Thematic Dossier

Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada
ISSN: 1984-6398
v. 23, n. 1, 2023, e21944
"Translanguaging and Language Policy in the Global South"
https://doi.org/10.1590/1984-6398202321944

Opportunities for and challenges to a translingual approach to ELT in Brazil

Oportunidades e desafios para uma abordagem translíngue no ensino de língua inglesa no Brasil

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ABSTRACT: In this article we reflect upon the opportunities for and challenges to the implementation of a translingual approach in three different ELT contexts in Brazil, based on three autoethnographic accounts. The first account was written by an English teacher in early childhood bilingual education; the second, by an undergraduate English language and literature student and English teacher working in a private language school; the third, by a university professor in an English language and literature undergraduate course. In spite of their differences in terms of target audience, available resources for meaning production and ecological features in general, there seems to be a monolingual orientation pervading the three contexts. Despite the many challenges posed by this monolingual bias, which reflects the coloniality of power (MIGNOLO, 2000) and linguistic imperialism (PHILLIPSON, 1993, 2009), the three authors believe in the importance of creating translingual spaces (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014) where students can negotiate their linguistic and cultural differences. This belief is grounded in the fact that in each context opportunities for translingual practices could be found and created.

KEYWORDS: ELT[1]; monolingual bias; coloniality of power; translanguaging; meaning-making.

RESUMO: Neste artigo refletimos sobre as oportunidades e desafios para a implementação de uma abordagem translíngue em três contextos diferentes de ensino de língua inglesa no Brasil, a partir de três relatos autoetnográficos. O primeiro relato foi escrito por uma professora de inglês na educação infantil bilíngue;

[1] ELT stands for English Language Teaching.

o segundo, por um aluno de graduação em Letras e professor de inglês trabalhando em uma escola de línguas; o terceiro, por um professor universitário em uma faculdade de Letras – Inglês. Apesar de suas diferenças em termos de público-alvo, recursos disponíveis para construção de sentidos e características ecológicas em geral, parece haver uma orientação monolíngue permeando os três contextos. Apesar dos desafios causados por essa orientação monolíngue, que reflete a colonialidade do poder (MIGNOLO, 2000) e o imperialismo linguístico (PHILLIPSON, 1993, 2009), os três autores acreditam na importância da criação de espaços translíngues (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014), onde alunos(as) podem negociar diferenças culturais e linguísticas. Essa crença se baseia no fato de que, em cada contexto, oportunidades para práticas translíngues podem ser encontradas e criadas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: ensino de língua inglesa; orientação monolíngue; colonialidade do poder; translinguajar; produção de sentidos.

A language is never closed upon itself, except as a function of impotence.
(Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 2003, p. 8)

There is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity.
(Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 2003, p. 7)

1 Introduction

Of all socially named or so-called national languages, English is, arguably, the most widely spoken, heard, sung, written, studied, disputed – in short, *languaged* – the learning of which has merited a great number of studies in Applied Linguistics over the last decades. While some of these studies conceptualize English as an international or foreign language, others posit the existence of World English(es), or English as a lingua franca. However, these forms of conceptualizing the language do not accurately capture the way English functions in multilingual contact situations nowadays, as Canagarajah (2013) notes (see also GARCÍA; WEI, 2014; PENNYCOOK, 2007; RAJAGOPALAN, 2010). Instead, he proposes that we conceive of English as translingual practices whereby speakers can deploy all their meaning-making resources to communicate, adapting them to particular contexts. These meaning-making resources can be seen as "arising from common underlying human competence" (CANAGARAJAH, 2013, p. 17). Hence the idea that human beings are naturally translingual, employing different resources, among which national languages, in diverse ways and modalities, to produce meanings. Likewise, García and Wei (2014, p. 40) conceive of translanguaging as "a meaning-making social and cognitive activity that works in-between conventional

meaning-making practices and disciplines and goes beyond them, for it emerges from the contextual affordances in the complex interactions of multilinguals".

In this article we acknowledge translanguaging as a notable theoretical advance, especially for its strong opposition to what Canagarajah (2013, p. 26) and others (e.g., GARCÍA; WEI, 2014; PHILLIPSON,1993; 2009) have termed a "monolingual orientation" or "monolingual bias". This orientation "seemed to promise efficiency, control, and transparency, features valued by the Enlightenment", while seeking to forestall language mixture and to construe languages as discrete, stable and homogeneous. Although this monolingual ideology may seem to be quaintly anachronistic in our present times of communication mediated by digital technologies and neoliberal globalization, it is still influential in many areas of our lives, not least education, and ELT in particular. In his seminal books on linguistic imperialism, Phillipson (1993, 2009) identifies the monolingual orientation as one of the main tenets of linguistic imperialism, which he asserts has always been profit-oriented, representing the "monopoly stage of capitalism" (PHILLIPSON, 1993, p. 45). In the case of English, its power "as a symbolic system in the global linguistic market is such that its legitimacy tends to be uncritically accepted" (PHILLIPSON, 2009, p. 118). Given the central role of English in the maintenance of global inequalities and injustices – which Mignolo (2000) places at the core of the coloniality of power and knowledge – Phillipson takes a critical stance towards what he terms "professionalism"[2], in that it "excludes broader societal issues, the prerequisites and consequences of ELT activity, from its professional purview" (PHILLIPSON, 1993, p. 48). Against this exclusion, the author proposes that ELT praxis and research relate "the micro level of ELT professionalism to the macro level of global inequality" (PHILLIPSON, 1993, p. 1). This article is an attempt to investigate this relationship between the micro – or *molecular*, as Deleuze and Guattari (2003) would call it – level of "professionalism", and the macro or *molar* level of language policies and social institutions. In addition, this paper acknowledges translanguaging's potential to oppose the monolingual bias associated with the social, cultural, linguistic and political inequalities produced and maintained by linguistic imperialism and the neoliberal coloniality of power.

This monolingual bias has had a considerable influence on ELT practices in different educational contexts in Brazil, as the three autoethnographic accounts below suggest. These accounts were written by three English teachers and researchers belonging to a research group, presently interested in investigating the theoretical and methodological contributions of translanguaging studies to their praxis and research. Also, the group has long drawn on critical literacy and decoloniality theories, which can cast light on the relationship between ELT and broader issues, such as the consequences of the monolingual bias, and its connections with the coloniality of power/knowledge, linguistic imperialism, and neoliberal practices, or under what circumstances linguistic creativity and agency can come into being. In this sense, this paper is a reminder that the notion that "English is an essential cornerstone of the global capitalist system" (PHILLIPSON, 1993, p. 10) still merits careful attention and investigation[3].

[2] According to Phillipson (1993, p. 48), "professionalism refers to seeing methods, techniques and procedures followed in ELT, including the theories of language teaching and learning adhered to, as sufficient for understanding and analysing language learning".

[3] While Canagarajah (1999, p. 3) recognizes the accuracy of Phillipson's depiction of English as an imperialist tool, he argues that owing to its "overly global approach" the book fails to capture "the subtle forms of resistance to English and the productive processes of appropriation inspired by local needs".

The three autoethnographic accounts that comprise the article are related to the co-authors' individual research projects, all of which are in their initial stages of data collection or analysis. This explains why this paper, written as an autoethnographic case study, may appear to lack an overall strong analytical frame, reading as a descriptive rather than an analytical polemic on translanguaging's potential to push for new understandings of language and culture. One possible contribution of this article in its present form to translanguaging theories is to reflect upon the opportunities for and challenges to a translingual approach in three different ELT Brazilian contexts, bearing in mind the need to relate the micro or molecular to the macro or molar levels of ELT; or, in other words, "to dig down to the underlying structures which support (or counteract) individual efforts" (PHILLIPSON, 1993, p. 46).

At this point it is important to justify the use of autoethnography. As a qualitative method, autoethnography allows researchers to scrutinize the object of study from within, or "from the perspective of the insider" (CAROSO, 2019, p. 8). It "acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist" (ELLIS; ADAMS; BOCHNER, 2010, p. 2)". In other words, researchers conduct research into their own actions in relation to others. This could raise a number of concerns about the limitation of this method, especially in terms of the objectivity and reliability of the research. However, as Heath, Street and Mills (2008) argue, the reliability of ethnographic, among other qualitative methods, hinges upon the researcher's awareness of their accountability for their own research to their peers, target readers and society at large. For Adams (2017), autoethnography "allows us to do compassionate and consequential research as well as try to live reflective, meaningful, and socially just lives" (p. 65). The resulting knowledge becomes self-knowledge, that is, the beliefs, assumptions and judgements that help explain how culture functions. In the case of our research on translanguaging, autoethnography seemed to be the right methodological choice when we began writing our notes and diaries. Intent on examining opportunities for the creation of translingual spaces in our ELT praxis as well as the challenges to it, and reflecting on how these relate to broader social, political and cultural issues, we agree with Adams (2017, p. 65) that autoethnography – critical autoethnography in particular – can not only "provide insights into the lives of a particular group" – in our case, for example, insights into the ways in which some materials or practices reflect monolingual conceptions of language, as Rabbidge (2019) implies – but also "offer ways to improve the lives of group members" (2017, p. 65), by examining and or conceptualizing ELT "professionalism" anew, in ways that do not reinforce linguistic imperialism and the coloniality of power.

The first account was written by an English teacher in early childhood education. It highlights the fact that children are naturally translinguals, using gestures and movements, or mixing languages, as meaning-making resources. The second account was written by an undergraduate English language and literature student and English teacher working in a language school. It points to the prevalence of monolingual conceptions of language and learning embedded in "English-only" classrooms, and its constraints on teaching and learning. The prevalence of a monolingual orientation to ELT in Brazilian language schools also appears in the third account, written by an English teacher teaching undergraduate classes in tertiary education in Brazil. At the end of the article we discuss how the monolingual bias is interwoven with the neoliberal coloniality of power and linguistic imperialism, making a case for the importance of translingual practices whereby students can negotiate their linguistic and cultural differences, and engage in multiple meaning-making practices that could foster agency, criticality and creativity.

2 "Teacher, look my *perny*!"[4]

I have been teaching English in bilingual nursery schools (NS)[5] for six years, constantly interacting with 2 to 7-year-old children. Still, it never ceases to amaze me that children from their first English lessons try to speak in the language they listen to. This led me to do a Master's degree research about translingualism, focusing precisely on the meaning-making resources deployed by very young children; in other words, how do children do translanguaging?

My students can neither read nor write, since they are very young. As a result, our English classes focus on listening and speaking skills. I have noticed that one of the resources used by children in order to make meanings, both in their additional language[6] and home language[7], are gestures. When children communicate, they use gestures, point, etc., to demonstrate what they are saying, corroborating Canagarajah's (2013, p. 40) assertion that we "can combine clues such as gestures, objects, setting, topic, and other features to help in intelligibility and communicative success". In fact, touch, movement and gestures are so important for children's development, helping them to perceive the world surrounding them and to appropriate knowledge, that they are part of an official policy document in Brazilian education called Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC). According to this document,

> With the body (*through the senses, gestures, impulsive or intentional, coordinated or spontaneous movements*), children, from an early age, explore the world, space and objects around them, establish relationships, express themselves, play and produce knowledge about oneself, about the other, about the social and cultural universe, progressively becoming aware of this corporeality. (BRASIL, 2018, p. 41 – translation and emphasis mine).[8]

When teaching a child new words, for example, "stand up" and "sit down", the teacher's explanation cannot be only verbal, but rather requires body language to demonstrate their meaning. In addition, children learn by doing, not just listening, as well as by emulating adults. Indeed, children are constantly mimicking the universe surrounding them, so much so that Moura and Ribas (2002) conceive of mimicking as a significant resource in the development of socialization, language, and cognition. Therefore, gestures can be considered as one of the resources that constitute translingualism, as they support meaning-making. According

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4 This neologism, coined by a nursery school student, will be explained below.

5 In Brazil nursery schools focus on learning, just as kindergartens do. Thus, they are not only a place where children stay while their parents work. Nursery schoolteachers must be graduated in pedagogy and develop activities prescribed by an official policy document called BNCC, in order to promote psychomotor, cognitive and affective development.

6 Additional language refers to a language learnt in a bilingual school that is not the language learnt at home. See García and Wei (2014).

7 Home language is the language children learnt at home with their parents. See García and Wei (2014).

8 Com o corpo (por meio dos sentidos, gestos, movimentos impulsivos ou intencionais, coordenados ou espontâneos), as crianças, desde cedo, exploram o mundo, o espaço e os objetos do seu entorno, estabelecem relações, expressam-se, brincam e produzem conhecimentos sobre si, sobre o outro, sobre o universo social e cultural, tornando-se, progressivamente, conscientes dessa corporeidade. (BRASIL, 2018, p. 41).

to García and Wei (2014, p. 85), "translanguaging always included linguistic signs from their growing repertoire, accompanied by gestures, pointing, physical imitations, noises, drawings, and onomatopoeic words.".

Body language, thereby, encompasses a broad range of meaning-making resources that accompany speech, frequently and naturally used by children. To illustrate this point, I recall an experience in NS, with a group of children between 4 and 5 years old. The class was close to the end when a child asked me: "teacher, time for yummy-yummy?". I frowned, unable to understand the question, and replied: "what do you mean?". The child repeated the sentence; this time, however, I paid close attention to her gestures. When saying "yummy-yummy", she opened and closed her hands near her mouth. I presumed that she was referring to food because she was hungry, so I explained to her that in five minutes they could have their snack.

For my Master's research[9] on children's translingual practices during online lessons I interviewed a NS's teacher about gestures, how she perceived them and their role in meaning-making. Below are extracts from the interview, which I translated into English:

> Me: Do you use other resources such as images, gestures, body expressions to help you understand and use the English language? And what resources do you use the most? Images, gestures, body expressions, figures, drawings?
> Teacher: In a face-to-face class, body expressions are more often used. In the remote classes, there were many images, videos...
> Me: And children, do they use them too? What kind of resources do they use to communicate? Could you share your experiences?
> Teacher: Yes! Once a little boy said "teacher, I am angry" (rubbing his belly). I repeated: "angry?" (making an angry face). He replied "no, angry" (rubbing his belly again). I said: "Ah, 'hungry'". Very often children say "teacher, can I go drink water?", gesturing a glass with their hands and taking it to their mouths...
> Me: And do you believe that communication transcends words? For you, how do we make meanings?
> Teacher: We produce meanings... wow... let me think... I think that the word by itself speaks a lot, but when accompanied by non-verbal communication, it is of great magnitude. It adds more meaning... So, for example... If I am teaching the child "open your book" and I just say, "open your book", okay, the word makes sense... The word is there, "open", "open" ... But if I gesture opening a book... I certify her about that, if I gesture other things opening, not just the book, I... I am bringing... I am communicating more on the same matter... I think... we... we can use it... We have the cognitive ability to explore all the senses in order to teach something... especially children.

When asked whether communication transcends words, the teacher I interviewed answered that non-verbal communication allows for more effective communication. She exemplifies her point with the gestures for "open your book", which she argues can ensure intelligibility. All in all, she strongly believes NSs teachers must deploy a number of resources other than words when teaching, mainly children. In her view, gestures are crucial for intelligibility, for example, when the student replied "angry" instead of "hungry". Had she not put her hands on her stomach, signalling that she was hungry, the teacher could have misunderstood her. This illustrates what Canagarajah (2013, p. 14) states: "communication involves more than words. In many cases, speakers use the context, gestures, and objects in the setting to interpret the interlocutor's utter-

[9] I was authorized to carry out my research by the Ethics Research Committee of the university where I am doing my Master's research, at Universidade Federal de Uberlândia. The process number is 52597721.3.0000.5152.

ances.". In the case of young children in NSs, gestures are even more important than words, whose referents – especially those related to abstract thinking – cannot be apprehended before the age of 11.

According to Piaget (*apud* MANURI, 2010), there are four stages of children's development: 1 - sensorimotor (from 0 to 2 years); 2 - preoperational (from 2 to 7 years); 3 - concrete operational (from 7 to 12 years old), and 4 - formal operational (from 12 years old onwards). My students are in the preoperational stage, therefore unable to formulate complex concepts. Yet Piaget considers this as the first stage of thinking because, besides manipulating objects, children are able to weave thoughts about them (MANURI, 2010); nevertheless, they still engage in the symbolic universe. Consequently, classes in NSs are expected to allow children to "explore the world, space and objects around them, establish relationships, express themselves, play and produce knowledge about oneself, about the other, about the social and cultural universe", as mentioned above (BRASIL, 2018, p. 25 – translation mine), based on the premise that they appropriate knowledge and language by doing (MATURANA; VARELA *apud* GARCÍA; WEI, 2014, p. 11).

When I started teaching in a NS, I was initially an auxiliary teacher, working with a lead teacher. It was a group of 4-year-old children and the lead teacher followed a traditionalist monolingual orientation. She spoke with the students only in English from the beginning to the end of the 4-hour class and did not accept them using their home language in the classroom. This seemed to put a great strain on the students, who were afraid to speak and simply responded to the teacher's questions and instructions.

In the following year I started teaching my own group as a lead teacher, eager to use a different approach. This group comprised 3-year-old children. I did not want them to be afraid of me, or of expressing themselves. Although I did not know about translingualism at the time – as I had not heard of it in college – I decided to value their subjectivity, allowing them to use the language they felt more comfortable with, and to mix the languages whenever they needed to. In the end they were speaking more English than this traditionalist monolingual teacher's class. My students were younger but had no fear of expressing themselves using both languages. As a result, they constructed more meanings using the English language. Since then, I have been adopting a similar approach.

One of my NS groups – children aged 4 and 5 – was particularly enthusiastic about learning English, trying to speak the language whenever possible. They repeatedly employed words they knew in English and mixed them with their home language (mainly Portuguese), as well as utilizing gestures. One day, a student in this group said: "*teacher*, eu estava andando de *bike* na casa do *daddy*, e eu caí, *look my* '*perny*'"[10] (*sic*). Not only did the student tell me what had happened, using words she knew in the English language, but she also pointed to the bruise on her leg. Despite the fact she used a word that does not belong to English, we could all understand what she said. In Portuguese, "leg" means "perna". So, the student *translanguaged* by adding "y" to the end of the Portuguese word, based on her knowledge of English words ending with this suffix. This is an example of children creating "translanguaging spaces" where they can draw on their creativity so naturally that they do not even notice it. Hence translanguaging's potential for creativity and for criticality as well:

> A translanguaging space acts as a Thirdspace which does not merely encompass a mixture or hybridity of first and second languages; instead, it invigorates languaging with new possibilities from a site of 'creativity and power' ... Going beyond language refers to trans-

[10] "Teacher, I was riding my bike at daddy's house, and I fell off, look at my 'perny' (sic)."

> forming the present, to intervening by reinscribing our human, historical commonality in the act of languaging. (hooks, 1990, p. 152 *apud* GARCIA; WEI, 2014, p. 25).

The fact that translanguaging creates a "Thirdspace" in which students can come up with words like "perny", exercising their creativity in meaning-making – and hence their agency – leads García and Wei (2014) to draw a distinction between translanguaging and code-switching. The latter means alternating between languages, not necessarily using all of one's meaning-making resources. For example, I work in an "English all the way" school, where we must use the English language whenever possible to provide students with a huge amount of input. However, I switch from English to Portuguese when something unusual happens[11]. Although my lessons are supposed to be "English all the way", I occasionally switch to Portuguese, especially when situations get out of hand.

On the other hand, translanguaging endorses all forms of communication, taking account of the learners' engagement in a wide range of discursive practices that comprise their "complete language repertoire" (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014, p. 22) – hence their suggestion that translanguaging, unlike code-switching, allows for more *holistic* pedagogical practices. In other words, "students and teachers in all bilingual education programs use complex language practices and build on complex resources for meaning-making in order to learn and teach; that is, they use what we are calling here translanguaging" (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014, p. 52). Therefore, a translingual approach values the spontaneity and naturalness of multimodal communication and language learning, considering "language differences and fluidities as resources to be preserved, developed, and utilized" (HORNER *et al*., 2011, p. 304). These differences and fluidities seem especially natural for children, who seem adept at deploying all the resources from their language repertoire more spontaneously, oblivious to the idea of mistakes. In this sense, translanguaging reminds us, teachers and learners, that we should all be "more humble about what constitutes a mistake[12] (and about what constitutes correctness) in writing, rather than assume that whatever fails to meet their expectations, even in matters of spelling, punctuation, and syntax, must be an error" (HORNER *et al*., 2011, p. 310).

Undue emphasis on mistakes and correctness may inhibit learners from creatively using their meaning-making resources and students, in addition to inadvertently reinforcing the monolingual bias characteristic of "language policies that reject the human right to speak the language of one's choice." (HORNER *et al*., 2011, p. 309). Conversely, "translanguaging offers an entry into systems of monolingual education that are in reality multilingual because of children's experiences with language practices other than those of schools." (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014, p. 68). Therefore, even in supposedly "monolingual" communities, there are several "languages" or ways of making and conveying meanings, even if some of them may be stigmatized in particular situations, for example in ELT[13]. This is corroborated by Canagarajah (2014), for whom we are all translinguals.

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[11] Once I spotted a student trying to cut his classmates' hair with a pair of scissors. I immediately stopped speaking English and switched to Portuguese, taking the scissors from the student's hands and telling him off in Portuguese.

[12] Children in their early ages often pronounce /l/ instead of /r/ when saying words such as "orange", for example. This is the kind of "mistake" which does not impede comprehension and should be viewed as characteristic of what they *can* do at that point in their developmental stage – in other words, as a resource rather than a deficit.

[13] When I started studying English at the age of nine, I was very excited to learn the language. However, when I used words from my mother tongue while trying to speak English, my teacher interrupted me and asked me to say it "in English". As a result, I did not want to speak anymore, and chose to just listen to the language. Only four years later, when I reached an intermediate level, did I try to speak English again. Still, I was still very anxious and insecure

Translanguaging theory stresses the need for openness to language diversity and for encouraging and validating learners' attempts to communicate using their full repertoire, based on the assumption that "learners' personal experiences, histories, and ideologies are realized in the learning process via their language repertoires, and this is said to transform identities and other social realities" (WEI, 2011 *apud* RABBIDGE, 2019, p. 33). As an English teacher, I agree that translanguaging can help my pupils develop their creativity and criticality, while increasing our confidence to experiment with different semiotic resources, speaking, drawing, gesturing, dancing, sensing, and so on.

For example, I once taught a 1st grade group, with 6- to 7-year-old students, where we used to create our own choreographies to the songs we sang. Once a student mentioned she had a baby cousin who was deaf. The group was very curious about sign language, so I tried teaching them some new vocabulary and its corresponding sign language in tandem. We watched a video clip of the song "I can sing a rainbow" in which the words were both sung and signed, and learned the signs for the English words. In the end the group were proud of it, and I was pleased to notice that they were motivated to learn. The child with a deaf cousin was excited and told us she would teach her baby cousin how to sing the song with English signs. This brief account reminds me that "it is in the creative and critical moments of translanguaging that actions are transformed. This leads to substantive teaching, and learning, as well as transformations." (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014, p. 120).

My own teaching experience testifies to the fact that "translanguaging is transformative and creates changes in interactive cognitive and social structures that in turn affect our continuous languaging becoming" (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014, p. 42). The authors argue that even in institutional contexts with few opportunities for translanguaging, students create their own translingual spaces to help each other and fully deploy their linguistic and cultural resources. Thus, "translanguaging creates the voice and knowledge through support and expansion of what they already know how to say and do" (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014, p. 86). As a result, translanguaging can alter the ways in which teaching and learning are conceived, paving the way for more inclusive and holistic practices of being, acting and *languaging* in the world.

3 Do you teach American or British English?

As an English teacher, I have been working at a few language schools using diverse teaching methods. From the beginning of my career, I was already very interested in the way in which some aspects of ELT are implemented in the classroom, and how this implementation reflects different beliefs about language and learning. In general, there seemed to be wide agreement that "English only" lessons were the best methodological option. As a result, in all the schools where I taught there was a certain aversion to translanguaging practices as conceived of by Canagarajah (2013) and García and Wei (2014). In many ways this was not different from my own experience as a student.

Having studied in a traditional language school during my teenage years, I can say that my English lessons seemed to be characteristic of an anti-translingual approach. Long before starting my career as a

about my vocabulary and speaking skills, which began to dissipate only when I graduated in English language and literature and started teaching.

language teacher, I had learnt English with an extremely traditional method for a long time, watching outdated videos which presented grammar in a decontextualized way that did not speak to my reality or to my classmates'. The focus was strictly on North American culture, including its cuisine, customs, holidays and parties, based on North American accent. Whenever my classmates translanguaged, instinctively using words in our mother tongue, our teachers would interrupt them. Students with less proficiency were usually rather quiet, afraid of expressing themselves wrongly in English. At the same time, teachers helped create a certain mystique around the English-only approach, arguing that the best groups were the ones which never used Portuguese and were thus most likely to attain high proficiency in English. However, in fact this created an unhealthy atmosphere of competition.

This highly charged atmosphere caused me to start reflecting on the quality of the input I bring to my own classroom. Now it seems to me that the translingual perspective represents an important advance in ELT theories towards a better understanding of the inclusive role of English in a multicultural world. Rabbidge (2019) argues that translanguaging is able to help students attain a better understanding of the content of lessons and create meaningful connections between school and home languaging practices, as well as a healthy environment, with successful interactions between weaker and stronger students in mixed level classrooms (RABBIDGE, 2019, p. 32). Nevertheless, the monolingual bias still seems to prevail in all the schools where I taught English. One of the schools where I worked adopted an overtly monolingual marketing strategy, trying to persuade new students of the wonders of English-only instruction for achieving fluency in English quickly. On the other hand, the use of the mother tongue, even if by a brief and unfortunate accident, was supposed to cause irreparable damage to language learning. Therefore, teachers were instructed not to utter a single word in students' mother language, for fear that this could develop a bad learning habit, hampering their progress learning English.

The emphasis on English-only classrooms neglects teachers' and students' *creativity* and *criticality* which, according to García and Wei (2014), only a translingual approach could develop. In my experience as a student, creativity was limited by the fact that the instructions and most teacher-students' interactions were scripted and offered few opportunities for deviation from the scripted material. This also made it difficult to develop students' criticality, since the focus of instruction was exclusively on the language itself, without any reflection on language use and change, how the context affects linguistic choices, how these choices reflect certain ideologies, on language diversity or the illusion of native speaker supremacy.

As an English teacher, I have always felt these methodologies were controversial, especially as they went against the grain of what I was learning at the time in my early years as an undergraduate student. I had, however, no one to share my uneasiness with, questioning the validity of teaching materials that had been developed long ago for all the franchises, irrespective of their local demands and characteristics, by someone the teaching staff did not know. In such franchises, the school management's decisions followed an entrepreneurial – rather than pedagogical – logic, while academic coordinators often claimed that their hands were tied, since they were supposed to endorse the use of teaching materials that had been prescribed to all the franchises.

This disregard for students' L1 seemed to pose more difficulties than advantages, especially to beginners, for whom drawing upon their mother language is perfectly natural and involuntary. This is confirmed by Ofelia García and Li Wei (2014), according to whom translanguaging allows students to express themselves with all the linguistic resources they own, including the mother language, and can only contrib-

ute to the group's learning (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014, p. 52). Devoid of the freedom to draw on their mother tongue, some students developed learning traumas, partly associated with feelings of shame – for using Portuguese when unable to convey the message fluently in English – or frustration – when unable to understand some vocabulary or grammatical structures and still not allowed to translate them into Portuguese. According to the management, "English-only" was likely to promote more effective learning because the students could risk losing their emotional bond with the target language when thinking in their mother tongue. Thus, the idea was to get students to immerse themselves in an English-only environment for an hour, eventually helping them to learn faster. However, in practice this sometimes caused them to feel frustrated and demotivated.

On one particular occasion, I taught a student who claimed to have great difficulty in any kind of formal instruction and therefore preferred to pay for private tuition, which he felt would be more productive. The student found it difficult to memorize vocabulary and understand grammar, so I had to be more careful and sensitive to his needs. It was then that I realized the complete ineffectiveness of such a rigid, English-only methodology. For me it was evident that the student would never be able to learn in an English-only environment. However, the school did not allow me to use his mother language, so it took me weeks to explain simple vocabularies. Eventually he decided to leave, much less confident in his own ability to learn the language than when he started. Being his teacher helped me realise the shortcomings of a monolingual policy, which probably required more time, effort and patience to teach vocabulary than a translingual approach would have.

Unfortunately, all the schools where I worked operated with a strong monolingual bias, with deleterious effects on students' learning, as the example above illustrates, and on ELT in general. These schools are often advertised as bastions of the language and culture of Kachru's Inner Circle (KACHRU, 1985, p. 12) countries, capable of making students feel native to those countries – in my teaching experience, always the United States of America. Nevertheless, this monolingual bias is not exclusive to language schools, as it seems to extend to society at large. It was common for new students to ask me if I taught British or American English. Some claimed to want to learn British English, as they believed it sounded more sophisticated[14]. Others said they preferred to learn American English, as they dreamed of moving to the United States and blend in naturally with native speakers. In either case, students dreaded speaking English with a Brazilian accent, so the school management encouraged teachers to meet students' expectations by avoiding "Brazilian pronunciation". These expectations reflected the pervasive influence of an ideology that Canagarajah (2013) refers to as "the Herderian triad", based on the supposed equivalence of language, community, and place, and "the territoriality and homogeneity of local communities" (CANAGARAJAH, 2013, p. 31). According to Canagarajah (2013), the problem with the Herderian triad is that it legitimates the power of native speakers and allows them to define how the language is used. It is based on the assumption that

> each language is associated with the geographical space it is located in. That is the expected or even authorized language for that place. Another language can be defined as an interloper and prevented from being used in that place. This orientation can potentially limit the range of languages that can be used in a place in social interactions. It gives justification for a community to exert its own language on others sharing its place. Since there are always diverse communities in a place, we can guess how this orientation can become a colonizing

[14] Once one student even asked me whether British English was indeed more formal than American English, which he thought always sounded more colloquial.

> activity. The language of the dominant community can be imposed on others. Minority languages and communities in a place, in addition to newly entering languages, lose their claim to that place and probably get suppressed (CANAGARAJAH, 2013, p. 28)

By insisting on English-only classes, the schools where I worked treated Portuguese as an "interloper" that should "get suppressed", otherwise it could hinder the learning of English. Furthermore, when schools purport to teach American or British English, they overlook linguistic heterogeneity both within and outside these respective countries, which could be regarded as "a colonizing activity". As a result, students are deprived of the knowledge that linguistic heteroglossia is the norm, and teachers of the opportunity to bring this heterogeneity to the fore, opening a space for critical reflection. Although some of my colleagues did not fully agree with this monolingual bias, they ended up complying with it, for fear of losing their jobs.

On the other hand, a translingual approach always considers the experiences, desires, individualities and expectations of each student. According to Canagarajah (2013, p. 169), "what we see in translingual practice is that learning is invested and personal. The learner shapes the target. Neither the learner nor the system remain unchanged by the communicative and learning activity". This suggests that translingual practices can foster students' and teachers' agency by acknowledging their role in changing the system and the fact that "the learning of different repertoires is ongoing, multidirectional, and sometimes parallel" (CANAGARAJAH, 2013, p. 169).

In terms of opportunities for creating translingual spaces, I remember one of my advanced classes. It was a mixed ability group in which some of the less proficient students did not participate at all, whereas others managed to express themselves despite their lack of vocabulary or grammar. It was particularly interesting to see how those students with the highest proficiency levels naturally interacted with their less proficient classmates by helping them finish their sentences, paraphrasing, suggesting vocabulary and sometimes simply showing sincere interest in what they were trying to say. These, according to Canagarajah (2013, p. 166), are *negotiation strategies* characteristic of translingual practices, or "strategies that enable interlocutors to deal with breakdowns and trouble spots in interactions", while being able "to respond to such highly diverse, unexpected, and changing contexts and codes by strategically combining ecological resources" (CANAGARAJAH, 2013, p. 166).

Indeed, ELT should enable students to develop strategies such as "let-it-pass" and "make-it-normal" – which comprise what Canagarajah terms *procedural knowledge* and more proficient students seemed comfortable using. Differently from the *propositional knowledge* or grammatical competence, it is the procedural knowledge that translinguals adopt while facing English that enables them to deal with unexpected interlocutors in different places around the world (CANAGARAJAH, 2013). Translinguals, then, are not only open to negotiation, but they are also more aware of linguistic and cultural diversity, and better able to collaborate with others in order to learn, while effectively practicing the language.

4 "Eu preciso parar de pensar em português"[15]

Having been an English teacher at a language school in Brazil for almost twenty years, I taught a great number of students from different levels, backgrounds and walks of life, most of whom eager to improve and practice

[15] "I have to stop thinking in Portuguese".

the language in English-only lessons. While teaching A1 to B1 classes, I would often hear students express their desire to achieve fluency in the target language, usually resenting the fact that first they had to draw on their mother tongue – which was believed to get in the way of learning another language – and then translate it into the target language, being unable to "think in English". At that time, I was not particularly aware of the role of L1 in the acquisition of foreign languages, let alone language cognition researches. Therefore, I could only lend a sympathetic ear to those students who resented thinking in Portuguese, trying to reassure them that in time fluency would come, after a considerable amount of exposure to input in English. As their teacher, I would encourage them to use English as much or as often as they could, keeping Portuguese to a minimum. It was already commonly accepted at the time that English-only lessons were more likely to help students develop their speaking and listening skills – and perhaps speed up the "thinking in English" process.

Needless to say, this "English-only" perspective had a considerable bearing on my professional attitudes, decisions and routines, in addition to my views of language and learning. Such views, as I have written elsewhere (TAGATA, 2018, p. 257), were characteristic of what Street termed an "autonomous model of literacy" (STREET, 1995 *apud* TAGATA, 2018, p. 257). At the time I believed that literacy in English would be developed in a monolingual environment, mediated by teaching materials produced by native specialists from "Inner Circle" (KACHRU, 1985, p. 12) countries. These included audio and video recordings of British or American English, not unlike the ones I would listen to as a student. Later, while taking part in teacher training programmes I would immerse myself in professional discourses around technical aspects of ELT, such as testing or teaching pronunciation, and their accompanying jargon, including proficiency, accuracy, fluency, interference, etc.

What all these discourses had in common was a monolingual orientation to language and teaching, at the core of which lay a view of language as a discrete, self-contained set of words, phonemes and grammar rules which could be effectively taught through mechanical repetition, irrespective of students' contexts and experiences; in short, language as a *commodity* that could be acquired and possessed – for instance, one student who *has* a good vocabulary, another *whose* pronunciation is intelligible. Little did I know then how misleading and harmful this orientation could be, in the sense of inculcating fallacious ideas about language uniformity and the belief that English could be learnt once and for all.

Furthermore, this monolingual ideology may place undue stress on the notion of linguistic deficit – what students *lack* in order to *master* English – doing learners a great disservice by causing them to feel anxious, disempowered, demotivated or excluded from certain social practices. Consequently, a change of mindset is long overdue, through which the notion of mastery can be critically examined, so as to "include the ability of users to revise the language that they must also continuously be learning – to work with and on, not just within, what seem its conventions and confines" (HORNER *et al*., 2011, p. 307).

I had never really given mastery – or other "bankrupt notions" such as intelligibility, proficiency or fluency, according to Horner, Lu, Royster and Trimbur (2011) – much thought. This only began to change when I started my Ph.D. research about cultural and linguistic hybridity, drawing upon post-colonial theories. These theories challenged my own deep-rooted assumptions about language stability and monolingualism, helping me to start *unlearning* my *academic colonization* (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2016) through the realization that linguistic and cultural heterogeneity necessarily precedes homogeneity.

Taking linguistic hybridity on board was one of the challenges that I faced as I began teaching English to undergraduate students at the Brazilian university where I have been teaching for over a decade.

In order to raise my students' awareness of the heteroglossic character of all languages, I would sometimes ask them to listen to audio recordings containing different accents of English or watch documentaries about its heterogeneity. Many students seemed to take a genuine interest in varieties of English and would point out which accents were particularly difficult to understand. This often led to a discussion of intelligibility, namely whether there was a phonological core of intelligibility (JENKINS, 2000) or whether intelligibility was first and foremost a political and ideological construct (RAJAGOPALAN, 2010).

Over the years, as I grew familiar with multiliteracies and critical literacy studies, I would ask students to design ELT activities based on these theories, hoping that one day they might be able to implement them with their own students after graduating. While some of my students responded enthusiastically to these assignments – especially those who could speak English confidently or were already willing to become English teachers – others appeared to have qualms, feeling they did not "have enough proficiency" in English, even though most of them could communicate in English effectively. When asked to explain what proficiency meant to them, they would associate it with mastery or command of the linguistic system. That appeared to be a timely opportunity to question their deep-rooted views of proficiency. I began by quoting Canagarajah (2014), according to whom it is not proficiency, "but our adeptness in negotiating the diversity of grammars in each specific interaction that enables communicative success" (CANAGARAJAH, 2014, p. 769). In a similar vein, Horner, Min-Zhan, Royster and Trimbur (2011) suggest that proficiency be measured "by the range of practices they (students) can draw on; their ability to use these creatively; and their ability to produce meaning out of a wide range of practices" (HORNER *et al*., 2011, p. 308). Hence the notions of proficiency as context-dependent, and of fluency as "openness to linguistic differences and the ability to construct useful meanings from perceptions of them" (HORNER *et al*., p. 308).

In the subsequent lesson we discussed Canagarajah's statement that "communication transcends words" (2013, p. 7). Although for some students the whole idea was still too abstract, this seemed to be an occasion to introduce the concept of translanguaging. So I brought some excerpts from Ofelia García and Li Wei's *Translanguaging* (2014), and Canagarajah's *Translingual Practice* (2013), interweaving the discussion of these excerpts with examples or personal anecdotes. One student told us about his Argentinian grandmother, who often inserted Spanish words such as "platita" in family conversations. Another student commented that when he played online videogames with other Brazilian players, he translanguaged, and his mother could not understand what he was saying in Portuguese.

A third student spoke of different words for "tangerine" in Portuguese; for example, when talking to relatives from another state of Brazil she would alternate between her usual "tangerina" and her relatives' "bergamota". This same student had once commented on how one of her roommates could be "such a Karen". One of her colleagues just nodded approvingly, while the others – including myself – seemed puzzled, unaware that the proper noun could be used as a common one. Only when she explained the meaning of "Karen"[16] and how common it is on Twitter, did it dawn on me how social networking practices provide opportunities for translanguaging. Also, this was a reminder that learning is ceaseless and ubiquitous or, according to Horner, Min-Zhan, Royster and Trimbur (2011):

> [...] we recognize that we are all language learners, and that learning language is necessarily continuous precisely because language is subject to variation and change. Further, we

[16] Defined, somewhat stereotypically, as a white woman who is demanding, entitled and unaware of her own privilege (https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/karen).

> recognize that language learners are also language users and creators. Thus, mastery must be redefined to include the ability of users to revise the language that they must also continuously be learning – to work with and on, not just within, what seem its conventions and confines (HORNER *et al*., 2011, p. 307).

Horner, Min-Zhan, Royster and Trimbur (2011) suggest that translanguaging may confer agency on language learners, seen as users *and* creators. This means that they may choose to work within or outside the confines of grammatical accuracy, for example, in order to "revise the language" that they are learning, or to create new, unexpected meanings. These meanings may emerge in "translanguaging spaces" where learners can "go beyond traditional linguistic boundaries that have been imposed by monolingual ideologies" (RABBIDGE, 2019, p. 34). In addition, "translanguaging creates a space for the learner to take control of their own learning, and any teacher can achieve this space in their own class by facilitating change and removing negative stereotypes about language in their classes" (RABBIDGE, 2019, p. 34).

All things considered, translanguaging creates "a more inclusive discourse for learners" (RABBIDGE, 2019, p. 181), no longer seen as "deficient", but as capable of deploying a variety of meaning-making resources in specific interactions, while coming to terms with linguistic diversity and change. If change is the norm, linguistic knowledge is always necessarily partial, contingent and incomplete.

My undergraduate students' reactions to translanguaging theory ranged from curious to enthusiastic. For instance, one student said she wondered what a "translingual English lesson" might look like. I answered that if we are all translinguals, according to translanguaging theory, a translingual lesson should, perhaps, allow learners to use a wide range of linguistic resources in different contexts. On the other hand, I also admitted to having doubts about translanguaging opportunities or spaces in my own lessons. For example, I wondered whether I might be sending them mixed messages by foregrounding translanguaging and at the same time acting as a "language expert" and devising form-focus activities for classwork, for example. Or whether by approaching linguistic differences in terms of local accents or varieties of English I could inadvertently be treating them as discrete, stable, and homogeneous, as well as reinforcing the prestige of American or British accents – and thus upholding dichotomies such as native-nonnative, or centre-periphery, among others.

In other words, I feared that all those years immersed in a monolingual orientation to ELT would keep me from creating opportunities for students to develop their sensitivity to linguistic diversity and use their full meaning-making repertoires. I believed that I was adopting a more student-centred approach, which I hoped might endorse a translingual orientation. This belief was based on the fact that the classes I was teaching did not have a fixed syllabus, allowing me to focus on those aspects of English grammar and phonology which I thought would be most relevant to students' needs. Also, by using virtual learning tools such as Moodle discussion forums based on students' suggested topics and encouraging them to use websites such as www.forvo.com for different word pronunciations I hoped to raise their awareness of linguistic diversity and to promote their autonomy. However, I sensed all along that the adoption of a translingual approach would pose a number of challenges.

Given the institutional constraints of my professional and academic context, the first challenge is to incorporate what Rabbidge (2019, p. 34) describes as "official translanguaging" – as opposed to "natural translanguaging" (2019, p. 34) – practices into the undergraduate curriculum so as to work "collaboratively

with our students, our current colleagues, and those who can become our colleagues amid the realities of a translingual nation and world" (HORNER *et al*., 2011, p. 309).

In practice, this can prove to be daunting. I remember a meeting with my colleagues from the English language department for considering possible changes to our undergraduate curriculum. Some of them insisted on maintaining traditional academic subjects such as phonetics, morphology and syntax, based on the argument that this kind of "specialist knowledge" – or "propositional knowledge", according to Canagarajah (2014, p. 771) – is what sets us in academia apart from language schools. Consequently, it may be challenging to let go of specialist status, by recognizing that linguistic expertise may be only one aspect of the knowledge required for engaging in translingual meaning-making and communication practices; the other would be "procedural knowledge" (CANAGARAJAH, 2014, p. 771), which consists of

> [...] the resourcefulness of speakers to negotiate diverse codes, values, and identities of the speakers and texts they encounter. It focuses on their creativity to merge their repertoires in the interactions and texts for voice in a manner that achieves intelligibility and communicative success in relation to the dominant norms and expectations of specific communicative contexts (CANAGARAJAH, 2014, p. 771).

By acknowledging learners' "resourcefulness" and "creativity" and encouraging them to draw on and build on their full linguistic repertoires, translingual practices can play an important role in the development of their agency. As an English teacher interested in translanguaging, I believe that we all need to go "beyond language", which refers "to transforming the present, to intervening by reinscribing our human, historical commonality in the act of languaging" (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014, p. 25). I also understand that my own attitudes in the classroom might contribute to the maintenance and spread of the monolingual bias. For example, while teaching pronunciation, my attitudes may have been biased in favour of one particular accent, or against pronunciations heavily influenced by students' mother tongue. Or I may have relished being in a position to correct students' spoken mistakes, oblivious to the fact that in a translingual approach "teachers (and students) need to be more humble about what constitutes a mistake (and what constitutes correctness)" (HORNER *et al*., 2011, p. 310).

Therefore, taking a translingual approach may offer opportunities for the development of one's self-reflexivity, or adopting what Cope and Kalantzis (2012, p.150) called "inward-looking". In my case, through "inward-looking" I could try to avoid excessive attention to stable and homogeneous aspects of English, which may suppress linguistic diversity and students' agency.

In other words, as self-reflexive students and teachers working in a translingual orientation we should critically examine our possible complicity with linguistic imperialism (PHILLIPSON, 1993) and the coloniality of power/knowledge (MIGNOLO, 2000), by asking ourselves: what is our place in the colonial – and why not monolingual too – matrix of power? Do our attitudes reflect monolingual views in any way (for example, by endorsing strict notions of mistakes, proficiency, among other bankrupt notions)? Do our lessons embrace linguistic and cultural diversity? What are we missing out on when approaching language in purely analytical terms? To what extent do our beliefs, teaching practices, decisions, and theories of learning and teaching comply with neoliberal interests, strengthening the coloniality of power associated with them? Or, as Phillipson (1993, p. 1) asks: "what arguments have been used to justify the continued use of the former colonial languages?" As we will see in the next section, uncomfortable as they may be, these

questions are necessary, especially if we set out "to dig down to the underlying structures which support (or counteract) individual efforts", and formulate an adequate theory, "preferably one which also elucidates how individual actors can influence the structure so as to change it" (PHILLIPSON, 1993, p. 46).

Working in English-only settings, encumbered by conservative views on language, education and society, teachers are unlikely to "influence the structure so as to change it". Hence the importance of creating academic and professional opportunities for challenging monolingual assumptions about ELT, whenever possible. On the role of language learning in the development of positive attitudes to linguistic diversity, Kubota (2001) recommends that education about cultural/linguistic diversity begin "at earlier stages in life" (KUBOTA, 2001, p. 61). Kubota views the foreign language class as "an ideal forum for cultivating cross-cultural/linguistic awareness and understanding" and suggests that language teachers "take the initiative to address and implement linguistic and cultural diversity in the school curriculum" (KUBOTA, 2001, p. 61). This could be our contribution to the creation of translingual, socially inclusive and just spaces, where learning and teaching may thrive on differences.

5 Conclusion

In this paper we presented three accounts of different ELT contexts in Brazil, in order to reflect upon the opportunities for and challenges to translanguaging. In spite of their differences in terms of target audience, material settings, instruction type, available resources for meaning production and ecological aspects in general, there seems to be a monolingual orientation pervading the three contexts. This orientation, which Phillipson (2009) suggests is "educationally unsound and installs or reinforces an inequitable language hierarchy" (PHILLIPSON, 2009, p. 16), originated in the colonial language teaching experience, as the "natural expression of power relations in the colonial period", being "highly functional in inducing a colonized consciousness" (PHILLIPSON, 1993, p. 187). The author contends that in former colonized countries, such as Brazil, where multilingualism was the norm, "monolingualism cuts across this social reality and attempts to impose a single lens on the world" (PHILLIPSON, 1993, p. 189). In colonial times, this was achieved through the imposition of physical sanctions, such as the use of corporal punishment for schoolchildren caught using their mother tongue, as was the case of indigenous children in schools run by the Catholic Jesuits in Brazil during colonization.

Hopefully the imposition of psychological and physical sanctions against the use of L1 is less common in this day and age. However, as the first and second accounts in this paper suggest, the monolingual bias is still widespread in Brazil, and can prove deleterious for English teaching and learning, causing teachers to be frustrated and decreasing students' motivation. In addition, it could also strengthen the fallacy of linguistic homogeneity and obscure the richness and complexity of meaning-making processes – as Horner, Lu, Royster and Trimbur (2011, p. 307) suggest, "processes that, particularly when they belong to less powerful communities, sometimes appear opaque to individual readers and listeners"; hence the importance of translanguaging for the development of teachers' and students' criticality and creativity, according to García and Wei (2014). In other words, it is in translingual spaces that teachers' and students' agency can be fully developed.

Creativity is one of the themes of the first account, in which young learners, unencumbered by a monolingual, English-only environment, can deploy their meaning-making repertoires to the full, making wide use of their body language and creating their own neologisms. Translanguaging allows them to "connect other ecological features such as the body and the environment to make meaning" (CANAGARAJAH, 2014, p. 45). The first account also implies that children are familiar with translanguaging practices, corroborating García and Wei's contention that "human beings have a natural translanguaging instinct" (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014, p. 32).

This means that even in or despite environments where the monolingual orientation prevails – sadly this still appears to be the norm in Brazilian formal instruction –, such as the ones described in the second and third accounts, there is still room for translanguaging practices. In the case of the second account, such practices took place in a mixed ability group where students were able to deploy a number of translingual, negotiation strategies in order to communicate.

In the third account, the teacher/author was able to bring linguistic heterogeneity and diversity to the fore, encouraging students to discover different pronunciations and engage in academic discussions about translanguaging. However, as he suggests near the end, there was always the danger of "getting it wrong" when calling attention to language varieties, treating them as discrete, stable or homogeneous – what Horner, Lu, Royster and Trimbur (2011, p.307) call "an additive notion of multilingualism". This is probably a result of years learning English in a monolingual perspective, which may have caused the teacher/author to uncritically use bankrupt concepts such as "proficiency", "native speaker pronunciation", among others, reproducing the coloniality of power and knowledge (MIGNOLO, 2000) or even displaying linguistic bias.

Considering that all of us teachers/authors learnt English in monolingually-biased language schools, it is reasonable to assume that we may at one point inadvertently endorse the monolingual orientation, using materials which attempt to erase linguistic and cultural diversity, for example. Therefore, as suggested in the previous section, it is essential to practise Cope and Kalantzis' (2016, p.150) "inward-looking", in order to examine ELT's complicity with the neoliberal coloniality of power. "The evidence thus far, from looking at the evolution of ELT in a broad historical perspective, is therefore that ELT is unquestionably neo-colonialist and operates within a framework of imperialism" (PHILLIPSON, 1993, p. 152). And imperialism, including linguistic imperialism, "has always been about profit", adds Phillipson (2009, p. 21) Therefore, while investigating whose interests are served by policies on language in education one should consider that educational discourses have long been heavily influenced by the neoliberal coloniality of power. To prove his point, Phillipson (2009, p. 6), quoting Hardt and Negri's argument in *Empire* (2000), contends that not only did the "corporate world" set out to dominate the media but also education, "which is increasingly run to service the economy and to produce consumers rather than critical citizens"[17] (PHILLIPSON, 2009, p. 6).

The crucial question for ELT professionals then is how to counter neoliberalism's corporatist interests in the educational field. In an attempt to answer this question, Flores (2013, p. 517) suggests that teachers problematize "the constructed nature and ideological assumptions of all language practices and

[17] A similar point was made by Pennycook (2001), according to whom critical analyses have demonstrated that schools function as agents of social reproduction, rather than social change, serving to maintain the social, political and economic *status quo*. According to Pennycook, one such critical analysis suggests that schools reproduce capitalist labour relations. Thus, "this focus on the roles of schools in the reproduction of social inequality" – which is at the heart of capitalism – "has been an important focus of critical sociology of education" (PENNYCOOK, 2001, p. 121).

provide opportunities for students to reappropriate plurilingualism" in order to oppose neoliberalism as a force that produces social inequalities. According to Flores,

> the goal of this classroom is for students to become aware of how language can be consciously used to experiment with new subjectivities and produce new subject positions. The principal understanding that students are expected to gain is that they are in charge of how they use language and can consciously deviate from standardized rules and experiment with new ways of being (FLORES, 2013, p.517).

Although Flores does not use the term "translanguaging", it seems to us that his critical analysis of the relationship between neoliberal capitalism and plurilingualism bears immediate relevance to an investigation of the possible complicity between translanguaging and neoliberalism[18]. Also, Flores cautions against "the commodification of diversity" effected through an acritical celebration of linguistic and cultural diversity – be it in the form of *pluri*, *multi*, or translingualism. After all, the ability to engage in *pluri* or translingual practices may be regarded as a desirable *asset* for the neoliberal subject – one that can adapt to the fluid meaning-making practices characteristic of capitalism's *deterritorialized* spaces (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2003).

Writing our autoethnographic accounts helped us take stock of the monolingual bias in our classrooms, which constitutes a hindrance to the development of students' and teachers' creativity, criticality and agency. If, as Phillipson (2009, p. 5) argues, this monolingual bias is one of the pillars of linguistic imperialism, or "the maintenance of injustice and inequality by means of language policies", we should always be examining our own praxis, relating the micro or *molecular* level of our praxis to the macro, *molar* level of the coloniality of power and global inequality associated with the spread of English. Such an examination could prevent us from reinforcing the monolingual orientation and its coloniality of power – and allow for the creation of translingual spaces, in which teachers and students can navigate and negotiate the linguistic and cultural differences constitutive of all (ELT) contexts.

Authors' contributions

Authors 1 and 2 have written the Introduction; author 2 has written section 2; author 3 has written section 3; author 1 has written section 4 and the conclusion.

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[18] For an insightful discussion about the similarities and differences between "plurilingualism", "translanguaging" and other related terms, see García and Wei (2014).

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Data de submissão: 12/07/2022. Data de aprovação: 19/12/2022.