (se for o caso). O(s) termo(s) deverá(ão) ser devolvido(s) na aula seguinte, aula na qual haverá a aplicação do questionário inicial. No último dia de aula serão realizadas as entrevistas individuais.

A pesquisa não oferecerá risco físico ou moral aos(as) participantes. A participação é voluntária e há a possibilidade de desistência em qualquer momento, sem prejuízo ao(à) participante. Para os(as) alunos(as) mais tímidos(as), durante as aulas, pode haver momentos de constrangimento e/ou desconforto, uma vez que haverá a presença de câmeras e gravadores. Além disso, no questionário e na entrevista, precisarão expressar algumas informações pessoais e seus pontos de vista a respeito das aulas dadas.

Como esta é uma pesquisa sem fins lucrativos, não haverá qualquer tipo de remuneração para aqueles(as) que decidirem participar. Não haverá, também, qualquer tipo de ônus caso decidam por tomar parte dela. Como possíveis benefícios, os(as) alunos(as) terão a oportunidade de vivenciar novos procedimentos metodológicos durante as aulas, embasados em teorizações de perspectivas pós-humanistas, em diálogo com a Linguística Aplicada Crítica.

A realização da pesquisa ocorrerá dentro das dependências da escola de idiomas XXX XXX, no segundo semestre de 2019 (de agosto a dezembro), durante o horário das aulas do grupo participante. A participação na pesquisa não é obrigatória e o seu consentimento pode ser retirado a qualquer momento da pesquisa sem qualquer tipo de penalização ou prejuízo caso decida fazê-lo. Há também o direito de pleitear indenização por eventuais danos causados por decorrência da participação na pesquisa.

No início da pesquisa, será pedido aos(as) participantes que escolham nomes fictícios para si, para assegurar que sua identidade seja resguardada. No caso de imagens utilizadas ao longo do estudo, os rostos dos(as) alunos(as) serão ocultados para preservar seu anonimato.

Após o término da redação do texto final desta pesquisa, os dados serão descartados e não poderão ser utilizados em pesquisas futuras.

Esta pesquisa só pode ser realizada com a aprovação do Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa (CEP).

## 1.2 Consentimento da participação da pessoa como sujeito da pesquisa:

Eu, ....., abaixo assinado, concordo em participar do estudo intitulado “*Uma experiência de etnografia pós-humanista em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa*”. Informo ter menos de 18 anos de idade, e destaco que minha participação nesta pesquisa é de caráter voluntário. Fui, ainda, devidamente informado(a) e esclarecido(a), pela pesquisadora responsável Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa, sobre a pesquisa, os procedimentos e métodos nela envolvidos, assim como os possíveis riscos e benefícios decorrentes de minha participação



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no estudo. Foi-me garantido que posso retirar meu consentimento a qualquer momento, sem que isto leve a qualquer penalidade. Declaro, portanto, que concordo com a minha participação no projeto de pesquisa acima descrito.

Goiânia, ..... de ..... de .....




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Assinatura por extenso do(a) participante

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Assinatura por extenso da pesquisadora responsável

## Appendix E – Initial questionnaire

	 <b>MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO</b> <b>UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE GOIÁS</b> <b>FACULDADE DE LETRAS</b>  <b>Uma experiência de etnografia pós-humanista em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa</b>	
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### Initial Questionnaire

Goiânia, \_\_\_\_\_, 2019.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Average household income: \_\_\_\_\_ (minimum wages)

Level of education: \_\_\_\_\_

School where you studied/study: \_\_\_\_\_

Job: \_\_\_\_\_

1) What do you think of the English classes you have had in this school?

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2) What did you like most in the classes?

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3) What is the importance of English in your life?

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4) What kind of topics do you like to discuss in class?

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5) How is your relationship with technology? (How do you feel about it and how do you deal with it?)

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## Appendix F – Language Learning Project

### GUIDELINES FOR THE LANGUAGE LEARNING PROJECT

1. Choose an area of difficulty in your language skills (listening, speaking, reading, or writing) and another aspect (grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation), which you intend to improve.
2. Read some texts about it (at least two authors') and find out how you can improve the skill and aspect chosen.
3. Choose one or more strategies to put into practice and plan how to do it. Write a chart like the following (e.g. project about speaking and vocabulary) to organize what you do and to facilitate your analysis.

Date	Time	Descriptive notes	Reflective notes
Mar., 15 <sup>th</sup>	01:00 p.m. – 02:00 p.m.	My classmate and I described a picture (a meeting of Brazilian politicians) and then we talked about Brazilian politics.	It was easy to describe the picture, but we had some problems with some vocabulary related to politics: <i>mensalão</i> (monthly payments for votes), <i>sanguessugas</i> (ambulance purchase kickbacks), caixa 2 (slush fund), reivindicar (claim), etc.

4. Put your strategy/strategies into practice for about 12 hours.
5. Analyze the results and draw some conclusions about them.
6. Write a paper (**Times New Roman 12 and spacing 1,5**) describing all the steps of the project (about 6 pages). The title should reflect the general idea of your project. Your paper should have the following 5 sections:

#### Introduction (1 page)

1. What is your difficulty? Why?
2. What is this skill? (Definition based on the theory read.)
3. What do you expect from doing this project?
4. How is your paper divided?

#### Theoretical background (1 page)

1. What do the authors claim about the topic? You can quote (if you do, you have to write the name of the author, the year, and the page). If you paraphrase, you just need the author and the year. Be careful with plagiarism (it is not allowed).
2. How does it relate to your own experience?
3. Which strategies do the authors suggest?
4. What is your conclusion about everything you read?

#### Methodology (1 or 2 pages)




1. What strategy/strategies did you use?
2. How did you put them into practice? (Describe everything you did.)
3. Write a chart to explain what you did, with date, time, descriptive notes, and reflective notes.

#### Discussion and final thoughts (1 page)

1. What were the results? Were they good or bad?
2. Have you improved? How?
3. If you have not improved, why not?
4. What was the experience like? Was it good or bad?
5. Give your opinion about each stage: writing the introduction, reading the texts, writing about them, putting the strategies into practice, analyzing the results, and writing the paper.

#### References (1 page)

## Appendix G – Intraview

	 <p><b>MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO</b> <b>UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE GOIÁS</b> <b>FACULDADE DE LETRAS</b></p> <p><b>Uma experiência de etnografia pós-humanista em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa</b></p>	
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### Intravista

01. Qual sua opinião sobre o uso dos recursos extraclasse, como o grupo de WhatsApp e o Google Drive? Como você os utilizou? Qual a influência deles no seu processo de aprendizagem?

02. O que você achou de aprender o Phonemic Chart (estudar os sons da língua inglesa)?

03. Dê sua opinião sobre os seguintes temas discutidos em sala:

- a. Plato's Allegory of the Cave
- b. Kakenya Ntaiya: A girl who demanded school
- c. "A call to men", by Tony Porter
- d. Everybody's free to wear sunscreen
- e. Validation
- f. Questions of identity

04. O que você achou da proposta do Language Learning Project (LLP)? O que ele significou para você?

05. Como foram as interações do grupo ao longo do semestre? Como você se sentiu em relação às/aos colegas?

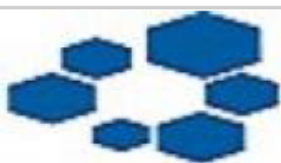
06. O que você acha e como se sente em relação à estrutura física de nosso contexto escolar e em relação à forma que organizamos a sala de aula?

07. De modo geral, qual a sua opinião sobre as aulas que tivemos nesse semestre?

## **Annexes**



**Annex A** – Scientific review issued by the Institutional Review Board  
of the Federal University of Goiás



UFG - UNIVERSIDADE  
FEDERAL DE GOIÁS



**PARECER CONSUBSTANCIADO DO CEP**

**DADOS DA EMENDA**

**Título da Pesquisa:** Uma experiência de etnografia pós-humanista em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa

**Pesquisador:** Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa

**Área Temática:**

**Versão:** 2

**CAAE:** 99588718.8.0000.5083

**Instituição Proponente:** Faculdade de Letras

**Patrocinador Principal:** Financiamento Próprio

**DADOS DO PARECER**

**Número do Parecer:** 3.383.404

**Apresentação do Projeto:**

O pedido de emenda dá-se pelo fato de que a pesquisa não será mais feita com um grupo de professores de uma escola de idiomas, mas sim pela própria pesquisadora que será professora de uma turma da instituição, bem como pelo fato de que a pesquisa de agosto a dezembro de 2019, ou seja, durante o período de um semestre.

**Objetivo da Pesquisa:**

Os objetivos específicos da pesquisa não serão alterados, exceto pela questão de que, ao invés de “investigar e problematizar a realização de uma experiência de formação docente colaborativa, pautada por perspectivas do Pós-humanismo, em diálogo com a Linguística Aplicada Crítica, no contexto de uma escola de idiomas”, como previsto anteriormente, a pesquisadora irá investigar e problematizar a realização de uma experiência de etnografia, pautada por perspectivas do Pós-humanismo, em diálogo com a Linguística Aplicada Crítica, no contexto de uma escola de idiomas. Desse modo, a professora-pesquisadora enfocará sua própria prática, a partir de uma experiência com um grupo de alunos. O segundo objetivo específico será mantido da forma que foi enviado ao CEP na primeira versão: “investigar, avaliar e discutir as potencialidades, as limitações e os desafios da implementação da educação linguística de inglês fundamentada pela perspectiva pós-humanista no contexto em questão”.

**Endereço:** Pró-Reitoria de Pesquisa e Inovação - Agência UFG de Inovação, Alameda Flamboyant, Qd. K, Edifício K2  
**Bairro:** Campus Samambaia, UFG **CEP:** 74.690-970  
**UF:** GO **Município:** GOIANIA  
**Telefone:** (62)3521-1215 **Fax:** (62)3521-1163 **E-mail:** cep.prpi.ufg@gmail.com



Continuação do Parecer: 3.383.404

#### **Avaliação dos Riscos e Benefícios:**

A pesquisadora mantém que "a pesquisa não oferecerá risco físico ou moral aos participantes. A participação é voluntária e há a possibilidade de desistência em qualquer momento, sem prejuízo ao participante". Porém, segundo a pesquisadora, para os alunos mais tímidos, durante a aplicação do questionário, as gravações das aulas e a realização da entrevista, podem haver momentos de constrangimento e/ou desconforto, uma vez que haverá a presença de câmeras e gravadores e precisarão expor algumas informações pessoais e suas opiniões sobre as aulas. No entanto, os estudantes poderão se recusar a responder o questionário e/ou a entrevista a qualquer momento, pedir a retirada das câmeras e dos gravadores, bem como se retirar do estudo, sem qualquer tipo de penalização ou prejuízo. "Como esta é uma pesquisa sem fins lucrativos, não haverá qualquer tipo de remuneração para aqueles que decidirem participar. Tampouco haverá qualquer tipo de ônus caso decidam por tomar parte dela". Como possíveis benefícios, a pesquisadora afirma que os alunos/participantes terão a oportunidade de vivenciar novos procedimentos metodológicos durante as aulas, embasados em teorizações de perspectivas pós-humanistas, em diálogo com a Linguística Aplicada Crítica. O conteúdo programático das aulas da escola não será alterado. A professora-pesquisadora apenas poderá abordá-los de formas diferentes, com o auxílio de tecnologias disponíveis na própria instituição. Além disso, a pesquisa configura-se como uma oportunidade de desenvolvimento profissional para a professora do grupo (que é a pesquisadora deste estudo).

#### **Comentários e Considerações sobre a Pesquisa:**

Saliento que todas as demais informações contidas no projeto detalhado enviado ao Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa da UFG e já aprovado anteriormente continuam em vigência, com exceção da data da coleta de dados, que se estenderia de janeiro a dezembro de 2019 e que, com as mudanças mencionadas, agora deverá ocorrer entre os meses de agosto a dezembro de 2019.

Todos os documentos foram novamente anexados nesta emenda com o novo título e novas informações sobre a pesquisa, a saber: folha de rosto, projeto detalhado, TCLE para maiores de 18 anos, TCLE para os pais ou responsáveis pelos menores de 18 anos, TALE para os menores de 18 anos, termo de anuência da instituição coparticipante e termo de compromisso das pesquisadoras.

#### **Considerações sobre os Termos de apresentação obrigatória:**

Como os participantes não serão mais os professores, mas sim os alunos de uma das turmas da instituição, a pesquisadora encaminhou o novo Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido (TCLE), para os maiores de 18 anos, o Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido (TCLE), para os

Endereço: Pró-Reitoria de Pesquisa e Inovação - Agência UFG de Inovação, Alameda Flamboyant, Qd. K, Edifício K2		
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UF: GO	Município: GOIANIA	
Telefone: (62)3521-1215	Fax: (62)3521-1163	E-mail: cep.prpi.ufg@gmail.com





Continuação do Parecer: 3.383.404

pais ou responsáveis pelos alunos menores, e o Termo de Assentimento Livre e Esclarecido (TALE), para os alunos menores de 18 anos (caso tenha algum aluno menor de idade na turma na qual a investigação será realizada). A pesquisadora salienta que a turma da escola que será escolhida pelo coordenador não terá crianças (alunos com idade inferior a 14 anos), mas sim apenas adolescentes (caso haja algum).

#### **Conclusões ou Pendências e Lista de Inadequações:**

Com base nas alterações do tipo de pesquisa, o título do estudo necessariamente precisou ser alterado. Por conseguinte, ao invés de "Formação docente pós-humanista: desconstruções e reconstruções do processo ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa", o novo título da pesquisa é " Uma experiência de etnografia pós-humanista em um contexto de ensino-aprendizagem de língua inglesa". Consideramos assim, essa solicitação de emenda APROVADA, s.m.j. deste Comitê.

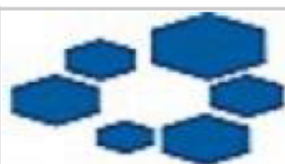
#### **Considerações Finais a critério do CEP:**

Informamos que o Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa/CEP-UFG considera o presente protocolo APROVADO, o mesmo foi considerado em acordo com os princípios éticos vigentes. Reiteramos a importância deste Parecer Consubstanciado, e lembramos que o(a) pesquisador(a) responsável deverá encaminhar ao CEP-UFG o Relatório Final baseado na conclusão do estudo e na incidência de publicações decorrentes deste, de acordo com o disposto na Resolução CNS n. 466/12. O prazo para entrega do Relatório é de até 30 dias após o encerramento da pesquisa, prevista para março de 2022.

#### **Este parecer foi elaborado baseado nos documentos abaixo relacionados:**

Tipo Documento	Arquivo	Postagem	Autor	Situação
Informações Básicas do Projeto	PB_INFORMAÇÕES_BÁSICAS_1349327_É1.pdf	07/05/2019 13:08:21		Aceito
TCLE / Termos de Assentimento / Justificativa de Ausência	TALE_Doutorado_Humanas_Para_aos_alunos_menores_de_idade.doc	07/05/2019 13:07:04	Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa	Aceito
TCLE / Termos de Assentimento / Justificativa de Ausência	TCLE_Doutorado_Humanas_Para_os_pais_ou_responsaveis_pelos_alunos.doc	07/05/2019 13:06:54	Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa	Aceito
TCLE / Termos de Assentimento / Justificativa de Ausência	TCLE_Doutorado_Humanas_Para_aos_alunos_maiores_de_idade.doc	07/05/2019 13:06:40	Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa	Aceito

Endereço: Pró-Reitoria de Pesquisa e Inovação - Agência UFG de Inovação, Alameda Flamboyant, Qd. K, Edifício K2  
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Continuação do Parecer: 3.383.404

Outros	Emenda_Mudancas_na_Pesquisa.docx	04/05/2019 23:47:52	Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa	Aceito
Outros	Termo_de_Compromisso_das_Pesquisas EMENDA.pdf	04/05/2019 23:47:16	Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa	Aceito
Outros	Termo_de_Anuencia_EMENDA.pdf	04/05/2019 23:46:55	Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa	Aceito
Projeto Detalhado / Brochura Investigador	Projeto_de_doutorado_detalhado_Laryssa EMENDA.docx	04/05/2019 23:45:16	Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa	Aceito
Folha de Rosto	Folha_de_rosto_EMENDA.pdf	04/05/2019 23:44:40	Laryssa Paulino de Queiroz Sousa	Aceito

**Situação do Parecer:**

Aprovado

**Necessita Apreciação da CONEP:**

Não

GOIANIA, 11 de Junho de 2019

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Assinado por:  
Geisa Mozzer  
(Coordenador(a))

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