


Language education in english as an additional language in Brazil: overcoming the colonial practices of teaching english as a foreign language*

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ABSTRACT

Both Great Britain and the United States have, for a long time now, deliberately implemented policies designed to spread the learning of English to countries all over the world, as a way of expanding their cultural and ideological influence throughout the globe. All the money invested in language and cultural institutes, teaching materials and teacher education has always been associated with this goal (PHILLIPSON, 1992; MOITA LOPES, 1996) and has promoted the development of a powerful industry for the teaching of English as a second or foreign language for virtually every country on the planet. The present essay discusses the ideological implications of mainstream practices of teaching English as a foreign language in the Global South (SANTOS; MENESES, 2010) in general and, more specifically, in Brazil. It also proposes an alternative framework for developing educational practices

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intended to facilitate the appropriation of the English language by Brazilian students. Appropriating the language, from the perspective adopted in this essay, means that the students should become able to use it on their own terms, according to their own needs and values, and, above all, for their own purposes. That is, appropriation is a process for replacing “Teaching English as a Foreign Language” by “Language Education in English as an Additional Language”.

Keywords: *Language Education. English as an Additional Language. Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Critical Pedagogies.*

Traditionally, research on the teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL) in the Global South (SANTOS; MENESES, 2010) has avoided adopting a straightforward approach to the issue of cultural imperialism. Most of the time, in Brazil, the discussions that relate the teaching of English to issues such as power, dominance and ideology revolve around the question of why public schools are not able to teach the language as efficiently as private language courses do. The main concern in these debates is that the English language – taken for granted as a powerful tool for individual overcoming of poverty, as well as improvement of the social conditions of marginalized groups – is being denied to the poor, who cannot afford a private language course as the middle classes do.

A couple of extremely important questions that should, logically, precede that one, are rarely asked. They are: 1) is English, in fact, a powerful tool for the popular classes to overcome poverty and social injustice? and 2) if so, is the way middle classes are taught the language appropriate to that purpose? Some would probably dismiss the first of these two questions, claiming that the status of international or global language, or, as some prefer, *lingua franca*, makes it obvious that the knowledge of English brings power to those who possess it, while making those who do not vulnerable and unfit for

living in today's globalized world. It is important to notice, though, that the overlooking of both questions is not a new phenomenon: the view of English as an extremely important tool for every single person in Brazil goes back to the 1960s and 1970s, when globalization was not yet in sight and the world was divided into two political, economic, and ideological blocs during the Cold War.

At that time, English was, without any question, the language of both British and American mainstream cultures – not yet a language which could be claimed by virtually every people on the globe, as it can today, but still the language of imperialism and neocolonialism. This means that the almost absolute absence of papers, conferences, or round tables on the issue of linguistic imperialism cannot be explained by an allegedly self-evident importance of knowing *the* international language in a globalized world. It is more likely that the explanation lies upon the efficiency of British and American policies for spreading their cultural and ideological influence over Latin America in general and Brazil in particular, as one of the few papers on the issue seems to confirm (MOITA LOPES, 1996).

What seems to be the case is that, since the field of TEFL, including methods, materials, and research, was largely a creation of British and American foreign policies, Brazilian teachers, teacher educators and researchers were the first to assimilate the neocolonialist ideologies which came with the proposed pedagogies for the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. The highly endogenous character of the community functioned as a shield, isolating their members from possible criticisms from researchers belonging to other fields of the human and social sciences.

What I intend to do in this paper is to provide a brief overview of the historical development of the field of TEFL in the Global South (SANTOS; MENESES, 2010) – emphasizing the case of Brazil, point out the ideological implications of this process for those working on the field in the past and nowadays, and propose a strategy for overcoming of the colonial practices of TEFL through the adoption of an alternative framework for language education, which treats English not as a foreign language, but as an additional one.

The development of the TEFL field: goals and attitudes

The efforts made by the UK and the USA for spreading the teaching and learning of English around the world started long before the Second World War. At that time, however, English had to dispute the preference of the public interested in learning a foreign language with several other European languages. The 1930s were an especially relevant decade for the history of TEFL, particularly in Brazil. The year 1934 saw the creation of both the British Council and the *Sociedade Brasileira de Cultura Inglesa*, which was, in fact, born of a suggestion made by Sir William Seeds, the British ambassador in Brazil at the time. In 1937, the *Instituto Brasil-Estados Unidos* was founded by a group of both Brazilian and American personalities, gathered at *Palácio Itamaraty*, in the city of Rio de Janeiro, then the capital of Brazil.

But it was not until the decades that followed the end of the II World War that the field of TEFL established itself as an important part of Brazil's academic, educational, and economic life in the big cities. During the years of the so-called Cold War, Latin America was under a heavy influence of the USA. English became hegemonic among the foreign languages people wanted to learn. In response to that demand, a lot of private English courses were created and a lot of them were commercially successful. The development, both academically and economically, of the field went on under an atmosphere of admiration towards what was represented as the mainstream American culture on the part of teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and pupils, which corresponded exactly to the goals set for TEFL by US policy makers (MOITA LOPES, 1996).

In one of the rare articles addressing the issue, Moita Lopes (1996) summarizes the hegemonic attitude of both teachers and students of ELT in Brazil during that period, as far as the USA, its language and culture are concerned. He also reveals the goals set by North American academic authorities for TEFL in Latin American countries. Central to both aspects of the investigation is the role attributed to the teaching of culture, its character and the assumptions implied in such teaching.

There is little doubt that teaching any language will frequently involve the teaching of aspects of the culture – or cultures – associated with the language, especially when cultural differences might lead to semantic or pragmatic misunderstanding. Moreover, a critical approach to cultural assumptions, values, and stereotypes of not only the cultures associated with the language being learned, but also of the learners' own culture(s), seems to be a perfectly reasonable way of developing not only linguistic skills, but also critical thinking. However, that was not what was meant by the emphasis on the teaching of culture on those days.

First, there was not any cultural diversity in the teaching of English and that was reflected in the way language variation was referred to by the whole community, including pupils: one either learned “American English” or “British English”. So, these were the possible cultures to be taught. And, of course, by American culture, or British culture, what was meant was the mainstream aspects of those cultures. There was little room for the introduction of linguistic or cultural variation within those cultures. And no room at all either for the cultures of other English-speaking countries, or to the pupils' own culture(s). Second, the intra-language approach of the audiolingual method – the most prestigious method at the time – obviously implied that the teaching of culture should follow it, that is, the method adopted both an intra-language and an intra-culture approach to teaching. This means that the pupils' language and culture(s) were left out of the English classroom. Worse, they were considered “negative interference” to the learning of the English language and its culture. This led to the bizarre concept and practice of the “cultural island”: in the EFL classroom everybody should pretend they were either in the USA or in the UK, and not in their own country. It was not rare that students were forced to adopt American or British names, instead of their birth names, during the class.

Moreover, the allegedly anthropological view of culture adopted by teaching materials was not thought of as a way of preserving or protecting the cultural identities of the pupils. On the contrary, it was recommended after specialists had analyzed the way American speakers reacted to cultural differences while learning other languages – they tended to despise cultural differences, considering them as a sign of

stupidity whenever their own cultural assumptions were not followed (MOITA LOPES, 1996, p. 40). So, cultural relativism for those who elaborated the teaching materials meant that the students should be encouraged to dismiss any negative feelings or thoughts they could have towards any aspect of the “target” culture. There is no doubt that such an approach fits well the purpose of colonizing the minds and hearts of those learning the language. In Brazil, this US version of cultural relativism helped increase an already extremely positive attitude of the middle-class students toward the USA and reinforced a negative attitude towards Brazil (MOITA LOPES, 1996, p. 41).

As far as the goals of TEFL are concerned, the discussion by Moita Lopes (1996, p. 42) of Jaramillo’s ideas is quite revealing. Jaramillo (1973 *apud* MOITA LOPES, 1996) warns the teachers of English for speakers of other languages (TESOL) that American cultural behavior should be understood and accepted by the students, otherwise they could become English-speaking enemies of the USA and, according to the article, the real job of teachers of English as a second or foreign language should be to make friends of the USA, to make students from the Global South (SANTOS; MENESES, 2010) admire English and the way of life it represents.

As to the findings of Moita Lopes’ research (1996) on the attitudes of Brazilian teachers and students of English, they show evidence that by the late 1970s and early 1980s, Brazilian students displayed a positive attitude towards the foreign culture. Brazilian teachers of English, for their part, shared an extremely positive attitude towards the American culture, while demonstrating a negative attitude towards their own culture. Based on cultural stereotypes, they looked down on Brazilian culture and acted as if they were born in Europe or in the United States. A considerable number of the teachers who were interviewed said that their goal was to teach students native-like fluency and accuracy. Their answers also indicated a preference for the use of English instead of Portuguese as means of expression, as well as lack of theoretical knowledge as far as linguistics are concerned: their beliefs about English and Portuguese were impressionist, prejudiced, and common-sensical, not scientific in any way. For example, most participants considered English to be more precise than

Portuguese, while Portuguese was considered more difficult than English.

Some may claim that things have changed and a lot since those days and that most Brazilian teachers of EFL do not subscribe to those attitudes anymore. Indeed, a lot has changed, but it is possible that some implications of working within the frame of traditional TEFL may remain in more sophisticated forms. Before considering the changes within the field, though, it is important to remember Raymond Williams' warning about the complexity of any given culture at any time. Residual, dominant, and emergent ideas, practices and assumptions live together in any culture (WILLIAMS, 1979). This means that even if a certain idea or practice is dismissed by some as old-fashioned or plainly wrong in face of new evidence, as it happened to the audiolingual method within the TEFL community, for example, it does not mean that that idea or practice will simply cease to exist, or that the whole group will agree on its obsolescence. A quick analysis of the methods adopted by some private language courses in Brazil will prove this to be true as far as the use of audiolingual method is concerned.

Let us now look at some of the changes that occurred in the field. One of them was the advent of the so-called communicative approach. In theory, methodology based on the communicative approach did not reject the possible use of student's L1 in class (as long as it contributed to the learning of a specific issue being taught), neither did it try to obliterate their cultural identities. However, in practice, especially in Brazil, teachers continued to see the use of L1 in class as negative interference. Even if it was not totally forbidden anymore, it was, at least, something to be avoided whenever possible. The communicative approach did not shake the hegemonic social belief that learning English is, above all, no matter the context or the student's personal objectives, about developing almost native-like oral fluency and accuracy in English. And, to achieve these purposes, an intra-linguistic and cultural approach seems more adequate than an inter-linguistic and cultural one.

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 130), the term *communicative revolution* is "clearly an overstatement". And one of drawbacks has to do precisely with the tendency of

not acknowledging the benefits of making use of the students' previous linguistic and cultural knowledge in classroom. He quotes several applied linguists (including SWAN, 1985; ROSE; KASPER, 2001; COOK, 2002) who criticize the fact that all the pragmatic and cultural knowledge which adult learners already possess, from their life experiences in their own languages and cultures, are not valued in most so-called communicative classes of EFL (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2006, p. 131):

Yet another serious drawback that deserves mention is what Swan (1985) dubbed the "tabula rasa attitude" of the learner-centered pedagogists. That is, they firmly and falsely believed that adult L2 learners do not possess normal pragmatic skills, nor can they transfer them, from their mother tongue. They summarily dismissed the L1 pragmatic knowledge/ability L2 learners bring with them to the L2 classroom. Swan (1985) draws attention to the fact that adult second-language learners know how to negotiate meaning, convey information, and perform speech acts. [...] In other words, L2 learners, by virtue of being members of their L1 speech community, know the basic rules of communicative use. All we need to do is to tap the linguistic and cultural resources they bring with them.

Another major change was the development of a community of teachers and researchers interested in the specificities of teaching English in the context of Brazilian public schools. The creation of such a community owes a lot to Professor Maria Antonieta Celani and her colleagues at PUC-SP who, during the 1980s, designed and implemented a huge dialogical program of in-service teacher education which was able to reach public schools' teachers of English all over the country (CELANI, 2005). The program did not establish any *a priori* procedure recommendations. However, the dialogue between teacher educators and public schools' teachers, who described the reality and the challenges they faced in their working place, soon led both to conclude that the best option for most public schools' teachers would be to focus on the teaching of reading. After this became clear, there flourished an English for specific purposes (ESP) movement focusing on the teaching of reading in Brazil.

That was one of the few - and, unfortunately, brief - exceptions to the blind following of foreign methodologies

designed for TEFL. Even during the relatively short period when the approach was successful to the point of competing with TEFL mainstream practices for hegemony in the teaching of English in Brazilian public schools, the teaching of reading was seen as somehow inferior to mainstream TEFL. Not only by those who refused to embrace this version of ESP, but also by some ESP teachers themselves, especially when they started the new practices with public school students. The participatory philosophy of the project was extremely important for ESP teachers to overcome this sense of not being “real” teachers of English:

This close participation in a non-prescriptive set-up gradually created a feeling of ownership which was one of the main assets of the Project. If before the Project started there were the feelings of near refusal to be involved in ESP teaching, referred to above, as the Project progressed, however, teachers seemed to have developed a positive identity as ESP practitioners. (CELANI, 2005, p. 17)

The movement reached its climax with the publication of the National Curricular Parameters (BRASIL, 1998) for the teaching of modern foreign languages at regular schools in the late 1990s. The official document recommended that the teaching of foreign languages in Brazilian regular schools focused on reading skills, following what was already being done by those who accepted the findings of the ESP Project mentioned above (ALMEIDA, 2012). Almost two decades of successful ESP practice and reflection in Brazilian public schools preceded the publication of the Parameters. Nonetheless, the document was badly received by a huge number of Brazilian teachers of English, especially those who did not teach at public schools or who never really tried to understand the rationale supporting the document.

Although the Parameters gave clear explanations about the reasons why the focus on reading seemed more appropriate to the context of regular schools – presenting not only practical reasons, but also reasons concerning social and educational relevance –, the resistance and criticism of Brazilian community of teachers of EFL, without any real theoretical support, was overwhelming. Moreover, it was not difficult for those teachers who were against the Parameters to get the support from non-

specialists, since their resistance was itself based on ideology rather than on scientific reflection (ALMEIDA, 2012). The focus on reading, which was a recommendation rather than an imposition, was misrepresented by critics as a prohibition of teaching the oral skills, which was clearly not the case:

Another important characteristic of the Parameters that should not be overlooked is their emphasis on teacher's autonomy. This emphasis can be seen clearly in the fact that no content or method is imposed upon the teachers. What one can find are suggestions and relevant information for teachers to make their own decisions, taking into consideration the context within which they work. In other words, the Parameters do not force any teacher to limit their focus on the teaching of reading, if they believe they can go further than that. (ALMEIDA, 2012, p. 334)

What was really behind the criticisms was the fact that the focus on reading challenged core ideological aspects of TEFL which were (and are) internalized by most Brazilian teachers of English as their assumptions, beliefs, and values. They strongly believe that, as far as the goals of teaching EFL are concerned, nothing less than oral fluency and accuracy should be accepted, no matter how different the contexts of learning and real students are from those idealized by foreign theories, methods, and materials (ALMEIDA, 2012).

That debate, however, was soon to become obsolete by technological and social changes: the increasing access of the majority of Brazilian society, including the urban popular classes, to fast internet connections led to a legitimate revision of policies concerning the teaching of English at regular schools. The new century saw most students at Brazilian public schools having real contact with the English language on the internet. There were, at least potentially, new opportunities for real use of the English language outside the classroom in Brazil, and they involved not only reading, but also listening and, to a lesser extent, writing and speaking. The pervasive presence of multi-semiotic discourses, and their importance in shaping the "brave" new world of today, led also to transformations in what was meant by a relevant teaching of the reading skill. Thus, multimodality and interconnection of semiosis replaced the focus on reading in the teaching policies for public schools, even though, still today, a focus on comprehension seems to

be more relevant and feasible than trying to give productive skills the same amount of effort as far as meaningful foreign language education is concerned.

This gave the false impression that the debate over the Parameters was “won” by those who were against the document, which was not the case at all. However, in spite of social change that led to new perceptions of what was educationally relevant to public schools’ students, the fact is that still today most Brazilian teachers of English are unable to set themselves free from the ideological implications of adopting an educational – best said instructional – framework that was designed abroad as part of an expansionist and imperialist foreign policy meant to help American and British interests in Latin America. In the following section, I will try to summarize the main ideological implications of sticking with the TEFL framework.

Ideological implications of accepting the TEFL framework

Two processes seem to encompass every aspect of what is implied by TEFL. They are idealization and standardization. Since TEFL theories, methodologies, and materials have always been produced by American and British specialists with the purpose of teaching English to virtually every speaker of other languages all over the world, it is only natural that learning contexts, objectives, and pupils are highly idealized and specificities of local realities are just suppressed and treated as irrelevant, even though they are not.

As far as the objectives of TEFL are concerned, nothing less than oral fluency and accuracy is accepted. In other words, the implication here is that learning English equals learning to speak English, preferably emulating the fluency and accuracy of urban middle-class North American or British citizens. Even if the old-fashioned attitude of over admiring mainstream cultures of English-speaking countries is not acceptable nowadays, the myth of the native speaker as the parameter for successful learning remains assuring that the colonization of minds and hearts goes on through TEFL. Moreover, in Brazil, although even today very few middle-class students have real need or opportunities of engaging in dialogues where English is actually necessary, any deviation of standard pronunciation is seen as an evidence of learner’s failure to learn the language.

That attitude, shared by both teachers and pupils, of rejecting what is considered “poor English” implies that to learn “good English”, one has to give up any sign of their own national cultural identity in the way they speak the foreign language.

Evidence of what was just said can be found, for example, in these two anecdotal episodes. The first one is about an Indian professor who decided to live and work in Brazil and how surprised he was during his first days in our country with Brazilian obsession about so-called native-like pronunciation. I was told that he felt confused by the fact that most Brazilians seemed to disapprove any possibility of speaking English with an accent that revealed their national identity. This seemed very strange to him as an Indian, since him and his fellow citizens have always made it a matter of national pride to speak English with an Indian accent. It made no sense to him that Brazilians should try to obliterate their national identity by trying to speak English as though they were British or American people. The second one refers to a conversation that I had with a professor working at *Universidade Federal de Roraima* who happens to be a friend of mine. I was arguing that, although I believed that for most public schools the focus on reading was still the best way to make English learning relevant to our students, teaching the oral skills could be relevant in contexts of linguistic and cultural contact, such as I believed was the case in the Brazil-Guyana border zone. I remember feeling astonished when he replied that Brazilian students who had contact with English-speaking Guyanese looked down on their English, because it was seen as “poor” English, not “real” standard English.

The only possible exceptions to this obsession with native-like (or at least as native-like as possible) oral fluency and accuracy as the goal of TEFL that are considered legitimate can be found in two different versions of ESP. The first one is relatively rare: ESP programs designed to train working people, such as taxi drivers, waiters etc., to attend foreign tourists and authorities during special events, such as the Olympic Games and international conferences, like Rio 92, for example. The focus of such programs would still be mainly on the oral skills. However, since they are explicitly aimed at low waged working force, learning to communicate using a few basic questions and answers needed to perform the service

with a pronunciation that can be understood by foreigners is considered enough. The fact that this kind of ESP has never been criticized by the Brazilian TESOL community with half the impetus that the Parameters were provides a good hint about the actual social prejudices which inform Brazil's middle-class, including many teachers of EFL: it is OK to teach "poor" English to low waging workers, what is not OK, though, is to try to make school teaching of English relevant to Brazilian students who belong to the popular classes by defying basic creeds of TEFL and establishing an authentic Brazilian agenda to this teaching instead. It is also worth noting that, although short-term ESP programs are announced whenever an international event is scheduled, there is virtually no data about their implementation or results.

The other exception takes place when middle-class professionals demand that they are taught to read texts in their area of expertise written in English. This is often the case of adult learners pursuing a master's or a PhD degree in their areas. This kind of demand is never questioned or despised by any members of the community of Brazilian TESOL. Generally, the demand is supplied by private classes designed to address the specific needs of each particular student. Again, the fact that in this case, the focus on reading is not challenged by the community says a lot about what really influences their considerations about what is legitimate and what is not as far as teaching and learning EFL is concerned.

Alongside with the standardization of TEFL objectives goes the uniformization of pupils. Regional or social differences which characterize different groups of students are never considered in discussions about the relevance of learning English in Brazil. As stated previously in this essay, the quarrel is always about why public schools are not able to teach English as efficiently as private courses supposedly are. Little or no attention is paid to what distinguishes the typical student of a public school from the one taking a private English course and the implications this might bring to issues of relevance as far as different uses of the language are concerned.

In order to address the issue properly, it is important to acknowledge that what is considered relevant knowledge by middle-class students may be different from what might actually empower students belonging to the working classes.

But before going into those different perspectives, it is important to clarify the criteria adopted here for the definition of a social class. Following Souza (2019), social classes are not taken in this essay as mere economic reality. That is, we do not subscribe to definitions of social classes based exclusively upon income ranges. Rather, we consider them as sociocultural phenomena defined not only by income ranges or position in relation to property and means of production, but also by a set of values and attitudes reproduced by families and transmitted from generation to generation, as a kind of “emotional economy” or “patrimony of dispositions” towards socially valued or devalued practical behavior.

With that in mind, let us go back to the discussion of why TEFL does not seem to present acceptable results in Brazilian schools. A probable reason is that, as Dr. Tara Fortune warns us, in “contexts in which multilingualism is not critical for living day-to-day or inherently valued, it is important to be aware that achieving meaningful levels of proficiency in two or more languages through schooling is difficult” (FRENCH; MATTOS, 2019). Notice that the quotation describes with extreme accuracy the situation in most Brazilian cities, including the more developed urban, metropolitan areas around the big cities. Notice as well that no reference to the “lack-of-it-all” context (ASSIS-PETERSON, 2003) or the supposedly inadequate pre-service teacher education, as an explanation for what is considered the failure of TEFL at schools, is made.

Thus, acknowledging Fortune’s warning, I believe that what really explains the inefficiency of TEFL at our schools is the lack of real need for using English – and I would add here, for using “conversational” English – on a daily basis in most Brazilian regions. This fact sheds new, though incredibly obvious, light on the issue. The real problem is seldom considered in the hegemonic debate over TEFL at public schools. Both experts and society in general tend to talk about methodologies, materials, resources, teacher qualifications etc., disregarding the most obvious fact: the social (ir)relevance of “conversational” English for most people living in Brazil.

But, if Fortune’s observation explains the “failure” of school TEFL in Brazil, what could explain the reasonable “success” of TEFL in private courses? The key to the answer can be found upon the same quotation. Although “conversational”

English is definitely not necessary for living day-to-day in Brazil, learning it is inherently valued by most members of Brazilian middle class. Thus, it is more likely that the different results in those two contexts can be explained by disregarding students' differences and establishing the same set of standardized goals to both realities, although they are extremely different from one another. Notice that the adoption of TEFL standard goals suits well middle-class students who inherently value the acquisition of "conversational" English, while potentially stigmatizing those students who do not share middle-class hegemonic values and present what is evaluated as poor results.

At this point of the argument, it is important to observe that, contrary to hegemonic middle-class beliefs, speaking "good" English is not necessarily a tool for overcoming poverty or finding a good job in Brazil, at least not to everyone in Brazil. That is, the fact that the middle class believes it to be so does not make it an undisputable fact of life. In the 19th century, for example, the same social segment believed that their daughters should learn to speak French and play the piano, as a way of attracting better offers of marriage. However, it is hard to believe that any young woman coming from a poor family would get proposals from wealthy or distinguished bachelors just by being able to speak French or to play the piano or both. Not to mention racial issues that would probably close the door on any afro descendent family aspiring to marry their daughters to wealthy bachelors, since they were all probably white and racist, or at least feared the judgement of an intrinsically racist society. And it is also very probable that the richer the bride-to-be's family were, the wealthier the bachelors proposing marriage would be, disregarding of how well the lady could speak the language or play the instrument. In other words, in a society characterized by extremely social (and racial) injustice and inequality, "success" depends more on being identified as belonging to the "right" class, that is, the upper or the middle class, than on displaying any competence or ability supposedly valued by the job - or the wedding - market.

One has to be either a hypocrite or plainly alienated to ignore that, in our country, middle-class white applicants are more likely to get good jobs than black, working-class

applicants, even if the lower-class candidate speaks “better” English than the middle-class one. This not to say that speaking “good” English is never a tool for getting a job: whenever the competition for a position is among members of the middle class, it is fair to expect that knowing English better than the other applicants will be seen as positive by human resources gatekeepers, even if its use does not happen to be really necessary for performing the functions of the position.

Some, however, might object that if the acquisition of English as a foreign language is not that important for the lower classes to get better jobs, as suggested above, how come almost everybody in Brazil, including those belonging to the popular classes, seem to believe it is? The answer, probably, is this: precisely because it is a middle-class value and belief. What counts as common sense in any society are those ideas and values which, in spite of having their origins within a specific social group or class and, hence, benefiting mainly or exclusively those groups they belong to, are propagated, throughout society, as natural and universal phenomena, rather than social and historical creations. As Fairclough (1989) points out, whenever possible, the exercise of power in modern societies is a matter of building consent rather than explicit coercing or threatening the social and economic vulnerable with physical violence. In other words, those ideas, values, and beliefs, which help to build consent, and are perceived by most people as natural, common-sensical, reasonable, universal, form what is known as ideology. In Brazil, the ideas, values, and beliefs of the middle class became hegemonic, as far as ideology is concerned. They are the ones which, amplified by the media, pass as universal ideas, values, and beliefs of Brazilian society.

Since speaking “native-like” English is inherently valued by the middle class, it became, with the help of the media, a “universal” value of Brazilian citizens in general, reflected on the superficial speech and behavior of most members all classes. It is not by chance that one can find in the literature recurrent examples of students from public schools complaining that they did not learn to speak English at school (BRASIL, 2006). And since researchers usually belong to the middle classes and were themselves educated in the TEFL creed, they are often happy to take pupils’ words at face value. However, a second

- and deeper - look at their speech might challenge that naive view, as can be seen in this report and discussion of a research presented by Luciene Pires Neves in the X Brazilian Conference of Applied Linguistics (ALMEIDA, 2014, p. 108-109):

[...] at the beginning of the school year she heard complaints by the students that "school English" served no purpose at all, because they did not learn to speak. Coherently enough, the research-teacher designed her course focusing the teaching of oral communication. However, when she attempted to implement the course, she was faced with an enormous resistance on the part of the students, who definitely refused to participate in the tasks. This apparent contradiction generated the research, which [...] concluded that this "speaking English" mentioned by the students at the beginning of the course belonged to the symbolic order connected to wanting something, but not really desiring it [...] one student said "I have to like English"! Well, if he or she "has to", then this "liking" is not spontaneous, that is, it does come from internal motivation. In other words, the students who took part in the investigation recognized as valid a certain discourse that circulates in our society about the importance of speaking English, but they do not really feel the desire to learn that skill, perhaps because they cannot see in it any relevance for their immediate context.

Summarizing, speaking native-like English is a symbolic good that is valued in itself by the middle-class pupil. This makes him/her the perfect student of EFL in the logic of TEFL. However, the fact that this logic does not suit the real needs of the popular class pupil does not mean that English is in fact irrelevant to him/her either socially or educationally. In order to really grasp what is at stake here, one must keep in mind that appropriation of knowledge is the real goal of any meaningful learning. And the way different classes appropriate the same object of learning may be different from one another. More than that: what counts as relevant aspects and uses of an object of learning for one class may not count for another. But the same object may become relevant for that other class when different aspects and uses are emphasized and learnt.

In his post-method pedagogy, Kumaravadivelu (2006) emphasizes the importance of considering the particular characteristics, needs, experiences, and identities that students bring to the pedagogical setting:

The experiences participants bring to the pedagogical setting are shaped, not just by what they experience in the classroom, but also by a broader social, economic, and political environment in which they grow up. These experiences have the potential to alter classroom aims and activities in ways unintended and unexpected by policy planners or curriculum designers or textbook producers. (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2006, p. 174)

I would like to suggest that, in order to build pedagogical practices that make learning English socially relevant and meaningful to lower class Brazilian students, one has to get rid of traditional TEFL practices and objectives and embrace methodological principles that respect student diversity, as well as asking for student collaboration in the decision-making process of what is going to be studied, how it is going to be studied, and what for. Those principles, which are central in any post-method perspective of learning, require that one replaces what is meant by “language teaching and learning” with the broader concept of “language education”. The same is true for the concept of “foreign language” and its implications – it is important that English is not seen a foreign language for those students but becomes an additional one: one that they will be able to use, alongside Portuguese, for their own immediate and future purposes. Purposes that they had established for themselves, and not the ones they were told to pursue.

Why language education in English as an additional language

Education goes way beyond teaching and learning. In simple terms, we can say that, although there is room for variation of objectives in teaching-learning programs, they are almost always about instruction. That is, somebody (the teacher) knows something (the syllabus) that he/she will help somebody (a student or a group of students) learn. Thus, the definition of what counts as relevant knowledge or competence to be acquired by the students is always established *a priori*, without any real dialogical participation of learners in the decision of what should be learnt. In such a scenario, needs analysis is almost nothing more than trying to grasp what pupils already know of the subject and what they still have to learn to satisfactorily acquire that particular piece of

knowledge or competence. The teacher-instructor seems to be in control of the whole process: he/she knows what should be taught, decides how to teach it, and evaluates pupils' progress comparing their performance to the pattern or goal which corresponds to that knowledge/competence in relation to the "level" in which his/her students are. Ironically, as a matter of fact, the teacher is him/herself under control of someone else: policy planners, curriculum designers, textbook producers.

Also, the scope of teaching is narrow when compared with the scope of education. Teaching is always about items in a syllabus or, at best, school subjects. That is, one can teach the present continuous tense, or quadratic equations, or the Age of Discovery, for example, and those will be the focus of the whole process. Or one can say that one teaches English, or Mathematics, or History, etc. The focus is mainly cognitive. Emotions and values are generally left out of the teaching process, or at best are dealt with peripherally. Education, on the other hand, is by nature and definition holistic. It is concerned with the development of each student as a complete human being. Education is not only about acquiring information or knowledge. Rather, it is about helping pupils to be able to understand how different pieces of information may connect to one another and what results from those connections. It is also about helping their development of autonomous, creative, and critical thinking, so that they may notice, for example, the possible hidden agenda in the way the media chooses to formulate headlines about certain events. But it is not only about cognition either. It is also about the development of healthy human beings: people who are able to deal with and express their emotions, to listen and be willing to help vulnerable people, to acknowledge and respect other people's feelings. It is also about citizenship: the development of democratic attitudes, demanding respect to his/her own rights and respecting those of other people.

Thus, education is not about transmitting knowledge with predictable outcomes. On the contrary, education is always dialogical and, thus, leading to unpredictable results. This involves, on one hand, giving up control, and, on the other, constantly replanning and rearranging the course of action in face of new and often unexpected outcomes.

Language education, as Bagno and Rangel (2005, p. 63) define it, involve “the set of sociocultural factors which enable an individual to acquire, develop, and expand knowledge of or about his/her mother tongue, other languages, language in general, and other semiotic systems throughout his/her entire life”¹. It starts at the beginning of one’s life when, through interactions with family and local community, he/she acquires his/her first language and, as time goes by, the “language culture” shared by his/her social community. At school, pupils get formal or institutionalized language education. Ideally, formal language education should focus on developing knowledge of and about language(s) so that pupils are enabled to face social demands of language(s) use with proficiency. Unfortunately, most schools fail the task by either focusing on either teaching about language(s) or on irrelevant uses aimed at unreal demands.

¹My translation. In the original: “o conjunto de fatores socioculturais que, durante toda a existência de um indivíduo, lhe possibilitam adquirir, desenvolver e ampliar o conhecimento de/ sobre sua língua materna, de/sobre outras línguas, sobre a linguagem de um modo mais geral e sobre todos os demais sistemas semióticos”.

Sound language education should replace those teaching practices, if we are to overcome meaningless teaching of both mother tongue and additional languages at school. And sound language education should include not only focusing on reading, producing texts, reflecting about language, and considering how additional languages may be in fact appropriate by pupils, that is, used for their real purposes, but also reflecting upon issues such as language ideology and learner identity (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2006, p. 175):

[...] more than any other educational enterprise, language education provides its participants with challenges and opportunities for a continual quest for subjectivity and self-identity; [...] This is even more applicable to L2 education, which brings languages and cultures in contact. That this contact results in identity conflicts has been convincingly brought out by Norton’s study of immigrant women in Canada.

And he continues:

Applying such a critical stance to teach English to speakers of other languages, Auerbach (1995), Benesch (2001), Morgan (1998) and others have suggested new ways of broadening the nature and scope of classroom aims and activities. More specifically, Auerbach has showed us how participatory pedagogy can bring together learners, teachers, and community activists in mutually beneficial, collaborative

projects. Morgan has demonstrated how even in teaching units of language as system, such as phonological and grammatical features, the values of critical practice and community development can be profitably used. Similarly, Benesch has suggested ways and means of linking the linguistic text and sociopolitical context as well as the academic content and the larger community for the purpose of turning classroom input and interaction into effective instruments of transformation. (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2006, p. 175)

Thus, what is meant here by overcoming colonial practices of TEFL by replacing it with “language education in English as an additional language” is, first of all, “broadening the nature and scope” of aims and activities, so that real – as opposed to idealized – students’ identities, needs, and realities are included. Another key expression from the quotations above is “participatory pedagogy”. Since the idea is to actually include pupils, they must also be included in the process of deciding what should be learnt. This is probably the most important step in overcoming a narrow concept of teaching and arriving at the broader one of education, as it is defined in this essay. And when students become active participants, it is almost certain that they will appropriate the language in ways unforeseen – and undesired – by policy planners, curriculum designers, and textbook elaborators. Thus, English will not be treated as a foreign language anymore. Rather, pupils will probably want to put the language to good use right away. That is, English, no matter how incipient their apprehension of the language is, will become almost immediately a tool added to pupils’ previous semiotic repertoire, helping them achieve whatever it is that they set as their communicative/discursive goals in a given period of their lives. In other words, English will become an additional language rather than a foreign one. So, considering English as an additional language means valuing the social contexts of pupils, thinking of the uses it might have for their current practices and goals, as opposed to the teaching of a (foreign) language that might or might not be useful to them in an idealized future.

Summarizing, what I am suggesting here is that there are ways to overcome the rationale of TEFL and its colonialist ideological implications, especially when working with popular classes pupils in the context of Brazilian public schools.

In order to do this, though, one has to get rid of the culture of methods (ALMEIDA, 2014) and abandon aprioristic goals, established according to standard definitions of what it means to achieve this or that “level” in the mastering of the language. The most promising alternatives to TEFL lie in the adoption of post-method perspectives and participatory pedagogies, in which participants get involved in the autonomous decision of what they want to learn. This means that project pedagogies seem to be the ones which are best suit for our purposes, since pedagogical projects, no matter which version of them we are talking about, always include as a first step the autonomous negotiation of contents and objectives between teachers and pupils (HERNANDEZ, 1998; ALLWRIGHT, 2001; SCHLATTER; GARCEZ, 2012). Thus, applying the basic principles of post-method participatory project pedagogies tends to broaden current practices of language teaching, opening a new path for our practices – the path of language education. By the same token, when working-class students decide what they want to learn, what they want to do with the language that they are learning, and proper design is made to achieve their goals, then English ceases to be a foreign language – it becomes part of their semiotic repertoire for exploring whatever it is that mobilizes them at a given time. That is, it becomes an additional language.

It is important, however, that each project designed and developed with the students be evaluated accordingly. Such a perspective calls for autonomous, individual as well as collective, collaborative (self-)evaluation. It is the group of participants, teachers included, that has to establish what was accomplished, what was satisfactorily achieved and what still needs to be pursued. And, of course, the outcomes of the project, as well as its goals, should never be limited or conformed to pre-established expectations and goals alien to the group’s own logic and decision. What is needed, thus, is a paradigmatic change in the way Brazilian policy makers, curriculum designers, and teachers of English look at their public-school students. If they are really encouraged to develop their own voice, then they will develop their own ways of appropriating the language. Their appropriation of English will, most probably, not resemble middle-class students’ one in any way. The common European framework of reference

for languages will definitely be of little use in this case. Rather, each particular group will build their own agenda for acquiring and using language for their purposes – a Brazilian framework for learning English. And a popular one indeed.

Conclusion

In this essay I have argued that the field of TEFL in the Global South (SANTOS; MENESES, 2010) has been in fact created and developed abroad, basically in the USA and in the UK, with the explicit purpose of expanding their ideological influence all over the world. What comes out of it is that TEFL practices tend to reproduce colonial values and ideologies, especially by disregarding local realities and identities. In Brazil, the colonial attitude resulting from that is reflected upon the hegemonic debates within the field, which revolve around what is perceived as the inefficiency of public schools in leading their pupils to achieve acceptable levels of proficiency in English, especially when compared to private English courses. Although it is known that in contexts where English is not critical for living day-to-day, achieving meaningful levels of proficiency through schooling is difficult (FRENCH; MATTOS, 2019), the Brazilian TESOL community tend to ignore that this is precisely the case in Brazil. Moreover, issues concerning the specific characteristics and differences between popular classes public school students and middle-class private courses ones are systematically disregard – the assumption is that what is good for the middle class is good for everybody. This attitude contributed to blind Brazilian TESOL community to the fact that the way social groups appropriate a language for their own purposes and benefit may be different from one another. If “conversational” English is inherently valued by the middle classes, it is up to the popular classes to establish their own agenda and purposes concerning what an empowering appropriation of English should look like for them.

I have suggested, then, as a possible path to overcome the colonial ideological implications of mainstream TEFL practices, especially when working with popular classes pupils, the adoption of participatory pedagogies, in which students get involved in the decision of what is going to be studied and for what purposes it will be studied. The repositioning of pupils

as the actual protagonists of their own learning is central to the replacement of the narrow and biased concepts of TEFL with the broad and critical ones of language education in English as an additional language.

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RESUMO

Educação linguística em inglês como língua adicional no Brasil: superando as práticas coloniais do ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira

Tanto a Grã-Bretanha quanto os Estados Unidos vêm, já há bastante tempo, implementando, de forma deliberada, políticas que visam a levar a aprendizagem do inglês a países de todo o mundo, como forma de expandir sua influência cultural e ideológica através do globo. Todo o dinheiro investido em institutos culturais e do idioma, material didático e formação de professores sempre esteve associado a esse objetivo (PHILLIPSON, 1992; MOITA LOPES, 1996) e promoveu o desenvolvimento de uma poderosa indústria de ensino de inglês como segunda língua ou como língua estrangeira para virtualmente todos os países do planeta. O presente ensaio discute as implicações ideológicas das práticas hegemônicas de ensino de Inglês como língua estrangeira no Sul Global em geral e, mais especificamente, no Brasil. Ele também propõe um enquadre alternativo para o desenvolvimento de práticas educacionais com o objetivo de facilitar a apropriação da língua inglesa por estudantes brasileiros. Apropriar-se da língua, de acordo com a perspectiva adotada neste ensaio, significa que os estudantes devem se tornar capazes de utilizá-la nos seus próprios termos, de acordo com suas próprias necessidades e valores e, acima de tudo, para seus próprios propósitos. Essa é a intenção da proposta de se substituir “Ensino de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira” por “Educação Linguística em Inglês como Língua Adicional”.

Palavras-chave: *Educação Linguística. Inglês como Língua Adicional. Ensino de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira. Pedagogias Críticas.*

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