
THE WALKYRIA EFFECT: INSPIRING TRANSNATIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

O EFEITO WALKYRIA: INSPIRANDO A FORMAÇÃO TRANSNACIONAL DE PROFESSORES DE LÍNGUAS

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Abstract: The three authors have many points of common interest and collaboration starting with their participation in the Novos Letramentos and Brazil-Canada Knowledge Exchange (BRCAKE) Projects, leading to a partnership agreement between their respective institutions (Glendon College, Universidade Estadual Mato Grosso do Sul). Walkyria Monte Mór has been an inspiring scholar, mentor and friend in the conceptualization and development of these projects. Utilizing a duoethnographic research approach (NORRIS & SAWYER, 2012; BREAUULT, 2016) the authors explore Monte Mór's scholarly and interpersonal contributions. In order to do so, the themes discussed in this paper are not based on pre-established objectives. From the dialogic and emergent perspective of duoethnography, discussions were constructed mainly based on the concept of subjectification and the authors' impressions of the Walkyria effect. Emergent themes include the development of critical literacies informed by multimodality and translanguaging and applied to fields such as medical education and the teaching of Portuguese in Brazil, in which the alterity of English potentially introduces orientations to language teaching that support a more agentive notion of citizenship in language curricula and language teacher education. Regarding these potential developments, the authors discuss the current risks and strategic challenges for social justice education and critical literacies in contexts of political repression.

Keywords: Duoethnography. Walkyria effect. Brazil/Canada collaboration.

Resumo: Os três autores deste artigo têm muitos pontos de interesse e colaboração em comum a partir de suas participações nos Projeto Nacional de Novos Letramentos e no Brazil-Canadá intercâmbio de conhecimento (BRCAKE), bem como a assinatura de um convênio entre suas respectivas instituições (Glendon Colege e Universidade Estadual Mato Grosso do Sul). Walkyria Monte Mór tem sido uma acadêmica inspiradora, mentora e amiga na conceituação e desenvolvimento desses projetos. Utilizando uma abordagem de pesquisa duoetnográfica (NORRIS & SAWYER, 2012; BREAUULT, 2016), os autores exploraram as contribuições acadêmicas e interpessoais de Monte Mór. Para tanto, as temáticas discutidas no artigo não se pautaram em objetivos pré-estabelecidos. A partir de uma perspectiva dialógica e emergente da duoetnografia, a discussão foi construída principalmente a partir do conceito como subjetificação apontada por um dos autores em diálogo a partir de suas impressões ao qual os autores denominaram de efeito Walkyria. Os temas emergentes que surgiram nas interações dos três pesquisadores incluem o desenvolvimento de letramentos críticos informados pela multimodalidade e translanguagem e redefinidas para campos como educação médica e ensino de português no Brasil, nos quais a alteridade do inglês introduz potencialmente orientações para o ensino de línguas que sustentam uma noção mais agentiva de cidadania nos currículos de línguas e formação de professores de línguas. Com relação aos desenvolvimentos em pontencial, os autores discutem os riscos atuais e os desafios estratégicos para a educação em justiça social e letramentos críticos em contextos de repressão política.

Palavras-chave: Duoetnografia. Efeito Walkyria. Colaboração Brasil/Canadá.

INTRODUCTION

We live in times of intensified transnational interaction fueled by the kinds of global, multi-directional flows and *scapes* (e.g., ethnoscapas, ideoscapas, mediascapas, financescapas, etc.) described by Appadurai (1996) and exacerbated by unprecedented human migration driven by conflict, environmental degradation and economic precarity. Such insecurities have also been exploited by opportunistic and irresponsible politicians, intent on provoking nativist and populist resentment against racial and ethnic others and often with tragic consequences. These are indeed challenging times for teachers, especially those who find themselves working under increasingly repressive educational policies and curricula. This is perhaps the space and opportunity in which transnational dialogue can be most beneficial, offering broader insights and possibilities with which to mitigate and/or transform existing constraints in local sites of practice.

Such aspirations and experiences underpin the ongoing collaboration of the co-authors of this article. Since 2010, all three have been participants, to varying degrees, in the National Novos Letramentos Project in Brazil. From 2011-2014, the authors also participated as co-investigators in a Canadian government-funded partnership development grant titled Brazil-Canada Knowledge Exchange ([BRCAKE] Diana Brydon, principal investigator, University of Manitoba), out of which a formal partnership agreement between the authors' universities (Glendon College/York University, Universidade Estadual de Mato Grosso do Sul [UEMS]) was signed. Throughout all of these projects, Professor Walkyria Monte Mór of the University of São Paulo has played a leading role in fostering dialogue and collaboration amongst international and Brazilian applied linguists committed to promoting social justice concerns through second/additional language teaching and language teacher education.

This type of transformative work is challenging on many levels. The notion of a genuine dialogue, in which participants enter a dialogic encounter with mutual respect and openness—rather than control and containment—is not always welcome, as mentioned above, certainly not by politicians and policy makers determined to remake education along narrow ideological or technocratic terms. Academics themselves can be resistant to the reflexive questioning of prior beliefs

that can emerge from dialogic encounters. Caught up in the relentless pressures of publishing and competition for funding and promotion, the productive doubt or epistemic skepticism of dialogue can be seen as yet a further burden in neoliberal times. Not Walkyria Monte Mór, though, who stands out as a role model for personal generosity and openness to new ideas and willingness to explore pedagogical options in order to realize them. In addition to the colleagues she has and continues to inspire, it is remarkable to consider the number of graduate students she has mentored and supervised and who are now in positions of academic leadership and responsibility throughout Brazil. It is an ongoing legacy to Walkyria as both a scholar and a wonderful human being, to which this transnational dialogue and trio-ethnography is dedicated.

DUOETHNOGRAPHY: A DIALOGIC METHODOLOGY?

As Wong (2006) details, the notion of dialogue has many influences and intersections: through Confucius and Mao Zedong, and in education, most notably Paulo Freire; in philosophy, commonalities are evident in the addressivity and heteroglossia of Bakhtin, the emancipatory work of Rancière, or in Levinas's ethics of engagement with alterity. Another key influence is the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and their notion of the rhizome, and its unpredictable movement in often provocative and engaging directions not previously considered. For educational researchers, what has been less explored would be a methodology for dialogic inquiry, a set of principles and guidelines by which participants might advance the kinds of insights to which the ideals of dialogue aspire. Towards this goal, the notion of duoethnography (NORRIS & SAWYER, 2012; BREULT, 2016) has emerged as an important development. Similar to autoethnography and narrative inquiry, the intent to interrogate and re-examine personal experiences and personal stories is foregrounded. Duoethnography seeks to overcome or compensate for the isolating limitations/challenges of this approach by bringing in and juxtaposing other voices and experiences related to the phenomena (e.g., educational policies, programs, curricula; interrelationships with students and communities). The paradigmatic assumptions underpinning such forms of inquiry are decidedly non-positivistic, and

more constructivist and post-structural in orientation—i.e., less concerned with arriving at singular, objective truths and more concerned with exploring how other participants and stakeholders may be differentially positioned and effected by specific policy and practices.

The foregrounding of varied and juxtaposed perspectives on common phenomena is a particular strength of duoethnography for transnational language teacher education. Again, it allows us as co-authors to see our own localities of research and teaching in ways less considered. This pluralization of experience potentially suggests ways of acting that address the problems we face as applied linguists and language teacher educators. The three of us shall see how this trioethnography unfolds. Certainly, there will no shortage of inspirational, dialogic insights given our focus on the remarkable career of Walkyria Monte Mór.

FIRST ENCOUNTERS OF THE WALKYRIA EFFECT: NEW POSSIBILITIES

Brian Morgan: During our BRCAKE project, I remember one of the more pleasant aspects of our project was around joint presentations at meetings with Brazilian and Canadian researchers presenting on a common theme or topic. Walkyria and I were both interested in critical citizenship literacies and pedagogies in second/additional language teaching. Both of us recognized and talked about a structuralist barrier to overcome—a traditional preoccupation with teaching language as a decontextualized code of grammar and vocabulary rather than as a social practice always implicated in social realities. In our presentation, and in regard to teaching critical citizenship, Walkyria introduced a metaphor that seems even more relevant today—the language teacher as tightrope walker (como um equilibrista na corda bamba)! She had these amazing images of tightrope walkers [teachers?] precariously but skillfully balanced—yet just a wind blast away from plummeting. Only recently at the USP event celebrating Walkyria's career did I learn about the famous song by Elis Regina, *O Bêbado e o Equilibrista (The Drunk and the Tightrope Walker)* and its metaphoric opposition to the dictatorship. When our musical group, A Banda Walkyrete, performed this song at the cultural finale, I was quite moved by the emotional

response from the audience. It seemed that all present were anticipating more tightrope walking to come.

It was a pleasure to co-present and co-author an article on critical citizenship education with Walkyria (MONTE MÓR; MORGAN, 2014). This experience was relatively early in my collaborative relationship with Walkyria. Yet it remains one of the most memorable and influential on my own professional development. What are some of your earliest and more memorable experiences of the Walkyria effect?

Ian Martin: I am immensely grateful to you, Brian, for inviting me to join the BRCAKE project, through which I was able to meet Walkyria and so many other delightful Brazilian colleagues. I quickly discovered that our interests overlapped considerably; language teacher education, Paulo Freire, teacher agency, the intersection of language teaching/learning and language policy, and we had many enjoyable academic and dinner-table conversations about these and other topics, both in Brazil and Canada.

But let me focus on one ‘critical incident’ which reveals how much I learned about Brazil from Walkyria. I think that Tom Jobim’s phrase, ‘Brazil is not for beginners’ is very true, and while I will always be ‘a beginner’ with respect to Brazil, this incident took place when I was just beginning to become a beginner.

At one of the BRCAKE meetings, it could have been in 2012, I was assigned the task of replying to a lovely, rich, discussion paper by Walkyria on the importance of agency. In my reply, I remember remarking on the passion of her insistence on agency as a key element of not only language learning, but also of the wider issue of Brazilian ‘agentic citizenship’. She was making a powerful argument that fostering critical agency and countering teacher passivity should be a fundamental goal of the Brazilian language teacher education system and English language teaching/learning.

While fully recognizing the value of her argument, I also wondered aloud whether her case for agency required the additional historical justification, drawn from her memory of the *ditadura*, to assert that Brazilian teacher educators needed to recognize the precious historical moment presented to them, and to see their agentic role in promoting social justice through language education.

Was this historical reflection really needed, I inquired. After all, I had read *Brazil on the Rise* (ROHTER, 2012) and the November 2009 issue of *The Economist*, with Cristo o Redentor “taking off” into space, and like most of the world, was dazzled by the energy exemplified by Brazil’s hosting of the World Cup and the Rio Olympics, and I knew Brazil to be a member of the powerful BRICS bloc of countries, the fastest growing sector of the world’s economy. A very serious country, indeed.

How wrong I was! “You don’t realize it, Ian, but something like the *ditadura* could come back!” was the reply. And, as subsequent history has shown, Walkyria was perfectly right to call me out for my beginner’s understanding of the dynamics of Brazilian history, as she was in many other matters. Since she also taught me to care for Brazil, and to incorporate Brazil into my world, I am truly indebted to this wonderful scholar and human being.

As Walkyria’s former student and now as a colleague, how do you see her contribution in your academic development, Ruberval?

Ruberval Maciel: As a former student, I had the opportunity to be at the same time in the beginning of the National Project as well as in the BRCAKE project. My earliest memories of the Walkyria effect were in relation to her generosity in nurturing her students in a horizontal perspective. The way she gave feedback after her tutorials; the freedom during my dissertation writing process was very respectful and inspiring: “Ficou lindo.” Although I knew that it was not that “lindo” at that time, her incentive was very important to continue my long process of (re)writing. After reading Biesta, Rancière and other philosophers, two concepts - socialization and subjectification can be used to discuss Walkyria's role and also the projeto nacional in my academic development. As Biesta (2014, p. 129) points out, “Socialization has to do of how we become part of existing orders, how we identify with such orders and thus obtain an identity; subjectification, in contrast, is always about how we can exist ‘outside’ of such orders”.

In the beginning of the Projeto Nacional phase, Walkyria had invited me to coordinate the Nuclei MS. The collaborative work with my local colleagues and in collaboration with other Nuclei has helped me and my colleagues to make sense of the theories that I had recently been introduced to at that time. That was one of the

most important collaborative experiences I have had in large scale of 'becoming with others' and contributed to the development of a Nacional group identity.

Subjectification is the process of becoming a collective subject through acting out of the presupposition of equality. As Rancière (1999, p. 35) explains: "By subjectification I mean the production through a series of actions of a body and the capacity of enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience". Although subjectification is not necessarily the result of academia, it can be an interesting concept that transcends our practices as researchers. Walkyria has conducted my supervision, as well as the Project Nacional (in this case with Lynn Mario) without imposing theories or a rigid format. In this sense, subjectification involves ways of being whereby individuals exercise their capacity to remain independent from pre-defined concepts or fixed agendas. Brian and Ian, you have been involved with so many projects and publications in Brazil as a result of the Walkyria effect, how do you see Walkyria's effect on the development of a new academia in Brazil, or how do you see different research possibilities after all these years?

THE WALKYRIA EFFECT: TRANSNATIONALISM AND SUBJECTIFICATION

Brian: In responding to your last question, Ruberval, I'm reminded of the most recent meeting of the Project Nacional and the celebration of Walkyria's career. The panel in which I participated was titled "Brazil/World views on literacies, education, applied linguistics studies and intercultural relations: a transnational debate." Joel Windle, Rajagopalan and I were participants. Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis joined via Skype. Monica Heller was teaching a course/workshop in the afternoon. Suresh Canagarajah had done the same at an earlier project meeting. Diana Brydon, Ian, and other international collaborators were unable to attend. Certainly, there was no debating our collective admiration for Walkyria. Where different or multiple perspectives did arise was over a question similar to Ian's observations above: why, as critical educators, had we not adequately anticipated or understood the (re)emergence of repressive, conservative/populist/right wing governments, and how

should we respond given the restrictions (e.g., *escolas sem partidos*) and repercussions we now faced? There were comments on the all-consuming (neoliberal) pressures of academic life and the resulting interpersonal and social disengagement that can diminish the real-world relevance of research and practice. Rajagopalan, reflecting on the political turmoil that had caused him to leave India for Brazil in the mid/late-1970's, spoke passionately of the imperative to act and teach transgressively in our respective localities.

It was in the context of this discussion that Walkyria spoke about her dream of a new academia. The notes I quickly jotted down outline a vision that exemplifies the notion of subjectification (cf. Rancière, Biesta) that you speak of, Ruberval: a new academia concerned with exchanging ideas with regular (public?) schools; an academia in which we see ourselves as philosophers but also as real people with histories that extend beyond, yet enrich and revitalize, our academic selves. It is an academic vision for current times, in which we must think about teaching strategies of evasion and/or subversion, but without risk, as Walkyria suggested. It is also about identity and its full complexity and potential to shape educational encounters. That seems to me a research agenda worthy of our attention, one in which the possibilities for teacher agency and social justice can still inform and infuse language curricula but in ways less obvious and professionally dangerous for practitioners, perhaps drawing from other traditions/modalities of resistance—i.e., the subversive laughter and parody of carnival described by Bakhtin (1991), or the everyday forms of peasant resistance Scott (1987) described as “weapons of the weak”.

I heard Biesta give a conference plenary in Iceland in 2015, in which he described the fostering of subjectification as the key aim of citizenship education and education in general—not to simply reproduce pre-defined conditions and meanings (e.g., socialization) but to create a kind of critical capacity, autonomy and agency by which students/subjects potentially transform the social or professional contexts within which they are situated—as you describe above, Ruberval. I would argue that the processes of subjectification, as an education goal, cannot be achieved in isolation; indeed, they are advanced and refined through transnational dialogue (in full evidence during our panel), of which Walkyria, along with Lynn Mario, have been

leading advocates and always with an eye towards curricular innovation in Brazilian critical literacies and language teacher education.

Both Ian and I have commented on new insights and reconsiderations (perhaps aspects of our own subjectification) we attribute to the Walkyria effect and our Brazilian collaborative experiences. Ruberval, it would be interesting to hear your own perspective on transnationalism, given both our partnership history but also your own growing international research profile.

Ruberval: The Walkyria effect, and after almost a decade, has clearly strengthened transnational collaboration from my perspective. I'm thankful now to be in touch with an ecology of knowledges from trans/national/cultural contexts during this period. Just to mention some of them – as a PhD candidate at USP, Walkyria supported my successful application (along with Ana Paula Duboc and Andrea Matos) to the Emerging Leaders of the Americas Program scholarship (ELAP, funded by Government of Canada) to be a visiting researcher in Canada, and during my stay at USP, I had the opportunity to attend international conferences in South Africa, USA, and Canada. My time at USP included membership in the BRCAKE project developing transnational literacies (coordinated by Dr. Diana Brydon), which included opportunities for international mobility/travel to Winnipeg and Toronto, and a partnership agreement involving UEMS/Glendon/York University; and after my PhD, and back at UEMS: a telecollaboration project involving Brasil-Canada-Cuba. Critical multiliteracies, language policy and teacher education are some of the theories I have had the chance to explore and develop in transnational contexts.

More recently, the Walkyria effect has also helped me to develop other networks and to be in touch with other theories. I met my friend and research collaborator, Claudia Hilsdorf Rocha through Walkyria, who had served as Claudia's external examiner for her PhD defense at UNICAMP. In 2013, Claudia invited me to discuss 'translanguaging' in a round table with Walkyria and Canagarajah. Claudia and I (2015) published a paper on translanguaging in 2015, and I have supervised some students addressing translanguaging in their research. In 2018-19 I was a Postdoctoral Fulbright visiting scholar under the supervision of Ofelia Garcia, who is one of the pioneers on translanguaging research. The Walkyria effect is also influential on my latest research interest - critical health literacy. Supervising medical

students, I have had the opportunity to revisit critical literacies, meaning making and multimodality studies as they relate to teacher education and medical students' education. To sum up, Walkyria has been very important in opening different types of national/international/transnational doors for us as Brazilian scholars. She has played a crucial role in our collective subjectification and how we imagine and act as teachers and researchers.

Ian: The Walkyria effect, at least on me, was something I felt from the beginning of our relationship. The Brazil-Canada project, although it had something of a practical focus: "improving English language teaching and learning in Brazil", depended on each side being aware of the broad intellectual currents of the other country. Walkyria was most enthusiastic about a suggestion of mine: that each side give the other an annotated list of 'essential readings' on the other country, so that our conversations would be enriched, and we would be able to discern commonalities and contrasts between Canada and Brazil. For instance, with respect to the theme of 'subjectivation' and 'agentic citizenship', each side would benefit from learning about the conditions of identifications and subjectivations in the two countries, the social structures of the two societies, and the ideologies of education and language teaching/learning available for critical pedagogy/agentic citizenship practices, and the confusing (for a Canadian) distinction between public and private education systems in Brazil.

We didn't develop this 'intellectual' side project very much, although Walkyria directed me to the later works of Freire - the ones which haven't been translated into English - and I know that she wanted the Canadians in the project to get to know her country's history in all its complexity.

One line of discussion we started began with my questioning of what I saw as the National Project's unusual view of the English language class as an ideal site for 'agentic Brazilian citizenship'. Why, I asked, isn't this being done in Portuguese - the students' mother tongue? And here is where I had another Walkyria-inspired 'aha!' moment, because she got me to read Marcos Bagno, and through him, I became familiar with the ideology of linguistic prejudice which Bagno has been struggling against in favour of a more democratic mother tongue education.

In a similar way, I see Walkyria's mission as a struggle to bring about a more democratic foreign-language education in Brazil's public education sector, and perhaps the fact of English being a foreign language has an unexpected advantage. In Brazil, English doesn't carry the same repressive and authoritarian ideological baggage typical of too many Portuguese-language classes in public-sector education, with their traditional fixation on promoting prestige norms and stigmatizing students' subaltern varieties.

Perhaps the very alterity of English allows for performances of agentic citizenship to happen in public schools. I certainly can't recall any instance of Walkyria promoting English native-speaker norms, whether linguistic or cultural, or even dwelling on the usefulness of English for international communication purposes. Could it be that her fundamental view of English is that it is first and foremost an instrument which allows Brazilian public-school teachers to create spaces for the performance of agentic Brazilian citizenship? Could it be that this is one more example of the famous "cannibalism" of Oswald de Andrade where everything foreign is Brazilianized? This concept might relate English teaching in Brazil to the topic of subjectivation; if 'the political becoming of a subject' is closed off in one language (Portuguese), perhaps conditions would be more favourable in another language (English).

Whether or not this discussion truly represents Walkyria's views on English, I think that the Walkyria effect is broad enough to allow for free interpretations of her influence. In any event, it is wholly in keeping with the Walkyria Effect (now with capitals!) to portray Prof. Dra. Monte Mór as a life-long advocate for critical public-sector citizenship education for a democratic Brazil in which foreign-language education plays a key role.

The Walkyria Effect is deeply etched into the minds and hearts of all those who had the privilege of knowing her, and this great educator and generous human being will continue to inspire language teachers and teacher educators, wherever the struggle for critical democratic public education is under threat from demagogues or populists. And she taught us: it can happen.

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