

## ELF dispositions in the classroom: rethinking ELT assessment in Brazil<sup>1</sup>

### Disposições de ILF na sala de aula: repensando a avaliação no ELT no Brasil

Camila Haus<sup>2</sup>

#### Abstract

When attempting ELF-oriented teaching in Brazil, one of the most difficult challenges are transforming assessment practices and policies, considering how they are founded on colonial and neoliberal orientations. It is urgent to change them, since criteria, test formats and evaluation often serve as parameters and guidance for teachers. Given this significant washback effect in ELT, it is necessary to envision competences and alternatives for teachers to assess language learners based on ELF-related principles. This article aims to rethink classroom assessment from a local ELF *disposition*, by interweaving reflections about ELT assessment and *ELF made in Brasil*, as evidenced in the analysis of discussions between two English teachers. I conclude with the idea of ELF *dispositions*, taking into account how they can represent a strategy to propose alternative and situated approaches to assessment in ELT.

**Keywords:** assessment, English, teaching, ELF, dispositions.

#### Resumo

Ao buscar um ensino orientado para o inglês como língua franca (ILF) no Brasil, um dos maior desafios é transformar as práticas e políticas de avaliação, considerando como elas se baseiam em orientações coloniais e neoliberais. Também é urgente mudá-las, visto que critérios, formatos de prova e avaliação frequentemente servem como parâmetro e orientação para os professores. Dado esse significativo efeito de retroalimentação no ensino de línguas estrangeiras (ELT), é necessário vislumbrar competências e alternativas para os professores avaliarem alunos de línguas com base em princípios relacionados ao ILF. Este artigo visa repensar a avaliação em sala de aula a partir de uma disposição local de ILF, entrelaçando reflexões sobre avaliação em ILF e ILF feitas no Brasil, por meio da análise de discussões entre dois professores de inglês. Concluo com a ideia de disposições de ILF, considerando como isso pode representar uma estratégia para vislumbrar formas alternativas e situadas de realizar avaliações em ELT.

**Palavras-chave:** avaliação, inglês, ensino, ILF, disposições.

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<sup>2</sup> Teacher at Academia de Línguas, PR, Brazil. Correo: [camila.haus@gmail.com](mailto:camila.haus@gmail.com) ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4522-8992>

## Introduction

*Dé – Writing is really funny because I think it's one of the things that makes it most obvious how some of the practices we do make no sense at all. It's writing from no one to no one. [...] What kind of writing are people doing these days? What writing practices do we have in our digital world? They're very different from what the textbook will ask for and so on, right?*

*Me - [...] Like, we stop valuing the literacy skills that students already have, for example, creating memes or posting a long text on Instagram, I don't know, things like that, we completely ignore them, [...] we pretend [these literacies] don't exist and keep asking them to write...*

*Dé – postcards (C6 transcript, 2021)*

This transcript is from a conversation<sup>34</sup> between two English teachers: myself and a research collaborator (henceforth Dé). For my PhD research, in which I was investigating assessment in English Language Teaching (ELT), we had meetings to discuss different theories in Applied Linguistics (AL), connecting them with our own experiences. In the conversation above, we are frustrated with assessment practices we believe do not correspond to the current communicative realities of English speakers. This dissonance is one of the issues that constitute the problem I seek to explore in this article.

Although variability and openness are not new to language, but actually intrinsic to all communication (Khubchandani, 1998), there has been much discussion about globalization and heterogeneous communicative interactions. As one of the approaches to interpret the role English has taken in this reality, the focus of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) studies on the diverse nature of communication has evidenced the inadequacy of traditional assessment practices in ELT - felt by Dé and I in the conversation that opens this article. As stated by Pipicano (2024), “there is a mismatch between test tasks and real-life tasks. Hence, students miss opportunities to develop abilities that could be useful in their lives beyond the classroom” (p. 11). Shohamy (2018) also says that “scores do not reflect their [students] real knowledge of what it means to know a language” (p. 585).

The conundrum we face is that there is not only this theoretical-practical tension, but also a strong influence of criteria, test formats and evaluations on language concepts (Shohamy, 2018). It is common to hear from teachers (or saying it ourselves): “I have to teach this because it is going to be in the test”:

*Dé - Probably there at [name of school], you had an assessment that you had no control over... but you had to, your students had to have a result in this assessment. So sometimes you had to do classroom practice focused on the assessment that was going to come because, you know?*

*Me - Totally. It's that thing... so much so that the first time, like, the first test of one class, I remember that there was an exercise that I kind of had to answer for them, because it was*

<sup>3</sup> These transcripts come from audio-recorded conversations that took place online in 2021, as I will explain in further detail by the end of this introduction. They are represented in italics, indented 0.5 in. The transcriptions are all translated to English (own translation), since the original was in Portuguese. I have decided not to correct inadequate grammar uses in order to keep the conversational and informal tone of the original interactions. The excerpts are identified by C followed by the number of the meeting (C1, C2, C3...).

<sup>4</sup> This research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Paraná on May 26, 2021 (CAAE: 46422521.8.0000.0102). All research participants (including “Dé”) signed a Free and Informed Consent Form.

*something that I had not worked on in the classroom. So what did I start doing? I had to start looking at the test before...*

**Dé** – *That's horrible, right?*

**Me** – *To teach, to teach based on the test. It's a very horrible thing. It's the washback effect (C3 transcript, 2021)*

As I mentioned with Dé, the influence assessment has in educational processes is called *washback effect* (Quevedo-Camargo, 2014). Once we recognize that assessment has pedagogical, social, political and ethical impacts, positive or negative, on different people and institutions, we assume the importance of “práticas avaliativas que sejam parte integrante desse processo [teaching and learning] e possibilitem efeito retroativo positivo por meio de suporte e, se necessário, redirecionamento do ensino” (Quevedo-Camargo, 2014, p. 89). Thus, it is essential to investigate the discourses being maintained through evaluative instruments, and to rethink assessment in ELT.

Segat and Sarmiento (2022) have recently mapped publications on language assessment in Brazil in 2015-2022 and concluded that there is little material in high-impact journals. Others have also raised the absence of research under post-structuralist paradigms (Duboc, 2007; Shohamy, 2018; Martinez, 2014). Therefore, I see urgency in a dialogue between ELF research and discussions about assessment, stressing the importance of locality in such effort.

This paper is an excerpt from my doctoral thesis entitled “Reframing Assessment as Dialogical Reflexivity in English Language Teaching” (Haus, 2024). Grounded in a qualitative and reflective approach, anchored in a methodological bricolage (Kincheloe, 2004), the article engages with teaching experiences and excerpts of conversations between educators in order to rethink classroom assessment from a local ELF *disposition* - as I will explain further. It is organized as follows: I begin with a reflection of ELT assessment in Brazil, questioning its modern, colonial and neoliberal roots; then, localizing myself inside the movement of *ELF made in Brasil*<sup>5</sup>, I present the idea of ELF *dispositions*; to conclude, I consider how this concept can represent a strategy to envision alternative ways of doing assessment in ELT.

In the same way I opened this article, I intend to interweave these steps of theoretical reflection with my discussions with Dé, data that was generated in 2021 for my PhD research. It consisted of audio-recorded meetings for discussions about the English assessment processes that prevail in Brazil and our contexts, and for reading and analyzing material regarding critical AL theoretical perspectives, such as ELF. By constructing this flow between theory and data, I intend to account for how our collaboration promoted learning and to embrace the methodological perspective of the bricolage “[b]ricoleurs are not aware of where the empirical ends and the philosophical begins, because such epistemological features are always embedded in one another” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 15).

## ELT assessment in Brazil

Historically, colonial and neoliberal discourses have oriented the tradition of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), guiding it towards the monolingual orientation, the belief in language as a shared system and the superiority of the native speaker. Analysing coloniality first, it has structured the global architecture in binarisms, such as European vs. Non-European, white vs. non-white, heterosexual vs. homosexual, among others. There is an imagined progression in which Europe represents the ideal, while others are behind, less human or even non-existent. Mignolo and Walsh (2018) refer to this as *colonial difference*, “the difference

<sup>5</sup> I use the term *ELF made in Brasil* (instead of *Brazil*) in order to highlight the local, situated and embodied character of this approach.

imposed through a hierarchical classification based on the ideas of race, anthropocentrism, heteronormativity, and gender” (p. 25).

*Dé - [...] when we study the history of Egypt, we don't think that in Egypt it's with black people. In our textbooks we think everyone was white. Even the Lion King's story, it takes place in Africa but only Scar is black, is darker, and his son Kovu, so the other lions...*

*Me - Yes. And he is the bad one in the story, right?*

*Dé - Uh-hum! If we were to think that they are people, they are white people. What about African deities? What did we do with the African deities? We call them macumba and they are of no value to us, we are afraid, we do not deal with them [...]*

*Me - So, this thing about the race, which is one of the things that decoloniality studies a lot, how it was created, right? It's a construction, the race thing is totally a construction that white people need to be superior. For him [white colonizer] to be white superior, he needs the black inferior to exist, right? [...] He creates several binarisms to be able to sustain his superiority. Then there's the issue of race, there's the issue of gender, there's the issue of sexuality, all of this was created (C4 transcript, 2021).*

Among the various strategies of the colonial project, the Cartesian, positivist and Enlightenment rationalities have been pillars in the construction not merely of ELT, but also schooling (Duboc, 2016). The idea of rational thought as superior, knowledge as individual, measurable and external to subjects and the division between mind vs body (Martinez, 2014), resulted in the selection of contents, excluding countless epistemologies, bodies, emotions and subjectivities. This rationale led to what Freire (1987) described as banking education: students absorb and reproduce concepts without questioning, while teachers transfer such information.

In relation to language, the 18th century colonization strategy of naming and defining languages as stable systems - to serve as symbols of national unity and mechanisms of control (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) - was based upon the Herderian triad, an ideology that takes one language as belonging to one speech community and one place (Canagarajah, 2013). The equivalence between these three elements results in the privilege of specific nations seen as the legitimate territory of a language, and in the authority given to an idealization of a native speaker. In the context of ELT, England and The United States are seen as the official owners of English, and consequently, as the native speaker models. This native speaker ideology is also connected to race, as Kubota and Lin's (2006) equation denounces: a) native speaker = standard English = white; b) nonnative speaker = nonstandard English = non-white. Therefore, it is not necessarily about having English as one's first language; rather, it concerns one's origins and the color of their skin.

One of the tools to propagate colonial ideologies, widely overvalued in some teaching contexts in Brazil, are the textbooks produced by publishers from the global North. By repeatedly presenting certain narratives, these books leave out alternative perspectives, perpetuate prejudices, and reproduce structuralist notions of dialogue (with harmony always portrayed, never conflict). Materials produced in the North are also colonial in their aim to be universally applicable, while actually failing to reflect our local realities.

*Me - There's a chapter (Siqueira, 2015) about what the plastic world of textbooks is, how textbooks do not reflect reality, right? Like it's a plastic world.*

*Dé - And then we can think about it from three hundred thousand perspectives, right? Of inclusion, racism, representation of women...*

*Me - Yes, he talks about all that, representation... he doesn't talk just about this, he talks about the issue of interaction, like: "hello, ah hello how are you? I'm good and you?" That*

*the interactions are always quite artificial, but he also talks about this issue of the margarine family<sup>6</sup>, the standard Brazilian family. How do you say it...?*

**Dé** – *traditional... Traditional Brazilian family, that's it. Everyone is always very happy.*

**Me** – *Yes, everything is very beautiful. All very 'white' (C5 transcript, 2021).*

In addition to coloniality, schools are currently permeated by neoliberal discourses, such as: an understanding of the teacher's role as to simply meet the needs of the learner, i. e., to satisfy the customer (Biesta, 2005); education as a mechanism to achieve capital success (hooks, 2010); the focus on individualism, freedom and meritocracy; privatization and its consequent increase of competition; national parameters to standardize teaching education; quality as synonym of efficiency and productivity; and the importance of quantifying such a quality (Santos, Nagase & Costa, 2022).

#### *ELT assessment: the enduring impacts of coloniality and neoliberalism*

Within these logics of coloniality and neoliberalism, along with industrial principles of systematization, standardization, and efficiency (Duboc, 2007), assessment becomes an instrument designed to verify students' abilities to reproduce knowledge in an objective and individualized manner. As a result, privileged methods are often ones which provide controllable and measurable outcomes. In addition, assessment determines which onto-epistemologies are included or not in our curriculums, once there are responses and discourses that we expect from students. This results in individuals adopting an interpretative habitus (Monte Mór, 2018), i.e., specific modes of reading that align with the interests of dominant and regulatory institutions:

**Me** - *How many times do we ask a question in a test that goes beyond him [the student] interpreting what is theoretically given there? And that is the correct answer. What is written there and that's it. Right?*

**Dé** - *It's that thing of doing TP [how we referred to the answer key of a test] and the student has to answer the open question just like the TP answer.*

**Me** - *TP, exactly, TP is the symbol of what we expect: a specific answer. (C2 transcript, 2021)*

Assessment research has broadened the range of tools beyond traditional tests and questioned goals that are solely quantitative. However, a strong emphasis on validity and reliability - interpreted through the lens of empiricism and standardization (Duboc, 2016) - and the dominance of summative assessments - prioritizing final outcomes measured against predetermined standards - persists. When it comes to ELT, assessment is often based on measuring how accurately students use a system, acquired linearly/progressively, imposing hegemonic norms and delegitimizing speakers' repertoires (Haus & Schmichek, 2022). The accuracy that is expected is judged in relation to idealized native speakers, which leads to the suppression of identities and ways of being. For instance, regarding pronunciation, colonial values are socially and racially attributed to certain repertoires, with the construct of accent based on the premise that there is a standard form to distinguish from.

<sup>6</sup> Siqueira (2015) is referring to a 1970s Kellogg's® Cornflakes vision of family, and cites Pennycook (2000): "a blond, white, heterosexual family, with one daughter and one son (all of whom clearly visit the dentist regularly)". (p. 100).

**Dé** - First you put the teacher on the pedestal, right? In what informs the knowledge that you will have to reproduce later. And then the teacher puts the textbook with him.

**Me** - Oh yeah, they (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015) say that.

**Dé** - And so we can't get it out of this place.

**Me** - It's so hard, right? But it's true, when they talk about the textbook, they talk about assessment too. Because the textbook brought the content in a procedural way, organized by levels and so on. This allowed testing to verify knowledge. So I think the textbook matches the tests a lot, right? (C3 transcript, 2021)

Lastly, this conversation between Dé and I shows the influence textbooks have in our assessment, by controlling learning goals, linguistic parameters, and consequently, evaluation criteria. Cope and Kalantzis (2015) explain that information is divided into “manageable chunks, and with ideas ordered from those that are more elementary to more complex (...). Knowledge so acquired can subsequently be tested in examinations” (p. 7). In addition to these materials, international proficiency tests and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) also reinforce this perspective of linear learning. These instruments have gone through some changes recently (Diniz de Figueiredo and Siqueira, 2021), yet they continue to claim universality and to reflect colonial and neoliberal ideologies (Shohamy, 2018). The widespread reliance on international tests and publishers can be attributed to both the appeal of systematicity and objectivity that they claim to offer, and the perception of superiority in knowledge produced in the Global North.

Nowadays, Brazil has been facing another challenge: the platformization of education, following the Reforma do Ensino Médio (High School Reform), approved in 2017 (Lei no 13.415/2017)<sup>7</sup>. While operating within neoliberal principles by aligning with private organizations' interests, the integration of digital platforms in schools also reduces pedagogy to a merely instrumental process. In the case of platformization in the state of Paraná, for example, students are submitted to mechanical quizzes and video lessons, while teachers are positioned as mere facilitators of content designed by individuals outside the school. Regarding assessment, this phenomenon can lead to its dehumanization:

**Dé** – It's because there [name of school] I don't create. So it [test] comes ready. And I don't give much opinion either. It exists. [...] The power of creation is none, the test is ready.

**Me** - And in the correction, like correction flexibility, you, for example, have an answer key and you have to correct with that answer key or you can, you know: I'm going to accept this here because this is possible... Do you feel that or not?

**Dé** - In presential classes I could. I could change there and such. Online no. The exam is already self-correcting. I don't correct anything. (C1 transcript, 2021)

In this section, we have explored how traditional assessment upholds coloniality and neoliberalism through its monolithic and structuralist approach to language and knowledge. Hence, it is essential to adopt a decolonial perspective, reimagining alternative approaches to assessment. From my readings, experiences and exchanges, I believe ELF made in Brazil is a subaltern perspective that has an enormous potential to allow the emergence of new ways of doing ELT, and consequently, of existing and speaking in the world. Thus, the next section will expand the concept of ELF dispositions, as they emerge as a possible response to the teaching concerns raised at the beginning of this article, pointing to more critical, flexible, and locally grounded assessment practices.

<sup>7</sup> The High School Reform was revoked by the current government. Even so, the belief in platformization as a solution for education and the pressure towards its adoption continue to grow.

## ELF disposition(s)

Although European/North American ELF studies are often given prominence and centrality, the research typically developed in the North carries a celebratory tone, overlooking power dynamics and inequalities (Kubota, 2014). When analysing the growing interest in this area in Brazil (Gimenez, El Kadri & Calvo, 2018; Duboc & Siqueira, 2020), it becomes evident we have been producing our own local forms of ELF research. In line with decolonial thinking, translanguaging, and critical pedagogies, *ELF made in Brasil* positions our local realities at the heart of the discussion (Duboc & Siqueira, 2020). Diniz de Figueiredo and Siqueira (2021) clarify that this ELF can be understood in two ways: (a) a research field scholars associate with concerning the English language; and (b) an ongoing global phenomenon. In line with their view, I propose a conceptualization of ELF as a *disposition*.

According to Lee and Canagarajah (2019), based on Bourdieu (1991), *dispositions* are inclinations to act, react and perceive the world in a certain manner. As they develop from our lived and embodied experiences, they are social and emotional, shaped over time. They guide our behavior but not determine it, since actions are also influenced by surrounding structures.

I take ELF as a disposition to refer to the inclinations and attitudes we adopt when engaging with, connecting to, and interpreting interactions involving English. To have an ELF disposition means to constantly question normative and colonial discourses, to be open to translanguaging and creative languagings, to engage with diversity and negotiation, to be aware of the existence and act in the face of unequal relations, to understand that English can be a tool for imposing ideologies or values, but that it can also be used to empower and resist - when it is glocalized (Menezes de Souza, 2019a) - and other attitudes that are aligned with a post-structuralist, decolonial and critical positioning. A teacher with an ELF disposition approaches ELT through these ontoepistemologies, allowing them to inform one's classroom practices in a localized way.

Why should we think about ELF as a disposition? I see it as a strategy to escape the modern and neoliberal temptation of methodologization (Menezes de Souza & Duboc, 2021), i.e., the tendency to transform theories into applicable pedagogical practices. Some ELF research has ended up objectifying ELF as a bounded variety or a pedagogy, conforming to a desire for systematicity and applicability. I stand with Menezes de Souza (2019b) in his critique of teaching ELF as way of “transformar uma prática que varia de acordo com os usuários e o contexto em um modelo a ser reproduzido” (p. 248). Diniz de Figueiredo and Siqueira (2021) also state that it is not about ELF being teachable, but of taking into account how this perspective can shape our classroom practices in a more context-specific manner. With this in mind, I believe promoting ELF does not entail developing specific methods, but assuming a *disposition* to act upon and make sense of all interactions that involve English.

**Dé** – *This concept, philosophy, approach, vision, I don't know, which he (Lee and Canagarajah, 2019) is calling disposition, is very cool. Because then it breaks with all this. Like, it's not biological anymore, right? In the sense that you are born where a language is spoken, that is, you are born having a language. And it becomes like we say, it's not a theory, it's not a pedagogy, it's a willingness to understand things in a certain way and work with them from there, right?*

**Me** - *Yes, and this disposition involves actions, practices, what I do, what I believe. He speaks of beliefs, practices, and ideologies. So all this is at my disposal. It's really cool, he says that a person being multilingual can have monolingual or native dispositions... in a negative sense, right? From the native... Normative, better saying.*

**Dé** - *Normative or structuralist, yeah*

**Me** - *You can speak several named languages as we call them, right, but be totally normative. So it's not a fixed identity... (C6 transcript, 2021)*

Instead of investigating how to apply ELF assessment, or think about categories such as ELF speakers, I wish to explore how ELF dispositions can orient how we see and act in assessment from specific onto-epistemologies. Then, performativity is put into focus, and we acknowledge that it is not always possible to act in accordance with our principles, due to the dominance of coloniality and neoliberalism. ELF dispositions are what direct us when navigating the entanglements and complexities of assessment, and should point towards opening spaces for going beyond textbooks, the native speaker and other hegemonic discourses.

### *Disposition for translingual practice*

**Me** - *There's no way you can change anything if you continue with the same language perspective. (...) Like, that's why when we talk about ELF, we also talk about translanguaging, we also talk about invented languages, etc., in Brazil, mainly, which is the other text there, right? That we read (Duboc & Siqueira, 2020), we bring it up a lot, why? Because we know that it's no use just... if I don't change the way I see language, it will stay the same (C5 transcript, 2021).*

Some ELF researchers, particularly those from the North whose work I am familiar with, do not necessarily approach language from a different perspective, or may view these fluid characteristics as exclusive to English or to something labeled as ELF. Therefore, to truly advocate for a Southern perspective of ELF, it is essential to start by *thinking communication otherwise* (Menezes de Souza & Duboc, 2021), i.e., exploring ways to question assumptions about dialogue and language.

**Dé** - *That's why these methodologies of English Only or such are so silly because you deny all the knowledge that the person has of one, two or three languages.*

**Me** – *Yes, exactly.*

**Dé** - *And you pretend that it's absurdly new. Like, the person isn't talking, using I don't know, if you're thinking about structure, he doesn't use the future in Portuguese, no, you're going to teach the future! [ironic] (C2 transcript, 2021).*

In the monolingual mindset, speakers possess separated competencies for each language, as if they were compartments within our minds. Dé is frustrated with this idea, reflected on how we teach students as though they had no prior communicative knowledge, or as if the content we present - belonging to English only - had no connection to what they already know. Translanguaging theory goes against these logics, defying the dominant view of language as an autonomous system with clear boundaries.

Although the call for a shift in research towards the fluid realities of communication is not new (see for instance Khubchandani's, 1998), translanguaging studies have recently gained attention in AL. In brief, this perspective assumes that languages are not separated entities, recognizing their historical invention (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007), and conceiving them as social and situated practice. Negotiation is placed at the center, once speakers *language* through their repertoires (Canagarajah, 2013) based on social norms and their communicative needs and interests (Jordão & Marques, 2018). Semiotic resources, modes, identities, and ideologies, in turn, form these repertoires. A perspective of ELF that aligns with translanguaging sees communication as a distributed practice where space and speakers are part of meaning-making.

In his 2013's book *Translingual Practice*, Canagarajah (2013) explains what he terms *cooperative disposition*, as the set of values and skills characteristic of translingual interactions.

More specifically, he talks about three components: language awareness (treating language as functional and formed by open norms and mobile resources), social values (being open to diversity and collaboration), and learning/communicative strategies (adaptive and performative skills). Provided we embrace a concept of language as translingual practice, these three components would be important dispositions to orient our pedagogical work. Nevertheless, ELF dispositions should also include a recognition of power relations and the status of English, as described in the next section.

*Disposition for acting in a power space*

ELF made in Brasil studies see power as ever-present (Jordão & Marques, 2018). Thus, meaning-making negotiations are not necessarily cooperative or harmonic, but consistently nonneutral, hierarchical and emotional. Moreover, the imperial status of the English language, the inequality of access to it and its “local embeddedness in relation to class, culture, and politics” (Pennycook, 2019, p. 171) are kept into consideration.

**Dé** – *It's like those job vacancies that put English as a criterion for selection. In many cases, it's used simply because it gives you more status (...). I remember, there was a friend of mine who said ok, I'm going to do an interview there that needs advanced English. Then he said he asked in the interview: How many meetings per month will I have in English? Zero, none. Hmm, ok. How many emails do I need to produce in English? Do I have contact with suppliers that is strictly in English? Oh no. Okay, so why are you asking for my advanced English?*

**Me** – *It is only used to filter the number of candidates. It's a pretty violent business if you look at it.*

**Dé** – *Uh-hum! It's stupid, right?*

**Me** – *Because then English opens doors for some and closes for others (C4 transcript, 2021).*

From an ELF disposition, we recognize the imperialism surrounding English while also adopting an attitude of glocalizing it, i.e., voicing counter-hegemonic discourses. For instance, when analysing the Greengo dictionary<sup>8</sup> Instagram page, Diniz de Figueiredo (2021) observes that it glocalizes English “in ways that challenge traditional understandings of local and global, and that at times mock the supposed international character of the language” (p. 10). An ELT teacher with an ELF disposition would look at these instances not as incorrect, but as legitimate, creative and situated practices:

**Me** – *It reminded me a lot of the Greengo dictionary and another Instagram page, Portuglese<sup>9</sup>, like, how many teachers wouldn't denigrate that or use it to make fun of or take it to the classroom so we can laugh at how people are misspeaking. Like... no! That's not it! I'm going to bring it and do what with students? Me, I did it with advanced conversation, it was really cool. I showed this Portuglese Instagram page [...] and they created Brazilian expressions in English with multimodality... (C3 transcript, 2021).*

<sup>8</sup> Greengo Dictionary is an Instagram profile that plays with multimodality and translanguaging by translating cultural expressions or current trends in Brazil to English. The profile is available at: <https://www.instagram.com/greengodictionary>

<sup>9</sup> Portuglese is another Instagram profile that creates multimodal posts with literal translations to English of Brazilian idioms. The profile is available at: <https://www.instagram.com/portuglese/>

Once ELF theory takes meaning as constructed and does not perceive language as belonging to a specific nation, the native speaker has his authority questioned. From this perspective, English speakers considered non-native (who have outnumbered natives by the late 20th century) ought to be seen as legitimate, as they actively participate in communication by utilizing their own repertoires. Besides, dominant countries no longer need to be excessively represented in textbooks, and learners do not have to assimilate cultures in order to speak English.

On the whole, an ELF translingual disposition can be translated into our ELT classrooms in how we teach linguistic forms, favor practices that open spaces for different knowledges, promote opportunities for students to appropriate new resources, and challenge language inequalities. Still, it is important to recognize that, while enabling students to express creativity through language (Rocha & Maciel, 2015; Lee & Canagarajah, 2019), we are also responsible for supporting their critical awareness of linguistic norms. Bearing in mind this conceptualization, how can ELF dispositions affect classroom assessment?

### Rethinking assessment from an ELF disposition

Unfortunately, teachers embracing ELF dispositions does not suffice in significantly transforming ELT assessment. There are top-down impositions, such as educational and language policies, which work within the interests of institutions that wish to preserve colonial and neoliberal structures. What we do as teachers takes place in a social context (school, media discourse, global market, etc.) with powerful forces at play that seek to regulate and constrain our agency. Even though a radical transformation of ELT might be beyond our reach, acknowledging the existence of limitations and doing research about possibilities are important for building any kind of resistance.

Once aware of these constraints - and that dispositions are not practices one might apply freely, but a force orienting decisions - rethinking assessment from an ELF disposition would entail abandoning the idea of evaluation to verify, measure or punish. It would involve the promotion of ways to support students in positioning themselves as legitimate users of language, empowering them to act within their own repertoires (beyond linguistic terms) while simultaneously fostering critical awareness of the normativities and power relations intrinsic to communication. Within this framework, assessment can be a truly formative process, where teachers promote spaces of exchange with students that result in a reorganization (Biesta, 2005) of all people involved, after the contact with otherness, difference, challenges and discomforts. Instruments can be developed to allow these exchanges, and to focus on the analysis of learners' processes based on locally defined goals.

### Goals and criteria

From an ELF perspective, we assume that traditional goals of verifying students' mastery of a linguistic monolingual bounded system, with accuracy defined in terms of a structuralist view of intelligibility and the native speaker, are inadequate and should be abandoned. Provided we accept the impossibility of pre-defining normative criteria, goals ought to be localized, negotiated and consistent with ELF dispositions, which understand language as emergent, fluid, multimodal and so on.

*Me – “If we take into consideration that ELF is to emerge from communicative situations within the instructional setting as defended in the” blah blah blah, “language contents could not be previously determined if one denies the notion of ELF as system or variation” (Duboc*

*& Siqueira, 2020, p. 319). So then I wrote down: we cannot establish a priori grammatical criteria for assessment. Because, if we're saying that grammar emerges in the situation, we don't, that's something we won't be able to do. It does not make sense.*

**Dé** - *Not using these criteria, uh-hum.*

**Me** - *(...) of course, we will establish criteria because we want to know where we are going to look. But they won't be grammatical criteria. Like, predefined shapes that students will have to use.*

**Dé** - *Neither grammatical, nor super structural, right? We're not going to be evaluating, like, the pronunciation of those ten words that we saw in class, on page 35 of vocabulary.*

**Me** - *Or some pronunciation pattern (C5 transcript, 2021).*

Since Dé and I are talking about pronunciation, let us take the speaking ability as an example. An ELF disposition implies valuing people's different pronunciations, without characterizing them solely by geographical terms, which actually hide racial hierarchizations. In fact, we have the responsibility of problematizing these prejudiced discourses around accent, as a means of helping students to develop an awareness of these mechanisms, and to critically make decisions on how to deal with them. In relation to intelligibility - a criterion usually advocated for in ELF studies - we assume the perspective of repertoires and meanings as negotiated, so communication is not guaranteed through the sharing of structures or forms. Going a little further, the decolonial movement of *thinking communication otherwise* (Menezes de Souza & Duboc, 2021) instigates us to even question the assumption that communication implicates (or should result in) mutual comprehension. Therefore, provided we could delink (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) from neoliberal and colonial desires towards conformity, our assessment could focus on abilities to language in unpredictability, explore and expand repertoires, adapt in diverse rhetorical situations, and deal with interlocutors who may not be open to negotiation.

Although I am not defending a complete abandonment of teaching grammar or pronunciation (after all, they are part of language), ELF dispositions entail teaching norms as mutable, understanding that they are constructions and that one might be empowered or not if reproducing them. When designing assessment procedures, it is crucial to base them on social practices (negotiation strategies, situated performance, repertoires, awareness of context, etc.), while developing tools that are interactive, contextualized and performative (Haus & Schmicheck, 2022).

**Me** - *We're not gonna stop teaching grammar. We're gonna balance it, we're gonna read our context there, balance how much we teach the norm and how much we make students think critically about these norms.*

**Dé** - *Exactly.*

**Me** - *[...] the rhetorical awareness, right, like the questions "How might it function expressively, rhetorically, communicatively? For whom? Under what conditions and how?" (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019, p. 360). So, that's what's important to work with students, it's not simply about being correct or not being correct. Like you give them a text and you correct it: here it's right, here it's wrong, that's it! No! It's like, okay! This works here! It doesn't work here! Why? Who is the reader? Who is interacting with you? (C6 transcript, 2021).*

Instead of having structuralist ideals as learning goals, ELT could aim at building *dispositions*. In other words, embracing ELF epistemologies in assessment would benefit not only teachers but also students. As speakers, they could take ownership of English, build self-

confidence, and challenge the impostor syndrome (Bernat, 2008). Considering the framework, I have developed in this article, it would be important to build the following ELF dispositions:

- A translingual understanding of language as open, complex, heterogeneous;
- An inclination to find ways to expand resources creatively; develop negotiation strategies and construct meanings multimodally;
- A critical awareness of language, i.e., the recognition of the status of English and the existence of power relations, as well as the knowledge of standards and how they are constructs;
- The ability to navigate normativity with critical rhetorical sensitivity (i.e., skills to choose styles, genres and discourses while critically reading the particularities of the context to know when and how to challenge rules);
- An intercultural sensitivity, with positive, open and tolerant attitudes towards difference, recognizing the socio-historical construction of self and others;

I would like to emphasize that I do not see these points as a complete and universal list of ELF dispositions, considering both what I have mentioned about escaping methodologization (Menezes de Souza & Duboc, 2021), and the fact that ELF made in Brasil and decoloniality emphasize the importance of localizing knowledge. Yet, I do advocate for the importance of ELF dispositions in developing practices and policies that allow teachers and students both to assume the subjectivity intrinsic to assessment (Martinez, 2014), and to orient ELT towards linguistic educational practices that are less rigid and hierarchical, aligning more closely with discursive approaches that emphasize diversity and empowerment:

*Me - I think a very important thing in the evaluation is to throw in the towel and accept that it's subjective. You have to accept it, there's no way...*

*Dé - I think so too*

*Me - ... pretend that all teachers will evaluate the same if we create a list of criteria, you know? Each teacher will use the criteria in a very different way: oh, I will assess whether the student is working collaboratively. What does this mean to me? What does this mean to you? [...] So I think it's really cool to think about these things, right? Having... not common goals, but being oriented towards the same side, right? (C3 transcript, 2021).*

### Sharing dispositions for future possibilities

I started this article by denouncing the theoretical-practical dissonance in ELT assessment. The biggest challenge we face is that the predominance of traditional practices is not merely due to teachers choosing to maintain things as they are, but rather the outcome of impositions that are anchored in colonial and neoliberal notions. In this scenario, ELF dispositions can help us recognize these constraints while exploring possibilities of defying them.

Borrowing from Schmichek's (2022) upcycling fashion metaphor, ELF dispositions might lead teachers and students to start using their "agency and creativity to come up with new and unique outfits" (p. 83), instead of trying to fit clothes not made for them. In identifying *brechas* (Duboc, 2012) in their contexts, teachers might not change large-scale structures (society and education as a whole), but definitely microstructures (e.g., classrooms, teacher-student relationships, etc.). These little revolutions (Siqueira & Dos Anjos, 2012), if done with critical discussion and shared responsibility - as I tried to illustrate by showing how the conversations between Dé and I have influenced my dispositions - might contribute to future decolonial pedagogical possibilities for and debates about ELT in Brazil.

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