



# Do all roads lead to internationalization? Mapping the role of the English language in the specialization proposal of LwB<sup>1</sup>

## Todos os caminhos levam à internacionalização? Mapeando o papel da língua inglesa na proposta de especialização do IsF

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**ABSTRACT:** The increasingly growing process of internationalization has received different responses. In Brazil, considering the role of languages in the process, the Languages without Borders-Andifes network has proposed a specialization course for internationalization purposes. In this text, I explore the understandings of professors who contributed to the elaboration of this project concerning the role of the English language in this process. I do so by mapping those readings with social cartography. The results indicate tensions and complexities that go from reinforcing to challenging modern/colonial praxis.

**KEYWORDS:** English language. Internationalization. Social cartography. Languages without Borders.

**RESUMO:** O processo cada vez mais crescente de internacionalização tem recebido diferentes respostas. No Brasil, considerando o papel das línguas no processo, a Rede Andifes Idiomas sem Fronteiras propôs um curso de especialização para fins de internacionalização. Neste texto, exploro as compreensões dos professores que contribuíram para a elaboração deste projeto sobre o papel da língua inglesa nesse processo. Faço isso mapeando essas leituras com a cartografia social. Os resultados indicam tensões e complexidades que vão do reforço ao desafio da práxis moderna/colonial.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Língua inglesa. Internacionalização. Cartografia social. Idiomas sem Fronteiras.

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## 1 Starting the walk

The internationalization process has been gaining increasingly more space in the world and is met with conflicts by those who seek to enable it, question it, refuse it and everything in between. I understand this phenomenon as intertwined with the search for progress and development, which are, in turn, linked to the coloniality of time.

Within modernity/coloniality, time, more than a commodity in scarcity, becomes linear, something to be wasted and used productively, as well as a tool (Shahjahan, 2014): by dividing past, present, and future, one can ignore the present effects of the violent and colonial past, mobilize the present towards a projected desired future, and hierarchize peoples, countries, cultures, bodies as the past (the uncivilized, the underdeveloped) or the future (the developed, the progressed, the civilized). In this sense, internationalization is placed as something that can lead to the future and all its modern/colonial promises.

One of the important elements in the internationalization process is language, especially English, the so-called language of science. In the processes of globalization and internationalization, based on the metaphor of Fabricius, Mortensen, and Haberland (2016, p. 589), English has become the currency used in a scenario in which “the communication of knowledge is an economic transaction”. Often considered necessary for participation in the globalized world, it is sometimes seen as a one-size-fits-all language (Fabricius; Mortensen; Haberland, 2016). As Jordão and Martinez (2021) state, this is where the conception of languages as decontextualized “access instruments” occurs. In this sense, English becomes a commodity.

In Brazil, one of the greatest initiatives on a national level related to internationalization is Languages without Borders (LwB), which promotes language courses and teacher education for internationalization processes with the contribution of several professors from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Brazil. Given its importance within this current scenario and the recent proposal for a specialization

course, I decided to conduct, in my master's journey, a study to map the understandings of internationalization, teacher education, and the role of English in the internationalization process among those who contributed to the elaboration of this course.

In this text, I focus on the perceived understandings of the role of the English language, which, in their plurality often conflictive, shall impact the specialization course and the education of those who take it. In this sense, the course is a space that can reinforce and question the position of this language. To explore the complexities of these readings, I engage with the construction of maps within the social cartography, seeking to highlight layers and exercise my own capacity not to simplify nor try to create simplified narratives.

In a process of looking into my own complicity with modernity/coloniality and the difficulties to delink from it, as Mignolo (2007b) puts it, I see my research as a learning tool: for me, as I reflect on how I reproduce and delink from modernity/coloniality and experiment with different strategies; for the readers engaging in a dialogue with me. For this reason, I weaken my impulse to place my readings as universal facts by imagining how data can be read differently. I ask many questions which I do not answer. I also see the people who kindly decided to contribute to my research as a group with whom I can learn and reflect, so, rather than rushing into judgment and right-wrong pointing, I invite for conversation. The readers are invited to join the dialogue, I ask, with the same disposition.

## **2 Next stop: LwB, language and internationalization**

The international mobility program Science without Borders (SwB, Brasil, 2011), given the English proficiency requirements from universities, explicitly revealed that many university students were not considered proficient in accordance to proficiency exams. The scenario reflects several issues: inequality in the access to language learning, the native-speakerism of most proficiency exams, the monolingual

understanding of language as a system to be dominated etc. Despite negotiating with universities abroad and getting them to lower linguistic demands, actions were required at home. In response to this situation, the English without Borders (EwB) program was created with the aim to linguistically prepare students interested in academic mobility (Brasil, 2012). The idea of the program was to have undergraduate students of language teaching offer, under the supervision of an accredited professor, English courses to the academic community of HEIs.

The program, linked to the Ministry of Education (MEC), was amplified twice: in 2014, becoming LwB, to include other languages and the concern with language education in the country, as well as to expand the scope of the program in relation to the possible ways to participate in internationalization (Brasil, 2014); in 2016, to amplify the target audience for courses and centralize teacher education (Brasil, 2016), which was already happening since 2013, when advisors noticed the need to educate those who would develop the courses (Kirsch; Sarmento, 2016) according to the goals of the program to contribute to internationalization. The latest shift in the program took place in 2019, when it became a network, part of the National Association of Directors of Federal Higher Education Institutions (Andifes) – the Andifes-LwB network (Associação, 2019). Its main goals are teacher education, course offering, and the contribution to the development of a national language policy.

Given the focus on teacher education, the Andifes-LwB network offers a specialization course in language teaching for internationalization purposes<sup>2</sup> as one of its central actions. The course, which can be completed between 18 and 24 months, is 500 hours long, distributed among 200 hours of theoretical components (on-line curricular components), 200 hours of practical components (teaching courses to the LwB community) and 100 hours of orientation. It is offered in all seven languages that are part of the Network: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese for

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<sup>2</sup> The pedagogical project of the course is available at: <https://www.andifes.org.br/institucional/redeisf/>. Access: 16 Jun. 2024.

foreigners, and Spanish. The specialization is meant for people who already hold an undergraduate degree and, as the pedagogical project indicates, are proficient in the language whose path they want to pursue. However, the means of proving this proficiency are not yet defined but will probably be mentioned once the call for the first class is published.

The course, still not yet offered, is being developed within the Network, which means that different scholars in and out of Brazil and with diverse perspectives on teacher education, internationalization and the role of languages are working together and negotiating meanings. Even though my focus is on English, I had participants that work with other languages (one working with Italian, one with Japanese, and one with French) because there was no clear division among languages in the process of elaboration of the proposal. The next stop in this text addresses the journey itself.

### **3 Methodological journey**

As one might follow me in this journey towards that which has not yet been imagined, it is only fair that I share a bit of the path, through which I have certainly found lessons. I present it with the hope that the attempts, failures, and successes have some things to teach us about how we act as Applied Linguists in relation to internationalization, English, and research.

Antônio Bispo dos Santos (2023) shares that, in his community, people have always planted several different seeds and waited for what the land would provide. They know what to plant in each type of land just by looking at it. There have been, however, constant impositions that disrespect how they plant: the “need” for soil analysis, the use of pesticides, monoculture, to name a few. I believe this story sheds light on the colonial side of science.

Modern/colonial science is based on the notion that knowledge is beyond time and space, a universal truth that can be achieved through rigorous scientific methods that can isolate the bodies of those who do research from their work. By stablishing

the means through which knowledge is to be learned and placing it as universal, other ways of being/knowing are violented (Cástro-Gomez, 2007; Grosfoguel, 2007b). In other words, the universality of scientific knowledge is only possible through the violent erasure of other ways of knowing – which is inseparable from ways of being with the world. Considering that, changing the content (knowledge itself) is not enough, we also need to change the terms of the conversation (how we come to such knowledge), as Mignolo (2007b) suggests. For this reason, questioning and disrupting methodology is important.

Andreotti (2021) explains that education [and science] seek to reaffirm hope and investment in the continuity of the system, so the maintenance of the modern/colonial world is founded in denials:

(1) the denial that systemic violence is what makes modernity possible and, because we depend on modernity to survive, that we are inevitably complicit in systemic harm (Ferreira da Silva 2007; Shotwell 2016; Andreotti 2019; Kapoor 2020); (2) the denial that the planet is finite and this mode of relating to the world (through growth and consumption) is unsustainable (Stein 2019); (3) the denial that we are not separate from each other, but interdependent and entangled in a larger living body that is the planet (Ahenakew 2019; Common Worlds Research Collective 2020); (4) the denial of the depth and magnitude of the mess we find ourselves in, which cannot be solved with easy, simplistic or feel-good solutions (Stein et al. 2020b; Van Berkel and Manickam 2020) (Andreotti, 2021, p. 497).

Given that, the author suggests that we need educational approaches that help us in the process of facing what we deny, creating space for complexity, plurality, ambivalence and developing stamina. Layering methodologies are, for this end, presented as an option. In this research, I use one of them: the social cartography.

The social cartography is both a methodology and an educational tool, as it maps ways of reading the world (Ruitenbergh, 2007). The maps are non-linear and allow one to explore layers, tensions, complexities and to challenge one's own readings, so it can make visible what would otherwise be implicit (Andreotti, 2016).

The mapping in this study considers: 1) the pedagogical project of the specialization course; 2) answers from a questionnaire; and 3) interviews. The second one counted with seven responses and the third with eight participants; all professors are linked to the LwB network and contributors to the development of the course proposal. They were invited to contribute via email; those who accepted answered the questionnaire and/or joined an-hour-long interview (through Google Meet). To engage with the study of these contributions and to be able to question my own readings, I decided to use both categorization – coding data and then grouping it – and connection – anchoring the construction of groups in the narrative shared by participants – strategies (Maxwell; Miller, 2008). Finally, the research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Paraná through the process number 5.616.648. My readings of such encounters are addressed in the next step of this text.

#### **4 Looking at the map: the role of the English language in internationalization**

Modernity/coloniality has as one of its effects linguistic subalternation, based on the universalization of Eurocentrism and the invisibilization and violent erasure of other ways of being/knowing. Under the onto-epistemological domination project, knowledge, words and saying were hierarchized. As a result, “lengua y conocimiento, entonces, quedaron marcados, hasta hoy, por dos características ineludibles desde las tramas del poder: un saber y unos idiomas eurocéntricos, y un saber y unos idiomas maquetados en una *matriz colonial* de valoración” (Garcés, 2007, p. 221, highlights in the original). This means that only those constructed and conveyed in certain languages, all of European origin (e.g., French, German, and English), were classified as valid knowledge. Knowledge production, therefore, has fluency in these languages as a condition for its visibility and recognition. As Garcés (2007, p. 227) explains,

Estamos, pues, frente a una colonialidad lingüística que muestra una doble cara: por un lado, la modernidad subalternizó determinadas lenguas en favor de otras, pero, por otro lado, además, colonizó la palabra de los hablantes de dichas lenguas. Es decir, no sólo se

subalternizaron determinadas lenguas, sino también la propia palabra y el decir de los hablantes colonizados.

Modernity/coloniality defines fluency in languages associated with the production of valid knowledge as necessary, especially English, nowadays; however, learning these languages is not enough, as the very act of speaking by certain bodies is marked and placed in a position of inferiority in the modern/colonial hierarchy. Put another way, even if a person from Brazil learns to speak English, which would theoretically make their production valid and visible, their locus of enunciation still keeps them in a subordinate position. These classifications, in this sense, work by considering different elements such as race, gender, and place of birth, in addition to being relational, given that, for example, notions of whiteness can vary from one place to another. We are also classified in relation to groups, norms, cultures etc.

Shahjahan & Edwards (2022) highlight the relationship between modernity/coloniality and whiteness, which is linked to futurity<sup>3</sup>, development and progress; therefore, race is central when thinking about globalization. Whiteness, according to the authors, guides imaginaries, affecting behaviors, aspirations, language use etc., while reinforcing racial difference. In other words,

global HE systems prioritize White interests, while reproducing racialized precarity, resource extraction, and ecological destruction across a variety of scales (Stein, 2017). Temporal dimensions also prompt us to contend with how Whiteness is also interconnected with ways of knowing and being largely shaped by modern/colonial epistemologies and ontologies. We cannot separate modern/colonial subjectivity from Whiteness-oriented subjectivity (Shahjahan; Edwards, 2022, p. 749).

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<sup>3</sup> Baldwin (2012) used the expression “whiteness as futurity” when challenging racial studies that are oriented only towards the past. In this sense, the suggestion is that we look at how whiteness, when projected into the future, becomes present. In other words, whiteness is linked to development, progress, future, and, considering that these modern/colonial notions guide our present actions because we act thinking about desired results, whiteness is projected into the future and the present.



Given this scenario, modern promises are directly linked to whiteness and, in seeking to achieve them, we also seek whiteness. An example of this, mentioned by the authors, is the English language itself, in a standard variety, being placed as the language of science: the white variety as the norm must be learned so that the scientific work of non-whites has a chance of visibility. Evidently, this is not just about the issue of white skin, but, considering its relational dimension, there is also an association with the male gender and the location in the Global North. The same occurs with the issue of mobility (normally towards countries in the Global North), for which proficiency (to be proven through internationally recognized exams that privilege whiteness and its associations, such as the masculine and those geopolitically located in the Global North) is required. This dimension of the existence of the English language shows how globalization/neoliberalism and internationalization favor whiteness and cannot be separated from it.

Furthermore, as Jordão & Martinez (2021) point out, dominant discussions on internationalization assume that, by being part of the process, universities would automatically become plurilingual and multicultural, barely promoting reflections on what language really means and its assigned role. In fact, in the social imaginary of higher education, according to the authors,

languages seem, by and large, to be conceived of as *objects* that exist out there, disembodied tools, autonomous elements that are reified as commodities to be acquired, bought and sold. External to the subject, language is seen as an *instrument* of access to wealth, power, knowledge and prestige – much valued elements in the global knowledge economy. There seems to be a general belief (if not a desire) that languages (or better still, A common language, i.e. English) could solve all miscommunication among peoples and nations, as well as allow access to prestige and wealth, both symbolic and material, for those who are said to have ownership of *this common language* (Jordão; Martinez, 2021, p. 579, highlights in the original).

Given the homogenizing character of modernity/coloniality, with the universalization of a way of being/knowing, we seek a solution that resolves our

conflicts and communication challenges: everyone should learn the same language; in this case, English (as if it were a unified, homogeneous language), associated with the achievement of modern/colonial promises of access to geographic and socioeconomic mobility, visibility, and academic recognition. The other side of these promises, however, is coloniality that manifests itself through the reinforcement of inequalities, violent processes of exclusion and exploitation (human, non-human, and planetary), and epistemicide. To deal with such a scenario, Jordão & Martinez (2021) understand that critical internationalization (and languages in their various uses in this context) can be explored as a field of possibilities and encounters with difference, so that we can rethink the ways in which we relate to each other, to ourselves, and to the world; all in a collaborative learning process.

In the case of LwB, after its emergence as EwB and given the changes with the following ordinances/resolutions, there are attempts to include languages other than English, so as to horizontalize the relationship among them. In the interviews, questionnaire, and PPC, intentions, desires and actions taken in preparing the specialization proposal were frequently mentioned in order to decentralize English in the internationalization process. The privileged position of English was also recognized and criticized, as in the following excerpts:

Natália<sup>4</sup>: “The [specialization] proposal implements these aspects by providing the same opportunity to access knowledge in the area, regardless of the language. What would be restricted only to English becomes relevant and also accessible to everyone else. And what the other 6 languages have in terms of peculiarities and needs also ends up benefiting English, by showing facets of teaching-learning that were not previously discussed in English language theories. This is a horizontal and inclusive articulation in my point of view.” (translated excerpt from the questionnaire).

Pérola: “So, even when there is a technology to be shared and researched together, how am I going to put myself into this? So, how are these issues of linguistic superiority that are still so strong to be dealt with? Of still

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<sup>4</sup> For ethical reasons, all names in this study are fictional; the participants themselves chose their fictional names.

feeling submissive in relation to the other?" (translated excerpt from interview).

Natália's speech exemplifies the cases in which collaborative work and exchanges among scholars from each of the seven languages participating in the specialization proposal were emphasized (German, Spanish, French, English, Italian, Japanese, and Portuguese for foreigners). In the process, in this sense, the articulation among all languages moved away from the divisions of areas. This division, as Castro-Gómez (2007) explains, was already defended by Descartes, according to whom reality would be constituted (and could be understood) based on mathematical logic. Given this, the analytical method, that is, the division of the object into parts and its subsequent reconstruction based on mathematical logic would be the best way to understand reality. The separation into disciplines and areas, therefore, is related to "la certeza [que] del conocimiento se alcanza en la medida en que nos concentremos en el análisis de *una* de esas partes, ignorando sus conexiones con todas las demás" (Castro-Gómez, 2007, p. 83, highlights in the original).

This division is due to an even broader one: the separation between human beings and nature/planet, reinforced by the Cartesian separation of body and mind (Stein *et al.*, 2023). For Descartes, true knowledge could only be achieved from a distance between subject and objectively researched object and from solipsism, that is, only the mind (in a non-place) would be part of the process; feelings, subjectivity (and everything that could anchor knowledge to a body or place) began to be seen as obstacles to be avoided (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Grosfoguel, 2007b). According to Stein *et al.*,

the denial of interdependence and reciprocal relational responsibilities to past, present, and future generations of both human and other-than-human beings is what allows people to rationalize and remain indifferent to the extraction, expropriation, and exploitation of land, labor, and resources that are required to sustain capitalism, white supremacy, and other modern/colonial systems, institutions, and subjectivities (Stein *et al.*, 2023, p. 994).

In this sense, there are deep separations to be questioned and undone so that we can move forward in a search for alternatives to modernity/coloniality. My own perspective for this research is based on separative thinking; in fact, I had to rethink the research participants, as my initial focus was on collaborators working in the English area. However, the premise did not work for my study, which sought to explore the specialization proposal developed by professors of seven different languages, with a separation among them is very hard to define. The goal to articulate languages is explicitly stated in the Pedagogical Project of the Course (PPC), being mentioned several times, as the following excerpt illustrates:

The idea of keeping all languages in a single proposal also demonstrates that the LwB Network sees internationalization as an integral and broad movement, not just focused on a single language. Even though the role of the English language as a *lingua franca*<sup>5</sup> is recognized, this is not the solution for internationalization (PPC, p. 7, translated).

In this sense, despite the recognition of the prominent position of the English language in internationalization, there is a movement to pluralize and encourage contact with other languages in the process. In developing the course, some administrative choices were made in pursuit of this objective, such as ensuring that, in the teams preparing the syllabi and writing the PPC itself, there were collaborators from different languages, for example. However, despite being important, actions that aim to mitigate the effects of modernity/coloniality do not “solve” the problem, that is, unequal relations among languages continue to exist and manifest themselves in different ways. In the interviews, the participants, especially those working with

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<sup>5</sup> I understand that here, the use of “*lingua franca*” differs from that found in studies in critical Applied Linguistics in Brazil (as in Duboc, 2018; Duboc; Siqueira, 2020; Schmicheck, 2022), that is, as a way of challenging dominant notions regarding language, as well as localizing it. “*Lingua franca*,” in this case, seems to refer to the understanding of English in a standardized and homogenizing way in a scenario where everyone would have to learn this language to enter the international academic world.

languages other than English, pointed out some situations that show inequality, as one can see in the following excerpt from the interview with Vitória:

Vitória: “We have to avoid English, because, if you speak English, they understand that it can be important, but, if you speak Italian, they question: “oh, maybe, I will travel to Italy”. I say “you're doing an interview [the oral evaluation in a discipline within the undergraduate level], even if you don't think now, understand now, then you'll think...” So, it's complex, right?! I think that anyone who isn't using a language other than English has any idea how... it's not just that the language is minoritized, because there are fewer teachers, it's an ideology, you know, that's very difficult to break. We are there, we are fighting!” [...] “As we are few, if each one takes an advisee [in the specialization], will there be 6 students in the specialization [taking the Italian path]? It's very little, do you see?! This logic is complex for me. I'm waiting so I don't suffer in advance.” (translated excerpts from the interview).

Vitória mentions the difficulty of breaking the ideology of the superiority of the English language. It is interesting that, when addressing the challenges with students in her classes who do not understand the importance of studying Italian, she highlights the (lack of) relationship with concrete/immediate results. With the colonization of time – which comes to be understood in a linear way as something that can be enjoyed or lost – it becomes a commodity in scarcity. We feel that we always make it “useful”, utilized for more “valuable” activities, that is, that will bring more immediate results in the context of competition and neoliberal individualism (Shahjahan, 2014). Faced with this reality, we begin to evaluate and choose the activities we engage in based on their concrete value (often, the market value). This process also occurs with languages, seen to achieve things. In the case of the English language, these associations seem to be clear in the social imaginary: it is the language of science, of the job market, of traveling etc. When it comes to other languages, however, their concrete/immediate return are hardly visualized (it could not be learning for learning's sake). This seems to be what Vitória notices happening with her students.

Another challenge Vitória highlighted, also a reflection of the unequal relations among languages, is quantitative: there is anxiety regarding the low number of teachers to guide students. This scenario is related to a broader one: there are more English teacher education courses at Brazilian universities, as well as there is more demand for learners of this language, due to its hegemonic place. This matter exemplifies how the university is related to the current project for society. Perkin (2007) refers to this process as the ability of these institutions to survive changes; for instance, from a cosmopolitan Christian center, the university was nationalized with the emergence of nation-states and then, after the Second World War, it undertook the task of training specialized labor. Looking differently at this scenario, Castro-Gómez (2007) states that the university, being directly related to modernity/coloniality, from the vigilant center and producer of “valid” knowledge considered, becomes corporate, that is, “una universidad corporativa, en una empresa capitalista que ya no sirve más al progreso material de la nación ni al progreso moral de la humanidad, sino a la planetarización del capital” (Castro-Gómez, 2007, p. 85).

The association of languages with specific purposes was recurrent among research participants, given the focus of the specialization course on internationalization purposes. According to Hutchinson & Waters (1991), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is centered on student learning. The authors explain that, given the position of the English language as a key to accessing technologies and the market, people began to seek learning with this type of access in mind – an argument which is corroborated by Kennedy (2012). By understanding that, however, each area uses the language in particular ways, the teacher would know what English to teach considering what the student would like to learn the language for. The question I propose is: when do we meet students' goals and when do we question them? This is a conundrum with no easy answer, considering that several factors have concrete effects, such as the imbrication of modernity/coloniality with survival (for example, teachers who need to work and, in order to keep their jobs, may find little or no space

to challenge norms) and our emotional responses to the process of letting go of modern/colonial promises in which we have invested.

Pennycook (1994), when discussing English for Academic Purposes (EAP), warns of the risk of a utilitarian orientation which, along with the difficulty of working with content in a meaningful way, presents challenges that the author calls the “problem of futilitarianism,” based on some beliefs: 1) the understanding that English would be a means to directly transmit meanings; 2) the division between content and language (and the latter as a way of transmitting the former); 3) the placing of EAP as a service provision to other areas; and 4) the tendency not to address political, cultural and other issues, acting as if teaching were a neutral and innocent process. The author suggests moving away from these beliefs towards a critical perspective, i.e., an orientation that “would not see itself as a service industry to other departments or have as its goal the assimilation of students into academic culture, but rather one that would aim to challenge the students and the university in a more critical fashion” (Pennycook, 1994, p. 16).

In the empirical material of this study, the objective of internationalizing is associated with (and even used as synonyms for) academic purposes. In this sense, the contexts of language use are those of the university environment, with mention of utilization for publications, oral presentations, reading, and student reception. However, language is also seen as multifaceted, variable, and associated with the construction of meanings and worldviews. The excerpts below illustrate this point:

Pérola: “[...] to make people able to interact in contexts more academic, in contexts not only of discussions, you know, oral, but of written texts as well, with their specificities” (excerpt from the interview).

Chico: “suddenly, in the same way that many students come to the courses we promote at our university, they think that “the English language is one thing, the written English for publication is one thing, and I want to learn that standard to be published” and we, therefore, problematize this perspective and show that things are not quite like this” (excerpt from the interview).

Helena: “Certainly the view that there are no ideal speakers in ideal worlds/contexts is very correct, we are all beings who communicate in complex ways, beyond the linguistic code that can be described, memorized, controlled. This is precisely where the richness of studying and learning languages lies, the different ways of representing the world we see with our eyes and the possibilities of understanding what someone else’s vision and world is like” (excerpt from the questionnaire).

Language is also considered in relation to the other and to the possibility of problematizing academic standards (from journals, for example, as in the shared excerpt). In this sense, the use of the language is problematized, but, at the same time, there is a concern with enabling academics to “use” it in these university spaces and to have access to the modern/colonial promises associated with it. I come to this conclusion by also observing the group of codes that address the concrete results of being or not “proficient” in the language, as in the following examples:

Mark: “the English language is the biggest channel for internationalization, so it needs to be promoted through courses and actions within HEIs” (excerpt from the questionnaire).

Paula: “And I feel like, how many of our foreign colleagues come to Brazil, see our research and say “wow, the work you’re doing is fantastic!” We don't have this international dimension because people don't know what we're doing, okay? So, this is due to the language barrier. This happens because everyone says or privileges that we have to publish in English and, in this process, we end up... so, we have to publish in English and, therefore, the international scientific market dictates how things go, and this limits us too much to publicize, okay?!” (excerpt from the interview).

Mark: “Students arrive [at the university] and there is no preparation so that those who do not have the conditions or come from an institution, a public school, have not had access to language education in their history, there is no training process for this student, of this student to also have access to internationalization actions. I know that because my daughter, for example, is studying biology here. Biology, I think the program is 5 or 6 [in terms of the classification conducted by the Ministry of Education], right?! But she's still in undergraduate school. The first conversation she had with the teachers was: “if you don’t know another language, it’s better to quit the course”, right?! So, what are we doing to contribute to this student who reached A level, right?! Because this student, in addition to obviously



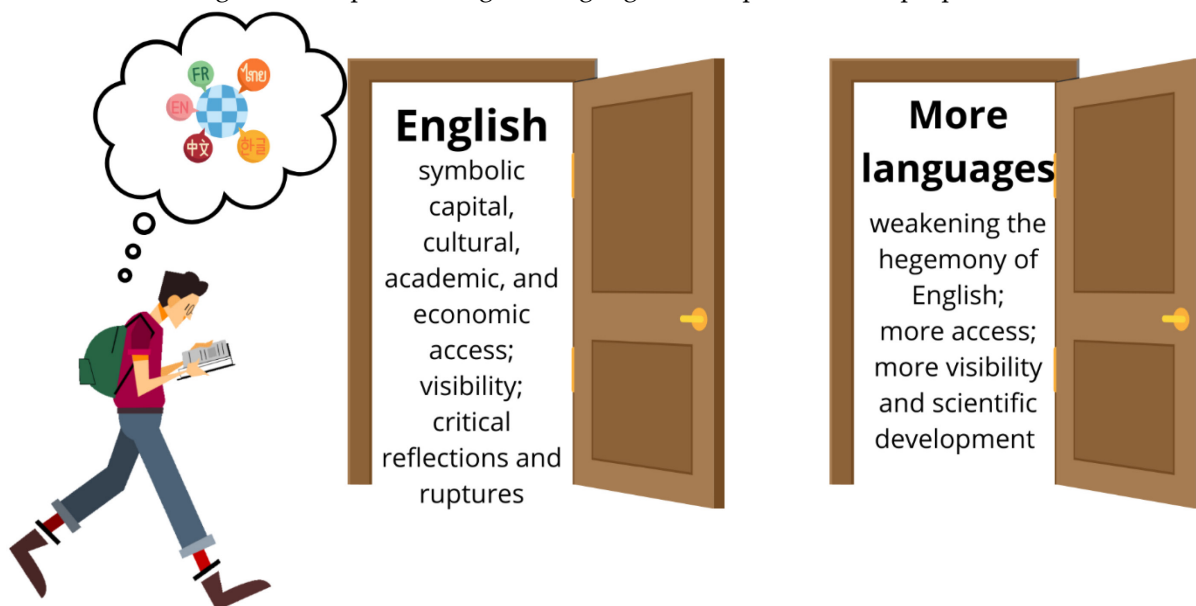
having to have a brilliant background to achieve something, also has to know English or Spanish or French, because, to go somewhere, he already needs to know that, right, because he already has to present the proficiency certificate. How do we improve this? So, if these programs 6 and 7 don't pay attention, they will still remain within something that I think is important and that perhaps you can even debate there [in my research]: internationalization is embryonic, but it is born patriarchal, it is born segregating, you know?!" (excerpt from the interview).

Chico: "In my experience, the predominant worldview in Brazilian society is one focused on competition and consumption and this also applies to the internationalization process and to linguistic education. In other words, many people treat "the English language" as a symbolic good to be acquired in order to acquire more material goods. That is, coloniality and inequalities permeate society, education, and internationalization. That's why I participate in the process [of developing the specialization course], trying to change myself and make decolonial movements to break with what is 'established'." (excerpt from the interview).

As stated by the participants, the English language is associated with participation in the internationalization process, with the visibility of the work carried out in the country, and, as Chico states, it is read as "a symbolic good to be acquired in order to acquire more material goods." For Paula, this focus on language and monolingualism is a barrier, in the sense that, if there are only publications in English (which she recognizes is a market imposition), only those who use that language will be able to access the studies. This would be an impediment to "full" scientific development. With the recognition of coloniality, Chico explains that he seeks to break with the social imaginary from which the English language is an instrument for achieving modern/colonial promises. The process of linguistic education, in this sense, would be a way of resignifying this language. Finally, the example shared by Mark illustrates the English language as a demand from Brazilian universities, even though access to learning was not expanded before the student entered higher education, which I see as a reflex of the link between language and the production of (and access to) "valid" knowledge. The proposal of these professors, therefore, is not to break with the English language, because that would mean depriving the academic community

of access to the symbolic, cultural, economic, and academic capital that it enables, but to promote the access to English and other languages and, consequently, to more knowledge and possibilities for scientific development.

Figure 1 - Map of the English language in the specialization proposal.



Source: my elaboration.

Within the specialization proposal, the English language, in this sense, would be like a door, whose learning process could trigger reflections and ruptures, but also lead to the achievement of modern/colonial promises. When only the English door is open, there is a limitation (which I understand as obstacles to achieving modern/colonial promises) in some ways, such as less visibility and access and, with that, less development. However, with the doors of more languages open, as the participants put it, there is an expansion not only to the promises themselves, but to the possibility of more people having access to them. On the other hand, when only one door is open (that of the English language, for example), there is a reinforcement of the exclusion of access, visibility, and participation of minority groups in spaces, collective processes and forms of life. Therefore, opening the doors to other languages is seen as a way of resisting the hegemony of English in the internationalization process (even though this hegemony, as a complex modern/colonial problem, cannot

be easily broken) and enabling access, visibility, and space for other groups and knowledges. In this sense, language is placed in this contradictory place of reinforcing the modern/colonial imaginary and providing opportunities to delink from it.

When reflecting on this link between language and the possibility of accessing more knowledge, I thought about some occasions when, during my time at UBC, I was able to hear people from indigenous groups and unshared stories that speaker was not authorized to tell. Our notion that knowledge should be freely accessible to everyone conflicts with that of some indigenous groups who understand that only some people can share/hear certain stories. This leads me to question the roles of knowledge and how the university has become a place of totality. I think, in this sense, about Tuck's statement (2018, p. 165):

There are some forms of knowledge that the academy does not deserve. This axiom is the crux of refusal. The university is not universal; rather, it is a colonial collector of knowledge as another form of territory. There are stories and experiences that already have their own place, and placing them in the academy is removal, not respect (Tuck, 2018, p. 165).

Here I echo some questions related to this reflection: what is the colonial side of the universalization of access to knowledge? What are the consequences of access to all knowledge by everyone? What would a university that deals with knowledge as belonging to (other) places be like?

I also return to the issue of access, thinking about choices, especially in the case of educators, academics, policy developers etc., whose decisions impact the choices that other people may or may not have. When we understand decoloniality as an option (Mignolo, 2009) and, when choosing it, we seek delinking from modernity/coloniality (Mignolo, 2007b), even though we recognize that it is a complex, long process with no easy solutions, I wonder: is it appropriate to choose to delink other people from modernity/coloniality by withdrawing or reinforcing (the lack of) access to modern/colonial promises that we enjoy? This is yet another conflict for

which I have no answers, but which I think about a lot, especially considering that my own access to the university and other modern/colonial promises was due to public policies. On the other hand, I understand that the planet is not capable of supporting all people having access to modern/colonial promises and that we are facing the urgency of global warming (Stein *et al.*, 2023; Verlie, 2019), which could mean the loss of the choice to give up modern promises – a choice that many people already do not have –, given that we will be forced, by planetary circumstances, into certain types of existence or even extinction.

Another point, in addition to the discussion about the role of the English language in internationalization as a means of accessing modern/colonial promises, is the questioning of the very conception of language. This is an important reflection, as it crosses how we construct meanings, which also impacts the design and development of the specialization course. Given the network configuration, different and, at times, conflicting language perspectives coexist: from the understanding that it would be possible to guarantee communication in a transparent way once those involved are fluent to the understanding that we negotiate meaning from the resources available in our repertoires. Therefore, the development of the specialization course can rely on the notion that, when learning a language (in its operating rules) for internationalization purposes, a person would be prepared to communicate in contexts resulting from this process, as if communication was linear, transparent, and guaranteed. On the other hand, the course can also be based on the idea of creating space and predisposition for difference and for the uncertainties of negotiating meanings – a perspective that I defend. With this in mind, I propose some questions: how is a conception of language as a transparent system of communication that works based on rules linked to modern/colonial thinking? How can we prevent the search for transparency in communication from infiltrating proposals based on understandings of language that criticize the illusion of transparency? What modern/colonial promises do we need to

give up in order to engage with and live in dialogue with conceptions of language that move away from modern/colonial principles?

### **5 A stop, not the final destination**

As I have discussed in the text, languages and the words of bodies have been colonized. In the internationalization scenario, knowledge is linked to languages and power, so its acceptability and visibility are dependent on the language used to share it. Just like knowledge becomes a commodity, so does language, and they are both supposed to allow the achievement of modern/colonial promises of progress, access to wealth, security, stability etc. The colonial costs of such promises are rarely addressed and, when they are, they are often placed as a separate thing that can be fixed without the need to disinvest in the promises themselves. The complexity of the process of voluntarily renouncing our desires includes our difficulty to see the colonial side of modernity, our emotional responses and the struggles to make room for tensions, plurality, conflict, and uncertainty within ourselves, as well as the entanglements between our ways of being/knowing with modernity/coloniality.

The mapping process of understandings concerning the role of the English language also shows conflict: there is a desire to provide more people with access to modern/colonial promises, which would be possible through language learning – that opens doors; at the same time, providing more access to more languages might also open space to question modernity/coloniality as it can disturb the hegemony of a single language and allow access to more knowledge. In this sense, there is no attempt to withdraw the promises, despite the disposition to reflect and problematize them to create cracks from within.

This research, however, only looks into the specialization course proposal, so it does not shed light on the many different praxis and understandings that will permeate the actual development of the course and how language will be approached.

Given that, this is a possibility of research to be conducted once the first class of the specialization starts.

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