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Embracing Decolonial Practices in Language and Literatures Education: An In-Depth Study with Brazilian Teachers

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Abstract: This article explores decolonial pedagogical approaches implemented by literature educators within the Brazilian educational milieu. It concentrates on tactics that disrupt the conventional chronological arrangement of literary genres. The featured educators integrate decolonial viewpoints into their methodologies, fostering an academic environment that surpasses Eurocentrism and challenges entrenched frameworks. The study underscores the formulation of alternatives to the instruction of Language and Literature, delivering a critical and more encompassing examination. Furthermore, it examines how these approaches contribute to shaping conscientious students adept at critically analyzing social and cultural issues. The article suggests restructuring Language and Literatures education to embody a more contemporary and diverse perspective rooted in a subversive rationale.

Keywords: Education; Decoloniality; Curricular Innovation; Critical Thinking; Cultural Diversity.

Adotando práticas decoloniais no ensino de Língua e Literaturas: um estudo aprofundado com professores brasileiros

Resumo: Este artigo explora abordagens pedagógicas decoloniais implementadas por docentes de literatura no contexto educacional brasileiro. O foco recai sobre táticas que rompem com a tradicional organização cronológica dos gêneros literários. Os(as) educadores(as) destacados(as) incorporam perspectivas decoloniais em suas metodologias, promovendo um ambiente de aprendizagem que ultrapassa o eurocentrismo e desafia estruturas consolidadas. O estudo enfatiza a formulação de alternativas para o ensino de Língua e Literatura, oferecendo uma abordagem crítica e mais abrangente. Além disso, analisa como essas práticas contribuem para a formação de estudantes conscientes, capazes de refletir criticamente sobre questões sociais e culturais. O artigo propõe uma reestruturação do ensino de Língua e Literaturas, orientada por uma perspectiva contemporânea, diversa e fundamentada em uma lógica subversiva.

Palavras-chave: Educação; Decolonialidade; Inovação Curricular; Pensamento Crítico; Diversidade Cultural.

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1 Introduction

This article unveils the findings of a doctoral research project centered on teachers' pedagogical practices in the context of Language and Literature education in Brazil. The research focused on understanding and implementing decoloniality in the classroom. The study aimed to identify how educators perceive and apply decolonial principles and the materials they employ to foster a more inclusive and critical approach.

This research's theoretical framework is grounded in the Modernity/Coloniality Group studies and contributions from Brazilian thinkers such as Paulo Freire. Decoloniality is approached here as a critical perspective challenging colonial power structures, prompting profound reflection on the dynamics of domination and resistance in the educational context (Russell, 2023).

Throughout the research process, questionnaires and online interviews were conducted with teachers engaged in decolonial pedagogical practices. Analyzing these data provided insights into how teachers apply decolonial principles in their classrooms and the strategies and materials used to promote inclusive education, attuned to cultural and linguistic diversities.

Furthermore, the study explored the motivations behind teachers' pedagogical choices and how these practices contribute to challenging hegemonic narratives and fostering a comprehensive understanding of the cultures and identities represented in Language and Literature.

This article will present narratives and experiences shared by participating teachers. It will highlight concrete examples of decoloniality implementation in the context of Language and Literature education and offer valuable insights into pedagogical practices and materials that promote a more critical and inclusive approach.

2 Methodological Procedures

To identify teachers whose pedagogical practices incorporated decolonial elements, I employed a methodological approach focused on educators' narratives regarding the materials and pedagogical strategies they used. Initially, I developed a comprehensive questionnaire inquiring about using materials and applying decolonial approaches in the classroom, which assisted in selecting interview participants. This questionnaire was distributed among an initial group of educators interested in sharing their experiences.

To broaden the diversity of perspectives, I utilized the snowball sampling method, asking initial participants to recommend other professionals who could enrich the study with

their innovative pedagogical practices. This approach allowed for a more comprehensive selection of interviewees, enriching the diversity of views and experiences reported.

I interviewed eleven teachers, who shared valuable insights into using decolonial pedagogical materials and strategies in their respective educational contexts. Using thematic analysis, I examined educators' narratives to identify patterns and recurring themes that informed pedagogical practices and materials related to decoloniality.

These educators incorporated various materials and strategies into their practices, considering aspects such as cultural representation, diverse historiographical perspectives, and the deconstruction of hegemonic narratives. The analysis of these practices revealed a profound awareness of the importance of materials that value and represent ethnic and cultural diversity, thus promoting a more inclusive and engaging education.

Throughout the interviews, I sought how these teachers selected and adapted materials to promote critical understanding and reflection on colonial legacies and their implications in linguistic and literary spheres. The resulting thematic analysis highlighted the relevance of pedagogical approaches that stimulate deep reflection on ethnoracial issues and the role of decoloniality in enhancing the teaching of Language and Literature.

One of the most significant findings focused on the valorization and promotion of materials challenging colonial narratives and emphasizing the importance of cultural diversity. These pedagogical materials were instrumental in creating an environment that fosters respect, understanding, and appreciation for diverse ethnic and cultural identities, demonstrating these teachers' commitment to a more inclusive and culturally conscious education.

3 Practices in the Pedagogical Construction of Decolonial Epistemology

The way decoloniality is addressed in the classroom emerges from the interviews, shedding light on specific practices that shape methods of teaching Language and Literature. Teachers who participated described practices they deemed relevant to decolonial studies, emphasizing actions that lead to the active involvement of students and pointing out techniques they believe subvert the hegemonic logic that has permeated classroom activities over time. Thus, it is underscored that educators, in their practices, generate knowledge in a participatory, dynamic manner, engaging in an exchange with spaces, students, and school administration, among others, revealing how they appropriate decolonial theories and translate them into practical activities. For this reason, the compiled narratives suggest pedagogical approaches to addressing socially relevant themes in line with the intended reconstruction.

In this section, I will present the classroom approaches reported by the teachers, which are crafted based on a decolonial perspective, as per the prompts during the interviews. I will also highlight correlations that enrich the techniques, methods, and ways of approaching topics, always guided by a critique of coloniality (or the structures that solidify it). Thus, at a certain point in the conversation, the informant and teacher Joana² raises a pertinent reflection to initiate this analysis, which I reproduce below:

It might sound trivial, but, for example, the idea that a student must sit and pay attention for 6 hours comes from this epistemology of rationality, where reason matters. However, you have a body that aches, the urge to use the restroom, and hunger... and the school dictates schedules. This control over the body, this fascist control over the student's body in the face of these rules... the student wants to use the restroom. The supervisor says, "he does not just want to use the restroom, he wants to walk." Okay, he wants to walk, that is it, folks. The person has been sitting for 6 hours, 7 hours... we cannot pretend there is nobody there. This body is not dissociated from the mind, things need to be together... and in a college entrance exam preparation process, it is not just about the theory of Language, it is about understanding that you are not a machine for taking exams, you need to take breaks, do other things, even so that you can achieve the performance you expect on this path to college entrance. (Joana, 2021)

Teacher Joana criticizes school structural rigidity by questioning the idea that students should remain seated for long hours. She highlights the disconnection between this approach and physical and human needs. Her analysis emphasizes the importance of more humanized school approaches sensitive to students' diversity of experiences.

In Africa, knowledge sharing is commonly done in a circle, where elders orally transmit elements of culture, including stories and ancestral habits. Paulo Freire also studied this method in the "Culture Circles," explained in the book "Education as the Practice of Freedom," published in 1991. With strong democratic inspiration, the Brazilian educator explains that the circle arrangement of workers, in the 1960s, during work in Rio Grande do Norte and Pernambuco, allowed them to participate horizontally in the literacy process, as topics emerged from conversations and provocations from the group. This, according to Freire, contrasts with the sectoral rigidity of a classroom where the furniture arrangement is designed within a hierarchy that centralizes teachers, leaving students in a secondary position, described as "that little model of one sitting behind the other, the student does not speak, the student does not

² Joana is a high school and higher education teacher, aged between 35 and 40. She holds degrees in Social Communication and Portuguese - Literatures in Portuguese Language from a state university. She earned her doctorate in Education from a state university as well. With over 10 years of teaching experience, she currently works as a substitute professor at a public university. Prior to the pandemic, she worked in basic education at a private school.

question, the teacher is the master lord of that place," as pejoratively commented by Teacher Sara.

Margarida Ribeiro, author of the article "How Post-Colonial Fiction Can Contribute to a Discussion About Historical Repair: Reading 'As Telefones' (2020) by Djamilia Pereira de Almeida," although discussing Portugal, reinforces something important to Afro culture, "The orality, the core of the tradition of African societies." (Ribeiro, 2022)

In addition to drawing inspiration from African tradition, following an approach akin to Paulo Freire's proposal, which already aligns with the decolonial perspective, other female teachers, including Joana, articulate the notion that insurgent teaching involves reconfiguring the classroom space, fostering moments of listening and questioning, as they describe below:

The chairs are heavy, you know, but whenever possible, we change the organization of the classroom, sit on the floor, shift perspectives, and go to other spaces. Within this, the 'Black Women and Literature Workshop' project that I developed with two other colleagues, X and Y, at the school, I think brings more innovation [...] so in the workshop, we have a specific room, the Portuguese Language room, with no desks; instead, we have sofas, mats, cushions, and the workshops take place on the floor, in a circle, during lunchtime. [...] This methodology is innovative within a traditional school. However, the school's daily routine and my day-to-day work are more about adopting a stance that makes the student a protagonist, providing them with the tools to produce what they learn. A producer of the knowledge they simultaneously acquire. (Camila³, 2021)

I had a certain autonomy where sometimes the principal would allow my students to sit on the floor, and we were in a different process, not always in a circle, sometimes scattered... and the class happened and happened in a good way. (Joana, 2021)

Generally, when you work on a book in school, they want it translated into a grade [...] So the criterion is what you thought about this book... I like to do reading circles and collective reading. We read, pick apart, and say, 'So, folks, what did you think? What did you understand? Then, there is an understanding of that action. No more guidance like 'What is the author's name? Why did Johnny fall off the hill? None of that, because it does not fit in this moment. I want to bring into the classroom the text, my student's speech, and my student's understanding; that is what I want. I think when you have that obligation, I have to take a test, I have to get a good grade, you already break with your critical thinking within that structure because you start thinking 'What does the teacher want me to say here?' and that is not what I want, but this is still a very arduous struggle, because what happens? If the school asks to buy a book, the guardians want that book that costs x money to be translated into a grade, and the school wants you to take a little test. I still insist on my reading circle and shared reading, which I want. [...] I tell the students, 'Look, I am not perfect, I make mistakes, I do not know everything, you can question.' I think it is a relationship of education and respect you have for the other, but you can question what I say. So yes, it is an insurgency. (Sara⁴, 2021)

³ Camila is a teacher for Middle School and High School, aged between 30 and 40 years old. She holds a degree in Portuguese - Literatures in Portuguese Language from a federal university and has a master's degree in Education from a private university. With over 15 years of teaching experience, she currently works at a federal public school.

⁴ Sara teaches in Elementary School I and II. She is between 50 and 60 years old. In addition to her undergraduate degree from a private university, the teacher is a specialist in Neuropedagogy and Psychoanalysis of Education. She has been working for more than 10 years in schools, especially in private institutions.

The teachers emphasize the importance of reconfiguring the classroom space as an insurgent strategy to promote a more participatory and inclusive environment. In discussing the "Black Women and Literature Workshop" project, Camila emphasizes innovation by replacing traditional desks with a more welcoming environment, including sofas and cushions. This approach brings about a change in both physical and symbolic perspectives, encouraging active student participation. Joana mentions her experience allowing students to sit on the floor, demonstrating flexibility in the traditional classroom setup. Sara highlights resistance to the emphasis on grades and tests, opting for methods like the reading circle and shared reading, focusing on dialogue and collective understanding instead of a more authoritarian approach. These practices reflect an insurgent stance, challenging established norms and promoting more collaborative and reflective learning spaces.

In the field of Literature, studies related to decoloniality have been gaining momentum. Among the readings I have undertaken, the article titled "Por um ensino decolonial de literatura" (For decolonial teaching of literature) by Rodrigo Corrêa Martins Machado and Ivanete Bernardino Soares, published in 2021, caught my attention. After contextualizing epistemology, the authors delve into the intricacies of literary studies, emphasizing the significance of this knowledge field. Their insights align closely with the discussions I have presented. According to the authors, "In a decolonial reading of the field of literature teaching, specifically, the very act of listening to subaltern subjects who have been disauthorized in school reading rituals for centuries can be configured as a revolutionary beginning" (Soares e Machado, 2021, p. 996).

Another point that emerges from the discussions is the curriculum. I have previously explored aspects of the guiding element of teaching work, which expands as personal demands align with school needs. Teachers define pathways to bring discussions about Language and Literature into interaction with their students.

For instance, Teacher Vitória⁵ initially hesitates, later describing her action as a "challenge" to say that she subverts the curriculum. However, she clarifies that when working on the grammatical item "Figures of Speech," her examples come from songs of African religious origin. She incorporates a drum to create an ambiance connected to African culture. According to her account, this also stimulates students to explore other musical instruments

⁵ Vitória is a teacher for Middle School and High School, aged between 40 and 50 years old. She holds a degree in Letters - Portuguese - Literatures in Portuguese Language from a State University. With over 25 years of teaching experience, she has a master's degree in Letters. She works in private school settings.

from the continent from which she draws examples for analysis. This, through grammar, facilitates the cultural enrichment of the student body.

It was subversion because I did not stop working on figures of speech or anything, but I brought elements of 'jongo'⁶ into this analysis space. Usually, literature is privileged over a newspaper as a medium. So, we had to work a lot—I and those kids worked a lot—to discover the vocabulary, the constructions... 'tava drumindo, cangoma me chamou,' what was 'drumindo,' which was 'dormindo' (sleeping) indeed... and then I talked about 'Pretoguês,' by Lélia Gonzalez. At that time, I do not think this was common in Elementary Schools, especially in schools like this. 'Cangoma' was the drum, so we researched percussion instruments; that was present there, there was a drum in the class. I play it terribly, but at least I could manage the basic jongo moves... (laughs) And man, bringing a drum into the classroom, oh my God, people..."

E: "A party..."

V: "A party and a challenge." (Vitória, 2021)

Vitória describes an innovative approach to teaching figures of speech by incorporating examples from African-derived music. While hesitant to label it as curriculum subversion, she emphasizes using elements such as drums and terms from "Pretoguês," following Lélia Gonzalez's proposition. Introducing "jongo" elements into grammatical analysis expands students' cultural repertoire and engages them in research on percussion instruments, fostering a richer and more meaningful learning experience. The teacher describes the drum's presence in the classroom as both a celebration and a challenge, highlighting the challenging and celebratory nature of her approach.

Teacher Camila justifies her choice by building her textual work collection exclusively with authors of African descent, such as Mia Couto, a white Mozambican author.

In my daily work, I strive to shed light on the history of the Black population in Brazil, and I also aim to highlight the work of Black women and black authors. The issue of authorship is crucial to me because authorship makes the individual the subject. It concretizes subjectivity, and Black women are the other of the other; they are neither men nor white. So, they are the other of the other. By giving visibility to the work of Black women, it seems to me that it allows other subjectivities to emerge and authorize themselves to exist in the world differently. Therefore, in my language work, when discussing linguistic variation, I talk about linguistic variation in Brazil, but I also discuss linguistic variation in Africa. I bring the accent from Luanda, and I bring the accent from Maputo because this history also constitutes us. So, both in language work and literature work, the existence of Black people, Africans, those from the periphery, and the marginalized, as the center of my work, offers the school the opportunity to have a different face, one that is not from the canon, not from the official curriculum, not more of the same. [...] In Portuguese language classes, we seek to privilege Black authorship in any text and any lesson.

I have been asked, "Camila, has anyone ever questioned you about this? Has anyone ever asked, 'Where are the white authors?'" No one has ever asked me. As long as no one asks me, I will continue because white authors are seen all the time. They are seen all the time and everywhere. So, if it is different only in my class, it is not that big of a deal. No one will die because they are only reading Black authors. We seek to privilege Black authorship, for example, in fables. We work with Indigenous and

⁶ African Music

African fables and tales. We talk about narratives to avoid falling into stereotypes, such as the animalized concept of African fables. I use Mia Couto with them; I use Ondjaki. (Camila, 2021)

Joana adds her voice to the movement, recalling her own experience and sharing:

[...] if I have a syllabus that is full of white men, my students from UERJ⁷ in Maracanã⁸ will struggle to recognize themselves, just as I had difficulty recognizing myself. I think that is the way. (Joana, 2021)

The teachers, Camila and Joana, adopt pedagogical approaches that prioritize the inclusion of Black and African-origin authors in their textual work, aiming to promote representation and diversity. Camila emphasizes the importance of authorship in building subjectivity, while Joana highlights that a syllabus centered on white authors can alienate students, making identification more challenging. Both seek to provide a more inclusive and representative education, breaking away from established norms.

At this point, it is interesting to note that the curriculum is one of the main focuses of pedagogy courses, encouraging various approaches to analyzing this element, which is sometimes explicit and documented, and sometimes hidden, implicit, laden with motivations surrounding teaching activities. In a highly insightful text, Maria José Silva explains how teachers play a role in shaping the peers involved in the teaching and learning process, showing that.

The Explicit (Real, Official) Curriculum and the Implicit (Hidden) Curriculum wield socializing power within the school, as certain school practices and rituals shape and manufacture consciousness. The school legitimizes the social, racial, and sexual division of labor, given that school knowledge is distributed unequally across different social groups and classes. The distribution of Hidden Curricula is also differentiated based on social class, race or ethnicity, and the gender of the clientele. Thus, different attitudes and personality traits are instilled according to various social groups and classes (Silva, 1996, p. 5).

One of the points highlighted by the author is that the school institution, closely tied to neoliberal logic, tends to be a space for the reproduction of social inequalities, primarily through its real, official curriculum, which, as mentioned earlier, is constructed with colonial references. According to the author, the situation can (and should) change through the teaching profession, as educators are the group that holds the keys to opening diverse paths.

⁷ State University of Rio de Janeiro

⁸ Neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro

The teacher must overcome prejudice regarding this student and realize that it is of fundamental importance for the transformation of this society that the worker's child has access to the elaborated knowledge of the school. There must also be a change in how knowledge is transmitted pedagogically and ideologically. The content must change to meet the real needs of the student and the society in which they are inserted. The transmitted content should not be disconnected from practice but should stem from the reality, the life, and the experience of the learner. (Silva, 1996, p. 5)

In this aspect, teachers Fábio⁹ and Igor¹⁰ also emphasize the importance of discussing topics that align with Silva's contributions, both ideologically and pedagogically. In his classes, Fábio addresses religious themes, for example, putting expressions of African matrix religions at the center of debates with his students.

This year, we adopted books for the first year of high school that discussed the issue of religious intolerance, so we worked with some texts considered somewhat canonical, but at the same time, they are insurgent texts because of the issues they raised when they were produced. So, students read, for example, "The Payment of Promises," Dias Gomes' play, they read "The Head of the Saint," the novel by Socorro Acioli, Itamar Vieira Junior, in the third quarter. They read Reginaldo Prand, the book "Aimó"... and we discussed religiosity and religion from very different perspectives. The work ended up bringing together a production of students who had to work around a story of a Yoruba pantheon, that is, they did in-depth research on the history of the orixás, for example, they did in-depth research on religious intolerance in Brazil, specifically intolerance related to African matrix religions. They surveyed numbers, and this material was taken to Culture Week. (Fábio, 2021)

The workshop is called "Literary Art Workshop." I am the only literary art teacher in the Arts Nuclei. The Arts Nuclei are five; they were supposed to be millions because what is an Arts Nucleus? We give art classes, guitar, theater, music, and dance, free of charge, for municipal students. They ended some, but there I had the opportunity to do this work of creating songs for the festival. The songs were created from the tradition of African matrix culture and a book given by the Municipal Department of Education. It had songs and taught things about Africa. We said that Africa is not a country but a continent, which is an excellent job. Then, this song about Exu emerged, which we dance to. Each teacher had a task. In this composition, we talked about who Exu was, how he was, and brought it to the issue of this boy because every boy is a kind of Exu, but when you mention Exu to certain families, it is over, he is the devil... So this work is stunning, and the boy must be about 25 years old today. (Igor, 2021)

Teachers Fábio and Igor emphasize the importance of addressing themes that align with the ideas presented by Silva (1996), particularly concerning cultural and religious diversity. Fábio describes an approach that involves readings on religious intolerance, featuring both canonical and insurgent authors. Students research Yoruba pantheons and religious intolerance, producing materials for cultural events. Igor, leading an "Artistic Literary Workshop,"

⁹ Fábio is a substitute teacher for High School and Higher Education. He is between 30 and 40 years old. He holds a degree in Letters from a state university, and his highest academic title is a doctorate in the field of Literature. With over 5 years of experience in the field, he has worked in both state and private schools.

¹⁰ Igor works primarily in Elementary School I and II in municipal schools and, in Higher Education, at a private institution. He is between 50 and 60 years old. He graduated in Letters from a private college and holds a doctorate from a federal university. With over 30 years of teaching experience, he has been imparting knowledge for several decades.

composes songs inspired by African cultural traditions, fostering an understanding of Africa as a continent. He addresses the figure of Exu, connecting it to the often negative perception associated with this entity in Afro-Brazilian religions. Both approaches aim to broaden students' cultural and religious understanding.

Teacher Hugo, who offers scholarships to his students, adds an extra incentive to text-based work. This incentive is rooted in a love for reading, the selection of learners, and the arrangement of spaces influenced by financial encouragement for study. He shared this experience to showcase his decolonial-oriented approach, introducing the concept of comparing texts and authors, exploring the nuances of writings, and the challenges associated with approaching one through the narrative of the other.

Another aspect in this regard, which I am not sure I can exactly label as subversive but rather as a process of sensitization and seduction of students, involved presenting texts and poems that were quicker and had a more intense dialogue with the students. I delved into the history of Maria Firmina, eventually pointing out that she authored the first abolitionist novel. As a strategy and method, I compared this with canonical abolitionists, those often presented as such, such as the book "Vítimas Algozes," considered an abolitionist text based on a highly questionable argument, but understandable for that time. The argument suggested that ending slavery was necessary to ensure the safety of enslavers because enslaved individuals would become highly violent. By drawing this parallel and showing Maria Firmina presenting, perhaps for the first time, an enslaved character in a humane light, I addressed the persistent question regarding the perspective of Black individuals in literature and other approaches. In Maria Firmina, I had the assurance that the character was humanized. For instance, in the novel "Úrsula," right from the start, Túlio, the first Black character introduced, is a character of moral reference for the main character. He becomes a central figure in a romanticized love story that Firmina develops. I am unsure if, within this framework, it is possible to say there is a subversive or decolonial meth. However, the intention was to challenge what was canonically presented as abolitionist, which involved somewhat questionable criteria for some of us.

Hugo¹¹ describes a decolonial approach in his pedagogical practice, influenced by providing scholarships to students. He emphasizes sensitizing students through selecting texts, such as those by the Black author Maria Firmina, the first abolitionist novelist. Hugo adopts a strategy of comparing texts by canonical abolitionist authors with those of Maria Firmina, highlighting the nuances in the representations of Black characters. He seeks to question canonical perspectives, subverting the conventional approach to these themes and emphasizing the humanization of Black characters in literature. While Hugo hesitates to label his approach as subversive or decolonial, his intention is clear: to provoke critical reflections on the representation of Black individuals in literature and challenge established narratives.

¹¹ Hugo is a high school teacher at a federal public school. He is between 50 and 60 years old. He holds a doctorate in Portuguese Language from a federal university and earned his undergraduate degree in Letters from a private institution. He has been working in the classroom for over 30 years.

In addition to this comparative approach, Teacher João and Teacher Bruna indicate that one of the subversions they practice is related to the chronological sequencing of literary styles. They depart from a more deductive logic in which the thematic motif is first brought to the center of discussion. At a later point, identifications of the characteristics of literary styles are compared, presented, and debated. According to both of them,

I developed an approach that I already consider conceived from the perspective of decoloniality. Instead of organizing the curriculum by chronological historical periods, I created thematic axes to address traditional content from thematic perspectives. For instance, instead of narrating the history linearly from troubadour poetry in the first year to contemporary literature in the second year, I approach literature and national identity, exploring Quinhentismo, Romanticism, Modernism, and Tropicalism about the construction of national identity. (João¹², 2021)

So, there are specific contents in the first year, in the second year, others, and so on. When you see part one here: abolitionist poetry, recognition of a fracture... what will I do? I will work on Castro Alves, I will work on symbolism, I will work on modernism... I could not work on this if I were within this box or not subverting the very structure of this teaching methodology that works with the contents defined by the textbook. Sometimes it gets complicated because the coordinator says, "Which book are you using?" I am using the first-year book, "but you are in the third year,"... but I am also in the second year... So there is no one book. Of course, the contents are in the book and are a concern for parents, but the methodology is mine. Thus, the school must accept that I know what I am doing. I keep thinking, why would I go back, the student will lose this thread... Castro Alves started this in Romanticism ideally, but already placed the other because if you stop to think about romantic novels, it is Lúcia, it is the name, it is the ego, from the moment Castro Alves puts a ship, look, he puts something, he moves away from the center and puts the other, you understand? So, I think my work is subversive, decolonizing, because you do not have to be within that box.

As the student sees a look at the other, in the first half of the 19th century, a look at the other in fin de siècle literature, and a look at the other within Modernism, he can make this evolution of human thought, but still with a prejudiced structure. You see, "Oh flower, oh flower," was Sinhá's speech, "go get a cafuné," "you stole it, sir," this thing about the woman. Then you play with Rita Baiana, who drives Jerônimo crazy, and he becomes a murderer, so I keep telling the story because I am also a storyteller. So I share other stories and talk to these multiple voices and perspectives. I think I can deconstruct this box. I, Bruna, personally, within my limitations, work on this idea of decolonizing. (Bruna¹³, 2021)

João and Bruna's teachers adopt subversive approaches to literature teaching, deviating from the traditional chronological sequencing of literary styles. João develops thematic axes, integrating traditional programmatic content under perspectives such as literature and national identity. Bruna creates her methodology by organizing content thematically rather than by

¹² João is a teacher for Middle School and High School, aged between 40 and 50 years old. He holds a degree in Social Communication and Portuguese - Literatures in Portuguese Language, the latter from a state university. Additionally, he has a master's degree in the field of Literatures. With over 15 years of teaching experience, he has been working in private institutions.

¹³ Bruna is a high school teacher, aged between 50 and 60 years old. She holds a degree in Letters from a private university. Bruna earned her master's degree in African Literature from a federal university. With over 10 years of teaching experience, she has been involved in basic education for more than 25 years. Bruna works in both federal and private schools.

academic years, breaking with the standard teaching structure. Both seek to deconstruct paradigms and promote a more inclusive and critical education, reflecting a decolonial approach to literary teaching. Their pedagogical practices highlight the importance of a contextualized and flexible approach in fostering critical thinking and dismantling established norms in literature education.

Another strategy observed is described by Teacher Igor¹⁴, who resorts to playfulness to develop a literary approach to socially relevant themes in the context in which he teaches.

Another experience was with puppets, which was quite powerful because we worked with puppets discussing popular culture. However, it was about connecting the puppet with the person. So each child would choose a puppet called "mamulengos¹⁵" (soft hand, in the Northeast they are called mamulengos, as you know), but there was one puppet left. Moreover, there was a girl and this puppet. He was black. Moreover, she did not pick up the puppet. Moreover, everyone said, "No, but you have to pick it up, otherwise we will not play" [...] The girl did not pick it up, but when we said, "But you have to pick it up, you have to interpret with this puppet" because we had a little theater, like that... she could not and started crying [...] this passage was excellent, fascinating on the sad side, that the girl, when she saw the puppet, I said, "But is the puppet ugly? Why?" "No, I am not going to pick it up." For her, it was the devil; he was black, [...], cute, but she did not identify, and mind you, she was supposed to be an actress because we are from the Arts Center. So, it was a powerful moment, where we tried to play and talk about art... It has to do with Literature because it was a matter of the constructed text, we built the text based on those puppets, and in this construction, we talked about some authors, Machado de Assis, Lima Barreto, but mainly at that moment of interpretation, the girl could not do it because she got terrified when we said, "But aren't you black?" and this became even more complicated for a child. (Igor, 2023)

Puppet theater is a methodological choice employed by the teacher to address an issue that, in his view, can be approached through decolonial perspectives. Using it, he believes that entertainment is a key to developing a literary and critical perception of the social reality surrounding him. In the recounted incident, he finds space to discuss racism, identify oppression, and the effect of coloniality on the mindset of his student, who struggles to portray a character whose skin tone is representative of her own. Evidently, in the narrated process, there is listening and a practice that involves recognizing pedagogical dynamism as an agent of social transformation. The teacher's provocation and the student's response communicate the effects of racism but also provide an opportunity to broaden the discussion, as names of highly relevant Black authors are invoked to deconstruct a harmful ideology in the face of the student's tearful reaction.

¹⁴ Igor primarily works in Elementary School I and II in municipal schools and, in Higher Education, at a private institution. He is between 50 and 60 years old. He graduated in Letters from a private college and holds a doctorate from a federal university. He has been teaching for over 30 years.

¹⁵ theater puppet

In one of Catherine Walsh's lectures, creativity is identified as one of the main forces for decoloniality because, in her view, creation presupposes inventing novelty, responding to the pre-established models of the Global North that reference teaching practices. Therefore, teachers present methods, ways of doing, and ways of interpreting, guided by a theory that seeks different, communicative, transformative paths for the other (and themselves).

4 Conclusion

This study emphasizes the crucial role of teaching in the context of decolonial epistemology, in light of the perceptions and motivations presented by the participating teachers. The analysis of reflections and commitments to decolonial practice provides an enriching understanding of this approach's theoretical and practical dimensions.

This paper highlights the relevance of educators' reflections and actions, which can significantly impact the educational environment. By adopting critical stances towards colonial structures and valuing cultural diversity, these professionals contribute to creating learning spaces that promote inclusion, social justice, and student empowerment.

Teaching is important in decolonial epistemology because it challenges hegemonic narratives, questions Eurocentric knowledge, and recognizes historically marginalized voices. This implies the need to rethink school curricula, promote the representation of different experiences and social struggles, and create space for critical reflection on power relations and injustices in society.

Through the dialogue between theory and practice, teachers engaged in decolonial construction generate enriching and relevant knowledge for expanding epistemic understanding. This involves using teaching materials that reflect cultural diversity, encouraging active student participation through discussions and collaborative projects, and promoting a pedagogy that respects and values multiple forms of knowledge.

In summary, the importance of teaching in decolonial epistemology transcends the school environment, profoundly impacting the construction of a more just and egalitarian society. Challenging colonial structures present in knowledge and education opens a path to a new world where all voices are heard, identities are respected, and differences are valued. Transformation, in this sense, begins in the classroom. As a teacher engaged in this process, I recognize my responsibility in pursuing a more inclusive and emancipatory reality for everyone.

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