

The roads we take – The pedagogic route as a proposal to build English classes along critical decolonial pathways¹

The roads we take – O percurso didático como proposta para construir aulas de inglês por caminhos crítico-decoloniais

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ABSTRACT: As an alternative to the popular planning for English classes derived from the communicative approach, known as Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP), I propose the **pedagogic route**. I argue that critical and decolonial praxiologies lack a proposal that could build up to a more flexible classroom, one more open to discussions. In this line of thought, I support the argument that the text (in a broad sense of the word) should be seen as a starting point for understanding social practices and political, historical, and identity intersections that compose them. Throughout this article, I describe four **trails** suggested for building classes, namely: **talking topic** (conversational topics), **expanding repertoires** (semiotic expansion), **thinking over** (reflections), and **bringing to life** (focus on experiences). More specifically, I point out some actions that are part of the pedagogic route such as the study of the meaning making process through reading, discussions, and the formulation of proposals focused on lived experiences. It is worth stressing, however, that the **pedagogic route** should not be seen as a single route that would supplant other classroom constructions but as an alternative to highlight that students ought to take the leading role in critical decolonial language education. From my viewpoint, the pedagogic route allows us to draw attention to our bodies and senses, with their intersections and subjectivities, revisit our cultures, values, and knowledge, and learn to also see ourselves in the world in another language. As the objective of this study, I thereby propose an English lesson planning outline that is in line with a view of language as social practice and that favors the expansion of repertoires in a dialogical, critical, and praxis-based manner. I end this piece by inviting other teachers to appreciate this course of action (which I refer to as **trails**) and to propose new ones.

KEYWORDS: Critical language education. Decoloniality. *Pedagogic route*. Meaning making. Planning.

RESUMO: Em alternativa ao planejamento de aulas de inglês típico da abordagem comunicativa, conhecido como Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP), proponho o **percurso didático**. Argumento que praxiologias críticas e decoloniais carecem de uma proposta de

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construção de aula mais flexível, mais aberta ao debate e que considere o texto (em sua ampla acepção do termo) como ponto de partida para compreender as práticas sociais e os atravessamentos políticos, históricos e identitários que as compõem. Ao longo do artigo, descrevo quatro **trieiros** que sugiro para a construção de aulas, a saber: *talking topics* (tópicos conversacionais), *expanding repertoires* (expansão de repertórios), *thinking over* (reflexões) e *bringing to life* (propostas de vivências). De modo mais específico, aponto algumas ações que integram o percurso didático, como o estudo da construção de sentidos por meio da leitura, de debates e da elaboração de propostas de vivências. Ressalto, no entanto, que o percurso pedagógico não deve ser visto como um percurso único, que substituiria outras construções de sala de aula, mas como uma alternativa que destaca as/os alunas/os como protagonistas na educação linguística crítico-decolonial. A meu ver, o percurso pedagógico nos permite direcionar a atenção para os nossos corpos e sentidos, com suas intersecções e subjetividades, revisitando nossas culturas, valores e conhecimentos e aprender a nos ver no mundo também em outra língua. Como objetivo deste estudo, proponho, portanto, um desenho de planejamento de aulas de inglês que coaduna com a visão de língua como prática social e favorece a ampliação de repertórios de maneira dialógica, crítica e emergente da práxis. Finalizo este texto convidando outras/os professoras/es a apreciar este curso de ação (esses **trieiros**) e a propor novos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação linguística crítica. Decolonialidade. *Percorso didático*. Construção de sentidos. Planejamento.

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1 The beginning of the path – initial considerations

Two roads diverged in a wood and I –
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.
The road not taken, by Robert Frost (1995, p. 103)

Letting oneself be touched by words in poetry and noticing how they traverse us is a beautiful and sensitive way of celebrating the work we do with language education. I remember the first time I read the epigraph poem above (by then I was still an undergraduate student), and how it affected me profoundly. Since then, I have followed less-traveled roads, not because they are short cuts, but because they allow me to glimpse other ideas and possibilities, such as the ones I discuss in this piece.

Gone are the days when I was starting my career as an English teacher. At first, pre-established rules on how to organize a class made me feel safe, even though I was

stuck to a fixed format. They seemed appropriate for my work context, a language school franchise. I started teaching in 1994, and at that time the communicative approach was being implemented in several English schools, thus present in textbooks used both in language courses and regular schools. Although this method was more flexible than its predecessors (grammar-translation method, direct method, audiolingual method, for example), as discussed by Diane Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Henry Douglas Brown (2004), the classes were still structured in fixed sequences of hierarchically arranged activities. They provided an instructional stage (**Presentation**), a stage for memorizing the content and doing exercises focused on the structures and/or functions taught (**Practice**), and a final stage that culminated in an individual or a collective activity (**Production**), in which students showed a result of what they had learned in class. This model became popular as PPP, and it was developed after an initial activity to “break the ice” (**warmer** or **ice breaker**), a game or any technique that would set the mood for each class.

Even though linguistic structures were taught inductively, the language perception was still restricted to its communicative function, and context was seen as a pretext to illustrate possible uses of language. In the words of Suresh Canagarajah (2018, p. 2), “context was treated as a container of language”, a container that, although broad, was delimited, encapsulated, and passive, that is, it was assumed that it did not influence how subjects understood the language. The meaning was taken as static and given, not as changing or flexible as living things are. For the author, linking the concept of language to its grammar structure means to essentialize it and to grant its possession to certain groups of people and/or countries. In this sense, Canagarajah has been engaged in breaking with this conception of language and showing how it is fluid, shifting and subject to (re)signification according to users, their intents and the contextual emergences.

As time went by, as I reflected on my experiences in the classroom² and in academia, I realized that I had to take my chances on less-traveled paths, **cerradeiro**³ paths (known as *picadas*⁴) carved by critical applied linguists from Goiás (the state in Brazil where we live and work), colleagues from the study group Transição⁵. These people encouraged me to think about the English class from the concept of **trails** (known in Portuguese as *trieiros*⁶), which outlines the **pedagogic route** as I understand it today. I use the terms **cerradeiro path** and **trail** to refer to counterhegemonic paths carved by the subjectivity that permeates our praxiologies. I have chosen these words because they are typical of the Cerrado of Goiás, in their reference to opening up new paths, a metaphor that I construct throughout this article.

One of the first things with which I came to terms on this road was the understanding that theory and practice are inseparable domains, as Paulo Freire (2020) reminds us. For him, real communication occurs in dialogue. People are constituted in dialogic relationships among practices and theories nurtured by the context. Consequently, I realized they constituted my subjectivity as much as other

² It is worth mentioning that this experience with lesson planning emerged from my work at the time in private language schools. Teaching of English at regular schools (private or public, for that matter) was primarily focused on grammar rules and reading of texts, as I discuss in Sabota (2021).

³ This adjective refers to the ecoregion known as Cerrado, a tropical savannah in Brazil.

⁴ For the Priberam Dictionary of the Portuguese Language, “picada” is a “short cut that is made by using a cutting instrument. Narrow path through the bush” [Source text: “atalho aberto com recurso a um instrumento de corte. Caminho estreito por entre o mato”] (<https://dicionario.priberam.org/picada>).

⁵ Study group coordinated by professors Dr Rosane Pessoa (UFG) and Dr Viviane Silvestre (UEG), which brings together researchers working with critical language education. The group is currently studying decoloniality and its relation to language education, especially in order to reflect on its repercussions on English language classes and language teacher education. Research work from this group can be found at (<https://sites.google.com/view/transicao2012> Access on: Jul. 07, 2025)

⁶ According to the Informal Dictionary, *trieiro* is synonymous with “a narrow path opened by successive passages through the woods” [original: “caminho estreito aberto por passagens sucessivas no meio mato”] (<https://www.dicionarioinformal.com.br/trieiro/>). Access on: Nov. 03, 2021). Initially, I used the word *trilha* to indicate the paths of the route presented here. However, as I talked with my colleagues Dr Viviane Silvestre (UEG) and Dr Valéria Rosa-da-Silva (UEG), I chose to use *trieiro* because I understand that this term – more colloquial and local – better represents the metaphor in the decolonial sense intended for this undertaking. I see it as something built with the people involved in education, and as something that is somewhat disruptive, as I discuss later in this article.

experiences. I have gradually learned not to separate each element of my “self” with commas, and not to see this identity as something finished, complete. Thus, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari (1995), and their idea of constant becoming with others and things, I keep trying to recognize and welcome my intersecting identities (teacher **and** researcher **and** adviser **and** mother **and** woman **and** socially seen as white **and** Brazilian **and...**), based on a perception of being in the process of becoming.

It is from this teacher construction that I propose, as the objective of this study, an English lesson planning outline that is in accordance to a view of language as social practice and that favors the expansion of repertoires in a dialogical, critical, and praxis-based manner. Therefore, throughout the course of this writing, I discuss the paths that led me to the proposal of the **pedagogic route**. First, I provide a context for its conception and, more specifically, I discuss some of the elements that prompted this proposal. Next, I present the **trails** that make up the path of the classes, indicating how they follow the principles of a critical decolonial language education. In the final considerations, I seek to think back on the footprints left on the pathway to invite other teachers to follow these **cerradeiro paths**.

In terms of methodological paths, I draw on the ontoepistemologies presented in this article. I consider it an academic writing-living experience, as discussed by Valéria Rosa-da-Silva (2021). She borrows the term coined by Conceição Evaristo (2020) to explain how a research may derive from enmeshed experiences making it not possible to separate the “self” from the text. Given the way my praxiologies and subjectivity are intertwined, I set to think and problematize my teaching agency from critical decolonial perspectives. A writing-living experience refers to a written denunciation that denotes “a profound discomfort with the state of things. It is a writing that does observe and absorb life, existence”⁷ (Evaristo, 2020, p. 34). It is research ingrained in my praxiologies as a researcher, teacher educator, and language

⁷Source text: “um profundo incômodo com o estado das coisas. É uma escrita que tem, sim, a observação e a absorção da vida, da existência”.

teacher. The idea of praxiologies is defined by Rosane Pessoa, Kleber Aparecido Silva, and Carla Freitas (2021, p. 16) as “the fusion of our epistemologies and our practices”⁸, based on the interpretation of Freire’s maxim that theory and practice must always be seen in relation to each other.

Thus, I reiterate Luiz Paulo Moita Lopes’s (1994) argument that critical applied linguistics research is committed to enunciating from an epistemic and ethical point of view. It sees researchers as agents who imprint their subjectivities **on** their praxiologies and (de/re)construct their subjectivities **with** their praxiologies. For Catherine Walsh (2015), the possibility of thinking about praxis based on local experiences and demands emerges as an act of resistance and re-existence to the violence that has been perpetrated by the colonial matrix of power for more than five centuries. Finding a way to do things differently, which “challenges the hegemony and universality of capitalism, Euro-centric modernity and Western civilizing logic” (Walsh, 2015, p. 12), is part of the commitment of those engaged in decolonial pedagogies. Actions southernized by decoloniality are guided by a commitment to interrupt violence and redeem subjectivities pushed to the sidelines by such a matrix. In this line of thought, this study becomes part of the knowledge constructed in critical language education. In an effort to build praxiologies with people, from their local demands and contingencies, I add the **decolonial** marker to this endeavor.

2 Paths already trodden – a journey toward critical decolonial efforts in language education

Historically, language teaching in Brazil has sought to import not just textbooks and teaching materials but also methods and practices that ensure success in language learning. This success has been measured by how much of the foreign culture a learner can assimilate and how well they can reproduce a foreign accent, in search of “the perfect English”, as discussed in Sabota (2018). These materials rarely coped with the

⁸ Source text: “nossas epistemologias fundidas com nossas práticas”.

local demands of learners, especially in regular contexts such as schools and universities. Clarissa Jordão (2014) argues that such materials present the language as foreign – a cultural good to be consumed (English as a commodity), and not as a powerful element that constructs meanings. According to the author, in critical applied linguistics, the meaning making process is very important for the expansion of repertoires as well as for the perception of language as social practice. It is thus possible to notice that textbook-focused practices that support a grammar based structural view of language reinforce the notion of completeness and strengthen the image of an “ideal speaker”, whose authority over the language can be used to oppress and silence learners. For bell hooks (2013), language can be an element of oppression, constraint, and silencing whenever it erases **knowledges** and prevents subjectivities from being expressed. In the words of the author, “I know that it is not the English language that hurts me, but what the oppressors do with it, how they shape it to become a territory that limits and defines, how they make it a weapon that can shame, humiliate, colonize” (Hooks, 2013, p. 224). I conclude from these arguments that, as the language enclosed in textbooks determines what can and/or must be said by learners, it perpetrates violence against them.

This violent way of relating to language, for Tânia Rezende (2015), engenders a feeling of inferiority in the learner, fostered in us Brazilians since the invasion of our territory by the Portuguese. The author coined the term **linguaphobia** to refer to the supposed inability to learn languages inculcated in us, especially in school environments. In the words of Rezende (2015, p. 64), linguaphobia “is the resistance and insecurity in relation to the Portuguese language at school, Brazilian Portuguese in asymmetric everyday interactions and, most importantly, the study of foreign languages, above all, the English language”⁹. Some of the repercussions of

⁹ Source text: “é a resistência e insegurança com relação à Língua Portuguesa, na escola, ao português brasileiro nas interações cotidianas assimétricas e, maximamente, ao estudo de línguas estrangeiras, sobretudo, à língua inglesa”.

linguaphobia are poor school performances in external exams, insecurity when preparing (oral or written) texts in less colloquial varieties of the standard language, and fear of oral presentations when there is some kind of observation/assessment. For these reasons, linguaphobia can be seen as a consequence of reiterated silencing actions towards learners as well as erasure of their subjectivities in educational contexts.

As an educator and a researcher, I chose not to follow these well-trodden paths but rather open up **cerradeiro paths**, as I mention in the introduction, in order to explore less-traveled roads. My classes could no longer be restricted to a rigid planning, which limited the time for discussions of word-world¹⁰ readings (Freire, 2001), separated experiences from theories, and silenced students who felt threatened by linguaphobia (Rezende, 2015). In order to construct dialogic events that could mobilize the construction of local meanings, problematize critical-experiential issues (instead of just proposing a theme for exchanging ideas (Rezende, 2017)), favor the appropriation of the language (previously presented as foreign, but recently resignified as additional (Jordão, 2014)), it was necessary to do away with apolitical trivialized techniques in English classes.

As discussed by Marco Túlio Urzêda-Freitas and Rosane Pessoa (2020, p. 72), based on the understanding of communication as a complex phenomenon, language classes should be “guided by a concept of learning as a space of sharing and co-construction of knowledge, identity performances and discursive clashes that make room for the articulation of complex analyses of social life.” I started trying to think of classes in which language could happen **between** and **from** (inter)subjective relationships, thus allowing the construction of knowledge based on local demands and seeing the class as a dialogical and socio-historical event. In addition, the idea that it is necessary to build other possibilities of being in the world, opening up cracks in

¹⁰ For Paulo Freire (2001), the reading of the word-world integrates the two juxtaposed terms that compose the concept. Therefore, I keep the spelling used by the author in this article.

the colonial matrix of power, began to germinate in our classrooms in Central Brazil, as highlighted in the book organized by Pessoa, Silva, and Freitas (2021). As Walsh (2018, p. 81) would put it, I started to look at decoloniality as praxis in a continuous movement of rupture in search of “possibilities of other modes of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, and living.” This proposal, in turn, makes room for new sowings, new ways of acting in favor of social transformations that I desire for my community.

For Urzêda-Freitas and Pessoa (2020), language classes can be a powerful space for epistemic decoloniality, given the possibility of disarticulating hegemonic discourses that structurally sustain violent discriminatory practices, such as: religious intolerance, aesthetic pressure, racial slurs, xenophobia, linguistic prejudice, to name but a few examples. Further, I agree with Viviane Silvestre (2017) that decolonial efforts in language education can interrupt criminal cycles of violence, which are (re)produced in social practices through language, such as racism and homo(trans)phobia.

Our challenge, as language teachers, is to make our classrooms spaces for dialogue, discussion, and different meaning constructions. Thus, preparing classes inspired by critical decolonial efforts means to act through selections, adaptations, and the creation of materials for pedagogical use, making sure that they are contingent, emerging from local demands, and that they lead to the reading of the word-world linked to the reading of oneself. Thus, the intention of critical decolonial classes (understood as semiotic events¹¹ of joint construction of meanings) is to transform

¹¹ I understand **semiotic events** as meaning making encounters that recognize multimodality and context as agents in this process. I am inspired by the explanation of Luiz Martins Lima Neto (2017, p. 41) that “meaning is constructed by the use of resources of all kinds (symbols, icons, and images); that languages and semiotic resources create meaning through different modalities, such as the oral and visual ones; and that semiotic resources are embedded in physical environments, aligning participants, objects, bodies, and contexts to create meaning” [Source text: “o significado é construído através de recursos de todos os tipos (símbolos, ícones e imagens); de que as línguas/linguagens e os recursos semióticos criam significado através de modalidades diferentes, tais como a oral e a visual; e de que os recursos semióticos estão embutidos em ambientes físicos, alinhando participantes, objetos, corpos e contextos para criar significado”].

realities, to envisage other ways of being, knowing, and living **in** and **with** the world, filling it with more questions than answers.

When referring to a problematizing practice in critical language education, based on Margarete Schlatter and Pedro Garcez (2012), Silvestre (2015, p. 64) states that it allows students to “know, participate in, and give new contours to their own reality; shuttle between diverse worlds; reflect on the world in which they live and act critically and creatively.”¹² The author reiterates that this is a way of connecting the local sphere to the global one, since when we think with people and from their perspectives, we can establish broader and more complex connections with the world and better understand the relations that constitute it. By questioning the way that we get to know the world and seeking to make sense of how reality is constructed, it is possible to appropriate one’s very process of meaning making. For Vanessa Andreotti and Rene Susa,

epistemological and ontological concerns tend to have a systemic orientation that highlights the connections between history, power relations, the politics of knowledge production, and the uneven distribution of wealth, labour, and the perceived value of life (human and not) (Susa, 2018, p. 1).

It is in this conjuncture that we can perceive which practices are naturalized, structurally sustained, and which matrices of power are operating. By questioning them, it is possible to interrupt their cycle of repetitions and disrupt what is set. As Silvestre (2015, p. 96) points out, a problematizing practice sees language as “inherently political”¹³. Therefore, while one must ethically care for human and nonhuman others (Andreotti; Susa, 2018), they cannot refrain from welcoming and troubling the limits and contours that define oneself, the other, and the social context.

¹² Source text: “conhecer, participar e dar novos contornos à própria realidade; transitar na diversidade; refletir sobre o mundo em que se vive e agir crítica e criativamente”.

¹³ Source text: “inerentemente política”.

3 The pedagogic route for critical decolonial English classes – possible disruptions

As I argue throughout this study, engaging in decolonial efforts in critical language education implies (de/re)constructions and disruptions. As I narrate in the introduction, in my teaching career, I have sought to make choices that would lead me to paths different from those well-trodden, not because I consider them inappropriate, but because I already know, in advance, where they would take me. Thus, I was convinced that, so that I could reach spaces not much explored in English teaching, especially in public contexts, it was necessary to venture into other ways of working with language education.

A few years ago, I started to rethink the planning of my English classes, and it was then that I decided to abandon the PPP format. At that time, I was reflecting on my reading classes (Sabota, 2017a), and it became even clearer to me that they did not open up possibilities for addressing the perspective of language education that I would like. As I worked with student teachers who were taking my practicum courses, I sought to build classes that could facilitate ontoepistemic movements to destabilize single stories (Adichie, 2009) that we had heard/read throughout our lives. Although still in its early stage, I already saw myself as a teacher and researcher looking for something that would translate my concerns into a flow of linked possibilities. I aimed to “organize the activities done in the classroom in logical sequences and provide for the mediation of content in a progressive and contextualized way”¹⁴ (Sabota, 2017b, p. 132). At that moment, I was already working with more flexible stages, insofar as I not only allowed more time for each one, but also used two, three, or as many classes as necessary to accomplish what had been proposed.

In revisiting my work with the **pedagogic route** at that time, I now realize that it was still based on predetermined meanings and a fixed view of language, as it endorsed the progression of content from elements that were external to my students.

¹⁴ Source text: “organizar as tarefas feitas em sala de aula em sequências lógicas e viabilizar a mediação do conteúdo de forma progressiva e contextualizada”.

The proposal of a **logical idea** governing a **progressive mediation** of content still resonated with a matrix of modern colonial power to the detriment of problematizations with my groups, the search for an internal way of articulating ideas to build meanings locally.

Despite such shortcomings, the concept of **pedagogic route** would lead me to some **cerradeiro paths**. As one can see, the questioning of the notion of spacetime was an important rupture presented in that first version of the proposal. The institutionalized class (at school and at the university) has a rigid space and limited time, which often stifles the agency of teachers. However, when looking at language as political action, as social practice, it is not possible to restrict the learning time to 50 minutes; discussions initiated in class can reverberate through and extend to other times and spaces. The activities done in class are intertwined in a complex web of relations guided by a contingency organization that involves that local context, that specific group of students, without the intention of (or commitment to) repeating something that has already been done. In this sense, each class is seen as a unique semiotic event. Similarly, a topic can be broken down into modules that include units of meaning to be developed for a week, a two-month period, or any other unit of time that is deemed viable, possible, relevant or necessary. Adding the dimensions of time and space, both while planning and discussing selected topics in class, expands possibilities of interpretation.

In a Freirean dialogic view of education, relationships built between teachers and students influence their ways of perceiving and appropriating reality, which might have effects in their relationships with their families and communities. Whenever this happens, as discussed in Sabota *et al.* (2021), the scope of the discussions promoted in class takes on other dimensions and can culminate in an environmental/social/cultural project, depending on people's willingness, commitment, availability, feasibility, and other affordances.

Another rupture in the initial model of **the pedagogic route** refers to the rigid and hierarchical structure of the class, that is, the way in which the PPP sequence predicted an increasing sequence in the degree of difficulty of the activities. In this proposal, I argue that this hierarchy can be supplanted by malleable stages that can be interchanged, shortened, or extended according to what is necessary in class. This perception pushed me to focus more on meaning making – which should always be privileged in language classes, in my opinion. For Lynn Mario Menezes de Souza (2011), texts emerge from sociohistorical events, and the perceptions that we have of them are limited to our own contexts; this implies coming to terms with the fact that we constantly experience intertwined movements, which not always are free of conflict. Working with the curriculum and/or the documents that regulate the content that is supposed to be taught is very important; yet relations, deconstructions, and rearrangements in the process of appropriation and transformation of student knowledge must take center stage.

I realized that if I intended to problematize issues relevant to my students, it was necessary to trouble power relations. By doing that it would be possible to take up a place of listening to decide even on the topics that should be addressed in class. This movement favors the creation of speech spaces that, in the words of Silvestre (2017, p. 86), allow students to have their “conceptions, values and truths”¹⁵ problematized, facilitating the reconstruction of personal practices and language education. For these spaces to be created, I have asked them to suggest what they would like to address in our classes. This has been done through direct questions (“What should we discuss next class?”), and sometimes their suggestions have been made in both their written and oral narratives. In general, although they have not fully engaged in this exercise, their responses usually indicate relevant ways to approach initial constructions of meaning. Noticing that they are willing to enact their agency and show their commitment in discussions throughout the **pedagogic route** is more

¹⁵ Source text: “concepções, valores e verdades”.

important than the number of topics suggested by the students, as we argue in Sabota *et al.* (2018).

One more important rupture seemed necessary: it was time to think about teaching materials. For some time now, I have created/adapted the material used with my groups, freeing myself from the textbook. I am aware that having the time and resources to think about and design one's own material is a privilege that not all teachers have due to precarious work conditions, which are getting worse in our country. However, in my opinion, it has been worth dedicating myself to searching, selecting, and organizing the material used in my classes, as I can design it to directly relate to my students' realities and meet their needs. On the other hand, I acknowledge that it is feasible to use textbooks and adapt/add to them to satisfy local demands, while engaging oneself in a problematizing praxis (Silvestre, 2015). Once the topics that will be addressed and material that will be used in class have been defined, it is time to design the route and map possible **trails** for exploration, as I will elaborate in the next section.

4 The *pedagogic route* and its *trails* – building critical decolonial pathways

A possible reading of the path metaphor is the idea of possibilities emerging from the unfolding of an action or chain of actions that delineate a route. By proposing *the pedagogic route*, I think of the process of preparing a lesson in English or other languages (or a set of lessons) that welcomes, discusses, (de)mobilizes, and (de/re)constructs meanings in dialogic exchanges, to contribute to plural, complex, translingual and less hierarchical learning. In other words, the focus is on semiotic events in which the people who experience them take center stage, drawing attention to their subjective identity markers (color, race, gender identity, sex, body image, social class, age, and many others). The class is thought in terms of allowing readings of the word-world to facilitate the dialogic construction of meanings. In line with Canagarajah (2018), it is translingual because it recognizes that several languages

participate in the process. In this sense, it seeks to go beyond the notion of autonomous languages (implying that they can be accessed at any time – simultaneously or alternately) and to support the understanding that semiotic and multimodal resources take part in communication and consequently compose and transform social reality through language. Finally, it mitigates hierarchical relations in the classroom by recognizing that the educator partakes in meaning making together with learners, and hence it considers that both share responsibility for actions related to the educational process. The teacher educator and their students thereby decide together on: topics that should be discussed; their assessment and grading system; the approach to verbal, non-verbal, imagery, sound texts, etc. Actions like these are aimed at building speech spaces and sensitive listening spaces that welcome and value horizontalized knowledges (that is, less hierarchical epistemic constructions).

The pluralization of voices in the language classroom can help combat linguaphobia, while promoting the action of **talking with** (instead of talking **about**), as observed by Rezende (2017). Furthermore, it welcomes experiences of different linguistic practices, thus assisting in the construction of arguments and in the subjective formation of subjects. In this sense, I argue that the **pedagogic route** – composed of its various **trails** – shows a decolonial pathway because it is built **with** the students and **from** their demands and interests, and not *for* them, as it normally occurs in the PPP model.

In the creation of the cartography of the **pedagogic route**, I seek to start with a topic and propose the discussion of multimodal texts in **trails** that alternate, enmesh, and intertwine. The focus is on problematizing meaning making in language and society and breaking with the cycle of violence, erasures, and silencing perpetuated by language. By **trail** I mean a set of chain of actions that moves students and teacher along the way. In other words, they are activities planned by both teachers and students to mobilize and build meanings in language classes. A **trail** is a path “slashed out by a machete”, as we often see in the woods of Cerrado; it opens up spaces not yet

(or little) trodden; and it does not deforest, or destroy, because its vegetation can grow back. In this image of language education, the **pedagogic route** is counterhegemonic, for it is based on the demands of the group and the teacher; therefore, it does not follow the norms established in textbooks, for example. It welcomes different multimodal texts (photos, paintings, poems, stories, essays, articles, music, slam, memes, rap, and an infinity of possibilities) and sees them in multiple ways as well (as for questioning, schematizing, or working on media transfers, textual alterations and intertextualizations, proposals for rereadings etc.), in addition to encouraging students' imagination and agency.

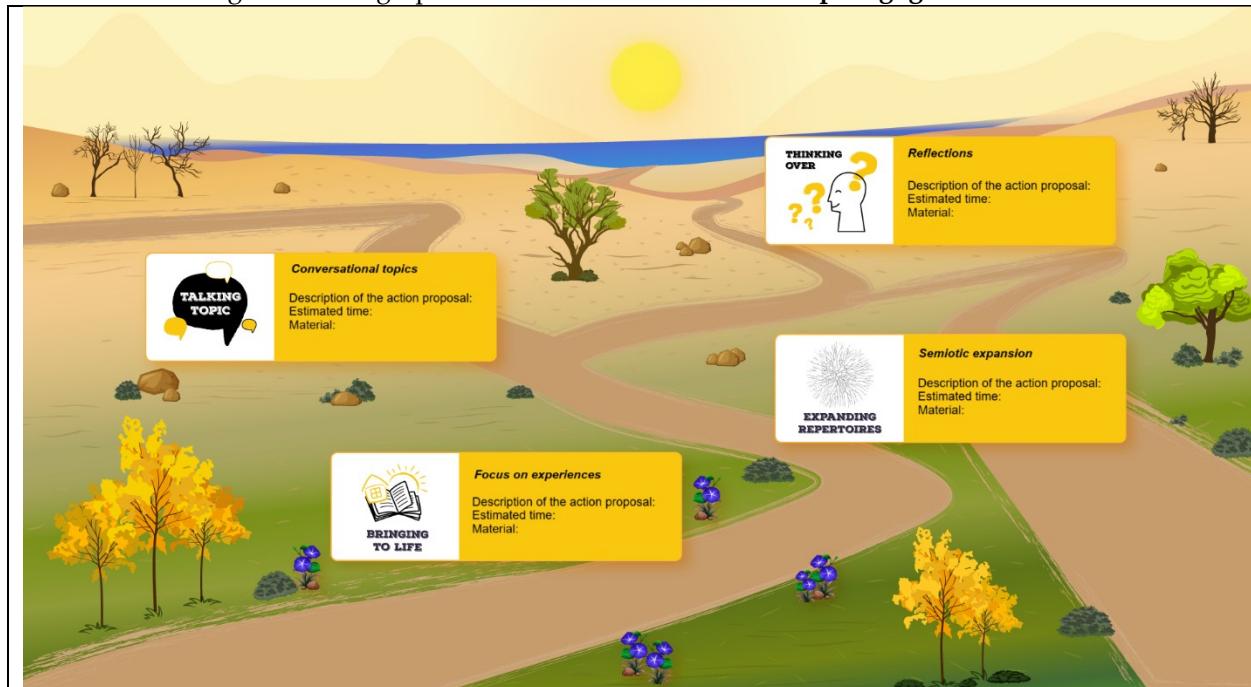
There is no linear sequence foreseen for the **trails**. It is possible to work with specific aspects of linguistic organization, textual genres, multimodality, and the media together with discussions and textual productions. The class follows local flows and movements decided by whoever conducts the class (the teacher educator, students, or a guest) as well as those who participate in it. Such spontaneity should not be confused with lack of preparation. All moments of the class are permeated by reflections on language, its uses, meaning negotiation, power relations, and social practices that constitute it and/or that are constituted by it. As I have stressed, it is important that readings of the word-world be responsibly problematized based on praxiologies that are constantly felt thought, and not treated in an essentialized and/or naturalized way. This implies a continuous effort to understand the transformations of languages, cultures, and societies.

Since 2019, I have explicitly included the **pedagogic route** in my course plan (Sabota, 2021), as discussed at the XXIII Encontro da Associação de Professores/as de Língua Inglesa do Estado do Mato Grosso (APLIEMT) (23rd Meeting of English Language Teachers Association of the State of Mato Grosso (APLIEMT)). At each new **route**, at each new **trail** carved by **cerradeiro paths**, I have the opportunity to work on them. I emphasize, however, that this is my first time writing about it as an article. Here I have named the **trails** based on their focus: **talking topics, expanding**

repertoires, thinking over, and bringing to life. For each of these **trails**, I think about the teaching material that will be necessary to conduct the problematizations and meaning constructions/negotiations, and then I estimate the time that will be used for that. The estimation of time allows me, as their professor, to foresee some directions and contours likely to be given to the class; however, as I do not intend to control their construction of meanings, my focus is on the pace of the discussions along the **trails**. It should be noted that, when trying to visualize and describe the action, I think of all those involved in it and how we will engage in the activities during its implementation. In addition, I raise questions that might stimulate the discussion and other reading possibilities with the aim of favoring the emergence of several voices (and not just echoes of the same discourse).

The following infographic presents a visualization of how I conceive these **trails** along **cerradeiro paths**.

Figure 1 – Infographic with the visual outline of the **pedagogic route**.



Source: drawn up by the author and designed by Walter Hugo Rodrigues in 2021.

The infographic shows a scenario without a previously demarcated beginning or end. We can start the route from any of the **trails**. The trees are inspired by the

flowering of the ipes and the twisted trunks that show the strength, beauty, and resistance with which we build our praxiologies in Central Brazil (Pessoa *et al.*, 2021). The sun, our companion in this land, energizes our discussions and heats them up. In the background, the lake (or river) reminds us that where there is water, there is life. Our *cerradeiro* soil, cradle of waters, teaches us to have hope. Morning glories are creeping plants and spread like rhizomes in several directions, even leaning against trees and rocks, just like our reflections bloom amidst adverse conditions, once again calling our attention to the importance of resistance. I discuss these **trails** in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Talking topic – Conversational topics: this *trail* is a good start for the route as it is very broad and allows us to have a panoramic view of the path ahead. However, it can be resumed throughout the classes, whenever deemed relevant, because there is not a preestablished order to follow the **trails**, as already mentioned. This is a moment for everyone in class to express their thoughts, feelings, and how they think they might be affected by the topics that will be addressed throughout the **pedagogic route**. It can be presented in a multimodal text, such as a song, an image, a poem, a short video, a newspaper/magazine article, or even in an explicit question about the topic, for example: “Let’s talk a little about street art?”, or “How do you feel/position yourself in relation to posting personal photos on social media?” The purpose is to raise some initial questions so that students can share some of their world knowledge and then explore points of convergence and divergence to get to know their classmates’ thoughts, preparing the ground for possible and desired mobilizations. The main objective of this **trail** is to help people to get to know each other (from where they enunciate and which voices are intertwined with theirs). In this sense, it aims to generate a respectful dialogical environment that welcomes dissent, as an opportunity to read themselves and the other and to recognize themselves in this learning space, as advocated by Menezes de Souza (2011). Sensitive listening spaces and speech spaces, discussed by Silvestre (2017), are favored in this **trail** because they lead to

encounters with different subjectivities. There are opportunities for those involved in this semiotic event to get to know each other, share emotions, feelings, ideas; and, should they choose it, it can also be a space for (re/de)constructing conceptions and values that make us social beings.

Expanding repertoires – Semiotic expansion: in this stage, I seek to trouble contours of prior knowledge to accommodate new experiences. It is in this **trail** that I address more specific questions about the textual genre, its functions, characteristics, and social uses, for instance. More importantly, it is at this point that we compare different examples of texts and explore in more depth their intersections and the effects of meaning that are generated. As an illustration, if we work with a comic strip, at this point, we dissect the semiotic elements that compose it: we study its modes of construction, power relations that act through language, and its sociohistorical contextualization to help them understand figures of speech/style (metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole) and thought (irony, sarcasm, humor), the linguistic variety, formal, informal, and syntactic elements of language (sometimes isolated, sometimes by comparing the mother tongue and the additional language). Even though studying grammar, *per se*, is not the focus, I admit it is important to some extent as it enables students to reflect upon their own language and the teaching they will operate in the future. The main objective here is to help students realize how intertwined social, cultural, and linguistic repertoires are. We do that to indicate that language repertoire expansion takes place as we are pushed out of our comprehension comfort zones. In addition, we also have the opportunity to observe what happens when these are troubled through systematic study, via questioning, critical reflection, and analysis. Classroom discussions can shake up these repertoires and displace us in the construction of meanings; at the same time, it is a process that encourages living with dissent and building ethical and plural experiences that educate for citizenship.

Thinking over – Reflections: this **trail** refers to the way that students and teacher connect what was troubled and their discoveries and learning to their personal

contexts. The aim is not conflict resolution or the homogenization of ideas; the focus is on how understandings of the topic can be related to personal experiences, for example. In other words, at this moment of reflection, we are called upon to recognize and assume responsibility for our actions. We are thus encouraged to analyze our verbal and physical actions, if we whether choose to maintain the status quo, that is, to perpetuate hegemonic structures, or if we seek to transform them, examining internally and externally what our options are and the possibilities of actively acting in the world to make the change we would like to see.

Bringing to life – Focus on experiences: I see this stage as a moment when we share what we have learned from the discussion of the topics selected by drawing on the construction of one (or more) multimodal text(s) by the group. It can also be a time to share previous experiences regarding the topics addressed. Sometimes, I use this **trail** at the end of my **pedagogic routes**, which can last one or several weeks, to understand the path taken by the students in the discussions. The time spent on it is determined by the pace of the discussions, the complexity of the topic, and the academic calendar. The focus on experiences is supposed to encourage the agency of students, as the learners challenge themselves to construct meanings and share them with their classmates, thus exploring the way each one has experienced the **route**. I usually propose some ideas to stimulate their creativity, senses, feelings, and interest in the classes so as to pique their epistemological curiosity¹⁶, as defended by Paulo Freire (2014). Nevertheless, they are always the ones who decide what should be shared or not. From the proposal for sharing experiences, it is important to intertwine the topic of the **pedagogic route**, the context in which the activity takes place, and the social practices of language, but in such a way that not many restrictions are placed on the activity. I also make it possible for them to do this activity by themselves or in small

¹⁶ For Freire (2014), epistemological curiosity brings the subject closer to formal knowledge and fuels the desire to learn. It makes it possible for problematizing questions to be asked about the object of learning from the learner's context.

groups so that they are free to choose the best way for sharing their experiences along the **route**. I see this focus on experiences as an opportunity for all of them to tell one another what they were able to (de/re)construct throughout the discussions and to present their reflections in multimodal texts. Together we negotiate the deadline, the media that should be used, and what will be necessary for their textual constructions: slides/cards/notepads to register the ideas explored in oral presentations; online/printed/handwritten narrative diaries, among other possibilities. The multimodal text (in its oral, visual, sensory, static/dynamic, sound, written, and/or musical form) comes to life when it is socialized with the group. When they are displayed, as they are resignified by the group, these multimodal texts are also assigned new meanings. Some of the ideas for the construction of meanings that I have proposed to my students include: the creation of posters, collages, virtual murals, interviews (in audio or video), conversation circles, posts on blogs and social networks, narratives, storytelling, portfolios with imagery, verbal and sound productions. I try to encourage them to also share how they felt while producing the material and, as I work in an undergraduate teacher education program, I ask them to reflect on how this activity could be useful to them as teachers.

In Sabota (2021), I present the **pedagogic route** of an English class that could perhaps bring more life and give more color to the descriptions and explanations that I provide in this section. I chose not to show it here so that the reader can imagine their own paths. But you are invited to watch its presentation, which is available online. There is also another illustration of a **pedagogic route** based on the discussion of the topics **citizenship, environment, and environmental protection** in Sabota et al. (2021). Before concluding, I would like to reiterate that *trails* are moving and **pedagogic routes** are unique, as they depend on subjectivities and contingent aspects for taking on their contours. Thus, other **trails** may appear or disappear over time. Some of those addressed here may become wide paths, roads that many students and teachers may

also decide to follow. Others might be covered with a dense *cerradeiro* vegetation, and new stories might then be told, after all, **trails** are paths in the making.

5 Transient considerations, and not the end of the road

I started this text with a poem that I really like, relating the metaphor of the less-traveled path, alluded to in **The road not taken**, to the changes I have experienced throughout my career. I justified my choices by presenting the picture of how I revisit my praxiologies during the construction of **the pedagogic route** and its **trails**. I argue that classes, when planned with students, based on local demands, can open up cracks in colonial structures. Seeing language as social practice, studied from multiple repertoires, helps to combat linguaphobia and to promote the agency of teachers and students. As a teacher educator and researcher who works in an undergraduate teacher education program at a public university, located in the state of Goiás, I have resignified what **knowing a language** means again and again. In my view, as language speakers, we have earned our place in the sun for studying an additional language such as English and doing this kind of work. I constantly ponder over how we see ourselves in this construction of meanings, to what extent we reinforce the vicious structure that excludes and segregates people and, even more importantly, how we can interrupt/break with this cycle of violence.

It is not enough to just reflect on how we got here, that is, on how access to cultural goods is often denied to us, how economic depreciation and the devaluation of our profession pushes us ever further to the base of the social pyramid, on how teacher education is neglected by governments. We must also think about how the undergraduate programs that we attended were when we left them and what we have proposed for them after returning to these institutions as professors. Thinking about how we have access to English and reflecting on the fact that, in this language, we are also meaning makers (and not mere consumers) encourages me to think of other ways of working with this language and making it less foreign and more additional.

For this reason, I have dedicated myself to thinking about other ways to build English classes. I propose the **pedagogic route** not as a single route that will supplant other classroom constructions, but as an alternative to highlight that students should take the leading role in critical decolonial language education. I also see it as a way of drawing attention to our bodies and senses, with their intersections and subjectivities. I understand that through the **pedagogic route** we can revisit our culture, our values, our knowledge and learn to also see ourselves in the world in another language. Therefore, the **trails** that constitute the route are narrow but powerful. They challenge us to engage with education by considering other ways of thinking and acting in the world and to perceive language as social practice. When choosing topics and teaching materials, teachers and students enact their agency. By raising questions, proposing discussions that focus on experiences, and addressing joint studies of the social practices that produce texts, students and teachers choose their educational paths while actively taking part in semiotic events. I emphasize that my classes have turned out to be spaces for sharing life stories, and that small changes that my students have made may contribute to significant transformations, as discussed in Sabota *et al.* (2021). In our classes, we have discussed topics that affect our stories and, therefore, that have been important for us.

It is time to end this article, but I stress that this is not the end of the **road**¹⁷. There are still many paths to explore. Finally, I wish good luck to both those who may decide to follow in these footsteps and those who choose to carve new **trails**.

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¹⁷ “End of the road” is an expression that refers to “the physical end of a route of travel”, or “the conclusion or final step of something” (The Free Dictionary, n.d.).

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