

Decolonial efforts in teacher education: destabilization and resignification of hegemonic knowledge in English language textbooks

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Abstract

In this article, I share some experiences as a professor of English language teaching practicum at a public university, with the aim of problematizing and resignifying the knowledge conveyed in textbooks used by student teachers in their practicum. With this purpose, I draw on critical and decolonial studies (Candau, 2020; Kumaravadivelu, 2005; Mignolo, 2011; Mignolo; Walsh, 2018; Pennycook, 2017; Walsh, 2005, 2007, 2009) to propose a decolonial/decolonizing view on the English language and on its teaching materials. This study is based on principles of qualitative autoethnographic research, which has a subjective and self-reflexive nature (Bortoni-Ricardo, 2008; Méndez, 2013). The results are shown through the report of a praxiological movement called Collaboration Project, carried out during the English language teaching practicum. In this joint praxis between professor-supervisor and student teachers, it was possible to destabilize and resignify hegemonic knowledge and expand critical perspectives (Monte Mór, 2018) with a view to contributing to their education.

Keywords: Teacher education. Decoloniality. Textbooks. Teaching praxiologies.

Esforços decoloniais na (trans)formação docente: desestabilização e resignificação de saberes hegemônicos em livros didáticos de língua inglesa

Resumo

Neste artigo, compartilho algumas vivências como professor-orientador de estágio de língua inglesa em uma universidade pública, com o objetivo de problematizar e resignificar saberes veiculados em livros didáticos utilizados por professoras/es em (trans)formação em sua atuação no estágio de língua

inglesa. Nesse intuito, parto dos estudos críticos e decoloniais (Candau, 2020; Kumaravadivelu, 2005; Mignolo, 2011; Mignolo; Walsh, 2018; Pennycook, 2017; Walsh, 2005, 2007, 2009) para propor uma visão decolonial/decolonizadora da língua inglesa e do material didático para o seu ensino. O estudo se fundamenta em princípios da pesquisa qualitativa de cunho autoetnográfico, por sua natureza subjetiva e autorreflexiva (Bortoni-Ricardo, 2008; Méndez, 2013). Os resultados são evidenciados no relato de um movimento praxiológico denominado Projeto de Colaboração, conduzido no estágio de língua inglesa. Nessa práxis conjunta entre professor-orientador e estagiárias, foi possível desestabilizar e resignificar saberes hegemônicos e expandir perspectivas críticas (Monte Mór, 2018), contribuindo, assim, para a (trans)formação dessas professoras.

Palavras-chave: (Trans)formação docente. Decolonialidade. Livro didático. Praxiologias docentes.

Esfuerzos decoloniales en la (trans)formación docente: desestabilización y resignificación del conocimiento hegemónico en los libros de texto de inglés

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Resumen

En este artículo, comparto experiencias como profesor-supervisor de pasantía de lengua inglesa en una universidad pública, con el objetivo de problematizar y resignificar los saberes transmitidos en libros de texto utilizados por profesores en (trans)formación en su actuación en la pasantía de lengua inglesa. Para ello, me baso en estudios críticos y decoloniales (Kumaravadivelu, 2005, Walsh, 2005; 2007; 2009, Mignolo, 2011, Pennycook, 2017, Mignolo; Walsh, 2018, Candau, 2020) para proponer una mirada descolonial/descolonizadora de la lengua inglesa y de los materiales didácticos para su enseñanza. El estudio se basa en los principios de la investigación cualitativa autoetnográfica, por su carácter subjetivo y autorreflexivo (Bortoni-Ricardo, 2008; Méndez, 2013). Los resultados son evidenciados el informe de un movimiento praxiológico llamado Proyecto de Colaboración, realizado en la pasantía de lengua inglesa. En esta praxis conjunta entre profesor-supervisor y los pasantes, fue posible desestabilizar y resignificar los saberes hegemónicos

y ampliar las perspectivas críticas (Monte Mór, 2018), contribuyendo así a la (trans)formación de esas profesoras.

Palabras clave: (Trans)formación docente. Descolonialidad. Libro de texto. Praxiologías docentes.

Initial considerations

English is a language that has been historically linked to colonial processes around the world. In this sense, it is a representative of several forms of imperialism, and its expansion has occurred through those practices (Pennycook, 2017; Phillipson, 1992). Accordingly, English teaching reflects such aspects, and it is commonly associated with colonial and colonizing stances, which may sometimes contribute to attitudes of resistance to its learning/acquisition¹.

However, it is important to bear in mind that English has also served as a weapon to fight and resist, for instance, when former colonies make use of it to denounce and counteract situations of social, political, and cultural subordination and subalternization, which they experienced in the past but that still echo in the present. The tension between colonizer and colonized, in which the latter uses the former's language to oppose colonization, is depicted in the play *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare, written between 1611 and 1612. This conflict can be clearly seen especially in a dialogue between two characters: Prospero, a Duke from Milan, in Italy, who was deposed and exiled to a remote island; and the native Caliban, who already lived there, and whom Prospero makes his slave and on whom he imposes his language, in his presumed right as a member of the nobility. The names of these characters alone convey the ideas of prosperity (civilization) versus cannibalism (backwardness, barbarism), respectively, reflecting an evident power relation in which the dominant culture, considered superior, is imposed upon the culture of the other, deemed inferior. As a result, from such a standpoint, it seems legitimate to make the latter subaltern and subjugated. The following excerpt shows part of this dialogue:

Prospero: [...] I pitied thee, took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour one thing or other: when thou didst not, savage, know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like a thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes with words that made them known. [...]

Caliban: You taught me language, and my profit on't is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you for learning me your language! (Shakespeare, 1863, Act 1, Scene 2, n.p.).

4 From decolonial and intercultural perspectives, the Shakespearean character Caliban has been regarded as a symbol of all peoples and nations subjected to colonizing processes, mainly European-based ones. Those suffered invasions of their territories, eradication of their cultures (in conjunction with the imposition of the colonizer's language), and subalternization of their bodies. Upon becoming aware of the exploitation to which they were subjected, those peoples, or most of them, have used the colonizer's language to fight against all sorts of domination. Thus, the relationship between Prospero and Caliban "[...] may be compared to the relationship established between the European colonizers and the native peoples from the Americas and, from a contemporary viewpoint", from the perspective of the global North-South divide, "between Europe and the rest of the world" (Gomes, 2018, p. 127, translated by the author).

In considering the possibilities for (de)constructing meanings and resignifying knowledges, we see that decolonial perspectives offer "new lenses and strategies of subversive reading that allow us to question and problematize the structures of social inequalities that emerge from literary texts" (Araújo; Tiraboschi; Figueiredo, 2022, p. 39, translated by the author). These might, for instance, serve as tools for fostering critical thinking in language classes. From this viewpoint, the play *The Tempest*, regarded as a "classic" of English literature, indicates the need to decolonize our view of the "foreign" language and the other. Accordingly, it suggests that we should also resignify our teaching praxiologies to destabilize hegemonic views of the world and society, which permeate teaching materials.

As I see it, it urges us to look at English – and consequently at its teaching, and by extension at its textbooks – through a decolonial lens. In this vein, as Pennycook (2017, p. 19) points out,

[although] historically English has been closely tied first to British cultural forms and later to the cultures of an expanded circle of English-speaking countries [...], of more significance today may in fact be the connections between English and various forms of culture and knowledge that are far less readily localizable.

This point of view aligns with the insights shared by bell hooks (1994), an American antiracist theorist and activist, when she reflects on the colonial and oppressive weight of standard English, which was imposed on black children and youth in schools in the United States. Hooks reports that when she read a poem by Adrienne Rich (1929-2012), a poet and political activist, a line, in her words, "moved and disturbed something within me: 'This is the oppressor's language; yet I need it to talk to you'" (hooks, 1994, p. 167). As she maintains, those words made her think of "standard English" as "[...] learning to speak against black vernacular, against the ruptured and broken speech of a dispossessed and displaced people" (p. 168). This feeling led her to ponder how difficult it is "[...] not to hear in standard English always the sound of slaughter and conquest" (p. 169). Nevertheless, in "reflecting on Adrienne Rich's words", the author states:

I know that it is not the English language that hurts me, but what the oppressors do with it, how they shape it to become a territory that limits and defines, how they make it a weapon that can shame, humiliate, colonize (hooks, 1994, p. 168).

From this perspective, the same language can itself serve to both oppress and liberate, to dominate and to resist domination, depending on how it is used and who uses it. This possibility can be associated with the aforementioned words of the Shakespearian character Caliban, as he rises against the subalternization to which he had been subjected, starting with the imposition of the oppressor's language. In a similar vein, Kumaravadivelu (2005, p. 31) highlights that "[...] if a language can be made a product of colonialism, then, it should be equally possible to decolonize it, if there is a collective will". This process necessarily demands the decolonization of knowledge. In the words of Candau (2020, p. 680, translated by the author), we should bear in mind that,

[in] general, educational processes reinforce the logic of coloniality, promoting the homogenization of the subjects involved in them. They identify a single type of knowledge as valid and true, the one produced from the framework constructed under the auspices of European modernity.

This understanding is corroborated by Walsh (2005, 2007), for whom the “coloniality of knowledge” refers to a particular organization of knowledge from a Eurocentric perspective, which holds a single view of the dynamics of knowledge production and legitimation, reinforcing the world divide in a center-periphery model. From this viewpoint, any knowledge produced outside the hegemonic scientific patterns from Europe is inferior since it does not fit into the Eurocentric notion of what knowledge is. This conception is directly connected with the idea of coloniality of power, operating from the “colonial matrix of power”, which “impinges on and transforms all aspects of life” (Mignolo; Walsh, 2018, p. 10).

6 These epistemological conceptions, along with my desire to resignify my praxiologies, have led me to professionally work with language teacher education (which has been aimed at transformation). My work is done in a Portuguese and English language teaching undergraduate program at a public university, which was founded with the primary mission of providing quality education for future teachers, who should work in basic education.

In this article, my objective is to problematize and resignify knowledge conveyed in textbooks that have been used by student teachers in their English language teaching practicum so as to propose a decolonial/decolonizing perspective on the English language and on its teaching materials. As I see it, there was a collaborative effort put by the supervisor and supervisees into making those praxiologies socially situated actions, grounded in a critical and reflective perspective, in conjunction with a decolonial (re)reading of the world and our praxes. Thus, the methodological procedures adopted in this study follow the principles of qualitative research, which regards knowledge as socially and subjectively constructed (Bortoni-Ricardo, 2008). In addition, it has an autoethnographic nature, as I seek to carry out a reflexive analysis of my own lived experiences (Wall, 2006). This process results in a narrative, in which I express my subjectivity and emotional experiences (Méndez, 2013),

with a view to broadening the understanding of the context where this study was conducted. Further, this study should also help engender new epistemological perspectives on research as a self-reflexive action (Ono, 2018).

Throughout my professional practice in language teacher education, as a professor and supervisor in the English language teaching practicum, I have faced recurrent challenges related to teaching in several different educational contexts, especially in basic education. When reflecting on the various kinds of issues with which our student teachers have to deal in their practicum, something particularly stands out to me: the relation these future teachers establish with the teaching materials that will guide and support their work in the classroom.

In order to achieve the aforementioned objective, this article was organized to direct its discussions and reflections toward the analysis of an activity referred to as *praxiological movement*. Thus, following these initial considerations, I address the effort made to see English language and textbooks through a decolonial lens. In the next section, I present the praxiological movement that emerged within the practicum component called Collaboration Project. There I describe the effort put into destabilizing and resignifying knowledges, and consequently expanding critical perspectives. Then I discuss the results of this study in the final considerations.

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Decolonial efforts to take a new look on textbooks: challenges in the teaching practice

In looking specifically at English as a foreign/an additional² language in contexts of basic education, although in many of them there is a certain resistance or even aversion to the use of textbooks, for reasons I shall not address here, I believe this material still provides solid support to teachers in their practice. I agree with authors such as Tílio and Rocha (2009), Ferreira (2014), and Nascimento (2016), who recognize the importance of this tool, especially in foreign/additional language teaching. Like them, I see in the textbook the potential to develop a critical and problematizing work. My experiences, as well as the studies I have conducted and others I have read, lead me to see how

[textbooks] play an important role in formal education and in the formation of subjects who live and co-exist in a society of knowledge like ours, something which is recognized by a large part of the population. The textbook is therefore a cultural, political, and ideological tool that has a key role in the process of production and reproduction of social practices; yet it has also the potential to engender questioning attitudes and resistance to such practices (Pereira, 2014, p. 214-215, translated by the author).

8 I notice the significance of these materials in the educational process, as these teaching tools expose teachers and learners to representations of social structures and values that constitute them. They present contents which express principles and conceptions that might serve both to foster critical awareness and to promote assimilation and conformity to hegemonic perspectives rooted in asymmetrical and unequal power relations. Textbooks often address cultural issues from the viewpoint of neoliberal multiculturalism, whereas, from the standpoint of decolonial education, critical interculturality would be the preferred approach. According to Walsh (2007), as corroborated by Candau (2020, p. 680, translated by the author), “critical interculturality is intrinsically linked to the decolonial perspective, and it should be understood as an intellectual and political process and project aimed at constructing alternative ways of [exercising] power, knowing, and being [in the world].”

Walsh (2019, p. 24, translated by the author) sees the concepts of *multiculturalism* and *interculturality* in opposing positions, insofar as

the recognition of and tolerance toward others, which the multicultural paradigm advocates, not only perpetuate social inequality but also leave intact the social and institutional structure that constructs, reproduces, and maintains inequalities.

In contrast, critical interculturality “continuously questions racialization, subalternization, belittlement, and their patterns of power, [and] it make visible different ways of being, living, and knowing” (Walsh, 2009, p. 25, translated by the author). It proposes a work from differences “within a framework that takes legitimacy, dignity, equality, equity, and respect seriously, while at the same time it encourages the creation of ‘other’ ways of thinking, being, existing, learning, teaching, dreaming, and living that go beyond pre-established

boundaries" (Walsh, 2009, p. 25, emphasis in original, translated by the author). Therefore, we should be alert to the traps hidden within proposals of educational materials that, "under the umbrella of 'interculturality'", present representations of marginalized and subalternized groups by society, which "only serve to reinforce stereotypes and colonial processes of racialization" (Walsh, 2019, p. 22, translated by the author). Hence, the use of textbooks should always go hand in hand with critique and problematization.

When addressing the need to decolonize textbooks, Oliveira (2017, p. 16, translated by the author) emphasizes that

[the] decolonization of utterances and visual representations is a fundamental movement toward a genuine recognition of differences. Decolonizing historical discourses, decolonizing racializing images (beyond the politically correct alternative), decolonizing ideas of development, consumption, and poverty, and decolonizing the literary worlds of reference are some of the challenges that arise when we look at textbooks [...], which usually fail to move beyond a framework of colonial knowledge.

My teaching practice and experience in a language teacher education program, as well as many studies done on the subject, have shown that, in general, despite several advances in the field, education continues to adopt a position of supposed neutrality in the face of urgent social issues. Since there is no neutrality in education, such a stance leads more to a training program geared toward acceptance and conformity with social norms and standards than to an education focused on transformation of social reality, which should be brought about by individuals. The latter presupposes problematization, questioning, and resistance to existing social structures.

In this sense, the textbook often just reproduces and reinforces socially pre-established norms and conventions. From a critical perspective of education, these should be resisted and problematized in order to promote pressing social changes. This is particularly worrying when we note that the textbook was

[initially] designed as a resource to facilitate the teaching and learning process, which should then support teachers' work. However, the textbook has instead regulated teaching practices in different

contexts, often replacing the curriculum and overriding teachers' voices. In those cases, the textbook becomes the dominant voice throughout the educational process (Tílio; Rocha, 2009, p. 296, translated by the author).

This supremacy of the textbook as a guide for teachers' work, which replaces lesson planning and supplants the teacher's voice, results in what the authors call the "textbook dictatorship". I see signs of this "dictatorship", for instance, when a school provides the material and demands, in return, that the whole textbook be used linearly, from start to finish, so as to "justify" its provision. Moreover, this "textbook dictatorship" can also be observed in the imposition of themes and contents as well as of how they should be taught in the classroom. Thus, there is no room for the development of agency and autonomy on the part of its users.

Another important observation is that, in contexts where textbooks are used, teachers do not always make the necessary adaptations to their students' local realities, a choice which reflects a massifying and homogenizing conception of teaching and learning. As a consequence, there is no due attention to the singularities of contexts and the individual differences of subjects. This homogenizing view of language education goes in the opposite direction to contemporary demands, as argued by Monte Mór (2014, p. 241, translated by the author):

[in] the traditional school, homogeneity is valued as a priority, and the focus is on linguistic, cultural, and behavioral norms and consensus of thoughts and decisions. These are disciplinary procedures that favor convergence. [However,] [i]n today's school, there is a tendency to include heterogeneity in the curriculum, pedagogical procedures, and classroom activities.

It is important to notice that the content and values presented in textbooks extend far beyond the classroom walls. These materials might lead learners to what some authors call "additional learning", that is, it may allow them to go beyond just learning the language. Fávaro (2013, p. 34, translated by the author) corroborates this idea by noting that the English language textbook does not only assist students in learning the language but also allows them to discover a "[...] new world through texts and images that tell stories

from other corners of the planet, about people of different ethnicities, with words that recreate meanings from the contexts depicted, based on situated realities”.

Concentrating my efforts into decolonizing the textbook, through the decolonization of knowledge and the destabilization and resignification of hegemonic knowledge, is a challenge that I have faced in my daily practice. My efforts have materialized in the adoption of a critical and problematizing stance toward language education processes (with the purpose of bringing about transformation), which has been reflected in my teacher education context. My praxis is aimed at encouraging movements toward the decolonization of knowledge, following Candau's (2020, p. 680, translated by the author) understanding of the need to identify and recognize the “logic of coloniality”, which deems legitimate only knowledge with a European-based benchmark. One way to destabilize these colonial assumptions of hegemonic knowledge is to prepare future teachers to critically engage with language textbooks, especially foreign language teaching ones. The focus should be on stimulating students to question all knowledge presented in different forms of language in these materials.

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Lived experiences in a Collaboration Project: a praxiological movement toward resignifying knowledge and expanding critical perspectives

As a teacher educator and supervisor of practicum, I accompany student teachers to schools and assist them from planning to teaching classes in the final grades of elementary education in state schools. My colleagues and I have referred to them as *partner schools*, seeking to overcome the conception of *field schools*, as they were called in the past. This change in the way that we look at them has also influenced our work in the English language teaching practicum, which is in keeping with the proposal to reshape the practicum through efforts that have been made to decolonize the university-school relationship. This is, in turn, aimed at “[...] disrupt[ing] the relationship of coloniality that sometimes reigns over educational practices within the practicum” (Silvestre; Sabota; Pereira, 2020, p. 104, translated by the author).

Our proposal for the restructuring and resignification of the practicum revolves around the concept of “*lived experiences*”, which presupposes to “*experience the school in its entirety*”, in the sense of “*co-construct[ing] a relationship of belonging with that place [...]*” (p. 105, 111, emphasis in original, translated by the author). This movement allows us to “[...] think *alongside, from, and within* (Dennis, 2018) the school. Such actions caused cracks in the pre-established certainties about the place that welcomed us and gave way to discoveries based on what we experienced in the environment” (p. 111-112, emphasis in original, translated by the author). We were thereby engaged in changing the lens through which we looked at the school.

Throughout the practicum, the Collaboration Projects provide us, supervisor and student teachers, with an opportunity to expand and resignify the contents proposed in the textbooks. These are activities included in the Practicum Regulations of our language teaching undergraduate program. Collaboration Projects are set up by student teachers, under the supervision and guidance of a teacher educator, in meetings held at the university and in partner schools. There is therefore a constant exchange of information and ideas between these two contexts, and in order to avoid the theory/practice dichotomy, we have worked with the concept of praxis – “[...] understood as thought-reflection-action, and thought-reflection on this action” (Mignolo; Walsh, 2018, p. 7).

When teaching regular classes, student teachers often report on their difficulty in “*breaking free*” from the proposals of textbooks or other materials adopted at the schools, either due to lack of time to prepare alternative or complementary materials, or the requirement to follow their contents to the letter. This goes in the opposite direction to what literacy studies point to as “*agency*”, as it is associated with the concept of “*subjectivity*”, proposed by Biesta (2010) and corroborated by Monte Mór. In the words of the latter, it must be

[...] focused on the development of independence and action. This moves from integrating and including learners into existing social norms to enabling or encouraging them, in a movement of expansion, to be able to free themselves from the current social order, whenever they deem it necessary (Monte Mór, 2014, p. 237, translated by the author).

In the planning and development of the Collaboration Project, future teachers are free to address the themes they consider relevant from contents presented in different kinds of texts – text here is understood in its multiple forms and languages, or semiotic possibilities, as upheld by authors such as Santaella (2001), Rojo (2009, 2013), and Rojo and Moura (2012). It is worth noting that various text types/discourse genres, commonly regarded as typical of digital environments, are becoming increasingly present in print media, such as textbooks (Rojo, 2013).

Collaboration Projects are carried out in schools in regular classes or at alternative hours (generally after school hours). In full-time schools, which are most of the partner schools with which we work, these projects take place during elective activities, that is, they are complementary to regular education, and not directly linked to specific classes. Therefore, learners are free to participate in them, according to their interests.

In working with Collaboration Projects, I have seen an increasing engagement by both students from partner schools and student teachers in the activities proposed. As these are elective courses, learners freely choose to take them, and student teachers are free to choose the themes, organize their planning, and teach the activities as they see fit. Those involved in language education, especially English language education, often complain about the disconnection between the reality portrayed in textbooks and everyday social practices of learners. Thus, in the activities done within the Collaboration Project, we seek to address global knowledge as linked to the local context, a movement understood as 'glocal' (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). According to Ramos, Fidalgo, and Sprenger (2018, p. 5, translated by the author), we should avoid looking at this relation in a dichotomous manner; instead, we ought to see it as

[...] a reciprocal and dynamic interaction so that co-construction can override duality, which sometimes favors the local, and sometimes it favors the global. It is important that the integration be constructed collaboratively, through negotiations rather than hierarchically, or from a specific and almost always unilateral source. In other words, such an integration should be a glocal construction. This is the challenge.

In this vein, Monte Mór (2014) discusses critical perspectives of literacy and expansion of views on “difference” in language teaching. From her standpoint, these processes involve

[...] deconstructing/reconstructing the predominantly established knowledge with the purpose of understanding the local context. This means more than just showing the tendencies and effects of dominant norms; it involves rebuilding local knowledge, taking into account its needs and understanding that they may be transitory. Thus, global or universal knowledge must be constantly reinterpreted in a way it can reflect its current conditions. However, such a reconstruction will likely occur through a process of “remixing”, encompassing both the local and the global (Monte Mór, 2014, p. 244, translated by the author).

14 In another work, Monte Mór (2018) addresses the correlation between critical literacies and the expansion of perspectives by problematizing the convergence of interpretations in reading practices in English language teaching. Her observations indicate that there are few spaces for the construction of meaning-making and the development of agency and authorship in the process. The author has directed her reflections and inquiries towards “a praxis that would provide [her] with what [she] identified as ‘one step further’”, which would involve, in her words, “[...] openness or willingness to know or recognize different views and voices, with the intention of promoting the expansion of perspectives” (p. 21, translated by the author). This “plurality in interpretations [...], which moves away from a convergent direction [...]” (p. 21, translated by the author), is not always present in reading practices in the school environment. The teacher’s role as a catalyst for this expansion of perspectives then becomes crucial, even if the material adopted (a textbook or another source of content) does not open up this possibility.

In the following paragraphs, I present a brief account of a Collaboration Project developed as an elective activity in 2022. It emerged from the concerns of two student teachers during their practicum experience at the partner school, which was shared with me in a supervision meeting. It is worth stressing that, in this process of resignification and re(de)structuring of the conceptions of practicum, partner school, and lived experience, the teacher educator and supervisor accompanies their student teachers to partner

schools, where they attempt to do the activities that were planned, thus being present throughout the whole process in the school.

During a collaborative session, while analyzing the textbook that they were going to use in their English lessons in a ninth-grade class, we found a unit on family. What bothered us were the types of family structures presented in that unit: they were limited to traditional families, made up of cis-heteronormative, middle-class couples with “perfect” children, and their members were predominantly white, i.e., they had a European phenotype.

I instructed them to ask their students about their families, and whether they fit into the types depicted, instead of starting from the family types presented in the textbook. I suggested that, before opening the textbook, they should talk with their students about their families, and while bringing up their family structures, that they should be careful not to seem like as if they were positioning themselves as models to be followed. As a follow-up activity, I suggested that they ought to draw on the textbook but propose a discussion of the theme presented in the unit the following way: “Now let's see if the families portrayed in our textbook have similarities or differences when compared with our families.” This proposal is in line with the arguments of authors such as Mignolo and Walsh (2018), in the sense that it seeks to move away from the “colonial matrix of power”, which perpetuates the hegemonic Western thought of supremacy of Eurocentric lifestyle and behavior, aspects that are assimilated into societies like ours. In this respect, there was an effort to destabilize the concepts of family based on “ready-made” models that follow Eurocentric criteria.

In my view, this particular approach, which works from the local to the global, makes a significant difference because by firstly talking about students’ “real” families and only after that addressing the family structures presented in the textbook, albeit implicitly, we indicate that the textbook must be adapted to our reality, and not the other way around. From my standpoint, this movement contributes to “critical intercultural education,” in which “a fundamental aspect is to unveil the forms of colonality present in the everyday life of our societies and schools” (Candau, 2020, p. 681, translated by the author). I must emphasize that the textbook activities, which focused on the family structures presented, proposed exactly the opposite, with the question: “Does your family resemble any of these families?” Therefore, it left no space for problematization

of differences in this comparison, nor did it encourage expansion of perspectives that could consider other possibilities of family types other than those represented.

From their concerns and reflections, under my guidance, the student teachers put forward a Collaboration Project entitled “Family Tree and Family Structures”. My goal was to stimulate the expansion of critical perspectives (Monte Mór, 2018) and instill in the student teachers and in their students the willingness and eagerness to “question, transform, shake up, rearticulate, and build” (Walsh, 2009, p. 25, translated by the author) the knowledge presented in the textbook. Accordingly, the Collaboration Project began with the creation of family trees and narratives about their family structures, which should preferably include photographs of their members. Our aim was to reinforce the idea that there is not an “ideal” family type, but that there are different forms of structures and experiences among people who love, respect, and identify with each other, and who have diverse familial ties. Following the activity that had been planned, each student should build their family tree, while describing the characteristics of its members in English. After that, we asked them to search on the internet for the types of families identified in the 2010 IBGE census, as well as those from other countries and cultures. We also suggested that they looked for examples of families of other people, whether famous or not, that were different from the representations found in the textbook, i.e., we asked the learners to show other family types to the group.

This search for different family types, for other forms of social organization, drives students to “begin to act, be, think decolonially” (Mignolo, 2017, p. 5, as cited in Silvestre; Sabota; Pereira, 2020, p. 109, translated by the author), to the extent that it can lead them to “make visible, confront, and transform structures and institutions that position groups, practices, and thoughts differently within a racial, modern, and colonial order and logic” (Walsh, 2007, p. 9, as cited in Candau, 2020, p. 680, translated by the author). This involves “decolonial work [that is] aimed at breaking chains and freeing minds”, “challenging and dismantling the social, political, and epistemic structures of coloniality” (p. 680, translated by the author). Then the students should present the results of their searches to the class the following week, by using graphs, drawings, videos, or other resources.

In their presentations, they showed that not all of their family types were represented in the textbook, nor were they present in the family structures in the IBGE census, and even less so in examples of typical families from other countries and cultures. Two aspects were then highlighted in the discussion that ensued: a) the omission of representations of Brazilian family structures and those from other cultures in that unit of the textbook and the reasons for this omission, thereby calling into question the supremacy of the knowledge reproduced in this teaching material; and b) how society treats nonhegemonic family structures, that is, those that do not “fit” into traditional types built on patriarchal and Judeo-Christian foundations. The main observation made by the learners was that “nontraditional” or nonhegemonic family types are regarded as “inferior” and “wrong” by part of society, which does not recognize these as “real families”, echoing what is implicit in the way the textbook presented family structures. As a result, as I see it, the activity pointed to a critical intercultural perspective. According to Walsh (2009, p. 25, translated by the author), this perspective “makes visible different ways of being, living, and knowing”, destabilizing the neoliberal multicultural view that, even when advocating for “tolerance towards others”, contributes to the maintenance of inequalities (Walsh, 2019, p. 24, translated by the author).

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It is worth mentioning that the student teachers used an accessible language repertoire, that is, they took into account the age and knowledge of their students while discussing the topic in question in English. In the following class, from suggestions made during the presentations and discussions, videos were selected by the student teachers and their students to be shown in class. Those focused on the theme “family and diversity”, and then a discussion was held about their content. Their final activity concentrated on revisiting the family types presented in the textbook and adding other family structures to the unit, which had not been previously included.

In my analysis of the Collaboration Project, briefly reported here, I consider that this praxiological movement led to the problematization of social representations of the textbook in three aspects, in a way it could expand the discussion to the social and cultural realms from reflections on: a) families structures; b) the family types that make up the Brazilian society; and c) the concept of family and its structures in different cultures. This movement from the local to

the global, which does not minimize or subordinate any cultural component but values diversity, gave rise to a “cultural remixing” of local and global knowledges, as proposed by Monte Mór (2014). Thus, it was a movement of reinterpretation and knowledge expansion (Monte Mór, 2018).

From my vantage point, in this praxiological proposal developed within the curricular component Collaboration Project, as dominant behavior models were problematized, hegemonic knowledge, disseminated as the sole way of viewing the world and conceiving social organization, was destabilized. Such knowledge is based on a colonial matrix of power that encompasses colonial practices of knowledge, being, and nature (Mignolo, 2011; Mignolo; Walsh, 2018; Walsh, 2009), which therefore must be questioned, resignified, and expanded.

In this respect, there was an expansion of critical perspectives (Monte Mór, 2018) by fostering the agency of the subjects involved in the activity, as they could draw on their lived experiences and everyday social practices to discuss the issues addressed in the school environment, as well as on cultural differences that underpin the conception of family in other sociocultural realities. Thus, the individuals that participated in this project were able to establish a connection between global knowledge and the local context of their lived experiences (Monte Mór, 2014). In other words, the “glocal” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) was taken into account by resignifying and expanding the content presented in the textbook, insofar as the work was primarily done from the sociocultural reality reflected in the school, and consequently, in the classroom. The students used the English language in their presentations by relying both on their existing language repertoires and newly acquired repertoires. However, most importantly, they could realize that this language, like any other, can serve both to disseminate hegemonic knowledge, which is tied to dominant power relations, and to challenge, destabilize, and resignify conceptions while presenting alternatives to them (hooks, 2013; Kumaravadivelu, 2005; Pennycook, 2017).

Final considerations

In this article, my intention was to problematize and resignify knowledge conveyed in textbooks used by student teachers in their English language teaching practicum by proposing a decolonial/decolonizing perspective on this language and its teaching materials. To this end, I presented an account on a praxiological movement called Collaboration Project, developed during the aforesaid practicum at a public school, as part of the activities proposed within the curriculum of a language teaching undergraduate program of a state university. This project was motivated by the concerns expressed by the student teachers and the teacher educator in a collaborative session about a certain content in a textbook used in the partner school, especially in relation to the representation of family structures.

The decolonial effort made to destabilize and resignify hegemonic knowledge took shape in the supervision sessions and throughout the monitoring of the praxiological movement reported in this study, entitled “Family Tree and Family Structures”. This movement led the student teachers, and consequently their students, to realize that the knowledge conveyed in the textbook, through the representations of family types, does not express an egalitarian and equitable vision of a society, in which different ways of “being, living, and knowing” are respected and seen as legitimate (Walsh, 2009, p. 25, translated by the author). This sparked a discussion on the topic that drove us to supplement that unit of the textbook with additional materials, in a way we could broaden its perspective, resignify knowledges, and challenge the hegemonic views reproduced in that teaching material.

Therefore, the praxiological movement reported here provided us with an opportunity to destabilize and resignify some of the knowledges, conceptions, and understandings that the individuals involved in the project had, which were also present in the textbook used in the classroom.

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Notes

1. I do not differentiate *acquisition* from *learning* here. They are used interchangeably, regardless of whether the process is formal or informal.
2. In this article, the terms *foreign language* and *additional language* are used interchangeably.

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