

## **INTRA-ACTIVE SPIRITUALITY/RELIGIOSITY IN LINGUISTIC EDUCATION FOR MULTIPOLAR JUSTICE**

*ESPIRITUALIDADE/RELIGIOSIDADE INTRA-ATIVA NA EDUCAÇÃO LINGUÍSTICA PARA A  
JUSTIÇA MULTIPOLAR*

**Nara Hiroko Takaki<sup>1</sup>, Simone Batista da Silva<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), Pioneiros, MS, Brasil

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8574-5842>

[narahi08@gmail.com](mailto:narahi08@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Institution (INITIALS), city, state initials, country

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5781-6006>

[simone@ufrrj.br](mailto:simone@ufrrj.br)

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**Abstract:** Our aim is to present a preliminary study by means of a pedagogical practice on spirituality and religiosity, in Language and Linguistics courses at two Brazilian public universities. An in-class pedagogical set was elaborated to be developed within two distinct public universities environments in Brazil. Our goal was to probe our students' perceptions on spiritualities/religions and their receptiveness to having these issues dealt with in class. The project counted on the researcher and the participants' world views concerning posthuman justice, that is, the way they saw the roles of people, nature, objects and 'things' as to try to reduce social inequities in local-global contexts. We argue that coloniality keeps on turning differences into homogeneous values in order to privilege the elite. The work holds a qualitative and interpretive methodological orientation, bringing the multimodal construction of students and criticality. We assume that spirituality/religiosity can function as an intra-action device that makes and unmakes boundaries among humans and non-humans, culture and nature, science, ethics, and the social, broadening language (Haraway, 2022, Barad, 2017). We partially conclude that identity reconstruction and interfaith dialogues may demand intentional pedagogical practices to happen so that students feel comfortable to speak up their faith; we also tend to think that teachers should pay attention to Afro-Brazilian and indigenous religious knowledges in language studies towards a more sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Applied Linguistics. Spirituality. Religiosity. Justice.

**Resumo:** Nosso objetivo é apresentar um estudo preliminar por meio de uma prática pedagógica sobre espiritualidade e religiosidade, em cursos de Letras e Linguística de duas universidades públicas brasileiras. Foi elaborado um conjunto pedagógico presencial para ser desenvolvido em dois ambientes distintos de universidades públicas no Brasil. Nossa intenção foi sondar as percepções dos nossos alunos sobre espiritualidades/religiões e a receptividade em ter essas questões tratadas em sala de aula. O projeto contou com as visões de mundo de pesquisadoras e participantes sobre a justiça pós-humana, ou seja, a maneira como eles viam os papéis das pessoas, da natureza, dos objetos e das 'coisas' para tentar reduzir as desigualdades sociais em contextos local-globais. Argumentamos que a colonialidade continua transformando diferenças em valores homogêneos para privilegiar a elite. O trabalho tem uma orientação metodológica qualitativa e interpretativa, trazendo a construção multimodal dos alunos e a criticidade. Assumimos que a espiritualidade/religiosidade pode funcionar como um dispositivo intra-ação que cria e desfaz fronteiras entre humanos e não humanos, cultura e natureza, ciência, ética e o social, ampliando a linguagem (Haraway, 2022, Barad, 2017). Concluímos parcialmente que a reconstrução da identidade e os diálogos inter-religiosos podem exigir que práticas pedagógicas intencionais aconteçam para que os alunos se sintam confortáveis para falar sobre sua fé; também tendemos a pensar que os professores devem prestar atenção aos conhecimentos

religiosos afro-brasileiros e indígenas nos estudos de linguagem em direção a um desenvolvimento mais sustentável.

**Palavras-chave:** Linguística Aplicada. Espiritualidade. Religiosidade. Justiça.

## INTRODUCTION

Spirituality/religiosity<sup>1</sup> issues have not been openly addressed in Applied Linguistics made in Brazil, despite religion being considered one of the four great symbolic systems along with language, eroticism, and art (Croatto, 2010). Relations carried out between humans and the wide world are usually mediated by these symbolic systems we, humans, have created. The religious experience plays an important role in meeting sociocultural needs, as it builds discursive communities devoted to the same rituals, myths, symbols and doctrines. Thus, it happens to play a relevant role in satisfying psychic needs through which people seek peace and/or a meaningful life, yet the world has witnessed many wars generated on behalf of religion. So, as a meaning production system, religion crosses linguistic practices, which means, it should also cross language education practices.

Religious/Spiritual ideologies are so much present in people's lives that they may cause politicians to lose or win votes, and business people to lose consumers if entrepreneurs do not cater to customers' religious needs, as we have recently seen in different countries around the world. Thus, as language educators, we truly miss much if we choose not to address such issues in contemporary classrooms, or within linguistic debates towards entangled forms of situated multipolar justice, politics, culture and society. However, experiencing Life-long learning (Alheit, 2018) does not necessarily imply confessing a particular religion, but rather exercising spirituality, which we understand as dynamic relationality, based on Braidotti (2018), who argues that posthuman planetary becoming is not about mere rights of nature/culture; life-death concepts, for example, are neither positive nor negative but just contingent dislocations, resembling assemblages in motion. Authors such as Canagarajah, (2009; 2018), Kubota (2009; 2018), Vandrik (2018), Wong; Canagarajah (2009), Wong

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<sup>1</sup> For Canagarajah (2009) spirituality is an umbrella term and does not necessarily require that someone has a religion. For Smith (2009), learners are spiritual beings. In this sense, all beings are spiritual and the two authors of this text follow his orientation.

(2018), Wong; Mahboob (2018), Sharma (2018) to name but a few, emphasize that spiritual sources might provide a commitment to respect, to challenge one's sense of self, in collective and entangled ways, but on the other hand, they risk reinforcing absolute institutional power, essentialist ideologies, resonating particular values, mainly in educational spaces, under a particular spirituality/religiosity ideology. Therefore, posing questions such as the following ones would be key at this moment:

Furthermore, what kind of identities do they encourage, either directly or indirectly? Do they promote the dominant beliefs of the community (conforming), or do they encourage alternative ways of thinking and being (contesting)? These questions are yet to be explored (Mahboob; Courtney, 2018, p. 214).

We would like to add a complementary question to address the consequences of action/agency in social life, in environmental relations. Following slow science (Stengers, 2023), the efforts for undermining domination and reducing extractivism also include engaging in spirituality/religiosity, once everyone/everything is connected to everyone/everything else (Nicolescu, 1999). That means that, in different ways and diverse contexts, we are all codependent.

Coming from the Physics and the Linguistics standpoints, Barad (2007) troubles the nature of time-being-matter as separate concepts, the spacetime-mattering, which favors a binary logic. In the opposite way, the author argues that, instead of linearity, constant becoming processes entail a diffractive dynamism, meaning an iterative movement in ways to produce openness. She explains that, through diffraction, possibilities of contextualized multipolar justice, in relational and indeterminate geo-ontoepistemologies might emerge. This entails understanding narratives and cosmologies otherwise, and building ways to weaken the violent effects of capitalism/elitism, colonialism/coloniality of power (Quijano, 2007), such as racism, patriarchalism/sexism, ageism, homophobia, ableism, xenophobia, religious discriminations, among others.

We are aware that teachers, students and stakeholders' beliefs do influence their geo-ontoepistemomethodological choices (Canagarajah, 2018). Under this perspective, in 2013, Takaki (2011) published a paper inviting colleagues to engage in spiritualities matters within linguistic education classes and Applied Linguistics in general. However, through the following years no responses emerged, until Silva (2023) decided to investigate the impacts of religious ideologies shaping people's identity, lives and agencies. We wonder why the issue keeps underestimated in

Applied Linguistics research fields if it has so much to do with discursive practices and power within embedded relations of race, ethnics, gender, class, age, (d)efficiency, geographical origin, environment and ecology, and multipolar justice in contemporary society. In our country, for example, many spiritualities/religions coexist, but their discursive rights have been unequal since our first days as a republic (Silva, 2023). In recent civil-military Dictatorship times (1964-1985) there was no place for esoterism in Brazil (Dunker; Lopes 2019), and only recently have initiatives emerged to change such things out. As Simas and Rufino (2019, p. 13) highlight, the dialogue between Christianity and all other religions is one that “has a desire for silence”. That’s why Black feminist hermeneutics groups in South America see their spiritual recovery as a political act (Quispe, 2023), for their spirituality is manifested within the relations between bodies, territories and rhythms of the cosmos (idem).

So, in this paper, following what Takaki (2011) proposes, we got together on a kickoff for “collaborative elaborations within the scope of spiritualities and coexistence with differences in teaching, research in languages and citizenship” (p. 124). Then, we decided to probe our students’ perceptions on spiritualities/religions and their receptiveness to having these issues dealt with in class. Our aim was to contest the ongoing Westernized dominations. Also, we wanted to bring the following questions to light: is it worth discussing the interrelation between spiritual identity and language education? If spirituality/religiosity may be a form of resistance, how does power operate in perceptions, meaning making, individual/collective identity reconstruction and pedagogical decisions and actions? If life is not meant to be useful (Krenak, 2020) how to deal with governments and precarious human-non-human resources and repertoires, bearing in mind that our finite Earth planet is hurt (Haraway, 2022)? Why are Afro-Brazilian and indigenous religions, still scarcely present in studies of language hubs? What would we, language teachers and researchers, miss in case we move away from these challenges of getting intertwining with objects, human-nonhuman others (spacetimemattering for Barad, 2007) and the unknown?

Thus, we elaborated an in-class pedagogical set, to develop within two distinct public universities environments in Brazil: a Language undergraduate class, in Mato Grosso do Sul, by Takaki – from now on, A1; and an undergraduation English class, in Rio de Janeiro, by Silva – from now on, A2. Both activities were held on the first academic term 2024, and are part of a broader research towards social justice in

dilemmatic times, following a qualitative and interpretive methodology. The project counted on the researcher and the participants' world views concerning posthuman justice, that is, the way they saw the roles of people, nature, objects and 'things' as to try to reduce social inequities in local-global contexts. As an exploratory inquiry, aiming at getting the students' responses, sensibilities, nuisances, and feedback upon bringing the matter into classroom – and not to compare the groups or to get to a specific result – we chose to write this paper assembling data and impressions.

Assuming our work as a political tool, we make clear that both authors of this paper speak from a locus of enunciation through the dynamics of feminine heterosexual bodies, working as language professors and researchers at public universities in Brazil. A1 is Japanese and Hawaiian descendent, raised in a Buddhist and Christian context. A2 is a Brazilian white woman, raised within a Christian family. We both bring in vivid experiences and diverse readings of the world and the word (Freire, 2005). We also consider it relevant to stress that such bodies are complicit with the structural racism and colonizing practices in Brazil, as we work under conservative and neoliberal higher education institutions.

## **WHAT RESEARCHERS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT ELT AND SPIRITUALITY/RELIGIOSITY**

Social practices are embedded in the ideologies of intra-actants and their various material aspects, which means linguistic activity involves multiple voices, making language as important as objects, as species and also as the environment; hence, narrating life may constitute a possible way to exercise spirituality/religiosity. More than a question of agreeing or not whether and how spiritual values should have a place in language education, Wong and Canagarajah (2009) have been shuffling off Christian English Teachers - CET power and responsibility. The authors point to the difficulty of making possible the dialogues about spiritual/religious identity, politics in education in post-positivist age (PPA) (Scheurich, 1995, apud Canagarajah, 2009, p. 1).

Though a values-based teaching is considered acceptable, even PPA is suspicious of spiritual values in teaching. In my opinion, such a bias simply shows the lingering influences of positivism in our field. Some scholars are unable or unwilling to take to their logical conclusion the epistemological shifts underway. Despite questioning the values of modernity, some still prefer to inhabit a closed natural world that is easy to predict, explain, and control (Canagarajah, 2009, p. 5).

Leaving spirituality out of the realm of education may mean being uncritical in relation to the spread of English through Christianity. Several coursebooks fail to recognize otherness – including the unknown – rendering teacher education as a pre-established agenda of coloniality. Also, recommended as it might be, sometimes a dialogue “can be intended to problematize power relations, while inadvertently reinforcing them” (Morgan, 2009, p. 197). The author warns us about the importance of discussion because changes are not all the same; therefore, there is a need to be open to understand that “the same Christian message would be ‘heard’ differently and that the worldly power that articulates Christianity with English would be ‘felt’ differently across different sites of practice” (Morgan, 2009, p. 200). After all, we are all subject to the languages we speak (Barthes, 2013), once the basis of human existence is elaborated by/within language, working as a game in which blurred meanings might get encapsulated in certain words.

Some Linguistics researchers affirm that different languages emphasize different semantic spots (Everett, 2019), which explains why religions grounded in sacred scriptures and canons, such as Christianity, end up sacralizing the language in which they were written, imprisoning the senses, in a movement that removes the symbolic and plural facets. This “implies a closure in the interpretation of texts” (Croatto, 2010, p. 407) and builds up to the concept of doctrine, which, ensures discursive uniqueness and prevent ideological struggles for truth. The danger resides, however, in transforming doctrines into idolatry of interpretation. After all, whatever we call truth is, in fact, an approximation of precision in the correspondence between a fact and the narration of that fact. The notion of truth happens to be just a subtlety of human cognition, always conditioned to the instruments we might have to measure something, to extract it from the absolute. As religion is concerned with establishing truths and certainties, peril arises whenever movements might rise to advocate that the word by itself should take the place of the Divine, in a complete inversion of levels (Croatto, 2010), with a sacred object being considered Divine itself.

It seems pivotal, then, to expand the notion of language and rather reconstruct life by practicing the *three Decolonial I's* (Menezes de Souza, 2020), that includes both analytical and programmatic aspects within three movements: *identify*, *interrogate*, *interrupt*. Perhaps, this exercise may be an antidote against coloniality to prevent it



from being perpetuated, and should be taught in language classes. Perhaps it permits us to focus on the non-centrality of human resources (e.g.: language/discourse) and to struggle for the legitimation of the entanglement of human-nonhuman life experience, accepting other animals, plants and the environment as doers and undoers of diffractions<sup>2</sup> (Barad, 2007) and disruptions, more closely related to the indeterminacy and, so, justice to come.

Pennycook (2009) indicates that all religions should be criticized given the linguistic ideologies within which they are performed. The author states that debates on spirituality, ethics, culture and politics are welcome as long as they keep away from “arrogance, bigotry, self-righteousness, homophobia, misogyny, racism, anti-intellectualism and hypocrisy” (Pennycook, 2009, p. 65). That means that we should also have in mind the type of religious person that stems from a competitive and inequitable global economy. Speaking from a postcolonial and multi-religious country (India), Ramanathan (2009) also argues in favor of unceasing questionings about religious ideals and their individual and collective intentionalities, our roles and engagements, as language educators, bearing in mind these are historical and temporal products. Our religious discourses usually make up one’s horizon structures, directing visions, feeding one’s intentions, serving as blinkers disallowing other ways of being, living, thinking. “Full and certain knowledge of Truth and God is simply not possible [...]” (Ramanathan, 2009, p. 74). This thought is valid not only for the ways Christianity has been used to impose its values upon diverse communities but also for any other religion.

Brazil, for example, is definitely not a confessional state, which means that religious leaders do not have to be authorized to work by the federal government, and that the State is not obliged to follow the moral orientations of any religion; furthermore, the Federal Constitution prescribes total separation between the State and the religious institutions and their services (Brasil, 1988). Nevertheless, Christianity, especially Catholicism is so entangled in people’s ways of life that the borderline between what is sacred and what is secular in daily life is completely blurred. One of the most famous tourist attractions in Brazil, Christ the Redeemer, in Rio de Janeiro, points to the fragility of our laicity, as it is a Christian symbol, that was intentionally built

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<sup>2</sup> Things do not return, they enact and iteratively turn over and over again, in a non-progressive way.

to become a national symbol; and, indeed, it became one of the most visited tourist attractions. On the other hand, “The Washing of the Bonfim Stairs” celebration, in Bahia – which, according to Simas (2022), came to Brazil by the hands of a slaveship owner and was dominated by black people from Salvador – mixes Catholicism with the afromatrix religion *candomblé*, and promotes somehow a religious encounter in a popular festival. That is why Simas (2022) argues that we live under a *cross devotion* paradigm in Brazil.

**Fig. 1 – Christ the Redeemer monument in Corcovado Mount, Rio de Janeiro.**



**Source:** <https://www.paineirascorcovado.com.br/cristo-redentor/>

**Fig. 2 – The Washing of the Bonfim Stairways**



**Source:** <https://www.salvadorbahia.com/roteiros/o-que-saber-sobre-a-lavagem-do-bonfim/>

The question Canagarajah proposes – “Isn’t there a logical slippage when we say we are open to dialogue with groups that have values which are different from ours, but some are more preferable than others for higher forms of dialogue?” (Canagarajah, 2009, p. 75) – calls attention to the awareness that less preferable groups “will always remain misunderstood and unappreciated and thus, excluded from dialogue” (Canagarajah, 2009, p. 75). In this sense, being open to transformative dialogues presuppose certain uncomfortable engagement and vulnerability (Morgan, 2009), which enhance “self-critical reflexivity, to listen to the students’ wisdom” (Morgan, 2009, p. 85). So, our work aimed at eliciting religious matter in class to observe whatever directions and meanings would emerge in classroom dialogues.



Education for possibilities requires listening to and learning from unfamiliar values, something difficult to be exercised. Moreover, being challenged by other posthuman praxeologies brings the dangers of radical Westernized geo-ontoepistemologies, which might inform the platform of such debates. Therefore, by expanding possibilities for productive dialogues, Kubota (2009, p. 231) suggests “that teachers develop a critical awareness of the racial, linguistic, and cultural power relations that positions people at different levels in the hierarchy and engage in a reflexive practice of using one’s power in counter-hegemonic ways”. Thus, nothing can be discarded outright in transformative dialogue, as Canagarajah argues:

There is thus a solipsism and self-serving argument involved in this procedure when we refuse to engage in dialogue with those positions we have already condemned as morally or rationally repugnant. From racists and sexists one can quickly slide to censoring evangelicals or any other group one doesn’t like [...] The precariousness of philosophical footing, willingness to be vulnerable by stepping into spaces which are new and uncomfortable, and a commitment to collaborative thinking, are prerequisites for a constructive engagement with spirituality in our field (Canagarajah, 2009, p. 78-80).

Spirituality/religiosity in the language field does not entail questions of like or dislike; yet it should be dealt (with) within educational spaces, if we intend to exercise interfaith dialogues in class so as to educate citizens who care about setting and supporting democracy (Kwok, 2012). In Brazil, for example, in recent years, while religious issues were afar from academic environments, the radical right-wing parties grew by using the evangelical discourses, found useful to direct elections and disturb the public debate. Once protestant Christianity emerged from a Jewish progressive movement and has historically carried a tendency toward progressivism – as the Black evangelicals, who became resistance in the USA – the far-right appropriation seemed somehow odd. In other words, conservatism is unfamiliar and should be discussed in classes to let students build their own critique towards the waves they face within contemporary religious discourses.

For the sake of illustration, prosperity, meaning material acquisition, is considered by neopentecostals to constitute one of the human missions. This ideology is directly connected to the growth of capitalism, neoliberalism and ideologies that defend the minimal state, which goes the opposite direction to the catholic liturgy, for which people have to cultivate humbleness and live in modest ways. Who would be held responsible for promoting space in language classes for the students to perceive the entanglement of such values, also including corruption, political manipulation, climate emergency,

racism, sexism, social reproduction – just to name a few examples? We contend that teachers, students and institutions would take initiative to leverage students' capabilities to understand the fact that each of the aforementioned issues operate as actant, and, beyond interaction, it elicits an intra-action phenomenon (Barad, 2007). People, plants, animals, objects, air, water, fire, and 'things' do have a function in life (Sousa, 2022); all these elements intra-act, which means, they co-depend and collaborate in the processes of their own transformation. The consequences of this non-hierarchical vision present several opportunities, such as preservation of nature, fighting against capitalism, engaging in anti-racist education practices, and respecting Afro-Brazilian religions and indigenous cosmologies, among other enriching experiences towards contextualized multipolar justice.

Hence, amplifying repertoires to enable students to question the hegemony of a particular religion, its uses and interpretations, might enhance intercultural translation (Walsh, 2018), collaboration, sustainability and the reinvention of a more democratic society. Subliminal or more explicit interventions can stimulate people towards critical, decolonial, creative and ethical posthuman praxeologies and culture-nature activism from slow science (Stengers, 2023).

Furthermore, we advocate in favor of bringing the body back and marking the historically unmarked ones (Menezes de Souza, 2021). As the body is situated, it carries histories, memories, narratives and actions, which might have naturalized spirituality by means of the normativity present in the uses of language. Approaching religiosity/spirituality by bringing the body back implies remembering that different religions have different ways of dealing with the body. Christianity, for example, as a modern institutional religion, was founded under white patriarchal perspective and its leaders supported racist and sexist interpretations for the Bible turning the religion into a way of controlling and suppressing bodies. The reflections on Cartesian-based knowledge productions, including Western Christianity and other similar religions, are invariably based on the denial of the relationships between bodies and their semiotic contexts. The result is that generalizations take place, and that means the denial of women, of non-Westerners, of LGBTQIA+ communities, of the (d)efficient ones; it is a deliberate neglect that we are all historically situated, in favor of an abstraction and a generalization instead.

On the other way around, we suggest that a decolonial discussion on religion might focus on building critical knowledge about religion, based on the body and its subjective experiences, rather than on a universal mind with no body. Somehow, diverse questions may emerge: What am I allowed to think/to believe with the body I have? By having this body of mine, would my religious faith guarantee me the right to exist? Which dialogues do my faith allow me to engage in? Where is my body in the becoming of spacetime-mattering? Moreover, how does the inseparability between bodies and matter come to play in this entanglement, since meanings can be built, perceived and felt, beyond the use of human language?

## **PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITY, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, we want to discuss the practice carried out in our classrooms. A1 decided to make room and ‘listen’ to what the students majoring in Portuguese and English, in year one, at a public university, had to say. The discipline was named *English I*, and, according to the syllabus, students were supposed to be exposed to several language practice situations – oral, written and multimodal – producing knowledge on diversity, intersecting race, ethnics, class, gender, age, religion, nationality, (d)eficiency, embedded in specific contexts.

To start off, A1 instructed the twenty-one students present in class to draw a spiritual/religious space on their notebooks, but they were given no further explanations on what would happen from that point on. After they were done, the professor/A1 proposed a question: “Have you ever been asked to talk about spirituality/religiosity in English classes or in any other class?” That was the introductory question A1 had made to the group to try to have the students get engaged into an intra-action (Barad, 2007, 2017). A loud and collective “No” echoed in class. That answer exposed our speculation that religion issues are usually not mentioned in language classes. However, we strongly believe that language teachers, researchers, students and institutions can no longer overlook the interrelation between spiritual identity and language education.

Out of twenty-one drawings, 18 resembled Christian churches (Baptist church, Christian Congregation in Brazil, Evangelical church), 01 represented a mosque, and 01 drew a Satan’s Church representation. It’s surprisingly odd that a country in which

about 56% of the population are selfdeclared black and brown (IBGE, [202-]), no Afromatrixed spirituality/religion came to the fore. Why are Afro-Brazilian and indigenous religions, for instance, virtually absent from studies in language hubs, taking into account that Brazilian Constitution legitimizes multiculturalism in this country? Unfortunately, racism keeps guiding the gear of society in such a way that if we do not get careful, we happen to be compulsory racists (Silva, 2021). These figures explain partially the impacts of the Colonial matrix of power (Quijano, 2007), which perseveres until today: White European pushed non-white people to be converted into Christianity, erasing their languages, identities, culture, ethnics, power, gender, class, spirituality/religion and ways of coexisting within differences intra-acting.

We insist that productive, critical and respectful debates might be a form of resistance to perceive how colonial power influences people's meaning making, individual/collective identities and critical literacy actions and posthuman ethics<sup>i</sup>. Indigenous cosmologies (Krenak, 2019; 2020), for example, may be a facilitator to understand much of the premises of posthumanism (Haraway, 2022; Barad, 2007), through respect and the preservation of nature and communal values. Human-non-human others making and remaking phenomena (Barad, 2007) and the unknown (e.g.: shamans' power to capture what is unfamiliar knowledge in Westernized world) have long been part of the indigenous lives, making kin with differences and staying with the trouble (Haraway, 2016). Posthumanism tries to relearn such ways of life to rethink sustainable and democratic local-global education.

The symbol for the Satan church, drawn by one of the students, as shown in image 3, made us think of religious representations and marginalization:

**Fig. 3 – The pentagram, produced by student in class**



Source: Takaki's archive (2023)

When the student was asked what the Satan church meant for him, he explained that his family and himself got identified with its purpose. He also declared he felt happy to be able to share his visions and experience with the professor, since many people usually decline and have prejudice against his religion, judging by its symbols. From a posthuman perspective, this is more than a drawing. It comes from relations/entanglements among species, bodies and elements, which/who are socio(discursive)materially and space-timely marked. The world navigates within semiotic-material meanings, many of which we do not understand yet. Human-non-human ways of seeing the world, being in it, understanding it and producing knowledge depend on such entanglements; hence, the inseparability between who/which knows and the thing/person who/which is indeed known, but always partially.

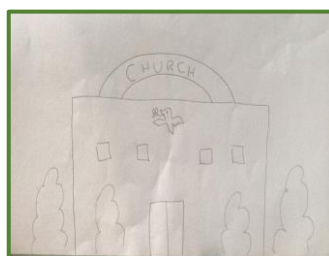
The Satan church is an atheistic organization for which Satan is a symbol of individualism, empowerment, self-indulgence, theatrical expression that goes against moral traditions. For the Wicca and other western nature religions the pointed five-star (pentagram) usually work with fire, air, water, earth and ether, or 'spirit'. The ancient Greeks thought it represented natural harmony, peace, balance and the entire cosmos. Also, as a metaphor, Satan rejects tyrannical authorities to preserve people's civil rights, to respect differences and bodily autonomy based on scientific evidence. Would it be possible to associate the elements of nature in the pentagram, and the spiritual symbols with a critique of the Anthropocene? Would it destabilize the linear notions of social/discursive, subject/object, culture/nature, Christian/non-Christian, man/woman, time/space/matter in troubled periods (e.g. climate emergency) such as ours? Do such elements help readers to get closer to an indigenous worldview becoming rather than a fixed one? As Barad (2017) argues: "Our debt to those who are already dead and those not yet born cannot be disentangled from who we are. What if we were to recognize that differentiating is a material act that is not about (absolute) separation, but on the contrary, about making connections and commitments? (Barad, 2017, p. 49).

If we have debts, it means we should stay with the trouble (Haraway, 2016). Thus, transforming anthropocentrism entails overflowing borders of (un)knowledge towards a permanent process of "worldfication" (Haraway, 2016, p. 140), that means undoing history and uniformity to reconfigure the present spacetime-mattering. This involves an ethical possibility of transformations (diffractions/mutations through relations) of

meanings and actions, with the functions of other than human, that is, human-nonhuman bodies, elements and matter, all of them intertwined. The presence of nonliving species in the five-star, in the student's drawing, may be indicative of a type of emergence as "ongoing agential intra-actions of the world through which specific determinacies (along with complementary indeterminacies) enacted within the phenomena produced" (Barad, 2007, p. 148). The agential intra-actions characterize an onto-epistemological incessant reconstitution of beings, species and 'things' in a relational mode, blending human-non-human entities. The student's production, as shown in image 3, translates his becoming (in terms of knowing, learning, being) not only with his vivid experience (memory, religious encounters, physical dislocations, satisfaction to share it in class), but also with his resources (pencil, paper, desk, voice, gestures, body language), supported by the air he breathes, the ground on which his desk is placed and the whole environment. These findings seem to be closer to Applied Linguistics as becoming.

A2 also proceeded the same in-class practice with undergraduate Language Arts students, and once again, the majority of drawings resembled Christian religious spaces, as exemplified below:

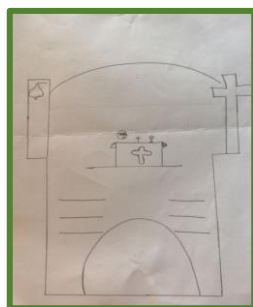
**Fig. 4 – An evangelical church**



Source: Silva's Archive (2023)

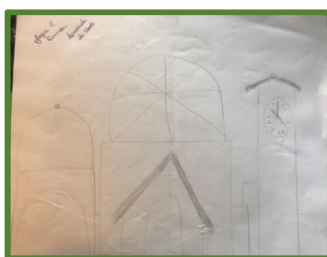
**Fig. 5 – A Catholic church**





Source: Silva's Archive (2023)

**Fig. 6 – A Catholic church**



Source: Silva's Archive (2023)

**Fig. 7 – A Catholic church**



Source: Silva's Archive (2023)

In A1's class, one female student chose not to draw, and asked to talk privately about her refusal. She argued that she did not feel comfortable to draw or say anything in public; then, privately, she explained that she studies witchcraft. Briefly, she limited to stress that many people do not understand witchcraft and think it is all about negative things and supernatural powers of magic. As our intention was just to inquiry how

comfortable – or not – students would be with these issues in class, A1 did not keep on questioning or asking for details or something.

Following the preset steps for the investigation, other questionings were proposed: “Think of the reasons why you have drawn a spiritual/religious space the way you did. Write down why it deserves attention”. The majority of the students responded they were more or less familiar with the church they had drawn and the reasons ranged from being a popular place in the country/world (with a known architecture, a historical place, a famous church in the Brazilian capital, in Istanbul, a resemblance of “Dia de los muertos”) to being a Christian or catholic church they used to go to when they were children.

We find it relevant to highlight the following answer, by Anna<sup>3</sup>, in A2’s classroom: “Anna: I don’t have a religion but my family partakes in many religions, my mom being half catholic half spiritualist.” (verbal information)<sup>4</sup>

Anna’s testimony reflects many families in Rio de Janeiro nowadays whose devotions oscillates between religions due to the city historical trajectory. Both Simas (2020) and Gomes (2021) point out that the enslavement of African and indigenous peoples was not only a political power project but a religious one as well. After all, the Church was interested in evangelizing black and indigenous people to increase the number of Catholics around the world. Thus, Christianity, as a colonial project, forbid religious services by the enslaved Africans, and also considered the indigenous Enchanted to be childish, so to admit the monotheist Catholicism as the only valid religious discourse (Grosfoguel, 2013). As a matter of fact, the Western thought split rituals, symbols and myths apart, to categorize them as either sacred or profane, totally contrary to indigenous and Afromatrixed religions and to the notion of spacetime-mattering (Barad, 2007). However, the enslaved populations kept resisting for generations so that, until present days, Rio de Janeiro population carries some of the African culture within their Christianity, even if veiled sometimes.

Interestingly, when the activity took place in Mato Grosso do Sul, neither indigenous nor Afro-Brazilian spiritualities/religiosities showed up. It feels odd because it is a state in which indigenous communities are relatively aware of their subjugation.

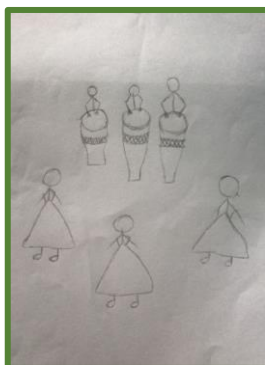
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<sup>3</sup> All given names were changed to protect the privacy of students in class.

<sup>4</sup> Verbal information collected in class.

When the activity was developed in Rio de Janeiro, only 02 drawings, out of 12, resembled an Afromatrix religion, as shown in images 1 and 2.

**Fig. 8 – An afromatrix service**



Source: Silva's Archive (2023)

**Fig. 9 – A spiritualist center**



Source: Silva's Archive (2023)

For a multicultural country, where more than half the population is black and brown, as we have pointed out, it seems quite important to consider the possible reasons to have a European religion (Christianity) dominating the discourse so far. Nevertheless, what is at stake is, again, the power exerted on non-white communities by the colonizers, forcing them to erase their language and culture to embrace Christianity, named languages, whiteness, heteronormativity in sexuality, discarding (d)efficient bodies and poverty. That is why Kwok (2012) highlights that it's essential to study racialism if we are talking about religion. The author advocates that the study of religion can give tools to understand racial imperialism.

When A1 asked the students how they associated the conception of an active reader with the reading of spirituality/religiosity and their peers' drawings, the following responses prevailed:

Sylvia: An image is also a text, so the reader can construct meaning about what he/she draws. It depends on the person, some people frequent a church and the others do not, but everyone knows that church. (verbal information)

Poli: Within the feelings of each student there is a proximity to what churches are, they are a place of reflection, of dedication to prayer, to rituals of celebration of life/birth, where people seek help. (verbal information)

Rui: I feel like the comprehension of the drawing is only possible if someone is from the religion, same for the comprehension of most religious symbols. They come with symbolisms and backstories a nonbeliever wouldn't understand. (verbal information).

Vivian: The reader undertakes meanings. His creation tries to be similar to what he wants to convey and pass on his message. (verbal information)

Despite being aware of the Bakhtinian active readers' role, for which the meanings are reconstructed in interaction, it is possible to infer that the students replicated the vision of legitimated meanings, suggesting that their loci of enunciation are fixed and pre-established. No problematization was made concerning why and how the reproduction of meaning in the drawings occurred. This was left for other investigation opportunities.

When asked if there should be a place for dialogues and discussions about spirituality/religiosity in language education and in curricula designs to minimize the impacts of social inequities, the students, in both studies, textualized answers to favor: a) the provision of contexts to reflect on religion, beliefs, and the stories of the churches, b) encouragement of diversities, especially in educational spaces, c) a place for religion in language education, in the sense that it engages with students and their histories and subjectivities, d) respect to differences with no imposition of religion towards someone, e) a place for debates stressing how necessary it is to show that other world views exist, f) the importance of exposing different religious, not only the biggest ones, g) the school where the student can engage with the plurality of people and religions, h) the non-interference of the government, and i) the discussion of spirituality/religiosity should take place in disciplines, such as Culture and History.

We suspect their answers neither contemplate transdisciplinarity nor interculturality but highlight human exceptionalism. Knowing does not seem to be part

of a complex and dynamic network of spacetime-mattering, including tasks engineered by nonhumans (e. g: the air people breathe, animals, plants, minerals, or simply the open-air environment for rituals) as constitutive of (im)possible performative intra-action. Such 'institutionalized' views appear to be distant from more entangled articulations<sup>5</sup>, following Barad (2017):

"Things" don't preexist; they are agentially enacted and become determinately bounded and propertied within phenomena. Outside of particular agential intra-actions, "words" and "things" are indeterminate. Matter is therefore not to be understood as a property of things but, like discursive practices, must be understood in more dynamic and productive terms-in terms of intra-activity. (Barad, 2017, p. 150)

When asked if there should be a place for dialogues and discussions on religion in language education, we want to stress Emily's suggestion to have the issue as a public educational policy: "Emily: I believe that maybe the BNCC should talk about the most popular religions that exist in Brazil, because the students need to know that there are other religions besides the Christianity and the main approach [for this teaching] should be respect and fight against intolerance." (verbal information)

We considered Emily's position relevant because the climate emergency, which is at the top of curricula discussions, has much to do with the Christianity hegemony within western world (Silva, 2023). So, if we are to have public educational policies that approach religious dialogues in a respectful space, the Christian religion, with its modern and developmental edge, should be put into question. Western Christianity dissolved Nature from its sacred aura, and located it in a position of exploitable resource liable to be used for enrichment, extraction and power relations reserve. Talking about other spiritualities, then, would necessarily involve learning other ways of coexisting on Earth.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We are moving towards a more religiously diverse country, a situation which demands respectful dialogues; therefore, there is no place for fundamentalism. Instead, all tyrannical discourses and practices must be extinguished if we are to have

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<sup>5</sup> Follow-up explanations in the making of spacetime-mattering concerning the inseparability between nature and culture were given by A1 and, students came up with interesting and relevant narratives, invigorating ancestrality, affect, critique and relations. This is what A1 sees as spirituality/religiosity in active readers, and that deserves further investigation.

a strong democracy. We need to firmly place ourselves as to prevent undemocratic discourses to grow; thereat, we should, at least, start to discuss exercising interfaith dialogues upon critical linguistic education practices. Spiritual/Religious influences on language teacher education still need more empirical and ethnographic studies to address various stances, such as power relations within narratives, identity reconstruction and agency towards the survival of the human-non-humans in more equitable ways.

Under the premise that spirituality/religiosity is dynamic and keeps shifting in diverse contextualized sites of struggles, we tried in this paper to shed first lights on the students' perspectives on spirituality/religiosity, having religion issues being approached during classtime as part of pedagogical practice in contemporary language education.

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### About the authors

#### Nara Hiroko Takaki

Nara Hiroko Takaki holds a Post-PhD, PhD, master degrees in Linguistic and Literary Studies and graduation in Portuguese and English Languages from the University of São Paulo. Her recent fields of study embraces Critical linguistic education, Post-humanism, Spirituality/Religiosity and Sustainability, Decoloniality, Transculturality and Translanguaging. She is an associate professor at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul and she is the leader of the research project Trans(de)colonialities, literacies and plural justice entangled in digital and printed public spaces.

#### Simone Batista da Silva

Simone Batista da Silva is a professor/researcher at UFRRJ, Rio de Janeiro. She holds a degree in Portuguese/English Literature, a Master's degree in Education, and a PhD in Linguistic and Literary Studies in English. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the same area at USP. Her research interests include language teacher education, decoloniality, transculturality, linguistic education, sustainability and spiritualities