# Challenging the Coloniality of Languages

**Cloris Porto Torquato**
**ORCiD iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1283-6369**

## Abstract

This article aims to reflect on the coloniality of language as a vertex of coloniality that acts with coloniality of being, power and knowledge; besides this reflection, it is also my aim to propose alternative ways to challenge the coloniality of language in the context of language education and teachers' education. In the first part of this article, I present some aspects of the coloniality of language, where race and racialisation play an important role (Garcés 2007; Veronelli 2015; Fanon 1967; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1997). In the second part of the article, I propose alternatives to challenge the coloniality of language mainly in the context of language education, focusing on a diversity of voices and knowledges (as plurality) associated with the perspective of language deregulation, as proposed by the Brazilian applied linguist Inês Signorini (2002) and the perspective of heterodiscourse/ heteroglossia as proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981).

**Keywords**: Brazil, Coloniality of Language, race and racialisation, language of deregulation, heterodiscourse

## Introduction

> In my view language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation (*Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1997).
>
> They made us into a race. We made ourselves into a people (*Between the World and Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates 2015).

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'Who of you identify yourself as Black?' – this was the question with which Rozena Maart opened her session on Black Consciousness at the 2020 University of South Africa (UNISA) Decolonial Summer School in Pretoria, South Africa, on Wednesday, 15th January. After the session, Maart visited participants at their lunch tables and later joined the Brazilian participants who were locked in conversation for most of the lunchtime period. We were four Brazilian researchers who attended the Summer School and lived in an apartment close to the downtown venue for the duration of the school. After the Summer School ended, we took up many of the themes discussed at home and remained in conversation for several days. It was a very productive week and a provocative period for each of us on different levels, which in turn motivated diverse reflections and conversation. As four Brazilian scholars from different fields: two from Mathematics Education and two from Language Education and Applied Linguistics, we were engaged in transdisciplinary work, all of which we brought together intentionally to construct transdisciplinary knowledges.[1] The joint purpose was to take part in the development of a Brazilian perspective on decolonial thought, related to the history of the Portuguese colonial processes and Portuguese Enlightenment, which as Brazilians we shared, especially on racialisation in Brazil. Maart's question, and subsequent examination of Black Consciousness and the many

[1] The expression knowledges is used to refer to a set or diversity of knowledge, I suggest reading Lewis Gordon (2014). In his text, the author considers it more appropriate to use knowledges as opposed to knowledge, since in his view the singular form erases the varieties of knowledges.

faces of racism and racialisation, was pertinent to our ongoing discussion and prompted further debate among us.

The question Maart posed was in-line with the theme of the UNISA 2020 Decolonial Summer School: 'Power, Knowledge and Being'. This overall theme was addressed by three of the speakers, in particular, Maart herself, Lewis Gordon and Mogobe Ramose, all of whom focused on how race was drawn on by the colonisers in South Africa, and various parts of the African continent, as well as within the United States of America (USA), to dehumanise Black people, and to deny Black people the right to be human. The three speakers in question also highlighted contemporary processes of dehumanisation and where prevalent, examples of how non-being was inflicted upon Black people. A such, Maart's question was posed in this context of the larger discussion. For me, in particular, the discussions within the Summer School and the question Maart posed were very important in assisting me to rethink and deepen my understanding of race as constitutive of:

i. language practices, and discourses that focus on language;
ii. the construction of knowledges;
iii. the operation of social relations; and
iv. teaching, research and pedagogical practices.

I identify myself as Black woman. However, in my experience, it appears that this must be asserted and frequently emphasised in many different locations with different interlocutors. For example, I needed to assert my racialised identity as a Black woman in South Africa in a similar way that I assert it in Brazil – a country affected by *branqueamento* (*blanquiamento* in Spanish), which when translated means 'whitening'. The latter is part of the social construction of Blackness that evades and erases its history through the superficial and cosmetic alterations to physical appearance to resemble the White colonisers from Europe, thus evoking a reverence to the Portuguese coloniser, and part of a process towards a rejection of physical Blackness, even though 56.10% of the Brazilian population self-identify as Black[2]. I am, as

[2] According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), 56,10% of the Brazilian population self-identify as Black (*Negro*) in Brazil (2019). From 209.2 million people, 19.2 million identify as Black (*Preto*) and 89.7 million identify as mixed (*Pardo*). As such, the category Black (*Negro*)

such, writing from this position: as a Black Brazilian woman working within the field of Language Education[3] and Applied Linguistics and thinking through the features that mark coloniality within these disciplines.

Part of Applied Linguistics studies in Brazil is characterised by its transdisciplinary (Signorini 1998b; 2006) or non-disciplinary and undisciplined texture, intentionally as a measure of non-conformity (Moita Lopes 2006); it suggests, a field that describes itself through forms of racialised lived experience, such as 'mestizo and nomad', that dares to think in different ways 'of creating intelligibility of social problems in which language plays a central role' (Moita Lopes 2006: 14). Positioned in this context of Applied Linguistics, I agree with Castro-Gómez (2007) on the need for transdisciplinarity to decolonise our processes of knowing and creating knowledges, and as such to overcome the arboreal structure of universities and their institutionalised ways of knowledge production. With this in mind, within applied linguists, we intend to create knowledge that transgresses boundaries, as put forward by bell hooks (1994). Many researchers are developing scholarly work with a decolonial focus (Nascimento 2015; 2018; 2019). In this sense, Brazilian applied linguists have been asking, as Signorini (1998a; 2004) emphasises: what kind of epistemic and political-ideological project has underpinned language uses, practices and analyses within teacher education and language teaching-and-learning processes? From this question, others arose, such as: how have we understood students and their languages? What kind of language(s) and writing have we taught? For whom? For what purpose? In whose name? The latter were questions similar to those raised by Maart in her first 15th January session

joins Black (*Preto*) and Mixed (*Pardo*); the term *Pardo* usually groups people from a range of skin pigmentation. With regards to the range of skin pigmentation, Abdias do Nascimento notes that in the Brazilian context, there are many euphemistic words to talk about a 'person of colour, it means, without any doubt, this person descends from a previously enslaved African. Therefore, this person is a Black/Negro, it does not matter what their skin pigmentation is. Let's not waste time with this superfluous distinction…' (Nascimento 2016: 48, own translation). Translated here by the author of this article.

[3] I have been working on teacher education training and continuing teacher education focusing on processes of teaching and learning Portuguese as a home language and Portuguese as an Additional Language/Portuguese for speakers of other languages.

at the UNISA Decolonial Summer School[4] in 2020. As a researcher and scholar thinking through interventions in decolonisation, I have to ask this question: What are the consequences of these epistemological and political-ideological projects that we have taken up? Whilst mindful of this question as part of the backdrop of this article, I am not attempting to find answers for them at present. Rather, I am focused on the process, as the constant unfolding of decolonisation suggests.

This article, as one in-progress, offers me as the author the possibility of shedding light on the entanglement of voices that constitute this South-South dialogue that I embody, and thus in itself creates a platform for such an exercise.

Following the introduction, this article is organised into two parts: Firstly, I focus on some aspects of the coloniality of language, considering that race and racialisation play a central role, drawing from the work of the following scholars: (Garcés 2007; Vernonelli 2015; Fanon 1967, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1997; McKinney 2017; Mignolo 2011).

Secondly, I focus on debates in the field of the decolonisation of language and language education as per the work of Fanon (1967) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1997), whilst engaging with the perspective of language deregulation as proposed by Signorini (2002).

## The Coloniality of Language

Reflecting on race is central when one intends to understand, challenge, refuse and stop processes of dehumanisation and sub-humanisation that are part of the fruits generated by colonialism, considered the primary practices of coloniality. Even though the administrative and political domination of colonialism has ceased for the most part within countries where it was present, the mentality, the strategies and procedures built to justify and to continue domination remain practically and discursively in place as coloniality (Maldonado-Torres 2007). Practices and discourses of coloniality act and exert themselves through their agents in all aspects of being in the world: the body,

[4] Questions similar to those Rozena Maart raised in her first 15 January 2020 session at the UNISA Decolonial Summer School. https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=2574883209291156&ref=watch_permalink

emotions, reason, spirit, alterity, relationships with other beings, experiences of living and the experience of wealth. Race and language are intertwined in so many aspects of coloniality; one such aspect is exposed by the Martinican scholar Franz Fanon (1967):

> The problem that we confront in this chapter is this: the Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter – that is, he will come closer to being a real human being – in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language. I am not unaware that this is one of man's attitudes face to face with Being. A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language (Fanon 1967: 8f).

Having a language[5] means having a worldview, a set of values, a way of seeing the world and seeing ourselves and others (Fanon 1967; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1997). I return to this aspect later in this article. For the present, I would like to highlight that language – as part of a process enforced upon the

[5] The concept of language has been contested among different theoretical perspectives that have developed in the broad field of Language Studies. It is however not my aim to return to this debate here. I would like to point out that language as an ideological sign has been the focal point of several disputes of many different groups. The legitimacy to talk about language is attributed according to power relations among groups: for example, groups seen as experts in language as an object of study, groups seen as non-experts in language but seen as experts in other 'objects' related to language, and groups seen as laymen (among them, those schooled groups, those with economic capital dominance, those few or not schooled). Disputes inside the field of Language Studies focus on linguistic perspectives that founded Linguistics as a field of inquiry. These perspectives developed conceptions of language as structure and imply that language is objectified and is bounded according to internal structure (and also political boundaries) so that each language would be differentiated from another and be identified as a unit. Authors that contest these perspectives have pointed out the political and ideological basis, bias and consequences of this structural view. I draw on some aspects of this contestation in my article here mainly through a decolonial lens, however I am not going to summarise this debate. Some texts on this debate can be found in Makoni and Pennycook (2007) and Kroskrity (2000).

colonised – is seen as part of the process of dehumanisation and sub-humanisation and thus crucial for understanding the construction of race, subjugation, and the process of racialisation. According to Fanon, for example, speaking French confronts the construction of Blackness and Whiteness.

> Every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle (Fanon 1967: 9).

For the Black person renouncing Blackness concerning language implies adopting a 'White language', since this language symbolises the culture of the White coloniser, the civilising nation, the colonial worldview, the acceptance of colonial knowledge and domination. Besides, languages also participate in racial construction since race is discursively built upon it. The construction of race and racial hierarchy is discursive – and practical, in the body, inflicted through violence – and part of the process of coloniality. As such, languages constitute and reflect elements of coloniality and decoloniality, both of which speak to how the languages have been mobilised within socio-discursive practices and how power relations are addressed in these practices; languages are also components of decoloniality since the discursive critique of coloniality is decolonial as well. In this sense, Fanon has been seen as a decolonial thinker whose legacy is acknowledged by Walsh and Mignolo (2018). Fanon's critique of how Black people are dehumanised, through the production of non-being, is central to scholars of the Modernity/ Coloniality/Decoloniality group[6] (MCD group). The Kenyan writer and

[6] The Modernity/ Coloniality/ Decoloniality [MCD] group is composed of academics from different fields of Human and Social Sciences. Many are from countries in South of Abya Yala (known predominantly as America, as named by colonisers) and work in universities within the United States of America (USA). The authors of this group that I cite in this article are Catherine Walsh (from the USA; works in Ecuador), Walter Mignolo (Italian heritage, from Argentina; works in the USA), Santiago Castro-Gómez (Colombia), Ramón

scholar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1997) is also acknowledged for his legacy in anticolonial scholarship; he cultivated and developed an important position in the 1970s, demonstrating the link between and among written and spoken language and colonial domination, asserting his refusal to write in the coloniser's English language but his mother tongue, Gikuyu.

According to authors from the MCD group, coloniality refers to multiple and asymmetric power relations of race, ethnicity, sexuality, epistemology, economy and gender (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel 2007). And languages constitute and are constituted, by these multiple interlocking relations. Languages have been used in processes of domination and exploitation due to the intertwined and mutual constitution of language, the economy and the social reality an economy of coloniality generates (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel 2007). Languages were brought into play to assert colonial domination and still function within coloniality of being, knowing, and power.

According to Maldonado-Torres,

> coloniality ... refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations (Maldonado Torres 2007: 243).

Coloniality is based on the 'rhetoric of modernity' and can consequently be described as a discursive process. According to Walsh and Mignolo (2018), 'coloniality is constitutive, not derivative, of modernity. That is to say, there is no modernity without coloniality' (Walsh & Mignolo 2018: 4). In the words of Maldonado-Torres (2007: 244), 'modernity as a discourse and as a practice would not be possible without coloniality, and coloniality continues to be an inevitable outcome of modern discourses'. If coloniality and modernity are both practice and discourse, the decolonial project, besides being practical, is also about enunciation, discourse:

> decolonial thinking and doing focus on the enunciation, engaging in epistemic disobedience and delinking from the colonial matrix to open

Grosfoguel and Nelson Maldonado-Torres (from Puerto Rico; work in the USA). About naming the place invaded by colonisers, see Gordon (2020) and Ramose (2020).

> up decolonial options – a vision of life and society that requires decolonial subjects, decolonial knowledges, and decolonial institutions. Decolonial thinking and options (i.e., thinking decolonial[ly]) are nothing more than a relentless analytic effort to understand, to overcome, the logic of coloniality underneath the rhetoric of modernity, the structure of management and control that emerged out of the transformation of the economy in the Atlantic, and the jump in knowledge that took place both in the internal history of Europe and in-between Europe and its colonies (Mignolo 2011: 9f).

Coloniality, modernity and decoloniality, in this perspective, have to do with discursive[7] and analytical processes. Decolonisation does not end with activities of analysis; it extends way beyond it. Since coloniality refers to practices of domination, decoloniality is also praxis (Walsh & Mignolo 2018), and 'decolonisation is both a process and a movement' (Maart 2020b).

One step toward this 'analytic effort' is to understand how coloniality

[7] According to the Russian scholar M. Bakhtin (1986), the production of knowledge within the human sciences and philosophy implies to analyse texts, words, and other signs (verbal, musical, visual). 'The text (written and oral) is the primary given of all these disciplines and of all thought in the human sciences and philosophy in general (including theological and philosophical thought at their sources). The text is the unmediated reality (the reality of thought and experience), the only one from which these disciplines and this thought can emerge. Where there is no text, there is no object of study, and no object of thought either. The 'implied' text: if the word 'text' is understood in the broad sense – as any coherent complex of signs – then even the study of art (the study of music, the theory and history of fine arts) deals with texts (works of art). Thoughts about thoughts, experiences of experiences, words about words, and texts about texts. Herein lies the basic distinction between our disciplines (human sciences) and the natural ones (about nature), although there are no absolute, impenetrable boundaries here either. Thought about the human sciences originates as thought about others' thoughts, wills, manifestations, expressions, and signs, behind which stand manifest gods (revelations) or people (the laws of rulers, the precepts of ancestors, anonymous sayings, riddles, and so forth)' (Bakhtin 1986: 103). So, the decolonial undoing and thinking have texts in this broader sense as the primary material.

is constituted and how language operates within this process. According to the MCD group, coloniality is structured as the coloniality of power, knowing and being and is based on an epistemic project that intends to cope with the totality of knowledge. (Castro-Gómez 2007; 2005). Maldonado-Torres (2007) defines vertexes of coloniality as follows:

> The concept of coloniality of being was born in conversations about the implications of the coloniality of power in different areas of society. The idea was that colonial relations of power left profound marks not only in the areas of authority, sexuality, knowledge and the economy but on the general understanding of being as well. And, while the coloniality of power referred to the interrelation among modern forms of exploitation and domination (power), and the coloniality of knowledge had to do with the impact of colonization on the different areas of knowledge production, coloniality of being would make primary reference to the lived experience of colonization and its impact on language... The emergence of the concept 'coloniality of Being' responded to the need to thematize the question of the effects of coloniality in lived experience and not only in the mind (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243).

Maldonado-Torres explains the coloniality of being, reflecting on the denial of the rationality of those who were forced to live under colonial power and how it produced denial of existence, denial of the possibility of being and existence. Coloniality of being was based and continues to operate on the grounds of racialisation, which means, the production of hierarchies based on theories of race. People who were under the yoke of colonial power frequently were seen and told that they are racially inferior. Such a statement was based on the assumption that colonised people were not able to adequately think for themselves. Existence was related to a certain kind of reason – linked and interpreted in a manner that limits the 'I think, therefore I am', the *cogito, ergo sum*, enunciated by the 17th century French philosopher, mathematician and scientist René Descartes – limiting the ability to rationalise, thus leading to limited existence, sub-humanisation, and dehumanisation. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) highlights this aspect of dehumanisation that characterises coloniality of being:

> At the centre of 'coloniality of being' is the consistent and systematic

> denial of humanity of those who became targets of enslavement and colonization. The denial of humanity of others was a major technology of domination which enabled them to be pushed out of the human family into a subhuman category and a zone of non-being (Fanon 1968). Two techniques were deployed in the 'colonization of being'. The first was the social classification of human species. The second was racial hierarchization of human species per invented differential ontological densities (Quijano 2000; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Dastile & Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013). Race actively worked as the reorganizing principle (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 102–103).

As Maldonado-Torres (2007) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) emphasise, based on their Fanonian interpretation, race is the main area where the denial of being is generated. It is important to remember that the assumption of lack of reason, linked to race, is derived from an understanding that language would be all-encompassing of the expression of thoughts. Since the verbalisation of thoughts of Black and colonised people were considered limited, the thinking was considered deficient. Languages were also part of this process of definition of who had and who did not have the right to existence, and to experience the human condition. Another scholar who focuses on the intertwined relationship between language and race in the dehumanising process is Veronelli (2015). Veronelli's main emphasis is on the coloniality of language, like Garcés (2007). These two authors are my main reference sources when discussing this vertex of coloniality. Their discussion is complementary since Garcés' interest is on the coloniality of language with relation to the geopolitics of knowledge; Veronelli is mainly interested in the theorisation of race. She notes, as per below:

> Regarding the theorization of race – and this is crucial to my approach to the relationship among race, language and communication – the decolonial historical approach marks a difference (and at the same time a relationship of complementarity) between race as a category of classification of world populations and racialization as a long-term dehumanizing process (Veronelli 2015: 40).

Veronelli utilises the concept of race as used by authors discussing the decolonial turn:

> race is seen as the mental construction that imposes inequality amongst populations and societies as being natural by transforming differences into values (Veronelli 2015: 41).

Racialisation has to do with the process of dehumanising through avenues such as,

> institutions, laws, ways of being treated, practices and desires that distribute the world population in the ranks, places and roles of the power structure, placing all who have been devalued in situations and relationships only because they are considered beings that are naturally inferior in contrast to naturally superior, civilized and human beings (Veronelli 2015: 41).

The author analyses the processes of dehumanising produced when devaluing people and language based on race. Veronelli and Maldonado-Torres cite Mignolo (2003) to show how coloniality of being is based on language.

> 'Science' (knowledge and wisdom) cannot be detached from language; languages are not just 'cultural' phenomena in which people find their 'identity'; they are also the location where knowledge is inscribed. And, since languages are not something human beings have but rather something of what human beings are, coloniality of power and of knowledge engendered the coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres 2007:130).

Mignolo (2000) emphasises that modern (colonial) knowledge was created mainly in two classical languages (Latin and Greek) and continued in six modern languages: Italian, which was the language of the Renaissance; French, German and English, which were the dominant languages from Enlightenment to present day; 'they remain the hegemonic languages of scholarship and world literature' (Mignolo 2000: 40); Portuguese and Spanish, that were subaltern languages in Europe despite assuming dominant positions in colonial contexts, and marginalised in international academic contexts. This can be observed, for example, to show how few texts written in Spanish and Portuguese are cited by scholars where English, French and German are the official language of speech and/ or writing.

The hierarchy of languages, as shown by Mignolo (2011: 20), is related to epistemic, artistic and literary hierarchies, since,

> the linguistic hierarchy in which Eurocentrism has been founded ... controls knowledge not only through the dominance of the languages themselves but through the categories on which thought is based.

As Mignolo (2011) explains, languages of colonised people were seen as inappropriate for exercises of abstraction considered necessary to science, but they are suitable for culture and folklore. These were seen as different, inferior, and of less social value compared to scientific knowledge. Culture and folklore were related to tradition, not exactly to modernity. In this sense, modernity produced a hierarchy of languages:

> A linguistic hierarchy between European languages and non-European languages privileged communication and knowledge production in the former, and subalternised the latter as sole producers of folklore or culture, but not of knowledge/ theory (Mignolo 2011: 19).

Connected to the construction of epistemological hierarchy, the hierarchy of languages bore social hierarchy and inequality. In these processes, languages, knowledges and writing are entangled, in the same way that language and power are entangled. Garcés (2007), in discussing geopolitics of knowledge, proposed the concept of coloniality of language and emphasised these entanglements:

> Without the development of a type of useful knowledge for the machinery of the state, which is aimed at controlling all orders of social life, the project of capitalist expansion would not have been possible. In this process of epistemic constitution, which took place between the 16th and 19th centuries, the structuring of the social sciences as we know them today is framed. In this way, a classificatory model of the word and its truth, of knowing and saying, of knowing and its expression, was consolidated. Language and knowledge, then, were marked, until today, by two unavoidable characteristics from the power lines: a Eurocentric knowledge and languages, and knowledge and languages modelled in a colonial matrix of valuation (Garcés 2007: 222).

Geopolitics of knowledge is engendered not only at the political macro-level (states or international union of states) but also generated in medium and micro levels of institutional and social relations. Internally in Brazil and several countries on the same continent, Indigenous and Black people have been victims of geopolitics of knowledge due to the effect of coloniality, which continues to operate across the continent. Despite this, our knowledges have gained ground as a result of Black and Indigenous movements and the growing numbers of Black and Indigenous scholars in academic contexts in Brazil; however, epistemicide and linguicide are still common practices. Epistemicide, as defined by the Brazilian sociologist Carneiro (2005), is in line with the concept of coloniality of knowledge and being:

> more than annulment and disqualification of knowledge of people positioned as subaltern, [epistemicide] is a persistent process of production of cultural destitution by denying access to education, mainly quality education; by producing intellectual subordination; by different processes of delegitimizing the Black as someone who has and produces knowledge; and by debasement of her/his cognitive ability in inflicting poverty and/or impairment of self-esteem through imposition of frequent processes of bias in educational contexts. This is because it is impossible to disqualify the different forms of knowledge of dominated people without disqualifying them, individually or collectively, as people of knowledge (Carneiro 2005: 97).

Carneiro developed her concept by joining the Foucauldian concept of *dispositif* (also known as apparatus) and the concept of epistemicide developed by the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos. She emphasises that epistemicide kidnaps [the] reason of subalternised people. In this way, epistemicide has to do with power relations in denying knowledges and the ability to know and learn. The latter gives rise to other processes, such as the imposition of poverty and the impairment of self-esteem. In this way, Carneiro draws upon the criticism made by Abdias do Nascimento, the Brazilian scholar who reported the genocide of Black Brazilians under the 'myth of racial democracy'. Nascimento ([1978] 2016: 47f) explains that this myth was built on 'frequently with the support of historical sciences', and such racial democracy 'supposedly would reflect specific concrete relation on Brazilian society: that Blacks and Whites live harmoniously together, enjoying same oppor-

tunities of existence, without any interference from racial or ethnic origins, in this play of social equality'[8].

The 'myth of racial democracy', widespread in Brazilian society according to Nascimento, was produced by 1. whitening people through the politics of migration that invited White Europeans to move to Brazil mainly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; 2. not employing Black people or offering employment in precarious and undervalued forms of work[9], which lead to poverty, and 3. cultural whitening. The author called attention to the fact that the whole structure of power – state structure (government, laws, capital, army and police) and White dominant Brazilian elite – had at their disposal instruments of social and cultural control, that were indicative of the 'system of education, all the range of mass communication (like radio, press and TV[10]) and literary production' (Nascimento [1978] 2016: 112). Principally

[8]Abdias do Nascimento was one of the main authors that reported on and discussed racism in Brazil. I understand he was a decolonial thinker in the Brazilian context.

[9] Despite this changing, it is still rare to find Black people in high positions in many different spaces and types of work in Brazil. Access to universities is being changed. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE*), in 2018 51% of students at public universities identified as Black. This is quite a significant change, but things did not change in the same way concerning professions well charged.

[10] It is important to keep in mind that Abdias do Nascimento published his book in 1978 when the internet was not available. Nowadays Black and Indigenous people have been using the internet as a space of voice and activism. See, for example, www.mundonegro.inf.br; www.geledes.org.br; YouTube channel Pensar Africanamente and Video nas Aldeias; www.videonasladeias.org.br. These are a few examples of using the internet as a space of action and as a decolonising practice. Besides that, there are two important laws related to the system of education that have been used as a tool against bias and as a tool in education to ethnic-racial education. Law 10.639/2003 determines that history of Africa and Afro-Brazilians and African and Afro-Brazilian culture must be focused on Basic Education (pre-schooling, primary and secondary levels). Law 11.645/2008 determines that history and culture of Africa and Afro-Brazilian and Brazilian Indigenous people have to be taught in primary and

the system of education functioned 'as a mechanism of control in this structure of cultural prejudice' (p. 113). Nascimento affirmed that all these apparatuses were used 'to destroy the Black as person/subject and as creator and leader of own culture' (112). The destruction of our culture included silencing or marginalising African cultures and knowledges. In this way, similarly to what Mignolo (2011) pointed out concerning the hierarchy of knowledge, Nascimento (1989) affirmed:

> Another deadly tool in this scheme of immobilizing and fossilizing the vital dynamic elements of African culture can be found in its marginalization as simple folklore: a subtle form of ethnocide. All of these processes take place in an aura of subterfuge and mystification to mask and dilute their significance or make them seem ostensibly superficial. But despite such attempts at deceit, the fact remains that the concepts of White Western culture reign in this supposedly ecumenical culture in a country of Blacks, marginalizing and undervaluing our heritage of Africa in the process (Nascimento 1989: 61).

Ethnocide, as referenced by Nascimento, can be seen as one strategy of epistemicide, which can be understood as a component in the process of coloniality. Even though colonialism had ended (theoretically and officially) in Brazil in 1822[11], coloniality keeps exerting itself onto the minds and hearts

secondary levels in Basic Education. These laws are relevant tools against cultural whitening and for decolonisation in education. But, despite the first law being in place for almost 20 years and the second for more than 10 years, we face many challenges and even resistance in their implementation, challenges that we face in 'processes and movements' of decolonisation (Maart 2020b). I have been working on teacher education to implement these laws in language education contexts. The final discussion of this text is part of a project that I am working on with some teachers of Basic Education (primary and secondary levels) and professors to implement these laws from a decolonial perspective.

[11] Although independence was declared on September 7, 1822, it is important to bear in mind that the declaration was made by a member of the Portuguese royal family who was living in Brazil. The Portuguese court moved to Brazil in 1807. In April 1821, part of the royal family returned to Portugal. The

of the colonised and informs the practices of the colonised. What Nascimento reports as the genocide of Black people in Brazil can be characterised as operating modes of coloniality in the same way that we can see as a process of coloniality in what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o refers to when discussing colonialism and its effects:

> The real aim of colonialism was to control the people's wealth: what they produced, how they produced it, and how it was distributed; to control, in other words, the entire realm of the language of real life. Colonialism imposed its control of the social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. But its most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others. For colonialism, this involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser. The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1997:16).

In a very similar way that Nascimento points out forms of domination of Black people, I would like to add, and Indigenous people in Brazil, the Kenyan author describes economic and political control imposed upon the

colonial process in Brazil developed some particularities during this period; and Portuguese Enlightenment also has some elements that need to be addressed: low rates of education, few universities in Portugal, no universities in the colonies. The first Brazilian university was established in the early 20th century (Federal University of Paraná – 1912). These aspects inform our beliefs in the need to rethink some statements made by the CMD group, which focus on the Spanish colonial processes; this will not be discussed here as it is not the aim of this text.

colonised. Reading Carneiro (2005), Nascimento ([1978] 2016) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1997) helps us to understand how coloniality of power, of knowledge and being, are entangled and how they continue to operate:

> 1. promoting poverty of some groups and controlling economic production and distribution;
> 2. denying knowledges, arts and other forms of culture, controlling self-definition of this people;
> 3. injuring self-esteem, that weakens other aspects of self-definition; and
> 4. dominating languages.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o calls our attention to an element that is not referenced by Brazilian scholars – languages. Although Brazil is a multilingual country (Cavalcanti & Maher 2018), the ideology of monolingualism is dominant. This ideology is known in Brazilian Language Studies as the 'Myth of Monolingualism' (Cavalcanti 1999; Altenhofen 2013), which means that Brazilians believe that 'in Brazil we speak Portuguese', silencing and denying approximately 280 Indigenous languages[12], roughly 80 migrant languages[13],

[12] 'The 2010 official census of the *IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics]—registered, for the first time, a total of 274 Indigenous languages. Linguists bring this number down to 188, considering that several of these self-denominated languages may, in fact, be varieties of the same language. These languages are spoken by most of the Indigenous people (*circa* 896,900) who either live on Indigenous lands or inhabit towns and cities in 5,565 municipalities in Brazil (IBGE, 2015)' (Freire, 2018: 27).

[13] In different historical periods, many people from different origins moved to Brazil. For example, firstly, the forced movement of enslaved Africans from the early 16th to late 19th centuries. Secondly, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Brazilian historians registered the arrival of diverse groups of European immigrants (Italians, Germans, Ukrainians, Polish, Dutch and Pomeranians), Japanese (in two different waves, 1908 and after World War II), diverse groups from the Middle East (Lebanese, Palestinian, Jordanian, Syrian). Recently, from 2010, Brazil is the host country of new flows of migrants from Syria, Venezuela and Haiti. All these migrants bring their

Brazilian Sign Language (*Lingua Brasileira de Sinais – LIBRAS*), and many languages of the borders also known as languages of frontiers[14]. The 'myth of monolingualism' can be understood through the lens of what Ndhlovu (2015) calls 'monolingual habitus', which is 'inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's (Bourdieu 1977, 1991) notion of linguistic habitus – this being a set of unquestioned dispositions toward languages in society' (Ndhlovu 2015: 399). Many Brazilians have the perception that the unique language that people who are born in Brazil speak, is Brazilian Portuguese. Education plays a key role in this perception since the education system is conceived of, and developed predominantly, in Portuguese. Schools and the media (in Portuguese only) reinforce the production of strategic blindness to 'multilingual and multicultural lifeways' (Ndhlovu 2015: 399).

The ideology of monolingualism[15] (as we see with the 'myth of monolingualism' and with 'monolingual habitus') is rooted in the German romanticism notion of 'one language, one people, one nation'. This notion was mobilised in the form of 'one language, one nation' in modern nation-state building (Hobsbawn 1990). This modern idea of a monolingual nation guided not only the language policy in Europe – language diversity was denied in Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy – but also in new national states that were colonies of these European empires[16].

The geopolitics of knowledge, as part of coloniality, produce what the Brazilian Indigenous writer Ailton Krenak calls 'civilizatory abstraction',

multilingual trajectory and repertoires. Many retain the use of their language within domestic and religious practices.

[14] Throughout the Brazilian border with other countries, we can observe language practices that are constituted by different linguistics resources.

[15] Ideologies of language, language ideology and linguistic ideology have been studied in different areas that focus on languages: Linguistic Anthropology, Sociology of Language, Discourse Analysis, Language Policy. For an introduction, see Schieffelin, Woolard & Kroskrity (1998). An important study of language ideologies developed by Modernity is Bauman & Briggs (2003). For monolingual ideology, see Blackledge (2000). For ideology of standardization, see Milroy (2001).

[16] Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), McKinney (2017), and Ndhlovu (2015) criticise the presence and effects of this ideology in South Africa. McKinney (2017) also discusses the ideology of standardisation.

which can be understood as the process of homogenising knowledges and languages in the name of universality. This abstraction 'suppresses diversity, denies the plurality of forms of life, existences and habits. It offers the same menu, the same costume, and, if possible, the same language to everyone' (Krenak 2019: 11)[17]. As Krenak highlights, in a similar way as the authors who put forward the decolonial perspective, this universality was rooted in Eurocentric paradigms. The ideology of monolingualism is strongly connected to the ideology of standardisation.

The ideology of standardisation refers to the idea that a language has an ideal or prototype form. Linguistic forms that do not correspond to this ideal structure could be seen as a variation or deviation, being evaluated predominantly as illegitimate. This standard is currently associated with writing since writing would make this structure permanent as opposed to spoken word, which tends to undergo modification. This idea is also connected to viewing language as a list of words structured as a sentence. It is not a casual gesture that dictionaries and grammar books are indispensable tools of standardisation. Written texts should imitate that grammatical arrangement and forms of spoken word and should use those words recognised in dictionaries. Standardisation was first connected to political affirmation and empowerment within Europe; it was linked to colonial empires as well; and finally, it was related to the construction of national states. Setting the limits/boundaries of languages in Europe corresponded to marking territorial limits of power influence of each state. This process of standardisation is especially important in performing the coloniality of language because it was the production of a unitary language that was built consistent with the interests of the group exerting the political and administrative power. A unitary language, according to Bakhtin (1981), was produced with the support of authors dedicated to language, philosophy, religion, and literary studies. In Bakhtinian words,

> (a) ... unitary language constitutes the theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization, an expression of the centripetal forces of language. A unitary language is

[17] Ailton Krenak is an important Brazilian Indigenous thinker and activist. He has raised his voice in the struggle for Indigenous rights (for education, the public health system, protection of lands, cultures and languages). His voice is central among other Indigenous decolonial thinkers in Brazil.

> not something given but is always in essence posited – and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia. But at the same time, it makes its real presence felt as a force for overcoming this heteroglossia, imposing specific limits to it (Bakhtin 1981: 270).

In this sense, the unitary language crystallises a 'relative' unit that starts being seen as the 'correct language'. Also, a,

> common unitary language is a system of linguistic norms. But these norms do not constitute an abstract imperative; they are rather the generative forces of linguistic life, forces that struggle to overcome the heteroglossia of language, forces that unify and centralize verbal-ideological thought (Bakhtin 1981:271).

Heteroglossia refers to the diversity of world views and is related primarily to how different social, economic, professional and cultural groups view, value and evaluate themselves, other groups, and the world. Heteroglossia can be identified with linguistic forms, but this is secondary since the 'same' grammatical category and the 'same' word can carry different world views. The word 'same', in the aforementioned sentence, is written in inverted commas because, carrying different world views means such a word is the same only as form, on the surface, not concerning ideology. A unitary language is an exercise to guide and control the way we view the world and develop our values. As Bakhtin emphasised, the standard unitary language (the 'correct language') is an exercise of power with the purpose to centralise and unify the power in a specific group. It is possible to connect the Bakhtinian perspective with the study on the coloniality of language articulated by Veronelli (2015). Veronelli shows the criteria to legitimise the language representative of Spain:

> a) to have a filial relationship with the traditionally superior languages perceived as gifts from God (Latin, Greek and Hebrew) and, consequently, to be languages capable of expressing knowledge;
>
> b) to have the capacity for the political enterprise to unify a territory, including the expression of the laws, authority and order of that territory; and

> c) the connection between alphabetic writing and civics. So, when the means of expressiveness of people perceived as 'beasts' are evaluated, from this criterion, they are not languages (Veronelli 2015: 45).

The principles noted above were used to legitimise the Castilian language in Spain.

Language was related to territory, political and juridical power, religion and writing. Veronelli (2015) analysed epistemological patterns that have oriented scholars toward the study of the Castilian language during the period of Spanish maritime expansion. Veronelli returned to texts written by Elio Antonio de Nebrija[18] (1441 - 1522) and Bernardo de Alderete[19] (1565 - 1641) and exposed their criteria for identifying and, consequently, legitimising the language[20].

Although development of the religious criterion lost force in society, the second and third criteria remained valid for the Enlightenment and Modernity and in some cases are still valid. The construction of languages as bounded units is linked to three main social and historical processes:

1. colonial domination;
2. the building of the modern nation-states; and

[18] Veronelli refers to *Gramática de la lengua castellana* (1492).

[19] Veronelli refers to *Del origen y principio de la lengua castellana o romance que oi se usa en España* (1606).

[20] These criteria seem similar to those that led Pero de Magalhães de Gândavo to affirm that the language of the people who lived on the coast of Brazil lacked three letters: f, l, and r. As said by this author, 'something worthy of astonishment, because they do not have Fé (Faith), nor Lei (Law), nor Rei (King): and in this way they live in disorder without taking into account, neither weight nor measure' (História, chap. 10, fl. 33v.). Language and, specifically, letter, correspond to social organisations and worldviews. In the absence of letters and linguistic correspondence with the coloniser's language, the colonised would lack not only faith and social organisation but very specific types and modes of faith/religion and social order. The reference of language and society is that of the coloniser. Not identifying any similarity in the colonised, the coloniser points out the lack. This lack was used to imply lack of humanity, building the non-being, dehumanising people.

3. the development of public instruction due to Enlightenment's[21] emancipation project.

Despite the differences that distinguish European colonial processes (mainly British, French, Portuguese and Spanish), colonial empires used language as part of a process of domination and exclusion of colonised people, imposing colonial languages and often denying the languages and knowledges of colonised people.

The connection between language and nation was part of the process of imagining the nation as a community of people that shared a common language, culture and a past. A nation is a discursive construct where language and writing play a fundamental role (Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm 1990). Imagining the nation implied the task of inventing unified languages and common narratives about past and present that could be shared throughout the territory. Writing would be necessary to spread such narratives and to standardise and stabilise language.

Schooling was also part of the process of imagining the nation. It was especially important to national development. The Enlightenment's emancipation project[22] defined public schooling[23] as the main way to emancipate

[21] As pointed out by Castro-Gómez (2007), 'The European Enlightenment [...] is not considered [...] as an 'original' text that is copied by others, or as an intra-European phenomenon that is 'spread' all over the world and against which it is only possible to speak of a good or a bad "reception"'. The author says that Enlightenment in his context (Colombia) is best understood if it is seen as had been 'read, translated and enunciated'. The consequence of this perspective is that reflecting on the Enlightenment implies to ask about 'cultural translation', which in turn 'carries the idea of dislocation, relocation and displacement'. Agreeing with the author, I understand that it is necessary to ask how Enlightenment was 'read, translated and enunciated' in Brazil, but also in Portugal, since there are specificities of Enlightenment in these contexts.

[22] Emancipation, in this context, meant to free people from any kind of guardianship: families, religion, political and ideological.

[23] It is important to mention that for the most part schooling in Brazil was developed by the Catholic Church until 1891 (Cunha 2017) and that science and scientific knowledge were developed later in Brazil compared to neighbouring countries.

people through science[24]. Scientific and legislative knowledges – and the scientific and legislative writing – were the foundation of freedom and the autonomy of enlightened people. Free, autonomous and informed citizens were the desire of the state because they could know and decide what were better for people and the nation since people became responsible for choosing governments.

Schooling relied on (and relies upon) writing (since knowledge might be defined and fixed in written texts) and promoted the teaching of the legitimate language of the nation-state. All citizens should know the same standardised (unitary) language. Language studies were connected to this national project: it was necessary to describe, standardise and create the instruments to prescribe the language. Writing performed the central role of producing hierarchies of languages given that it was used as a paradigm of language forms and uses. Only one specific pattern of writing was used: alphabetic writing (Mignolo 1992a; 1992b). Indigenous forms of writing – like embodied and graphic signs, paintings, and images – were delegitimised and not considered writing[25]. As such, colonisation of languages implied the imposition of the Roman alphabet and the denial of other writing systems used by colonised people. These systems are still marginalised, and visual signs that compose communicative practices are still seen as inferior when compared with the spoken word. Such patterns of evaluation can be seen as being connected to the coloniality of languages.

The use of a legitimate alphabet, however, did not always guarantee the legitimating of languages spoken by colonised people, nor guarantee the legitimating of their knowledges. According to Garcés, embracing alphabetic writing can still be treated as insufficient for validating these languages and knowledges expressed within them. Coloniality of language is engendered so that the hierarchy remains even when the person uses the legitimised writing system or the legitimised language. Coloniality of language, therefore:

> shows a double face: on the one hand, modernity subalternized certain languages in favor of others, but on the other hand, it also colonized the word of the speakers who speak subalternized languages. In other

[24] In colonial contexts, emancipation was put forward as the way to 'free' colonised people from 'primitive beliefs' and to 'civilise' them.
[25] On this note, see Boone & Mignolo (1994).

> words, not only were certain languages subalternized, but the word itself and the speech of colonized speakers: the word of a Quechua speaker, for example, even if it is expressed in Spanish, will always be less valued than the word of a Spanish-speaker, especially if is urban, White, mestizo, male, titled, etc.; that is, the valuation of the word continues to depend on the colonial trilogy indicated by Quijano (class, race, gender) (Garcés 2007: 150).

In this sense, the coloniality of language can be seen as another vertex of the structure of coloniality (with coloniality of being, knowing and power). It has to do with the intertwined processes of racialising, classifying, hierarchising and dehumanising of colonised people. In this way, values are attached to the speaker and writer according to their class, gender and race. Garcés (2007) affirms this position, by noting that,

> Languages and knowledges function like the economy: through a valuation system, which asymmetrically classifies the production, consumption, distribution and circulation of goods (Garcés 2007: 225).

Coloniality of language implies evaluation and produces asymmetries that construct dehumanising since it is that vertex of coloniality that directly affects world views, on values. Experiences of hierarchies of languages into schooling were embodied and narrated by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who examines how schooling was used to produce subjugation of the colonised by the British within the Kenyan system of education in the 1950s. This production of coloniality operated through language, ensuring that the colonised understood that the coloniser's language was the most important:

> Thus, one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford ....
> The attitude to English was the exact opposite: any achievement in spoken or written English was highly rewarded; prizes, prestige,

> applause; the ticket to higher realms. English became the measure of intelligence and ability in the arts, the sciences, and all the other branches of learning. English became the main determinant of a child's progress – up the ladder of formal education (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1997:11, 12).

Different from what is noted by Garcés (2007), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o brought into focus the support and affirmation given to students for using the language of the coloniser. While speaking Gikuyu was punishable, on body and soul, speaking and writing in English was rewarded, especially showing the capability of learning normative uses of English. A similar narrative is produced by Indigenous people in Brazil in the documentary *Indigenous of Brazil 2 – Our Languages*, produced by Ailton Krenak. According to participants, Indigenous people from different ethnic groups (Baré/ Warekena, Tariana, Baniwa) living in the North of Brazil were prohibited from speaking their languages and were obliged to speak Portuguese at schools, mainly within Catholic schools, in 1970s Brazil. If Indigenous children were seen or heard speaking their languages, they would be forced to carry an object as punishment or would be deprived of a school meal.

Unlike Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's narrative, Brazilian Indigenous learners were not offered rewards for using Portuguese as a language within the school. Those narratives show how the coloniality of languages were embodied and experienced within the souls of the colonised and the Indigenous people. In this way, civilising suggests a project of homogenising 'forms of life, existence and habits', homogenising languages (Krenak 2019: 11), which has as its reference the unitary language, the language of groups of power (Bakhtin 1981), and producing hierarchies. Once language is homogenised by standardising processes, a hierarchy is built not among languages as units (for example, Guarani, Tukano, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Kimbundu, Portuguese, English) but among what we learnt to witness as varieties of the 'same language'. As such, the superior position is ascribed to a standard variety used in scientific, academic, juridical and literary written texts: fields where writing is central to the discipline, and as such fields with high social value. This value is attributed to the standard and was used later to build and sustain hierarchies among languages as units since standard languages are positioned higher than languages that were not standardised, not being written with the Roman alphabet, without grammar or dictionaries.

Fanon[26] (1967) developed considerations that are related to language hierarchies. The Martinican scholar draws our attention to a double language hierarchy, which means a hierarchy of languages as units and a hierarchy of linguistic norms (varieties): The Frenchman's French first and foremost, followed by Antillean's French, then Creole. The author cited a poem to exemplify the aversion to Creole and the aspiration that is instilled upon the colonised to speak in 'French French':

> The middle class in the Antilles never speak Creole except to their servants. In school the children of Martinique are taught to scorn the dialect. One avoids Creolisms. Some families completely forbid the use of Creole, and mothers ridicule their children for speaking it.
> My mother wanting a son to keep in mind
> if you do not know your history lesson
> you will not go to mass on Sunday in
> your Sunday clothes
> that child will be a disgrace to the family
> that child will be our curse
> shut up I told you you must speak French
> the French of France
> the Frenchman's French
> French French
>
> (Fanon 1967: 10).

[26] In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon calls attention to how the Negro (his phrase for referring to Black people) in the context of the French colonised island of Martinique used to relate with his/her language and the colonial language. Fanon highlights that on the one hand, Black people seek to use colonial language to show proximity to the coloniser to be accepted but on the other hand being aligned with the coloniser, using colonial language in a legitimate standardised way, thus created and sustained hierarchies in colonised societies. Speaking French as a French speaker would allow Black Antilleans to create a differentiation from those Antilleans that were not able to use the language in the same way. Fanon helps us to think about language uses by focusing on the relations between Black people and the White colonisers and relations between and among Black people in colonised societies.

Here Fanon leads us to reflect on different values attributed to 'varieties' or degrees of language articulation such as the: 'the well-spoken' or the one who 'mastered' French in writing, which was valued by French colonisers as speaking 'like a book' (Fanon 1967: 11). This is measured as the best French, worthy of being feared, like the speaker who shows command is feared, for command suggests mastery, and mastery is the highest form of governance and control of the masses. The colonised Black man from the Antilles who speaks French with this kind of mastery 'talks like a white man' (Fanon 1967:11).

McKinney (2017) shows that some patterns of English language usage are connected to Whiteness, and she analysed naturalised and contesting practices of power relations based on the entanglement of language and race. She focused on how 'white ethnolinguistic repertoires' are taken as reference for legitimate and privileged usages and how practices and linguistic forms that are not included in this repertoire are delegitimised. McKinney coined the concept of *Anglonormativity*, which 'refers to the expectation that people will be and should be proficient in English, and are deficient, even deviant if they are not' (McKinney 2017: 80). As the author points out, parameters of proficiency are based on prestigious varieties of English language spoken, above all, by ''White' ways of speaking English' (McKinney 2017: 84). In this sense, this proficiency can be connected with the need to speak French like the Frenchman ('the French of France; the Frenchman's French; French French') referred to by Fanon (1967), 'the normativity or dominance of whiteness' (McKinney 2017: 81).

*Anglonormativity* can be seen as an ideology and practice that reinforce hierarchies of prestigious linguistic norms and, as shown by McKinney, reinforce a specific set of knowledge referred to as 'knowledge of the world' (McKinney 2017: 103). In this way, the author discusses the normativity of pretence 'universal knowledge', pointing out the construction of Eurocentric universality. Thus, McKinney shows 'how knowledge is regimented through racialised discourse. *Anglonormativity* here reinforces 'the position [of] White people as bearers of "preferred knowledge"' (McKinney 2017: 103). In this way, the analysis offered by McKinney connects with the concept of coloniality of language and coloniality of knowing. Her analysis of how *Anglonormativity* has been contested in education can be seen as a step toward decolonisation.

## Decolonising Language Education

Reflections on the coloniality of languages produced by Garcés (2007) and Veronelli (2015) (both based on Mignolo's texts) assist us in challenging this vertex of coloniality. Decolonial thinking and decolonising languages involve, as noted by Mignolo (2011: 10), the 'analytical effort to understand, to overcome, the logic of coloniality underneath the rhetoric of modernity'. But, as mentioned by this author, decolonisation is not only an analytical practice. Walsh and Mignolo (2018) emphasise that decoloniality is characterised by 'thinking-doing and doing-thinking' (Walsh & Mignolo 2018: 9). According to Walsh (2018), decoloniality,

> is a form of struggle and survival, an epistemic and existence-based response and practice – most especially by colonized and racialized subjects – *against* the colonial matrix of power in all of its dimensions, and for the possibilities of an otherwise.
>
> Decoloniality denotes ways of thinking, knowing, being, and doing that began with, but also precede the colonial enterprise and invasion. It implies the recognition and undoing of the hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class that continue to control life, knowledge, spirituality, and thought, structures that are intertwined with and constitutive of global capitalism and Western modernity. Moreover, it is indicative of the ongoing nature of struggles, constructions, and creations that continue to work within coloniality's margins and fissures to affirm that which coloniality has attempted to negate (Walsh 2018: 17).

And further along:

> Decoloniality, without a doubt, is also contextual, relational, practice-based, and lived. Also, it is intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and existentially entangled and interwoven (Walsh 2018: 19).

In this way, decoloniality is a responsive, responsible and engaged practice of struggle against dehumanising practices (that also involves discursive practices). In this sense, Walsh's statement can help us to respond to Maart's

questions posed during the 2020 Decolonial Summer School: 'What does it mean to decolonise? Decolonising whom from what? What do you decolonise from?' [27]. And we could complete Walsh's affirmation with what Maart asserts about process and movement of decolonisation:

> The process is one that involves several acts aimed at directing one's energies toward the undoing, toward the removal of the colonial, and this may include the settler colonial's attitude, language, culture, entitlement and forms of Black surveillance often referred to as social etiquettes; the movement is the collective process through which decolonisation takes a community focus because various acts involve disenfranchised communities and not the individual (Maart 2020b).

Some of these actions, processes and movements were previously expressed by Maart (2014): 'To decolonize is to remove the process, the movement, and the procedures that decapitated Africa – left it with a body and robbed it of its head, stole its mind' (Maart 2014: 75). Because of the stealing of the mind, we sought Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1997) *Decolonizing the Mind* . And for Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, decolonising the mind implies to go back to an African home language that was, and in some cases still is, the language of your parents, grandparents, and ancestors which the coloniser forbids you to speak. In the Brazilian context, it means that Indigenous people would be educated in their languages if they want it, how and when they want[28]. About the latter, we have

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[27] https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=2574883209291156&ref=watch_permalink.

[28] Many Brazilian Indigenous people have developed education in their languages, and they also fight for education in the Portuguese language. There are many experiences in Bilingual Education in Brazil produced by different ethnic Indigenous groups (Freire 2018; Maher 2018). They struggle to work with their own knowledges at school, and they also want the modern-based knowledge and language of schooling. They want the dominant language and knowledge to use strategically (as guns) in struggling for their rights (Kondo 2020). In a similar sense, they have strategically used the idea of a unified language (providing writing, dictionaries, and grammars) to legitimise their languages in schooling (Oliveira 2018). Schools in their territories provide

faced many challenges. Even though the Brazilian government wrote many official documents (laws and other kinds of educational briefs) guaranteeing the right of education in Indigenous languages, Indigenous people deal with many difficulties to develop Indigenous School Education, beginning with teacher education, passing through publishing materials (textbooks or literature) in their languages to be used in schooling, until the effective implementation of intercultural education. Despite the 'permission' to use Indigenous languages in schooling, Indigenous people are also obligated to use the Portuguese language.

But what does one do when the home language is also the coloniser's language? So another answer is possible in Maart's voice:

> To decolonize is to unpeel and examine each layer of colonialism, each segment that is layered with history, lodged in, hooked, entrenched, in words, sounds, blood, with body parts, with breath drawn from the fermented land … you inhale it, draw it in. To decolonize – is to open the wounds of the word; the word gone flesh from its moment of announcement (Maart 2014: 75).

And the word that went flesh was a word in English. Taking ownership, possessing the word is also decolonising.

Although not talking from a decolonial perspective, bell hooks' voice sounds very decolonising. The North American feminist bell hooks wrote about how she imagined the enslaved Africans arriving at that distant land, oppressed, deprived of their languages and obliged to learn the language of the oppressor:

> I imagine, then, Africans first hearing English as 'the oppressor's language' and then re-hearing it as a potential site of resistance. Learning English, learning to speak the alien tongue, was one way enslaved Africans began to reclaim their personal power within a context of domination. Possessing a shared language, black folks could

Indigenous School Education, which differs from Indigenous Education. The former is theoretically based on Intercultural perspectives and is oriented towards national and provincial curriculum documents. The second is the education of Indigenous cultures and is not related to schooling (Brasil 1998).

> find again a way to make community, and a means to create the political solidarity necessary to resist (hooks 1994:171).

The author looks at language usage as a means to undo oppression. Collectively Black people used English to create a community in the USA. This community was characterised by resistance and transformation. In this way, we can go back to the statement of Coates, quoted as the epigraph of this text: 'They made us into a race. We made ourselves into a people' (Coates 2015: 149). Deprived of family, prohibited from using their own language, dehumanised, they used the 'the oppressor's language' to build a community and to experience Being. 'Needing the oppressor's language to speak with one another they nevertheless also reinvented, remade that language so that it would speak beyond the boundaries of conquest and domination' (hooks 1994: 170). hooks underlines the subversion of grammar as a strategy of possessing the language.

Some of these features are also present in Maart's (2014) text, which undertakes an examination of the decolonising process by contesting the norms with which we write academic articles. Maart visually subverts the arrangement of English language sentences by inscribing her analysis within and against the grain of reading and writing, with a particular focus on the system of punctuation, which she asserts is key to understanding the systemic nature of the English language (Maart 2014).

This process of decolonising language goes further than subverting forms of language (phonetically, morphologically, syntactically or textually); decolonising language, as Maart notes, focuses on examining the layers of colonialism in the words, opening the wounds of words, which implies to deepen the analysis of the value that words carry in language, and also occupying these words. The way Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o undertakes the entanglement of language and culture shows us the need to navigate language also in this sense (not only as a form) and unpeel these values in words.

> Culture embodies those moral, ethical and aesthetic values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses, through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe. Values are the basis of a people's identity, their sense of particularity as members of the human race. All this is carried by language. Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history. Culture is almost indistin-

> guishable from the language that makes possible its genesis growth banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1997: 14f).

And further along in the same text:

> Language as communication and as a culture are then products of each other. Communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication. Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1997:15f).

Similarly, the Russian thinker Mikhail Bakhtin notes:

> We are taking language, not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically[29] saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, ensuring a maximum of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life (Bakhtin 1981: 271).

This perspective of language as a system of ideas and set of values overcomes the limit of structure and focuses on how one person carries values in and throughout using languages. It is also useful to overcome the objectification of language and the view of language as a unit which boundaries match with

[29] According to Emerson and Holquist (1986: 101), ideology in Bakhtinian work 'should not be confused with the politically oriented English word. Ideology, as it is used here, is essentially any system of ideas. But Ideology is semiotic in the sense that it involves the concrete exchange of signs in society and history. Every word/discourse betrays the ideology of its speaker; every speaker is thus an ideologue and every utterance an ideologeme'.

national or ethnical groups boundaries.

My proposal to thinking-doing decolonising language education is to join this perspective of language as value/worldview with Signorini's proposal to deregulate language. Signorini is a Brazilian Applied Linguist who has been working on Literacy (through the lens of New Literacy Studies) and teacher education. She challenges her readers in the following ways:

- One, to find other goals to teaching language differently from the national and the modern project (enlighten the ignorant);
- Two, to research language by focusing on what is out of the normative and standardised umbrella.

She focuses on the actions and agency of speakers, readers and writers and how they handle the standards both because they do not know the prestige forms and uses and because they dare to challenge the standards to position themselves within these interactions. She proposes a look at the heterogeneity of uses, forms and meanings of language practices and to look at how people value this heterogeneity.

Signorini emphasises that texts and knowledge 'transmitted' by schooling (knowledge produced inside the rhetoric and logic of Modernity/ Enlightenment) are connected to economic and cultural-specific groups, despite their pretence of universality and neutrality. These texts and knowledge are often connected to legitimised and privileged linguistic forms. The privileged and legitimate 'varieties' are also presumed to be neutral. Despite being exhibited in this way, texts, knowledge and linguistic norms are politically, historically and socially allied with dominant groups. Signorini suggests that students excluded from practices that focus on these texts, linguistic forms and knowledge can feel or see themselves as being very far from these texts and knowledge; besides, one possible effect of schooling is that students perceive themselves as ignorant (Signorini 1994). As such, schooling could emphasise the exclusion rather than promote the inclusion of students performing these prestigious practices. Described as neutral technology, literacy appears to be apolitical, ahistorical and asocial. However, as affirmed by Signorini (1994: 21f),

> literacy practices are social practices and, as such, are inexorably committed to the ways of reasoning/acting/evaluating of the groups

> that control access to these practices. In the case of groups of greater prestige in society, literacy practices are committed to mechanisms of political-ideological domination/subordination of socio-economically marginalized people.

Literacy is not neutral; on the contrary, it is constitutive of domination and exploitation; it is also constitutive of power relations that build and sustain inequality within society. In societies where racism is structural, some literacy practices are connected to silencing and excluding groups, such as Black and Indigenous people in Brazil. Racism reinforces mechanisms of exclusion, exploitation and domination (Almeida 2019).

Signorini (2002) criticises and challenges this pretence of universality and neutrality, and she proposes that we look at the deregulation of language. This perspective, as explained by the author, focuses on multiple and heterogeneous forms and uses of languages, as opposed to focusing on what is described as unitary, homogeneous or common in seeing languages as bounded[30]. Within the language deregulation perspective, the interest is on multiple language practices and on what is built as:

> common and uncommon, compatible and antagonist, legitimate and non-legitimate, possible and unacceptable, etc. Thus, instead of referring to a standard, lingua franca, or privileged norm, in contrast to a non-standard, stigmatized language, or vernacular, we are interested in the notion of linguistic order as always temporary and contingent configuration of what, in playing socio-communicative as well as political and ideological social relations, is constructed as division, border, or frontier in the uses of language (Signorini 2002: 93f).

As a consequence, this interest in unstable and provisional as it informs and uses it as a guide, thereby focusing on speaker/reader/writer agency:

> we are interested in common practices of language use in which the 'disruption' brought up by variation is what allows the speaker/writer to create him/herself as an agent that both reproduces forms and meanings, roles and identities as well as changes, strains, twists,

[30] Usually, studies that describe one linguistic variety tend to concentrate on what is homogenous and common to constitute such variety.

> subverts and produces the new, whether it is perceived as creative, revolutionary, or perceived as just unreasonable, crooked, badly organized (Signorini 2002: 94).

In this sense, attention is directed at subjects in interaction: to the speaker or writer whose text (oral or written, verbal or verbal-visual or verbal-sound) is constituted by disruptive linguistic forms, and to the person who listens or reads and values/ evaluates these forms. Since we look through the Bakhtinian lens, Signorini's proposal is similar to an invitation to observe centripetal and centrifugal forces of tension within the text, the enunciation. Signorini does not draw on this Bakhtinian lens, however, in a similar way, she focuses on the one hand on social forces that tend to centralise, unify and maintain stable linguistic forms and tend to legitimate these unified stable forms; on the other, she focuses on forces that tend to decentralise and produce different forms, disrupting and challenging unifying forces and forms.

Since language is sensitive to social and cultural changes, social and cultural transformations are felt and lived within language, which are conceived as a worldview. Disputes and struggles for social and cultural permanence or transformations take place in language (word meanings, linguistic or stylistic forms, and, consequently, genres of discourse) as well. These forces and disputes are produced by groups collectively. Considering collective agency, the perspective of language deregulation keeps its eyes on individual enunciations understood with other enunciations, which the subject agrees or disagrees with and/or fights against. The collective does not subsume the individual, but the individual is constituted by other subjects within the collective.

Centralising and decentralising social forces are related to the evaluation of meanings and forms of languages as well as the evaluation of groups, their values and their knowledges that constitute the worldviews they construct and share in their languages. Centralising forces create the privileged unified standard language and legitimate knowledge and texts. Through this lens, other uses and forms of language, seen as 'varieties' of the legitimate, texts and knowledges are valued. In this perspective we understand Fanon, when he notes:

> Yes, I must take great pains with my speech, because I shall be more or less judged by it. With great contempt, they will say of me, 'He

> doesn't even know how to speak French'. In any group of young men in the Antilles, the one who expresses himself well, who has mastered the language, is inordinately feared; keep an eye on that one, he is almost white. In France one says, 'He talks like a book'. In Martinique, 'He talks like a white man' (Fanon 1967:11).

Maintaining or disrupting language forms and uses that are expected in social relations produce effects because these relationships imply judgments and evaluations. Expressing oneself 'well', as Fanon notes, means expressing oneself according to the privileged White coloniser's standard language. This is a value addressed to the language and the speaker.

Language education in this perspective focuses on the values ascribed to languages and 'varieties' including the privileged standard one, guaranteeing access as well as arguing the legitimacy and power of this standard. This perspective of language deregulation in language education, in accordance with what I am proposing in this text, keeps the attention focused on the agency of speakers and writers as producers and listeners, and readers as evaluators and as co-producers as well; listeners and readers understand a text as a comprehensive active response (Bakhtin 1986), that includes evaluative forms and meanings directed at them. Therefore, these interlocutors are not passive. This joint process is constituted by and a constituent of multiple asymmetric power relations that pertain to race, sexuality, the episteme, the economy, gender and spirituality.

## Conclusion

Challenging the coloniality of language and decolonising language education involves paying attention to the context out of which the language emerges and allows us to direct our energy toward the agency of subjects in communicative dynamic interaction and the interpretative practices of interaction (Signorini 2002). Importantly, since language is seen as embodying values (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1997), as worldview (Bakhtin 1981), we look at this 'temporary and contingent configuration' of forms focusing on the agency of subjects to position their worldviews, their ideas/values. In this way, decolonising language education focuses on attentive listening to multiple voices, principally of those historically silenced or forced to stay in the margins. In

Brazil, it means listening attentively to Black and Indigenous voices, reading, seeing, and listening to the vast range of diverse oral, written and visual texts that have been produced in different sociopolitical spaces. The voices of Black people and Indigenous people rarely come into schools, even when and where they constitute the majority of students. Starting from Black and Indigenous students' voices at schools, including voices of their families and communities and voices of more prestigious representatives of the Black population and the Indigenous population in Brazil and other countries. For all of these inclusive concerns, I understand it is essential that we continue the South-South dialogue, especially with African voices. As Nascimento asserts, African cultures were silenced for a long time in Brazil. Decolonising language education implies listening to African voices, as well as voices of the African diasporas.

This practice of decolonising language education involves negotiation, often times conflictive, of the values carried within languages. There is a diversity of 'moral, ethical and aesthetic values' within and among groups. At the same time, considering that we circulate through different social spheres, developing a range of diverse human activities, where values may be contradictory, it nonetheless allows us to bring common uses and forms of one sphere into another. As such, it is not uncommon that we also draw on the values of one sphere and insert it into another sphere. In this sense, transformations allow for an intertwining of varied criteria and contexts and in the process a series of entanglements take place.

A word carries this tension of values. The word is simultaneously the place of encounter and the dispute of values. When we learn a word and when we take ownership of it, we do not strip it of its values, but we repaint the word giving it the tonality of our previous experiences of that word and lived values played out by that word (Bakhtin 1986). It means that negotiations are present among values/worldviews shared or disputed by groups that use the same-named language or different-named languages. Within the experience of Blackness, different values/worldviews are shared, disputed, contested, much the same as in a range of sociopolitical and racialised identities. Within the 'same' ethnic group (Brazilians Guaranis, for example), values/worldviews are shared, disputed and contested. Within Whiteness, different values/worldviews are shared, disputed and contested. There is not homogeneity in any group. Diversity of values and worldviews throughout what is named (and people treat) as the 'same' language (Portuguese, for example) requires negotiation;

negotiations are also required between what is named as 'two' completely different languages (Kimbundu and Portuguese, for example). Conceiving of languages as values or worldviews, as opposed to structures by themselves, leads us to understand that we enact some form of translation of different values/worldviews even within the 'same' named language. It is critical to think about how we dialogue and 'translate' in interactions using 'same'-named language and using different-named languages. Having this perspective as a point of departure, all interactions imply some kind of intercultural dialogue. Decolonising language education needs to address this central aspect of discursive practices and literacy practices. In this sense, language education can become a space where we challenge and resist coloniality of language, of being, of knowing, and of power. In addition, within language education, being multivocal (multiple voices, worldviews)/multilingual, can be a space 'for alternative cultural production and alternative epistemologies – different ways of thinking and knowing, that were crucial to creating a counter-hegemonic worldview' (hooks 1994: 171).

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Cloris Porto Torquato
Professor
Department of Language Studies
State University of Ponta Grossa
Ponta Grossa
Brazil
clorisporto@gmail.com