

## Languages without Borders: Reinforcing and delinking English from coloniality in a Brazilian internationalization program

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### Abstract

*Language without Borders was initiated by the Brazilian Federal Government and has undergone a series of modifications until its discontinuation as a government-sponsored program, when it was taken up by the academic community as a free enterprise. Currently, it is linked to Andifes (National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education). One of the main actions of Language without Borders is to offer the academic community tuition-free language courses. This article presents an interpretive content analysis of one of Language without Borders's popular features: the catalog with information about the courses offered by the program. We engage with decolonial critiques in the process of exploring Language without Borders legislative pieces, focusing particularly on the English courses in the catalog. Our analysis looks into the uphold of English after the program became an Andifes enterprise to reflect on how the language is approached, given its discursive construction as the language of science in internationalization. Throughout the analysis, we visualize complexities and contradictions in a process permeated both by the reinforcement and delinking from modernity/coloniality.*

**Keywords:** Brazil, decoloniality, English language, internationalization, languages without borders

### Resumen

El programa 'Idiomas sin Fronteras' fue iniciado por el Gobierno Federal de Brasil y ha sufrido una serie de modificaciones hasta su discontinuación como un programa patrocinado por el gobierno. Posteriormente, fue adoptado por la comunidad académica como una iniciativa libre. Actualmente, está vinculado a Asociación Nacional de Directores de Instituciones Federales de Educación Superior (Andifes). Una de las principales acciones de 'Idiomas sin Fronteras' es ofrecer cursos de idiomas gratuitos a la comunidad académica. Este artículo presenta un análisis de contenido interpretativo de una de las características populares del 'Idiomas sin Fronteras': el catálogo con información sobre los cursos ofrecidos por el programa. Nos involucramos con críticas decoloniales en el proceso de exploración de los textos legislativos del 'Idiomas sin Fronteras', enfocándonos particularmente en los cursos de inglés en el catálogo. Nuestro análisis examina el sostenimiento del inglés

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después de que el programa se convirtiera en una iniciativa de Andifes, para reflexionar sobre cómo se aborda el idioma, dada su construcción discursiva como el lenguaje de la ciencia en la internacionalización. A lo largo del análisis, visualizamos complejidades y contradicciones en un proceso permeado tanto por el refuerzo como por la desvinculación de la modernidad/colonialidad.

**Palabras claves:** decolonialidad, inglés, internacionalización, Idiomas sin Fronteras, Brasil

### Resumo

O Idiomas sem Fronteiras foi um programa elaborado e financiado pelo Governo Federal brasileiro e passou por uma série de modificações até sua descontinuidade enquanto um programa governamental, quando foi adotado pela comunidade acadêmica como uma iniciativa independente. Atualmente, encontra-se vinculado à Associação Nacional dos Dirigentes das Instituições Federais de Ensino Superior (Andifes). Uma das principais ações do Idiomas sem Fronteiras é oferecer à comunidade acadêmica cursos de idiomas sem custos. Este artigo apresenta uma análise interpretativa do conteúdo de um dos recursos populares do Idioma sem Fronteiras: o catálogo com informações sobre os cursos oferecidos pelo programa. Fundamentadas em críticas decoloniais, buscamos investigar as peças legislativas do Idiomas sem Fronteiras, focando particularmente nos cursos de inglês do catálogo. Nossa análise se debruça sobre a manutenção do inglês após sua vinculação à Andifes, a fim de refletir sobre como o idioma é abordado, dada a sua construção discursiva como língua da ciência nos processos de internacionalização. Ao longo da análise, visualizamos complexidades e contradições em um processo permeado tanto pelo reforço quanto pelo desvinculamento da modernidade/colonialidade.

**Palavras-chave:** decolonialidade, língua inglesa, internacionalização, Idiomas sem Fronteiras, Brasil

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### Introduction

Internationalization of education has been defined in different ways: as a process, an activity, a competency, or an organizational approach. Each related to diverse agents and levels (Knight, 1999). The most cited definition, however, is Knight's (1993 cited in Knight, 1994, p. 3), which she later redefines (Knight, 2003, p. 2) as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education". The researcher's changes concern her worries in relation to making the concept clear, more comprehensive, and "generic enough to apply to many different countries, cultures, and education systems" (Knight, 2004, p. 11). This desire for general/universal application can be linked to the modern/colonial concept of knowledge production, given that in such view theories are considered more important and sophisticated (more developed, one could say) than practices. This "generic" and "universal" knowledge, however, is usually produced in the global north, which is associated to progress. In this scenario, the global south is conceived as a space for the application of theories developed in the global north (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Grosfoguel, 2016). In this sense, the global north defines what is to be recognized as internationalization. Consequently, countries like Brazil struggle with 'global' demands that very often differ from local practices. In Brazil, the discourse to internationalize is also connected to the ideal of progress and quality of education. Mignolo (2011) explains that our notion of time has been colonized, as it started to be used as an epistemic tool to mark and create hierarchized differences. In other words, the modern/colonial idea of time, that of linearity and progress, became the only one. This logic holds that there is a past, when subaltern individuals still are, and a future, where development will take place. Therefore, being in the past means being behind, underdeveloped. This idea of time is closely linked to space, as Europe defined itself as the point of departure (where innovation is produced and from which it is imported) and of arrival (the model of development others should aspire to become). Such reasoning promotes the feeling that, by not internationalizing, universities stay in the past. Additionally, English is hegemonic in the process, often portrayed as *the* language of science. It becomes a means to achieve goals, being frequently disembodied and commodified (Jordão & Martinez, 2021). Fabricius et al. (2016, p. 584) contend that "internationalization often leads to linguistic uniformity, simply because English comes to be seen as a one-size-fits-all lingua franca." In this sense, English and internationalization get entangled in the academic imaginary. This complex

scenario is the backdrop for the creation of Languages without Borders, a Brazilian national language program that emerged in 2012, initially focused on English language teaching. This program has been having a great impact in the internationalization of Brazilian higher education as far as languages are concerned, if not because of its monolingual privileging of the English language, certainly because of the institutionalized offer of tuition-free language courses to the academic community. Since its beginning, it has undergone a series of reformulations and is currently the Andifes-Language without Borders network (Resolution no. 01, 2019), opening up to the heavy criticism it received for privileging only one language as *the* language internationalization. This text presents an analysis of one of Language without Borders's popular features, which has been kept since the program's beginning: the courses catalog, a booklet containing information about the courses offered by the participating universities and specialists. We engage with decolonial critiques in the process of exploring the legislative pieces of Language without Borders and discussing the development of the catalog. Our analysis focuses on how English was upheld after the program became Language without Borders to reflect on the approach to English given its discursive construction as the language of science (Jordão & Martinez, 2021). Through an interpretive content analysis, we look into the legislative pieces and the course catalogue available nationally.

Before going any further, it is important that we explain who and where we are in terms of academic background, so readers can have a better idea of why we read and write the way we do, and why we reach the conclusions we do. We are both Brazilian scholars whose careers have been developed in public institutions. By 'public' we mean tuition-free and, for most Human Sciences, completely sponsored by the government. That has allowed us to grow academically amidst strikes, activism, political (and financial) struggles. We believe that it is one of the reasons why we fight for social and cognitive justice (Sousa Santos, 2007), why we side with the silenced and invisibilized, and why the decolonial option (Mignolo, 2011) is so appealing to us.

We speak from decoloniality as devised by the Modernity/Coloniality group of Latin-American scholars such as Quijano, Mignolo, Walsh, and as situated by fellow Brazilian scholars like Menezes de Souza, Duboc, and Martinez, to name but a few. We believe, with Guerrero-Nieto, Jordão, and Veronelli (2022), that decoloniality has three main tenets: visibilization, embodiment, and localization. These are our guidelines hereinafter.

In the next pages, we will examine how and why the concept of "English" and the idea of internationalization of higher education need to be decolonized; next we will go through the legislation that institutionalized the focus of our analysis, Language without Borders. Then we will discuss how we perceive the catalog as on the one hand reinforcing coloniality and on the other delinking from it. Finally, we will present tentative suggestions towards alternative futures for English and internationalization in Brazil.

### **Decoloniality, English and Internationalization**

Decoloniality is more than mere intellectual fashion: it is an option (Mignolo, 2011) that can help us deal with the silencing cast upon whatever was considered different from (and challenging to) the modern/colonial world. As a lingering effect of such silencing, many of us still function under the shadows of colonial difference (Quijano, 2005), that is, the classification and hierarchization of the world's population promoted by the European colonizers. According to Mignolo (2009),

The colonial difference operates by converting differences into values and establishing a hierarchy of human beings ontologically and epistemically. Ontologically, it is assumed that there are inferior human beings. Epistemically, it is assumed that inferior human beings are rational and aesthetically deficient (p. 46).

Such ranking still lingers on and maintains what Sousa Santos (2007) has called an *abyssal line*, an imaginary and powerful line that creates two sides to the distinctions it promotes. One side constructs the other as inferior and irrelevant; such separation produces abyssal *thinking*, whose fundamental characteristic is the "impossibility of the copresence of the two sides of the line" (p. 45). This kind of thinking underlies many of our perspectives on the world today, ranking ontoepistemologies, projecting difference as inferiority.

Therefore, modernity/coloniality has silenced cultures, knowledges, and peoples, placing 'western men' at the center of all that matters, dehumanizing those who do not operate from such assumption and therefore projecting them to

the other side of the abyssal line (i.e. to immaturity, infancy). This ‘western man’ has occupied a central position as far as the English language is concerned. The dissemination of English throughout the world has projected the local ontoepistemology of modernity/coloniality as universal, unmarking the epistemic racism it carries along, the native-speaker construct being one of its violent traits.

The desire to render such ontoepistemologies visible can lead to privileging the pluriversal quality of the world, where simultaneity, heterogeneity, and conflict are positively marked and opportunities to constantly learn with and from alterity become imperative. We need to delink English from the violence made possible by the modern/colonial desire to universality and its *hybris del punto cero* (or *zero point hubris*)—that is, the notion that there is a point outside space and time from which a researcher can observe (Castro-Gómez, 2007)—that have disembodied knowledge and created the illusion that Western knowledge is the only way to access reality/truth, and to teach-learn English.

Menezes de Souza and Duboc (2021) present three movements to a decolonial pedagogy aiming at a pluriversal world: *bring the body back*, *mark the unmarked*, and *reconceptualize language (and communication)*. These strategies are part of the wider decolonial pedagogy brought forward by Menezes de Souza, involving *identifying – interrogating – interrupting* the coloniality that constitutes us. Such pedagogy is crucial to our understanding of how (and why) English has been disseminated around the world (Jalal, 2020) and the effects of this movement not only in the language itself but also on its users worldwide. That is why this section explores these strategies more deeply, for they help us devise the entanglements of English with (de)coloniality and internationalization. Such entanglement is the very focus of our analysis of the Language Without Borders catalog.

*Bringing the body back* refers to the need to localize and situate knowledge and knowers, delinking from universality. Menezes de Souza (Menezes de Souza & Duboc, 2021) explains:

According to Grosfoguel (2013), the historic colonial ego conquiro differs from the modern colonial ego cogito by concealing the body that produces knowledge, thus separating what is said from the enunciating subject. This separation allows for the illusion of universality and unmarked-ness to the extent that what is enunciated, unanchored from a particular, situated location, appears to have universal value and meaning. The proposed decolonial strategy of bringing the body back involves identifying the producing subject (collective or individual) of a particular piece of knowledge (p. 879).

As far as internationalization and English are concerned, bringing the body back suggests, for example, paying attention to the bodies of the actors who benefit from the dissemination of English and from the narrative that it is *the* language of access to science – are they mostly male, white, middle-class, Anglo-saxon bodies (Cameron, 2006)? It also means looking at who is projected to the margins, what knowledges (including languagings) are valued as scientific, which people can be considered part of the game and which cannot. When we stress the need to *bring the body back* we are operating within the realm of visibility and affect, assuming we are not only minds that reason or hearts that feel, but both indissociably, for reason and emotions are inextricably intertwined (Maturana, 2002).

The second strategy, closely related to the first one, is *marking the unmarked*, since it alludes to making present (marked) that which has been made absent, invisible (unmarked). However, here we are closer to enunciation and languaging, stressing the authorial marks that situate every single narrative or world view. When thinking about internationalization, this means we cannot conceive of curricula (or any educational practice) as disembodied, neutral or universal: processes such as selection and arrangement of knowledges are localized in time and space, moved by affect and presence.

*Thinking communication otherwise* seems to flow almost naturally from the two previous strategies. In terms of English, this strategy refers to the crucial movement of conceptualizing language as *languaging*, a word that implies open-ended processes of *becoming* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). *Languaging* is a concept of language that conceptualizes it as a verb, as practice, as something we do rather than an object we can dispose of. As a practice, language becomes alive and belongs to no one or to everyone, which is actually the same: ownership becomes a non-issue here. The focus is on languaging practices in communication, and not on discrete language items or grammatical norms; each situation of enunciation is unique (Bakhtin, 2016) and communication is multidimensional, multimodal. As Pennycook (2012) claims, we should be ready to “unexpected the expected” in (dialogical) contact.

Needless to say, such pedagogy and its strategies are crucial to a more democratic process of internationalization, both in terms of how we negotiate concepts, aims, and modes of internationalizing our practices, and in terms of how such practices are idealized and materialized in the named languages we choose to design education. That is why it has been taken as our analytical orientation in this article.

## Walking Through Legislation

### Science without Borders

We begin this section by discussing Science without Borders (SwB). Even though it is not our focus here, it has played an important role in both Languages without Borders's underpinning constructs and creation, in addition to being one of the largest international scholarship programs funded by a Latin American government.

SwB was decreed in December 2011 and sought to send Brazilian students to institutions considered excellent, based on international rankings, and to attract highly qualified foreigner scholars. According to the Decree of its creation (no. 7642, 2011), this program would contribute to “quality, entrepreneurship, competitiveness, and innovation in priority and strategic areas to Brazil”. Mobility, therefore, was linked to neoliberalism, so the country could be more globally competitive. The reasoning was that meeting this goal would lead to national development—that is, the modern/colonial point of arrival.

In this sense, SwB reflects the dominant modern/colonial imaginary in higher education. Menezes de Souza (2018), however, refers to the program as strategically complicit because, despite aligning with neoliberal goals, SwB was part of a movement of social redistribution, allowing students from the lower classes to study abroad.

During SwB’s implementation, several candidates were unable to reach the proficiency levels their aimed institutions required. This can be explained by the historical process of language learning in Brazil, for the private sector was often considered the only option, which excluded a large part of society that could not pay to learn languages (Paiva, 2003).

The inequality of access and the pursuit for qualifications (and the commodification of education) are modernity/coloniality symptoms. Their identification as problems frequently leads to solution seeking *within the system*. As Stein (2019) explains, in such cases there might be a simplification of the problem (with no acknowledgment of its colonial roots or complexity) and, therefore, proposed solutions will not solve it.

### **English Without Borders (Decree no. 1466): The Beginning**

In SwB, upon identifying the proficiency issue, the solution proposed regarded teaching English so students would score as required. One of the ideas was to hire private English teaching institutions; however, the International Relations Department from the National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education (Andifes) counterproposed that public universities themselves should teach English to the program participants. As a result, English without Borders was created through Decree no. 1466, 2012 with the aim of preparing students for the proficiency exams anglophone universities required. However, in this text, we decided to uniformize the term used to refer to the program, considering that we discuss its trajectory that involves changes, including its name. Therefore, Languages without Borders is utilized, even though the initial version of the program focused only on English.

Language without Borders reflects a broader scenario. It emerged as a quick solution to a complex issue. While it reproduced neoliberalism, its creation avoided a bigger presence of the private sector and it did amplify, even if minimally, students’ access to English. Silva and Silva (2019) explore the sociopolitical role of Languages without Borders: for them, it dealt with the reality of universities receiving students who had not had satisfactory access to English, especially those who entered universities through the implementation of affirmative actions (quota system for public school, black, and indigenous students). As Segato (2021) explains, affirmative actions allowed new groups of students to enter public universities; however, these institutions remained structurally and academically unchanged. Given the dominance of neoliberal discourses and meritocracy, students were supposed to adapt on their own; if they sought to engage with academic mobility, their proficiency was their ‘individual’ responsibility. Languages without Borders was a way to deal with inequality in this scenario, providing students with free English courses.

As a national program, Languages without Borders advanced different kinds of initiatives, all of which free of costs to the target public: a) face-to-face language courses to academic communities; b) an online language course (My English Online - MEO); c) proficiency exams (TOEFL ITP).

The face-to-face courses worked on internationalization-related matters. Each teacher, alongside a Languages without Borders coordinator, would plan what/how to teach. Nonetheless, courses to be offered would have to be selected from a national catalog—which we will discuss further in the following section. MEO, on the other hand, was an online course in five progressive levels to which the government bought a number of passwords for the academic community.

Languages without Borders face-to-face courses were offered to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels A2, B1, and B2. Occasionally there were courses to more beginner levels (A1, A2) and more advanced ones (C1). The issue with CEFR is that it considers language as a norm system and aims to measure the “mastery” learners have over it (Jordão & Martinez, 2021). Additionally, it assumes that learning a language is a linear process, moving from simple to complex structures. That is linked to the colonization of time, excluding the possibility of multiple timelines or relationships with time (Mignolo, 2011). Finally, CEFR emphasizes prestigious varieties (the so-called American and

British English), which are referenced as the ‘right’ way to use the language, and assumes that communication is transparent, and people can understand one another if they master a common language structure (Canagarajah, 2013).

Regarding the application of TOEFL ITP, the idea was to provide access to an international certification free of charge to academic communities. This initiative, on the one hand, refers to the need for proficiency exams for academic mobility – SwB’s aim. On the other hand, many students could not afford such expensive tests on their own, so Languages without Borders came to diminish this inequality. According to Sarmento et al. (2016), the issue was also geographical: not enough places proctored the tests and most application centers were away from small towns, which again would hinder access.

We highlight, however, that international language proficiency exams are an industry permeated by interests—often neoliberal—that involve different agendas. They affect language teaching-learning, policies, beliefs, and sometimes present a retroactive effect (Kobayashi, 2016, Spolsky, 2004). Kobayashi (2016), who studied the practices in the program through interviews and class observation, noticed that although courses were not designed with the exams in mind, students did use them as references, aiming to engage in academic mobility. Therefore, despite not embracing the logic of the exams, the program did not oppose it either.

### **Languages Without Borders (Decree no 973): First Modification**

All three initiatives (courses, MEO, and TOEFL ITP applications) continue to be part of the program as it has undergone modifications. The first big shift took place in 2014, when English without Borders became part of a recently created Languages without Borders. The Decree no. 973 (2014) creating Language without Borders included more languages, such as German, Japanese, French, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese for Foreigners, which would be taught to academic communities and language teachers from basic education.

Nonetheless, the Ministry of Education (MEC), responsible for funding the program, did not treat languages equally. Only those involved with the English language within the program received payment for their work. The other languages were to have volunteers or seek local support from universities; in the rare situations when there was a budget for such languages, payment was considerably lower than to teachers of English. This scenario reflects a broader reality: modern/colonial thinking is based on a totality “that negates, excludes, occludes the difference and the possibilities of other totalities” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 451). In this process, several languages are subalternized and invisibilized in favor of others.

English, specifically, has been placed as the language of science under the modern/colonial perspective (Menezes de Souza & Monte Mór, 2018). Consequently, the production of ‘valid’ knowledge is associated with this language, along with some myths: that it will foster contributions with and get the validation of the global north (Segato, 2021); that more people will have access to ‘quality’ knowledge; that there is only one ‘worthwhile’ English. Moreover, language becomes a means to achieve a goal: to engage in mobility; to get a job; the means to access and produce valid knowledge that can help national development. Funds, therefore, are directed towards English teaching-learning in the hope that these promises are fulfilled.

### **Languages Without Borders (Decree no. 30): The Amplification**

Despite unequal funding, Language without Borders fosters the offer of courses in other languages and paves the way for their growing presence in Brazilian higher education institutions. As the program becomes more independent from SwB (which was discontinued in 2017), its goals are enlarged. Nonetheless, a few underlying notions remain, such as the connection of language learning with ‘useful’ ends for the country and the association of language, academic mobility, and qualification. All of them appear in Decree no. 30, 2016, which amplifies the scope of participant institutions and works towards the development of a national language policy.

### **The Andifes-Languages Without Borders Network (Resolution no. 01)**

In 2019, MEC withdrew financial support. As an alternative, Language without Borders became part of Andifes. In its new configuration, Language without Borders is a network, working mostly with volunteer work by registered professors. Its main aim slightly changed to the promotion of language teacher education (which only appears as a secondary objective in Decree no. 30, 2016), along with the previous goals of language teaching for academic communities and the development of a national language policy (Resolution no. 01, 2019).

To deal with the inequality that favors English, the Language without Borders network, differently from its previous version (when it was a MEC program), assigns no privileges to those who work with English, seeking to treat all languages equally. Thus, no differentiation is made in terms of resources distributed and weight on decision-making. Nonetheless, deciding to treat languages equally does not erase the colonial difference: English continues to be more present in university

courses, as a sort of continuation of the logics and legislation that makes such language the only mandatory language in Brazilian public schools; consequently, there are more English specialists, teachers and students in Language without Borders. Additionally, most universities prefer to invest resources in this language, given its privileged position, despite Language without Borders's attempts to equalize the scenario. Identifying such coloniality is an important step to interrupt it, in line with the aforementioned Menezes de Souza and Duboc's (2021) strategies for decolonial praxis.

From program to network, one Language without Borders initiative has remained: the offer of language courses to academic communities. Courses are chosen from a national catalog, which we address in the following section.

### **The National Catalog For English**

During the existence of Language without Borders (and of English without Borders before), several language courses from the national catalog have been offered. The booklet lists options that include a title and a course description with pieces of information such as course objectives, total duration, level, and bibliographical references. They are guides that delimit the scope of each course, as well as topics to be covered. However, throughout the existence of the program, teachers are free to develop the course as they see fit, to choose whether they will use a textbook or not, for example, but decisions are to be made under the supervision of a Language without Borders coordinator (or specialist, as they are referred to in the network). This means that language concepts, understandings of internationalization and teaching-learning languages change depending on who is in charge of each course, although the course comes from the national catalog.

We highlight that there is room for agency in this process because agents are free to teach according to their perspectives (Johnson & Johnson, 2015), even when these differ from those suggested in the course plan or Language without Borders's documents themselves. Additionally, considering that meaning is not transparent, people will interpret and, consequently, approach the cataloged courses differently (Bakhtin, 2016). In this sense, our analysis does not intend to tackle on every single perspective existing within the program; besides, we are not studying the practices of those involved in the program/network, but presenting our particular perceptions of ideologies that inform Language without Borders.

In the first editions of the program, coordinators would submit their course proposals to the national management team, mostly via an online platform, to be examined and approved/rejected by a board of specialists selected by the management team. There was, therefore, an expectation of controlling the design and content of the courses to be offered nationwide. As per Braga et al. (2021),

Since the establishment of this process, 1,785 courses were approved, appearing in a database of the Management Team (MT) of Language without Borders. Given the number of proposed courses and the MT's perception of the use of different nomenclatures for similar (when not equivalent) courses, and also in order to demarcate the scope of Language without Borders to the use of language for academic purposes – as opposed to of a more general nature – work was done to unify and delimit the 1,785 proposals in the Program's database (p. 124).

The board removed duplicates and checked if courses were in line with the program. The process involved five steps: data gathering and posterior grouping in macro-categories; division of courses based on course load; identification of themes within the macro-categories; selection of the most suitable course plans; and adjustments/suggestions to the course titles and plans (Braga et al., 2021). This board no longer exists in the Language without Borders network; however, many of the courses they selected are part of the current catalog.

The first thing to highlight is the focus on *academic* courses. Language without Borders seeks to amplify access to language learning; however, its focus is specific: language is linked to its immediate academic “usefulness”, since Language without Borders's objectives center on integrating students into the internationalization process (Decree no. 1466, 2012, Decree no. 973, 2014, Decree no. 30, 2016).

Another point of interest to our analysis is the categorization of courses. The first evaluation process on the courses to be offered nationwide resulted in a total of 178 approved courses. The macro-categories created by the evaluation board were, from the most to the least numerous: internationalization (23 types), exams (16), English for specific purposes (11), and culture (7). According to Braga et al. (2021), the *internationalization* macro-category comprises courses that aim to prepare people linguistically to engage in internationalization contexts and opportunities. In turn, the courses focused on *exams* seek to prepare test takers to get better results so they can participate in internationalization initiatives. As for the group *English for specific purposes*, courses address specific demands from various areas of knowledge so academics can be prepared to use the language within their areas of knowledge. Finally, the courses concerned with *culture* aim to enable students to deal with cultural matters, based on critical reflections. According to Braga et al. (2021), the purpose was to empower the target audience for the demand for cultural knowledge that would guide interactions with peers from other higher education institutions, both in the case of international mobility and in the case of welcoming professors, students, and technicians from other countries (p. 136).

As we can see, although there are four macro-categories for the courses, they all relate to “immediate academic ‘usefulness’” as we mentioned above, that is, to internationalization practices.

**Table 1**

*Course Examples per Category*

Macro-categories	Courses
Internationalization	Oral Production: academic interactions and communications
	Everyday Interactions in English
	Text Genres and Creative Writing
Exams	Proficiency exams: familiarization
	IELTS: Preparatory
	TOEFL iBT: Simulations
English for specific purposes	English for specific purposes: Artistic Area
	English for the job market: topics from the corporate world
	English for specific purposes: Health
Culture	Intercultural Communication
	Cultural differences
	English language varieties

In the Language without Borders network specialists can still submit course proposals; however, that is done by sending the plan to their national coordinator or by presenting it in one of the network meetings. Moreover, the categorization remained the same in the latest edition of the catalog (2023), only with a few changes in numbers. There are currently a total of 110 courses of 52 types grouped as follows: internationalization (29 types), exams (11), English for specific purposes (8), culture (4). To exemplify, we list below three courses from each macro-category from the 2023 catalog. Such courses were chosen as examples of the diversity of courses within the macro-categories.

The catalog seems to operate within the modern/colonial logic of separability (Castro-Gómez, 2007), most visible in the classification of courses into categories. But it goes deeper into such logic by focusing on language use and linguistic abilities (such as speaking or writing), as we can see in the category *internationalization* above. This kind of logic can be noticed in our universities and schools in general: that is how we usually deal with knowledge, as if it could be isolated into parts and desiccated. In this sense, the catalog reiterates the coloniality of knowledge. The decolonial exercise we propose to counter such logic is to consider Sousa Santos’ *ecology of knowledges* (2007), that is, to envisage languaging (or *language as practice* as suggested in section 2) as localized multi-dimensional and emergent practices in which knowledges are multiple and co-existent.

On the other hand, the catalog delinks from the modern/colonial linearity, according to which there is only one way to experience time (Mignolo, 2011). Courses are independent yet connected; students can construct their learning trajectories by choosing courses that make more sense to them. There is no linear progression among the courses. Nonetheless, linearity is reinforced in terms of proficiency levels, as candidates only have access to courses in their given level. After the end of the program linked to MEC and, consequently, the termination of TOEFL exams available and of the use of MEO, the Language without Borders network has been trying to find ways to certify students’ proficiency: online placement tests, self-evaluation, analysis of written and/or spoken texts by a selection committee, among others. While those alternatives decenter the position of international proficiency exams, they still operate within the modern/colonial notion that everything can and needs to be measured. The desire to quantify is linked to a pursuit for homogeneity, that is, by making sure students are on ‘the same level’, they would be able to understand the same topics, engage in the same activities—all coming from a common basis of knowledge and language.



Another underlying modern/colonial discourse both in the Language without Borders legislation and the catalog is that of predictability and certainty (even if partial). As per Menezes de Souza and Monte Mór (2018, p. 448), “rationality and science, and the desire to rationally explain the universe led to the connection between knowledge and totality: science came to signify total organized knowledge.” The desire for predictability is linked to a belief in knowledge totality, excluding everything that does not follow ‘scientific’ rules or the very modern/colonial reasoning that traditionally defines Science. This ‘true’ knowledge, considered to be transcendental and as such beyond questioning, would only be achieved by impersonal subjects that research from a neutral perspective. The idea is that the mind would be able to explain everything from a logical rationality, facilitating control through certainty and predictability (Castro-Gómez, 2007, Grosfoguel, 2007). This is to say that Cartesian binaries (mind/body, subject/object) would provide the grounds to a modern/colonial promise according to which “a single, universally relevant knowledge system [...] offers certainty, predictability, consensus (universality)” (Stein & Silva, 2020, p. 552). The coloniality in this promise is its promotion and enabling of epistemicide: all (and everybody) that does not comply with such logics is dismissed as primitive, false, unscientific.

The desire to predict and control teaching and learning is thus connected to how we experience knowledge (and languaging). Learning, in this case, consists of being prepared for future situations, of solving foreseen problems, that is, learning should provide the basis upon which an individual can predict and respond, with reason, to given challenges. This logic underpins the justification for the existence of the courses in Language without Borders: to prepare academics linguistically, predicting which language items they will need to engage in internationalization initiatives, disregarding the uncertainty and instability of encounters involved in contacts with alterity and difference, in interculturality.

Delinking from this desire to control the world around us is an uncomfortable process that causes anxiety, which frequently makes us circularly seek for security and predictability again. As Stein (2019, p. 1778) argues, a decolonial approach requires “that we stay with uncomfortable feelings of uncertainty, insecurity, and equivocal authority, and it will require that we not only do things differently, or even just think about them differently, but that we actually learn to be differently.” The process is not easy and provides no guarantees; rather, it is a learning process in which we make mistakes in a self-implicated manner.

### Further Considerations

Our understanding of the Language without Borders catalog is no different than the way we see education in Brazil. Overall, it is a process tinted by modernity/coloniality and difficult (perhaps impossible) to completely turn into a decolonial endeavor. Some reasons for such difficulty may be, first, that education is done by, to, with and for human beings—students, professors, society, all moved by affect (which does not eliminate reason, but comprises it as one of our emotions, as Maturana (2002) insisted on), constantly involved in a process of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), in endless transformations that do away with certainty and/or predictability. Education thus constantly presents us with unexpected circumstances, in unrepeated events, with people in-the-making and praxes that will never be finished.

How can we prepare for that? As we have seen, some of our suggestions related to internationalization of higher education are that we consider to promote specific ‘delinkings’: from the modern/colonial desires to rank-order knowledges and knowers; from our eagerness to find stability in predictability, security in certainty, and instead that we open up to the beauty and learning inherent in our encounters with difference: not colonial difference, that classifies and fragments, but *cultural* difference that enlarges repertoires, arises curiosity, and stimulates collaborative learning. Cultural difference does so by directing our gaze to violent practices, to silencing and invisibilizing, to the importance of Menezes de Souza’s (Menezes de Souza & Duboc, 2021) three strategies of decolonial pedagogy. In the realm of internationalization and the role of English in this undertaking, such pedagogy demands the plurality and simultaneity that Sousa Santos (2007) sees in the perspective he calls “ecology of knowledges” (and knowers, we would add). It also demands that we see language as practice, as activity rather than as an object to be sold and bought. As action, language is what we do in communication, i.e., *languaging*. The implications of such view to English in processes of internationalization are huge: it places teaching-learning this language, or any other, we dare say, into collaborative (and dialogical) encounters with cultural difference and constant opportunities for learning and opening up our repertoires.

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