Thematic Dossier

Portuguese as an Additional Language at a Brazilian University: Encounters in Language Learning Spaces and Conflicts in Ways of Knowing

Português como Língua Adicional em uma universidade brasileira: encontros em espaços de aprendizagem de línguas e conflitos entre formas de saber

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ABSTRACT: In this article I analyse narratives about Portuguese as an Additional Language (PAL) learning spaces within a Brazilian university in order to show how ways of knowing, or epistemic differences, can be tied to the production of linguistic differences. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two PAL educators and one Japanese student. To conduct the analysis, I focus on the ways in which participants 'scale the world'. This line of analysis demonstrated that participants construct hierarchies between learners and between knowledges based on ideas of West and East. In concluding, I argue that university administration and staff need to engage in urgent epistemological dialogue and praxis concerning language policy and practice in language learning spaces, in order to diminish the possibility of reproducing hegemonic knowledges.

KEYWORDS: Portuguese as an additional language; scale-making; epistemic difference; internationalisation of higher education.

RESUMO: Neste artigo, analiso narrativas sobre os espaços de aprendizagem de Português como Língua Adicional (PLA) de uma universidade brasileira a fim de esmiuçar como formas de saberes, ou diferenças epistêmicas, podem estar ligadas à produção de diferenças linguísticas. Foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas com duas professoras na área de PLA e um intercambista japonês. Na análise, focalizo como os participantes constroem escalas sobre o mundo, nas quais se desenham hierarquias entre estudantes e seus saberes com base em ideias sobre o Oriente e o Ocidente. Concluo argumentando que, para diminuir a possibilidade de reproduzir conhecimentos hegemônicos, as universidades precisam se engajar em diálogos epistêmicos urgentes e em práticas que tenham a ver com política linguística em espaços de aprendizagem de língua.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Português como língua adicional; escalas; diferença epistêmica; internacionalização do ensino superior.

1 Introduction

In the last decade, internationalisation became a key issue in the context of higher education in Brazil. One dimension of internationalisation – that of student mobility – has mainly been boosted by major federal government investment in an outbound student mobility programme known as *Ciências sem Fronteiras* (Science without Borders). Propelled by the needs and requirements of this programme, language education policies have also turned the spotlight on forms of language education provision, such as the *Idiomas sem Fronteiras* (Languages without Borders) Programme (see Abreu-E-Lima; Finardi, 2019; Jordão; Martinez, 2015). Within the larger sociopolitical scenario of the country's prosperity, as well as the transnationalisation of Portuguese (Zoppi-Fontana, 2009; Moita Lopes, 2015), the area of Portuguese as an Additional Language (PAL) showed relative growth from the late 1990s to the first half of 2010s, and has become more institutionalised in public higher education institutions. As some studies have shown (Marques; Schoffen, 2020; Frazatto, 2020), the number of PAL courses has risen in order to respond to the demand brought by short-term and long-term student mobility from various continents to Brazil.

Despite English learning and English as a medium of instruction being a "symptom" (Martinez, 2017) of internationalisation, in Brazil the language of instruction in most universities continues to be the country's official language, Portuguese.

To date, there have been numerous relevant investigations in the Applied Linguistics field relating to the lived experiences of international students[1]. However, they often draw on the mobility experiences of international students at universities in the Global North (Badwan; Simpson, 2019; Kubota *et al*, 2021; Nguyen; Pennycook, 2018), where English tends to be the desired and required language for academic spaces. In this article, my interest lies in the circuits of mobility across a multipolar world, as depicted by Marginson and Xu (2022). For example, inbound student mobility to Brazil throws a light on, and reflects, other economic and cultural relationships between countries and different mobility goals. In this context, different knowledges and languages come to the fore and give rise to conflicts and tensions, as I will show in this article.

In Brazil, there are now several detailed and ethical accounts by sociolinguists and applied linguists of South-South degree mobility, including those by Bizon (2013), Bizon and Cavalcanti (2018), Pinto (2018) and Rodrigues (2021), yet non-degree international mobility has attracted little attention. With that in mind, my research has been focusing on a cohort of students which includes Chinese, Japanese and South Korean undergraduates, whose main mobility goal is enhancing their Portuguese level of proficiency while studying at a Brazilian university as part of the year abroad requirement from their home institutions[2] (Frazatto, 2023; Frazatto; Bizon, 2022).

These various circuits of knowledge production can disclose the relationality of concepts such as East and West. Despite being produced as less distinguished and less "advanced" than those in the Global

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[1] In Brazil, public universities are free of charge to all students, therefore the term "international students" (or, more commonly, "foreign students") is applied to any student from abroad pursuing academic mobility, either at a degree or non-degree program.

[2] Students opt to study in a country where Portuguese is one of the official languages and they do that according to the existing higher education partnerships established by their home university. Most often partner universities are in Portugal or Brazil.

North (Grosfoguel, 2016; Jordão; Martinez, 2021), many universities in the Global South are also informed by the idea of the "West" (Hall, 1993). This means orienting to and reproducing westernised structures of knowledge, and making an effort to mirror, as well as desiring to have, experiences of and access to the resources and practices of "internationally" renowned universities. The current status of universities in the Global North and West is, of course, based on world higher education rankings and on the direction of mobility flows to the Global North, with the consequent creation of sameness (Jordão; Martinez, 2021). According to Hall (1993), the concept of West is a historical construct, and it was transformed into a synonym of "modern" through evaluation of societies over time. Consequently, it is not rare for those geographically located in the East to also resort to the idea of the West as a reference. However, there are scholars who look at this in a more complex way: for example, Marginson and Xu (2022) argue that East Asian universities display a dual-perception of the West as both a friend and a foe.

This logic of "not being (good) enough" also materialises in South-South relationships, but it involves other actors. In terms of cooperation agreements between universities, some Brazilian universities can cultivate hierarchised and oppressive relationships with their partners, including in the matter of language requirements (Diniz; Bizon, 2015). Likewise, students can face constraints on reaping advantages from mobility during their lived experiences at universities, when their communicative repertoires are then put to the test even by their peers (Frazatto; Bizon, 2023). Additionally, clashes may arise when teaching staff are dealing with non-Western epistemologies (in the form of knowledges, cultures and languages practices). Such clashes will be investigated here. For example, in the context of East Asian international students studying Portuguese in a Brazilian university, the approaches employed to teach this language in their home universities can be criticised and represented as not so effective in Brazil.

The research presented in this article focuses on the ways in which educators and students in a university in the southeast of Brazil, who are involved in the PAL field, narrate their experiences in PAL learning spaces. Engaged with a decolonial project, the article aims to show how ways of knowing, or epistemic differences, are tied to the production of linguistic differences. The relationships and links analysed here call attention to the meanings that can be (re)produced in language learning spaces and how language policy can require students to conform to a homogenous and westernised form of internationalisation.

In what follows, in section 2, I briefly describe how Western universities and their forms of knowledge have been produced throughout the centuries as the epitome of modernity, whilst displaying practices and policies tainted by coloniality and capitalism. I will argue that, with the vigorous pursuit of neoliberal policies and practices in the internationalisation of higher education, pedagogic spaces within universities have become spaces of conflict. In section 3, I go on to describe the context of the study and I introduce the participants. After that, in section 4, I explain how the notions of 'scales' and 'scalar project' inform my analysis of the narrative extracts. In the two data analysis sections, sections 5 and 6, I will examine the scale-making that the two educators and one student engaged in while narrating their experiences of/in PAL learning spaces. As we will see, hierarchies are established on the basis of epistemic, cultural and linguistic formations as well as linguistic performance. In concluding, in section 7, I argue that university administration and staff need to engage in urgent epistemological dialogue and praxis concerning language policy and practice in language learning spaces.

2 The production and circulation of knowledges: spaces with ample scope for conflict

The process of internationalisation of higher education reveals underlying conceptualisations of university, education and knowledge. However, an exclusive focus on the present when examining the meanings these ideas and internationalisation itself convey can lead to imprecise conclusions. That is why we need to take a closer look at the past.

First of all, structures of knowledge are, to this day, rooted in concepts such as Cartesian logic, science neutrality and search for "the" truth. Such stances were validated and embodied by most European universities in the eighteenth century. Back then, these universities were conceived as emblems of *modernity* and their models and epistemologies were later exported to different parts of the world, including institutions in Brazil. However, as Quijano (2005) and Mignolo and Walsh (2018) argue, the production of *modernity* is in fact entirely dependent on *coloniality*[3]. One of the products of modernity/coloniality is that, following what Castro-Gómez (2007) called the zero-point hubris, other epistemic formations are deemed worthless, old-fashioned, epistemically inferior. It is on these grounds, for example, that anthropologists and linguists kept some civilisations under scrutiny and came up with the idea of them being less civilised. It is also on these grounds that the syllabi at many Brazilian universities, still nowadays, pay so little attention to knowledge produced locally and by people of colour, focusing widely on what Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 28) will refer to as "Western-Euro-U.S.-centric" systems of knowledge.

Secondly, the entanglement between capitalism, modernity/coloniality and racist and patriarchal structures needs to be addressed as part of the history of universities (Grosfoguel, 2016; Segato, 2015) and internationalisation (Jordão; Martinez, 2021). Hence, internationalisation of higher education needs to be viewed with a sceptical eye. It can be but a "fable" (Bizon; Frazatto, 2023) which is nurtured by discourses about positive globalisation and the knowledge economy while being depicted as a-historical and apolitical (Buckner; Stein, 2020). Public universities in Brazil have different historicities, situationalities and responsibilities from universities in the United Kingdom or the United States, however, their approach to internationalisation is still being informed by the hegemonic (and homogeneous) idea of internationalisation and knowledge that I mentioned above. We are thus observing a "perverse" dimension of internationalisation unfolding, as Bizon and Frazatto (2023) have argued, while drawing on the contribution of the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (2001).

One of the results of this scenario is that the university and its learning spaces can prove to be hostile spaces for students, either due to erasure of the presence of certain groups of students, their bodies, their languages, their knowledge resources and their ways of learning, or due to insufficient engagement

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[3] Mignolo and Walsh (2018) affirm that coloniality is a concept born in the Third World, standing for the coloniality of power. According to them, "if modernity is a narrative (or, better still, a set of narratives), coloniality is what the narratives hide or disguise, because it cannot be said explicitly" (p. 141). That is, generally we tend to see only the first "half of the story" (p. 142). An instance they offer in their conceptualisation is that the constitution of power, "progress" and "advance of civilisation" in the capitalist model in European states was only made possible through slavery, which was justified based on an idea of enslaved people as less human.

with inclusion policies and language policies that provide ways of dealing with difference[4]. Rather, as Jordão and Martinez (2021) state, university agendas are concentrated on creating sameness, and on conformity with the norms of dominant social groups, and thus contribute to the construction of social and epistemic inequalities. As they note, modernity has become part of our everyday practices:

> We are highlighting how educational policies, practices and discourses have been informed by modernity and have been reproducing social disparities, epistemic racism and abyssal lines; as a consequence, we tend to reproduce and reinforce inequalities in our contexts and experiences (Jordão; Martinez, 2021, p. 598).

Thus, as I have pointed out elsewhere (Frazatto, 2023), all social actors at universities, no matter what their affiliations might be, can reproduce or emphasise inequalities. The question then is what can be done to counteract or even stop the effects of this perverse dimension of internationalisation when we look at international student mobility?

Madge, Raghuram and Noxolo (2014) call attention to the importance of shifting the focus of the discussion on "international students" to what they call "international study". Their key argument is that "knowledge is not simply passed on" (Madge; Raghuram; Noxolo, 2014, p. 9). In other words, they highlight how this type of mobility comprises more than just the circulation of students; in fact, it comprises the circulation of knowledges, through encounters in different university spaces - encounters which involve a multitude of actors and objects. The concept of space is at play here, because students are not seen purely as absorbers of what is offered by universities or as having no say or impact on the spaces they inhabit. Spaces are conceptualised as dynamically produced from these encounters and, from this point of view, the notion of international study recognizes the implication of all these actors within the university and the co-production of knowledge by them. For instance, Bizon (2013), in her work with Congolese students who came to Brazil to pursue their degrees as part of a traditional programme funded by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, exposed how the language class(room), the university's positionings (*e.g*, in terms of language policy) and its staff profoundly affected these sojourners' mobility experience. As Higgins (2017, p. 102) observed, when explaining Lefebvre's work on space: "all spaces are ultimately political realms, and power is constantly embedded in their representation and in how people experience them." In a similar manner, but advocating education with sociolinguistic justice, Zavala (2019, p. 8) points out that power will also be exerted in our interactions and in the ways we speak. As she puts it: "everyday encounters between people are always crossed by power relations, which influence the possibility of employing certain resources in particular communicative contexts"[5].

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[4] It is urgent to recognize that students from different minoritised contexts face a variety of difficulties in Brazilian universities, which ends up emphasising how access for certain groups to universities, if it happens at all, is still precarious. Rodrigues (2021) investigated the effects of abyssal divisions a black migrant student experienced. Carvalho and Schlatter (2022) made a case for the legitimation and circulation of indigenous repertoires within academia after analysing the Master's dissertations of two indigenous students. Freitas and Moita Lopes (2019) scrutinised microfascist attitudes towards Brazilian students who migrated within the country to pursue their academic degrees. Fernandes and Moreira (2017) described the challenges related to the development of an inclusive education for Deaf students and, among other propositions, made the case for bilingual education that recognizes and supports Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) as part of the knowledge that is produced in universities.

[5] In the original: "Los encuentros cotidianos entre las personas están siempre atravesados por relaciones de poder, que influyen sobre la posibilidad del uso de ciertos recursos en contextos comunicativos particulares."

Considering the embeddedness of language and epistemologies (Menezes de Souza, 2017; Santos; Nunes; Meneses, 2007), my interest here falls particularly on formal spaces for the learning of PAL at a Brazilian university. In these pedagogic spaces, where the interaction of speakers from different parts of the world is inevitable, conflicts of various sorts, including "epistemological conflicts" (Menezes de Souza, 2017) can lead to (un)perceived asymmetries not only in the relationship between educators/professors and international students, but also between students themselves.

In the particular university context that I focus on here, the research that I undertook identified hierarchies that arose related to the origin of the students, their cultural practices of learning and forms of knowledge, and their linguistic practices. This is why this section has been devoted to the connection between different understandings of education, university and internationalisation. As educators and researchers, we should be questioning ourselves about how rigid language learning spaces at university have been, both in terms of reinforcing fixed ideas about knowledge or overlooking the knowledges that students bring to university-level study.

3 The wider research project: Context and participants

This wider study that I draw on here aimed at investigating what I called "políticas de inserção" (in a free translation to English, this would be "inclusion policies") and whether/how these policies were put into practice in a public university in the Southeast region of Brazil. The impact they had on East Asian students' lived experiences was also investigated. The specific nature of the PAL language policies at this university, and the mobility trajectories of the students involved in the PAL courses, were described and analysed in depth in the aforementioned study.

There are many ways in which I relate to this topic, so I will explain two aspects of my positionality. Having completed a major part of my education at the university in question, it was also there that I participated as a paid/volunteer teaching assistant and educator in various activities and projects connected to PAL courses, always observing the intertwined dynamics between internationalisation and language policy. Moreover, as an international student who travelled to the Global North, I ended up experiencing vivid expectations and frustrations that the experience of mobility can entail.

When analysing the student mobility scenario in this university from 2010 to 2020, I observed that around 70% of international students were from Latin America. They included both undergraduate- and graduate-level students as well as individuals making short-term and long-term sojourns. However, the incoming flows of East Asian students were mainly linked to short-term stays (six months or one year) and enrolment in undergraduate courses. In 2021, 10% of the international partnership agreements were between this Brazilian university and Chinese, Japanese and South Korean universities. Also, the university has been a pioneer in the field of PAL, having created PAL courses shortly after its opening in 1966 so that recently-hired international staff could teach in Portuguese (Scaramucci; Bizon, 2020).

As mentioned in the introduction, a considerable number of these East Asian students visit countries where Portuguese is the official language as part of their year-abroad degree requirement. They have already studied Portuguese intensively for around 2 years in their home institutions, which means that

even though they may not be familiar with the Brazilian educational context and its practices, they are not beginner learners of Portuguese[6].

The research that I undertook was interpretive and ethnographically-oriented in nature. It consisted of building a corpus of semi-structured interviews in Portuguese, with students as well as with educators who were working or had worked in the field of PAL at the university. The interviews were audio- or video-recorded and later manually transcribed. All the extracts presented here have been translated into English. For this article, I draw on interviews with two educators and one student. Also, for the sake of anonymity, all names are pseudonyms (chosen by the participants themselves), and in the case of the educators, I offer little information about their backgrounds.

Beatriz and *Lívia* participated in a virtual meeting with me and other three educators in May 2020. *Beatriz* is a very experienced educator in the field of language education, particularly in the PAL context. She has experience with language policy management and with a wide array of PAL courses and modalities. At the moment of our meeting, *Lívia* was a pre-service teacher[7] participating in the *Idiomas sem Fronteiras*[8] (Languages without Borders) Programme along with two other PAL pre-service educators. She worked in the programme until its termination at the university, and was responsible for teaching several courses, either alone or in cooperation with her colleagues. As all participants were together in this meeting, the topics ranged from the creation of language courses and language policy at the university to the hardships that the educators experienced while conducting their activities.

Eduardo was a Japanese international student, who, at the time of our interaction in the second semester of 2018, had been in Brazil for three semesters. We met in person to talk about his mobility experience and he always contributed very openly to the conversation, explaining his point of view and describing situations or feelings he had endured in class and out-of-class. He attended the general Portuguese courses at the Language Centre as well as specific short courses that were part of the Languages without Borders Programme.

4 Scales of knowledge

I engaged with the notion of scale, in the data analysis presented in this article, in order to capture the ways in which participants shared their perspectives and narrated their experiences in PAL courses and classrooms. Carr and Lempert (2016, p. 3) argue that by making use of language, "we scale the world", which means we use "the powers of perspective" in order to "orient, compare, connect and position ourselves". The debate on scales, a concept borrowed from Human Geography, has been widely employed in our field, often being formulated with reference to sociolinguistic scales (Blommaert, 2007), and being

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[6]   The university offers three general PAL courses divided into 3 levels. Participants in this project were ranked either in level 2 or 3 after a language placement exam.

[7]   In this programme, all teachers had to have a degree or be pursuing a degree, either at undergraduate or graduate level, in the field of Languages in order to be considered for the position. The university paid a work-study scholarship to those who were selected.

[8]   The Languages without Borders Programme was the official language policy dimension of the academic mobility programme Sciences without Borders, which was mentioned in the beginning of this article.

used as an analytic tool in researching communicative/linguistic repertoires (Badwan; Simpson, 2019) and language ideologies (Silva; Signorini, 2021). Gal (2016, p. 91) affirms that scaling is an "ideological project", which as such, "implies positioning and, hence, point of view: a perspective from which scales (modes of comparison) are constructed and from which aspects of the world are evaluated with respect to them."

Several authors (Badwan; Simpson, 2018; Kell, 2015; Canagarajah; De Costa; 2015) have emphasised that scales are not categories of analysis, but categories of practice instead. One of the arguments this stance reinforces is that scales should not be taken for granted, for they are situated, context-based, and discursively formulated by social actors themselves. This also relates to Carr and Lempert's choice of the term "scalar projects" (Carr; Lempert, 2016). When they refer to scale-making as "scalar projects", these anthropologists are emphasising how, although tied to ideological work, scales are contingent on social actors. Hence the importance of "reading out" from the data, rather than "reading into" it, as mentioned by Kell (2015).

In my analysis of the data presented here, I will draw attention to particular kinds of scalar projects that emerged from the student's and educators' narratives: that is scale-making tied to ways of knowing, or knowledge scales. Despite the common use of "knowledge" in the singular form in English – which also implies that there is only one valid way to conceive it – knowledge here is understood as a "diversity of knowledges" (Santos; Nunes; Meneses, 2007). As I will show below, it is through their discursive scale-making that participants index the conflicts that arise in different learning/teaching spaces.

5 The educators' scalar projects

At this university, Level 3 Portuguese classes bring together students of all nationalities, whereas in Level 1 and 2 those from Hispanic countries have separate classes. In the extract below Beatriz describes the difficulties that Asian students would have during classes when there are classmates of other nationalities:

Extract 1[9]

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[9] Transcription Conventions:

Symbols	Meaning
...	Short pause
They underSTAND	Emphasis
/	Self-correction or restart
(...)	Omitted due to word count
((laughs))	Description of non-verbal activity
(inaudible)	Sound not understood during transcription
a lot of gra::mmar	Vowel or consonant lengthening

01	**Beatriz: o problema** é que eles sabem muita gramática, mas **eles não**
02	**enTENdem quase nada do que os brasileiros falam,** porque eles têm **um**
03	**ensino normalmente muito tradicional no país deles**, então **eles não têm essa**
04	**habilidade de conversação, de compreensão oral** e aí eles ficam junto com
05	franceses... italianos, **que saem falando TUdo**, mas sem nenhuma
06	base da gramática... e enfim, e é isso...(...) aí tem falante de espanhol **que sai falando**
07	**com aquele sotaque naquela velocidade 100 quilômetros por hora** e aí eles **também**
08	**ficam perdidos**, e tem principalmente essa questão da interação, né,
09	cultural de novo, **eles não se sentem à vontade pra falar, pra expor a opinião**,
10	então **a maioria só fala quando realmente é DEmandado assim,** o que não é uma coisa
11	legal de você ficar fazendo o tempo inteiro, né, "x, fala, y, agora é você",
12	enfim, enTÃO...

English translation

01	**Beatriz: the problem** is that they know a lot about grammar, but **they**
02	**underSTAND almost nothing that Brazilians speak,** because they normally have a
03	**very traditional learning style in their countries**, so **they don't have this**
04	**conversational skill, oral comprehension skill** and then they are together with the
05	French... the Italian, **who can speak EVERYthing**, but who have no
06	grammar foundation...and anyway, that's it... (...) then there are the Spanish speakers **who speak**
07	**with an accent at a 100 km/h speed** and then they also
08	**get lost**, and mainly there's the interaction issue, you know,
09	cultural again, **they don't feel comfortable to speak, to speak their minds,**
10	**so most of them only speak when they are ASked**, which is not
11	something nice to do all the time, you know, "x, speak, y, now it's your turn",
12	anyway, SO...

First, Beatriz begins by referring to "the problem" (line 1) students display during classes, that is, according to her, the fact that they have learned too much grammar because of a "very traditional learning style in their countries" (line 3). Non-Western approaches or styles of learning are frequently seen as outdated or inferior by those in the West, as previously discussed by Nguyen and Pennycook (2018) and Song and McCarthy (2018). In this Brazilian educator's narrative, the scales of knowledge acquire thick verticalized contours in her depiction of East Asian students and their ways of learning. By characterising their knowledge as "a problem", the educator's judgement is very explicit. Her positioning of the East Asian students implies that teaching approaches used at the PAL courses at the university – which can be understood as Western ones – contrast significantly with the ones experienced by learners in their own countries, and that only the former approaches could facilitate the "development" of abilities that the students did not display.

Second, apart from the approaches to learning that they were exposed to in their countries, the in-class performance of those students also constituted a component of the educator's scale-making. In her words, the consequences of exposure to East Asian learning/teaching approaches would be gaps in students' skills: "they don't have this conversational skill, oral comprehension skill" (lines 3-4). Beatriz singles out students with different origins in order to explain her stance vis-à-vis those who come from East Asian countries. She argues that French and Italian students "can speak EVERYthing" (line 5), and those from Spanish-speaking countries "speak with an accent at a 100 km/h speed" (lines 6-7), while East Asian students, according to the way the educator positions them, just "get lost"" (line 8). The opposition created between learners is clear: while those from Western European countries can interact effortlessly with Brazilian educators, East Asian learners are depicted as "underSTAND[ing] almost nothing that Brazilians speak" (line 2).

The ways in which this teacher's scales bring to the surface values about which learners have more worth and which repertoires and knowledges are valid can be interpreted as an instance of "epistemic racism" (Grosfoguel, 2016). Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006) remind us that when it comes to colonial/imperial difference certain languages are conceived as beyond the "epistemology of the zero point". Instead of being languages of modernity (*e.g.*, English, German, Portuguese), the languages spoken by East Asian students are perceived here as having no "world-wide epistemic import" (Mignolo; Tlostanova, 2006, p. 207), thus not conveying legitimised and validated knowledges. In this narrative about a PAL learning space, and speaking a language (Portuguese) deemed as "modern", East Asian students still seem to be heard as lacking language proficiency or not being on the same level playing field as Western students in terms of knowledges – the teacher's account positions them as non-Western, as failing to assimilate. This encapsulates very well what Flores and Rosa (2015) will refer to as "the white speaking and listening subject"[10], which, the way I see it, is an ideology founded on the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of being (Mignolo; Tlostanova, 2006).

In one of her works, Zavala (2019) illuminates a crucial point by affirming that linguistic difference simultaneously projects social difference. That is, linguistic resources attributed to a group are transformed into a pretext for establishing social hierarchies between speakers, even when its members do not display these traits. Taking this proposition into consideration for my own data, it is possible to say that the epistemic differences narrated by Beatriz in Extract 1 are deeply tied to the production of linguistic differences. According to Beatriz, when East Asian students communicate, it will be just because she called them by their names to make a contribution ("they don't feel comfortable to speak, to say their minds, so most of them only speak when they are ASked", lines 9-10). Their oral production is linked to their form of behaving – that is, waiting to be called – and passivity in class, characteristics that supposedly would not be shared by Western students. In Beatriz's interpretation if they do not communicate, that will be due to their lack of skills or their "culture" (line 8). In fact, it becomes clear that whether in silence or speaking, in this narrative these students are positioned in relation to what they lack. These students are depicted as having no agency while their bodies would somewhat disturb this space of learning – which can be argued by the discomfort the educator displays when inviting them to participate.

Although East Asian students have access to PAL learning spaces, just as other international students do, the scalar project made by educators such as Beatriz places them in a position of deficit along with others considered to be non-Western students. For this reason, what Silva (2000, p. 82) called the "privilege of classifying" is relevant here. This refers to the privilege that is often granted to academic and administrative staff in universities given their more stable and legitimised social position. As a policy-maker or educator (or both) its dangers have to be addressed, otherwise learning spaces would only allow for sameness, in Jordão and Martinez's terms, while at the same time reproducing inequalities.

In the extract below, Livia and other educators were discussing whether specific courses should be created for the cohort of students with the profile explained here. Lívia's scalar project contrasts with that of Beatriz in Extract 1:

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[10] As Flores and Rosa (2015, p. 151) so clearly explain the "white speaking and listening subject should be understood not as a biographical individual but as an ideological position and mode of perception that shapes our racialized society." My intention here is not to point fingers to the participants, but, instead, to reflect on how our beings are modern/colonial beings.

Extract 2

01	**Lívia**: então pensar talvez não só os temas das disciplinas (...), não só
02	pensar quais conteÚdos **a gente** teria que aprender ou quais conteúdos **a gente**
03	teria que ter como pré-requisitos pra oferecer essas disciplinas, mas **também pensar**
04	**certos tipos de prática que consigam conciliar o que a GENte tem de**
05	**expectativa pra essa disciplina com o que eles também** é::: ... **tem essa**
06	**questão da bagagem que eles trazem**, não só de conteúdo, mas de formas
07	de ensinar e de... o que que pra eles é uma aula de língua portuguesa, por exemplo,
08	**muito conteúdo de gramá::tica** e aí a gente chega e já quer trazer
09	coisas que não são tão relacionadas à gramática, coisa assim, então **pensar**
10	**de que forma que a gente/ a nossa aborDAgem também, muito mais do que o conteúdo,**
11	**de que forma a nossa abordagem tá sendo produtiva ou não pra eles**, e **claro que**
12	**também que a gente não vai pegar o material que eles usavam no país deles e falar**
13	**"então beleza, vamos continuar ensinando voCÊS com esse material aqui",**
14	porque afinal, **eles vieram pro Brasil com o objetivo de** ((sorri)) **não continuar**
15	**no país deles**, de **ter convívios diferentes, estar em situações que**
16	**eles não viviam no país**, mas também pensar **de que forma esses**
17	**métodos e esses materiais também são um choque pra eles, né, comparado**
18	**com o que eles tinham no país deles também**

English translation

01	**Lívia**: so maybe considering not only the theme of the courses (...), not only
02	considering the CONtent that **we** would have to learn or which content **we** would
03	have to have as prerequisite in order to offer these courses, **but also considering**
04	**certain types of practice that can reconcile what WE have as**
05	**expectation for this course with what they have too** yea:::h ... there is **this**
06	**matter of the baggage they bring,** not only content-wise, but of teaching
07	styles and of... what a Portuguese class is for them, for example,
08	**a lot of gra::mmar content** and then we get to the classroom and want to bring
09	stuff not so related to grammar right away, things like that, **so we should consider**
10	**in what way we/ in what way our aPPROAch to this too, much more than the content,**
11	**in what way our approach is productive or not for them**, and **of course**
12	**we won't just grab the material they used in their country and say**
13	**"alright, we will go on teaching YOU with this material here",**
14	because after all, **they came to Brazil with the goal of** ((she smiles)) **not being in**
15	**their countries, of having different interactions, being in circumstances that**
16	**they wouldn't live in their country**, but also considering **in what ways these**
17	**methods and these materials are a shock for them too, you know, compared**
18	**to what they had in their country too**

Whereas Beatriz's discourse focused on the deficits of East Asian students, Livia introduces different elements to the conversation between educators, stressing the need to design courses so as to include the expected or required content and, at the same time, to take account of the "baggage" that the students bring to their courses (including their ways of learning and cultural orientations). In this way, Livia moves away from representing East Asian students as a problem and highlights the role of teachers in policy implementation and their relevance in the encounters unfolding in these learning spaces.

To make her point about how to design courses and to conceive of different practices in language learning spaces, Lívia takes cultural details into account when teaching these students, *e.g.*, the distinction between western and eastern ways of learning. However, instead of constructing a hierarchy between knowledges, here the scale-making displays horizontalities. In other words, it seems Livia is not anticipating the assimilation of the students to the dominant cultural practices in the PAL classes or the university – or in a broad sense, to Brazilian society (understood as a unified entity) – but she is suggesting a reconciliation of experiences in the classroom ("but also consider certain types of practice that can reconcile what WE have as expectation for this course with what they have too", lines 3-5).

Furthermore, she proposes that teacher education should consist of debates around the teaching approaches chosen for class ("so we should consider in what way we/ in what our approach to this too, much more than the content, in what way our approach is productive or not for them", lines 9-11). In Livia's discourse, there is no implication regarding the superiority of the learning/teaching approaches employed at the Brazilian university. Moreover, Lívia always includes herself and the other teachers (her interlocutors) in her conjectures and suggestions. In Extract 2, this is indexed by her frequent use of 'we'. As a pre-service teacher who is not only planning her own classes, but also observing other educators' classes, she seems more willing to discuss different approaches to teaching and to the selection of strategies for her class.

In spite of the centralised position occupied by the educator in different university learning spaces, her account calls attention to the fact that the expectation and experiences of students ('the baggage they bring', line 6) should be a matter of concern in these classes. Possibly fearing the reaction of the other educators to that, she adds that opting for this approach does not mean giving way to approaches from the students' own universities ("of course we won't just grab the material they used in their country and say 'alright, we will go on teaching YOU with this material here', lines 11-13); instead, she places an emphasis on students being aware of the fact that a sojourn would be informed by encounters with difference ("they came to Brazil with the goal of ((she smiles)) not being in their country, of having different interactions, being in circumstances that they wouldn't live in their country", lines 14-16). This is how she makes the case for employing teaching approaches not so familiar to them to construct language learning spaces. As Badwan and Simpson (2019, p. 2) affirm, student mobility does not involve just a physical move, it "enables understandings of how individuals respond to and engage with the emerging linguistic, cultural, social, educational and political contexts around them".

However, at the same time, Lívia assesses the encounters as valuable, she alludes cautiously to the culture shock that students could undergo during PAL classes ("in what ways these methods and these materials are a shock for them too, you know, compared to what they had in their country too", lines 16-18). Her assumptions are connected to approaches to teaching PAL that rely more heavily on 'neutral' linguistic structures or out-of-context language teaching ("a lot of gra::mmar content", line 8). She indexes in this way Eastern Asian approaches to teaching languages. Like Beatriz, Lívia expresses alignment with "Western" approaches to teaching, and thus represents other approaches in stereotyped and non-critical ways (for a discussion about essentialised critical thinking, see Song and McCarthy, 2018).

6 The student's scalar projects

In Extract 3 below, Eduardo narrates his experience of being the only student attending an Academic Literacy course who was not from a Spanish-speaking country. This course was part of the Languages without Borders Programme (see section 3), which was based on a partnership between the federal government and higher education institutions (cf. Abreu-E-Lima; Finardi, 2019).

Extract 3

01	**Bruna**: e você teve uma experiência que eu gostaria que você contasse como foi
02	**Eduardo**: a::h, tá bom... é que assim ((ele ri)) existia uma... **uma diferença, né, de**
03	**facilidade de comunicar**, porque o falante de espanhol, é, são mais/ **as pessoas**
04	**são mais acolhedores, mais animados, mais agitados** (inaudível) **assim, do que**
05	**a gente, do que a maioria dos asiáticos**, eu tinha bastante dificuldade lá na matéria
06	porque cada vez que a professora lançava alguma coisa/ perguntava alguma coisa
07	"e aí tem essa questão, sobre a questão/ em relação à cultura brasileira, tal tal tal,
08	é::, o que vocês acham?" **e sempre teve aquela chuva de respostas ((faz barulho**
09	**para imitar chuva e nós rimos))** e **até uma moça chegou a brigar com o colega, né,**
10	**pra...((ele ri)) pra falar quando ela quisesse, eu fiquei meio NOssa**/ é, **não tinha**
11	**muito espaço de tempo para conversar**, né, **aí era meio difícil pra mim**

English translation

01	**Bruna**: and you had an experience that I'd like you to share
02	**Eduardo**: a::h, alright... let's say ((he laughs)) there was a... **a difference, you know,**
03	**related to ease of communicating**, because **the Spanish speaker, yes, they're more/ people**
04	**are more welcoming, more cheerful, more restless** (inaudible) **like, than**
05	**us, the majority of Asians**, I had considerable difficulty in the course
06	because every time the teacher launched something/ asked something
07	"then there's this matter, on this matter/ in relation to Brazilian culture, so-and-so-and-so
08	ye::s, what do you think?" and **there was always that storm of answers ((mimics**
09	**the sound of rain and we laugh))** and **there was even a lady who argued with a classmate, you know,**
10	**in order to... ((he laughs)) speak when she wanted**, **I was kinda WOW**/ yes, **there**
11	**wasn't much amount of time left to talk,** you know**, so it was kinda hard for me**

As mentioned earlier, most international students at this university come from Latin American countries. The PAL courses of the Languages without Borders Programme had a considerable impact on PAL language policy at this university, while they lasted[11] (for more details about this matter, see Frazatto, 2020). This was the case because they were available not only to students at undergraduate level, but also

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[11] Brazilian science and education went through a very fragile situation during 2019-2022. After introducing a series of budget cuts in Basic and Higher Education, the federal government terminated the Languages without Borders Programme in June 2019. Later, the programme received support from a different organisation, but the university where the study took place did not join the initiative.

to those at graduate level. Also, short-term courses for specific needs were created. These differed from the general PAL courses that the university provided.

While narrating the situation he experienced in a PAL course in Extract 3, Eduardo explains the way he felt at a disadvantage during classes. His explanation involves clear scale-making as two groups are contrasted in his narrative: the ones who came from Spanish-speaking countries and Asians – even though he was the only Asian student attending the course. According to Eduardo, the participation of Hispanic students was so active that he was often unable to join the debates proposed by the teacher. He mobilises the metaphor of a storm in his narrative in order to illustrate how loud and frequent the participation of students tended to be ("there was always that storm of answers ((mimics the sound of rain and we laugh))", lines 8-9).

In recounting what he experienced during the course, he refers to a situation that had shocked him ("I was kinda WOW", line 10): this was a moment when two students were arguing over their turns to speak. Here, Eduardo's disappointment at not getting a chance to contribute is expressed as disbelief, which is highlighted by his use of "even" and his laughter: "there was even a lady who argued with a classmate, you know, in order to... ((he laughs)) speak when she wanted, I was kinda WOW" (lines 8-10). His account draws on his expectations regarding what a class should look like and how students' participation would be organised. Yates and Trang (2021, p. 28) discuss how the classroom setting is influenced by students' cultural values, "including the type, amount and quality of interaction that students consider appropriate". Language practices in classrooms are inevitably based on beliefs about learning and teaching. For this student, it seems that the environment of a language class should be more restrained, and the turn-taking should be better distributed. Eduardo was clearly eager to contribute his opinion, and not being able to do so, or being invited to do so by the teacher, left him feeling disappointed ("there wasn't much amount of time left to talk, you know, so it was kinda hard for me", lines 10-11). By narrating this situation the way he does to someone investigating the PAL policy of the university and the inclusion of students, I assume that Eduardo was also asserting that his voice should be heard – something that did not often happen in class.

Apart from that, the scales of knowing depicted by Eduardo put Hispanic students in a hierarchized relationship vis-à-vis the "majority of Asians" (line 5). This asymmetrical relationship did not involve Asians and Brazilians, who usually have Portuguese as their preferred language[12] and would thus be seen as "native" speakers of the language and more favourably positioned interactionally. Instead, the asymmetry referred to in Extract 3 is between two groups of learners of Portuguese. A differentiation is being made between those who are from the West and from the East, and their ways of being and knowing.

In Eduardo's account, the experience he had at the course was due to "a difference [...] related to ease of communicating" (lines 2-3) since the Hispanic students were, in his view, "more welcoming, more cheerful, more restless... than us, the majority of Asians" (lines 4-5). On the one hand, he positions the former as those who predominantly contribute in class due to the positive cultural traits they would, according to him, display; on the other hand, he positions Asians (represented by Eduardo himself) as being constrained to limited participation because they would not have the same cultural traits as Hispanic students.

As can be seen in this Extract, this Japanese student is not questioning his Portuguese proficiency, the quality of his contributions in class or the way the instructor conducted the lesson. Like Beatriz, Eduardo mobilises a fixed idea of culture, language and knowledge, as if just by being from the West or

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[12] It is important to recognize that Brazil is not a monolingual country.

the East a student would be destined to behave and act in a particular way. By sustaining this argument, he ranks students' linguistic performances as well as indexing the interactional constraint he suffered during the course, which is made clear by utterances like "I had considerable difficulty in the course […] " (line 5) and "[…] so it was kinda hard for me" (line 11).

However, Eduardo does not project the cultures of Asian students as inferior to Western's or resorts to assimilation, tendencies displayed by Beatriz when portraying those cultures. In order to explain his negative experience, which, to him, is a result of the conflict between different ways of knowing and being during the language course, he indexes an epistemic lack linked to being Asian in this class.

Both instances illustrate, to some extent, the lines of argument put forward by Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006, p. 207) on knowledge structure and languages:

> "(...) languages are not something human beings have but they are part of what human beings are. As such, languages are embedded in the body and in the memories (geo-historically located) of each person. A person formed in Aymara, Hindi or Russian who has to learn the rules and principles of knowledge mainly inscribed in the three imperial languages of the second modernity (French, English and German), would of necessity have to deal with a 'gap'".

Besides evoking the relationship between our language, bodies and memories, these authors emphasize that depending on the language in which a certain form of knowledge is produced, those shaped by colonial and imperial differences will always attribute a cultural and linguistic gap to those who are producing knowledges. In Eduardo's and Beatriz's extracts, the relationality between East and West is at play, and Portuguese, language learners and their ways of being and knowing are at the centre of this tension. What is understood here is that while speaking Portuguese, some bodies will feel or be deemed as inadequate and in continuous catching up mode.

Closing remarks

In the beginning of this article, the complex relationship between modernity/coloniality that is embodied in the formation of Western universities and even in contemporary internationalisation processes were briefly discussed. The analysis of the narrative scenes then illustrated why this was my point of departure, since the discourses within the university in this study and the academic practices unfolding there are no exception to this rationale and formal PAL learning spaces can embody, reproduce and reinforce inequalities and hierarchies.

By analysing the perspectives of the two educators, Beatriz and Lívia, and the Japanese student, Eduardo, I have endeavoured to show how ways of knowing diverge and how epistemological conflicts, related to ideas of West and East, emerge, even though asymmetrical power relations are not always overt, or even perceived by speakers and listeners. In fact, it was only by looking at the scalar projects in the discourses of the participants in the first and third extracts, that it was possible to demonstrate how linguistic differences

and epistemic differences can be intertwined. As argued, oftentimes they also lead to inferiorization, which was made clear in the first extract.

Language practices are traversed by trajectories and identity markers, such as social class, cultures, and race, to name just a few. My interpretation of the data, in interview extracts such as these included here, threw light on how hierarchies are built, in language lessons and classrooms, based on students' linguistic performance – even when they are silent – and how students' knowledges can be diminished, overlooked or stereotyped. While my focus in this article has not been on investigating the agency of students and the specific ways in which they resist or react to their discursive positioning during their sojourns at university, I have pursued this angle in other publications (Bizon; Frazatto, 2022; Frazatto, 2023).

Although each university has its own locality and context, all language classes and courses can be spaces for the (re)production of hegemonic knowledges. However, we have to ask ourselves what kinds of knowledges these are: To what extent are they hegemonic? Are they exclusionary? How are they conveyed, for example, in the discourse of educators? At the same time, we need to ask what potential can learning spaces unlock if they are nourished as spaces for engaging with difference, instead of with "sameness" (Jordão; Martinez, 2021) and "abyssal divisions" (Rodrigues, 2021)?

In the second extract, Lívia endeavoured to rethink PAL classes and courses by taking into consideration East Asian students' "baggage" (their mobility goals, profiles and ways of knowing and being) and by allowing room for exchange of experiences. This may be a way of moving towards engaging with ways of knowing which have been made unknown, which are erased. At a university, such as the one where this research was carried out, where the diversity among international students is scarcely mentioned in official discourses, attempts to develop practices addressing this heterogeneity in the current PAL language courses are not seem as deserving attention or as issues to be tackled.

To promote encounters of the kind that Madge, Raghuram and Noxolo (2014) relate to international study, there needs to be urgent debate at universities concerning language policy and language learning spaces. These conversations, and any language policy changes that are ushered in, also need to be strategic, envisioning higher education and internationalisation differently (Frazatto, 2023; Frazatto; Bizon, 2022; Bizon; Frazatto, 2022). In this regard, Santos, Nunes and Menezes's (2007, p. xlviii) words come to mind for they stress that encounters cannot presuppose completeness. In their words: "The principle of incompleteness of knowledges is a basic condition for the possibility of epistemological dialogue and debate among knowledges". In the context studied, I advocate that the forging of learning spaces where different incomplete knowledges can exist is only possible if the public policy we have at the moment is reframed. These policies would, of course, include orientation programmes for university educators so that epistemological dialogues can actually be endorsed, instead of generating epistemic racism.

As can be perceived, educators cannot be the sole actors in this change; in fact, university administrations need to be hold accountable for what kind of institution they are building. The handling of epistemological conflicts and power relationships in local learning spaces, and the discussion of linguistic and epistemic differences, should take account of the fact that students' educational experience is not limited to the present. Account should also be taken of the fact that their education is not limited to the acquisition of 'skills', despite the vigorous pursuit of the 'skills' agenda associated with the globalised knowledge economy in the development of the internationalisation policies of universities in the twenty first century.

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