CRITICAL COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH: EPISTEMIC-ONTOLOGICAL LOCUS FOR THE EDUCATION OF EDUCATORS AND RESEARCHERS AS AGENTS OF PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

This text discusses the Critical Collaborative Research known in Brazil as PCCol – *Pesquisa Crítica de Colaboração*[3] - which is a practical-theoretical approach used in the development of investigations that focus on understanding and often challenging knowledge production and actions so as to promote de organization of decolonial-and-inclusive schools. Standing on Marxian, Vygotskian and Freirean underpinnings, the text was written from the recordings of two classes delivered by the authors in a Graduate Course called *Critical Research Methodologies,* with participation of some guest professors, such as Maria Cecilia Camargo Magalhães, who also authors this paper. The text is organized from the speeches of the authors on two occasions in which they collaboratively delivered lessons about PCCol, as well as the questions and interventions from the other course participants. The writing procedure interweaves speeches, treated as data, and their analyses, treated as the actual discussion of some of the concepts that base the Research Methodology itself, and that include relational and transformational agency, the Freirean notion of data production from the South rather than the North, professional practice that is personal and collectively responsive, but more specifically, we will discuss the role played by language for the implementation of collaborative interactions, as well as how this type of language is organized.

Keywords: Critical Collaborative Research; Cultural-historical Theory; Education of Educators and Researchers; Resignification and Transformation; Language and the Development of Transformative Agency.

Pesquisa Crítica de Colaboração: lócus epistemo-ontológico para a educação de educadores e pesquisadores como agentes de transformações pessoais e coletivas

Resumo

Este texto discute a Pesquisa Crítica de Colaboração (PCCol), uma abordagem prático-teórica utilizada no desenvolvimento de trabalhos voltados à compreensão de conhecimentos e modos de agir, assim como ao questionamento destes, de modos a promover a formação de uma escola decolonial-e-inclusiva. De base marxiana, freiriana e vygotskiana, o texto foi escrito a partir de duas aulas ministradas no Curso "Critical Research Methodologies", com a presença de professores convidados como a segunda autora deste texto, Maria Cecília C. Magalhães. O presente artigo foi organizado a partir das falas e perguntas dos participantes das duas aulas ministradas por Fidalgo e Magalhães sobre a PCCol, que foram gravadas e transcritas. Em outras palavras, o artigo trará dados produzidos das exposições teórico-metodológicas das apresentadoras e das perguntas e intervenções dos demais participantes, intercaladas de discussão epistemo-metodológica dos conceitos que embasam a PCCol, tais como desenvolvimento da agência relacional e transformadora, a emergência de uma prática profissional pessoal e coletiva responsiva, mas mais fortemente sobre o papel da linguagem na colaboração e como esta se organiza.

Palavras-chave: Pesquisa Crítica de Colaboração (PCCol); Teoria histórico-cultural; Educação de Educadores e Pesquisadores; Ressignificação e Transformação; Linguagem e Desenvolvimento de Agência Transformadora.

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3 Different researchers have named Collaborative Research differently across the Globe. So, we would like to emphasize that we work with what Magalhães (1990- 2022) and collaborators have been calling PCCol.

Investigación Crítica Colaborativa: locus epistemo-ontológico para la formación de educadores y investigadores como agentes de transformaciones personales y colectivas

Resumen

Ese texto aborda la Investigación Colaborativa Crítica (PCCol), cuál enfoque teórico-práctico utilizado en el desarrollo de trabajos destinados a comprender saberes y modos de actuar, así como cuestionarlos, de manera que promuevan la formación de una escuela descolonial-e-inclusiva. Con base marxista, freireana y vygotskiana, el material ha sido escrito a partir de dos clases dictadas en el Curso "Metodologías de Investigación Crítica", además de profesores invitados como la segunda autora de este texto, Maria Cecília C. Magalhães. El presente artículo fue organizado a partir de las charlas, intervenciones y preguntas de los participantes de las dos clases impartidas por Fidalgo y Magalhães acerca de la PCCol, que han sido grabadas y transcritas. En otros términos, el artículo traerá datos producidos a partir de las exposiciones teórico-metodológicas de los expositores y de las preguntas e intervenciones de los demás participantes, interpuestos con una discusión epistemológica-metodológica de los conceptos que subyacen la PCCol, como el desarrollo de relaciones y agencia trasformadora, el surgimiento de una práctica profesional personal y colectiva comprometida, pero más fuertemente acerca del papel del lenguaje en la colaboración y cómo esa se organiza.

Palabras clave: Investigación Colaborativa Crítica (PCCol); Teoría histórico-cultural; Formación de educadores e investigadores; Reencuadre y transformación; Lenguaje y desarrollo de la agencia transformadora.

Por que lutas? Por que lutas? Lutas por seus filhos.
Como lutas por seus filhos?
Lutas por seus pais. Pela herança... não a herança financeira,
Mas pela herança cultural, pelas raízes da sua vida, não?
Lutas para levar as raízes adiante. Lutas pela tradição.
Isso não quer dizer que somos tradicionalistas, não.
É a tradição crescente.
A tradição não é aquela que te prende, mas a que te inspira,
a que te empurra adiante.
Lutas por tuas raízes. É só isso (...).
Quem não tem memória não sabe lutar.

(Papa Francisco, 2021)[4]

In lieu of beginnings

In this text, we partially discuss the theoretical-methodological framework employed in our investigations and those of our supervisees, as members of the research groups that we co-coordinate with colleagues from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP) and the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP). In the first educational institution,

Magalhães and Liberali[5] coordinate LACE – Language in Activities of the School Context. Similarly, Lessa[6] and Fidalgo coordinate ILCAE – Language Inclusion in Educational Activity Settings. At UNIFESP, Fidalgo and Carvalho[7] coordinate ISEF – Social and Educational Inclusion and Teacher Education. ILCAE and LACE began their actitivies in 2002, after their members had begun an extramural program known as PAC – Projeto Ação Cidadã /Citizenship Action Project – which set the bases for many of the teacher education actions that are carried out by these groups until today[8]. All research groups are registered at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development and accredited by their host institutions (PUC-SP and UNIFESP).

We base the debate presented here mostly on the Cultural-Historical Theory (Vygotsky, 1924-34), and the Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1970, 1992, 1996). Data presented and analyzed in this paper are extracted from the speeches of participants (authors included) of a Graduate Course called *Critical Research Methodologies,* which was offered by distance learning to Master's and Doctorate students of three contexts, i.e., the Graduate Programs Education and Health in Childhood and Adolescence (Federal University of São

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4   Why do you fight? Why do you fight? You fight for your children. How do you fight for your children? You fight for your parents. For the heritage… but not for financial inheritance. You fight for cultural heritage, for the roots of your life, don't you? You fight to take these roots forward. You fight for tradition. But this does not mean that we are traditionalists, no. This is emerging tradition. Tradition is not something that binds you, but something that inspires you, that pushes you forward. You fight for your roots. This is all (…). Those who do not have a memory, don't know how to fight (free translation of the Pope's speech)

5   Professor Fernanda Coelho Liberali.
6   Professor Angela B. Cavenaghi T. Lessa.
7   Professor Maria de Fátima Carvalho.
8   Information on this program/project can be found in Liberali et aliae (2007); Lessa et aliae (2005); Fidalgo et aliae (2006).

Paulo – UNIFESP); Education Psychology (Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo – PUC-SP) and Sociocultural Psychology (University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland). More specifically, the text will interweave theoretical-methodological discussion with the speeches – treated here as analyzable data – from two lessons that the authors delivered in the above-mentioned course on the subject of Critical Collaborative Research Methodology (i.e., PCCol – Pesquisa Crítica de Colaboração). We aim at clarifying some aspects of PCCol, especially some of its linguistic components, i.e., the importance – the actual core status – that we place on language as essential for collaborative interchanges to occur, promoting – as they should – revolutionary changes in the *status quo,* or the context where research and teacher education take place.

PCCol and Applied Linguistics: some initial clarification

The authors of this paper are from the field of Applied Linguistics (AL), a broad area of investigation that deals with (perhaps, in our case, we should more precisely say "challenges") the uses we humans make of languages that constitute us and are constituted by us. This alone would (at least partially) situate our work within a critical reflective field, as is the critical perspective of Applied Linguistics. But adhering to Critical Applied Linguistics implies more than challenging the use of language. It implies standing up against colonial attitudes of all sorts, carried out (in most cases) by language, such as social-school exclusion for reasons regarding people with disabilities (Fidalgo, 2006, 2018), migrant children who are not familiar with the language spoken in their country of arrival (Sá & Fidalgo, in print), among others. It implies looking at AL as transgressive (Pennycook, 2006; Pennycook and Makoni, 2020), rather than a fixed discipline, or a subject matter within a box. And, contrary to what many still think, Applied Linguistics is definitely not the application of linguistics. Equating AL with the application of another science could not be farther off the track. We hope that, by defining AL, and especially the perspective that we follow, we can clarify this difference.

As is often the case when we deliver a lesson, we initiated our first class similarly to how we begin this text, i.e, situating ourselves socially so as to clarify where we speak from, acknowledging, therefore, that

views most likely will vary in accordance with the theories and beliefs that underlie practice and even the paths taken in life. The excerpt below shows our explanations:

> *S9: We both speak from Applied Linguistics which we consider a moveable practice, in the sense that Pennycook (2001) states: it's "a form of antidisciplinary knowledge, a way of thinking and doing that is always questioning, always seeking new means of politicization10."*
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> *C: (…) That's very important for us because of the focus on language. Language is the center of our research. So, it is how we can understand other peoples' organization in a collaborative, critical way. (…) And today also in Applied Linguistics, we are worried with, with the colonized ways in which research is conducted, and that's also important. (…)*
>
> *L: and why is it anti-disciplinary?*
>
> *S: Because it doesn't think of… er (…) of one "discipline", as a "subject", the subject of study, an area of study. So, this idea of applied linguistics doesn't focus on one single area of study, but on the merging of different areas of study (…)*
>
> *K: I have a question. The way you explained anti-disciplinary? Is it the same as interdisciplinary?*
> *S: No, no.*
> *K: Ah! Okay.*
> *S: Interdisciplinary is one collaborating with the other in some cases, like, for example, … I will work with my colleague who is … who teaches history, and we are working together in a project. That's not the same thing. We're talking about breaking the barriers, bringing down the walls…*
>
> *C: maybe you can say it's not disciplinary.*

It is possible to confirm from the excerpt of the class that Applied Linguistics may be seen from different perspectives – all the more reason to clarify where one is speaking from. It is true, as K states, that some see AL as interdisciplinary (or cross-disciplinary).

9   In the examples taken from the classes and group discussions, S represents Sueli Fidalgo, and C represents Ciça (Cecilia Magalhães). As for those participating in the lesson, L stands for Laure Kloetzer, I stands for IA (Wanda Aguiar). Others will be clarified as per use in this paper. Apart from those who were teaching the course, the other participants will be referred to by a pseudonym. In this sense, K stands for Kathia, one of the students.
10 The quotation uttered here can be found on page 3 of the book mentioned.

Thus, her doubt. Were we talking about the same thing, but using a different jargon? No. In our case, it is anti-disciplinary because it will employ elements from different areas of study to produce and analyze data, thus clarifying daily matters (for us, those seen in schools) and producing new knowledge. It is also anti-disciplinary because it is transgressive – rather than adhering to the *status quo,* it questions and challenges it with a view to improving the lives of those involved (research participants that may be from the groups of educators, students, parents, to name a few). And it is anti-disciplinary because it seeks to break some of the barriers that bind disciplines or, in other words, break the fragmented organization of the curriculum, which usually sets disciplines side by side on a timetable, and top-down (in order of "importance") on a content list. In the lesson taught, this was thus explained:

> S: (…) we are, we are against the idea, this idea of the school that fragments subjects of study. So you, you enter the classroom, you close your door, and you teach English; the other teacher comes in, closes the door and teaches history. And it's all isolated. It's very fragmented, the school organization is very fragmented, and the university organization is fragment as well.

Nonetheless, it does not stop at the concept of anti-discipline. An area of study that is constantly challenging the state of the art should inevitably challenge itself just as much. And so, C says "*And today also in Applied Linguistics, we are worried with, with the colonized ways in which research is conducted, and that's also important.*" The idea of decolonization is not quite new, nor is the notion of Global South (or the Southern production of knowledge), already discussed by Freire (1992), when he used the word "Sulear" in Portuguese to refer to guidance from the South, in opposition to the word "Nortear", which is quite common in Portuguese, meaning guidance, produced from the root "norte", i.e., North. However, this discussion has gained quite a lot of visibility lately, due to the works of Santos, de Souza and, in Applied Linguistics, that of Pennycook, among others. The latter, in partnership with Makoni (2020, p. 1) states that:

> There is an immediate concern that emerges when we talk of the Global South: Although the term is intended geopolitically, metaphorically, and episte-mologically, it cannot at times escape its geographical reference. While Global South scholars are insistent

that it is a geopolitical concept referring to struggles against inequality, there is often at the same time a pull towards the South. This is not surprising both because the term 'south' is always likely to orient us in that direction and because, given the historical development of colonialism and capitalism, "the epistemological South and the geographical South partially overlap, particularly as regards those countries that were subjected to historical colonialism" (Santos, 2018, p. 1).

In other words, one should remember that looking at knowledge production that arises (or as we would prefer to say, guides us) from the South is much more than a matter of geography, i.e., countries that are in the Southern Hemisphere. If we really consider Freire's terms, we are forced to conclude that *guiding from the South* would certainly refer to different relationships, such as those between the school and the university (often referred to in the other order, i.e, university and school), the worker and the employer, the student and the teacher, the parent and the school, etc. In other words, wherever there is a relationship that could be explained by its top-down relationship, we should try very hard to flip it upside down, and, through listening and acknowledging (i.e, respecting) what others bring to the fore, to the discussion, re-establish a relationship that is either horizontal or, if this is not possible, establish a bottom-up relationship, where participants understand that knowledge is also being produced from the practice to the theory – and not only the other way around. Our understanding of critical, anti-disciplinary, transgressive applied linguistics is that it should attempt to follow precisely this path, though we can see and feel the difficulties that this entails. In the first lesson, we further explained some of the aspects that compose the understanding that we have of the idea of decolonization:

> S: (…) When we speak of decolonization, it's very important. This is not a new concept. Of course, it's been here forever (…). I mean, it's been here for at least 30 years or so. 40. More. (…) and even before that, if we think of all the struggle to diminish matters that are, (…) that are related to injustice like Paulo Freire discussed. So this is not new. It's being used for many years, but what Ciça is saying now is that, in this context of the pandemics, it all becomes very clear. Who are the people? Who are the students who have access to school? Who are the students who have access to knowledge production? Who are the

students who are completely isolated, completely margina-lized in this process of ... er...schooling developments? So, in this sense, we are talking about decolonization now, in the context that we live.

This is further discussed on a paper called *Necroeducação e necrodiscurso: ações e linguagens a serviço da necropolítica*[11] (Magalhães & Fidalgo, in print), where we bring data showing how the poor, black and underprivileged child, living in the outskirts of large cities or in rural areas, as well as those living in states that receive less governmental financial support are expected and set to fail, in a process that Fidalgo (2005), based on Habermas (2004) discusses as school environmental eugenics, which differs from the racial eugenics (Fidalgo, 2006, 2018) that has also been thriving in Brazil for many years, the former adding to the latter a new perspective that, in the pandemic period, has become even more evident due to the lack of resources that strikes some homes[12].

We acknowledge that relationships are rarely on equal terms, especially in social environments such as state schools, where mostly those with few resources study, and where the policies, the cur-riculum and the rules are often ready-made, i.e., are received by the teacher simply to implement them, no questions asked. The truth is that – at least where we have been working in São Paulo and Greater São Paulo, Brazil – the schools receive a package to be put into practice. Standing up to discuss and, where appropriate, challenge this package is part of the role that Applied Linguists have been playing when they approach schools.

There are many ways in which this practice of challenging the state of the art is carried out. We will try to show them in the lessons taught, i.e., we will try to show in the practice of teaching and working with others what we are theoretically discussing, and argu-ing that we do. For example, in one the lesson excerpts above, L. and K. asked questions that requested clari-fication, though K's question requested a confirmation as well – as per Ninin's (2018) explanation about the typology of questions in linguistic analyses.

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11 Necroeducation and necrodiscourse: actions and language at the service of necorpolitics (free translation).

12 Data shows that 15.5% of the Brazilian population, i.e. over 33 million people are currently impoverished to the point of being struck by famine.

L: and why is it antidisciplinary?

(...)

K: I have a question. The way you explained antidiscipli-nary, is it the same as interdisciplinarity?

There are two things that can be explained here: Firstly, lessons should not take the format of lectures, but dialogues. A dialogical lesson is an argumenta-tive text *par excellence*, and an argumentative text is the procedure through which knowledge is co-constructed/produced rather than transmitted. This is Cultural-Historically based, and also follows the Bakhtinian Circle view of the role of dialogical inter-actions (Volóchinov, 1929/2017). We do not believe in transmission of knowledge because it relies on rote learning, and this leads to the exclusion of many. This has been shown in a number of investigations and papers (Magalhães, 1992/2006; 1998/2006; Fidalgo, 2002, 2006, 2018). Co-construction/production of knowledge, on the other hand, relies on what Vygotsky (1934/2001) discussed as the relation between sponta-neous[13] concepts *versus* scientific concepts. According to him:

> (...) the development of the child's spontaneous concepts proceeds upward, and the development of his scientific concepts downward (...)

> In working its slow way upward, an everyday con-cept clears a path for the scientific concept and its downward development. It creates a series of struc-tures necessary for the evolution of a concept's more primitive, elementary aspects, which give it body and vitality. Scientific concepts, in turn, supply structures for the upward development of the child's sponta-neous concepts toward conscious and deliberate use (Vygotsky, 1934/2001, pp. 193-194).

One can see that it is where the two kinds of processes meet, or it is when spontaneous concepts are challenged by new information arising from scientific concepts, that new knowledge can be produced. So, questions and a dialogical organization of the class are important for this new information to be produced and internalized.

Secondly – and also part of this idea of dialogical lessons – is the notion of conflict. When participants

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13 Spontaneous in the sense of mundane, ordinary, day-to-day.

ask a question, they put into motion two intertwined processes: (1) they state to the speaker that their speech was not clear enough. This can be ignored (and often is ignored by most speakers). But, for us, the question (2) poses a conflict for the speaker, who then has to quickly reorganize their explanation in a way that can clarify what had been said, and this allows for the other person to make their own sense of the words uttered – or ask another question if the speech is still not clear, or even to disagree, thus establishing a new path of conflict and co-construction of knowledge. Therefore, a question establishes a conflict that must be dealt with by the interlocutors; it allows both the speaker and the "listener" to build new knowledge that makes sense to both; it allows for meaning to be constructed. The speaker who listens carefully enough to what is asked rebuilds their speech and their way of explaining the topic at hand, i.e., s/he can then make deliberate use of new developed consciousness about that topic. This is what we understand from Volóshinov's notion of listening responsively (1929/2017). In the first class, C explains:

> C: (…) So, when you're collaborating with someone you are listening to them, that's the first thing. We need to listen carefully to what the other is saying. You can talk or expand your question or ask for clarification of what the other is saying. I think that listening is something very important because it is very difficult. This is very important in our classrooms, we can see, in classrooms that people ask questions, sometimes that are exactly what the other student has just asked. Then what do you do? So we need to say - See, did you listen to what your friend has just asked? Let's listen to it again. So, let's see how you can expand his question. So, students have to first learn how to listen carefully, and then learn how to ask questions that are based on argumentative language.

Questions *that are based on argumentative language* are questions that expand – or somehow continue – from where the other question stopped. They are not repetitions. They do not paraphrase, except when the speaker clearly states that they are paraphrasing in order to better comprehend, or check if they understood, and complete with a question. Otherwise, it may seem to the previous speaker that their speech was completely ignored, and this hinders knowledge construction because it obliterates the participation of some people in the group, thus jeopardizing collaborative work, which requires trust in order to take place.

In our view of collaborative-based research methodology, therefore, language plays a very central role. As Liberali (2019) states, critical-collaborative relations need to be organized by means of collaborative argumentation that aims at constructing shared knowledge, but not just any shared knowledge. It needs to be supported by arguments, to present new meanings, values, interests, and sound (and, when necessary, new) theoretical bases. We cannot emphasize enough that it is a practice-theory that aims at stopping the imposition of ideas, not at highlighting it. As Moita Lopes (1998) says, we need to pay attention to avoid seeing the ideas of the strong as strong ideas. It is also this author that argues that this knowledge production procedure requires researchers to listen to all the participants, though not in order to *destroy their arguments* (1998, p. 117) – which is quite common in investigations and in teaching environments.

In short, collaborative processes are essential for the creation of relationships of trust and respect so that each participant may intentionally feel free to raise their doubts, place their own challenges, make suggestions, ask for clarifications, disagree. As John-Steiner (2000) says, by means of collaboration with others, we overcome our limitations, our individualism and alienation. Nonetheless, in order for this to take place, it is necessary that we take cognitive risks and go beyond superficial appearances of conflict because, as we have shown here, collaborating does not simply mean working together. It is a process in which tensions and conflicts between the voices that take part in the same dialogue will always be evident because each participant has been historically constituted through different educational, family and social experiences. Tensions and conflicts reveal contradictions between ideas, values, actions, concepts, reasonings, and feelings, and this creates the possibility of critically reflecting about one's modus operandi, i.e., one's modes of feeling, thinking, acting in the world and in relations to others. As Freire (1970, p. 81) states, this creates the possibility for education to be organized as a "problematizing practice", which at the same time is a practice of freedom rather than a practice of domination and oppression – in turn, a very common and traditional way of viewing education and acting within it. But besides the essential role of language, interaction, trust, what else is PCCol made of? A question asked by Ia (Professor Wanda Aguiar) will allow us to continue in the next section of this paper.

Who is this human being? And who collaborates?

Ia: Now, I would like to say something. I can see that, when you talk about collaboration, it implies a concept about the human being, right? I think that you have a human being in mind, someone who thinks, who asks questions, correct? Who is critical. If not, you would never think that collaboration is important.

Ciça: Yes, that's right. And that is something that we can see in the collaborative processes; at the same time that there is collaboration, each person is unique, because s/he was… had different experiences in life, grew up differently and in different environments, but at the same time, we are thinking that he or she is social because s/he learns with the other. And that's the reason why the argumentative language is so important, because you can discuss with the other to understand how s/he thinks, feels and… and ask him/her to clarify and so build a kind of relationship that allows the other and allows you to understand the other, understand yourself, because sometimes we say some things that the other person is asking for clarification, and you see that you learn with the other, and the other learns with you because you move ahead.

Liberali et al. (2021) state that, in order to organize the collaborative process, there are three very important points to be taken into account: 1) looking at each participant in their total uniqueness, i.e., looking at the other with fairness, as someone who also has the right to be heard and to have their speeches validated and valued, regardless of their political position. If they are human beings, and are in the world, they have the right to be heard. 2) Answering the other is showing them that they deserve to be heard, they are valued, their ideas deserve to be discussed - and even challenged. 3) considering the collectivity is key to the Project of critical construction of a fair and unbiased world, so that the interests, needs, wants of the collectivity are emphasized throughout the production of reality. Thus, the need to listen to others becomes even more important than the need to speak.

Sueli: When Ciça speaks of listening carefully, we can say that we are basing this idea on the Bakhtinian Circle's concept of responsive listening. So, you don't, you don't just sit there and listen. But you listen responsively which means that you are very attentive to what is being said, in order to probe into words. What is probing into words? It is asking questions about what doesn't make sense to you. Or

for example, perhaps what Ia has just said is… she wasn't asking a question, but she was saying to us: "I think you are you should mention the type of human being that you have in mind." So this is listening responsively. You listen to what the person is saying. But you think "Well, perhaps this is missing?" Or "well, they forgot to say that", or "I'm not sure I understood that." By doing this, Ia asked a question about a concept that doesn't make sense, or that might have been missing. Responsive listening is a very important part of collaborative work. And actually, it's a very important part of any knowledge production that is social. If you are producing knowledge socially, then you need to listen responsively, otherwise what you do is persuasion. In other words, you are listening to the people but you are thinking of what you are going to say. That's not listening. It's pretending to listen, but you think your idea is stronger {more important} than the other one's idea. And so you just wait for them to finish. You're not listening. This is persuasion. This is not collaboration. And this is a second concept here that we wanted to oppose to collaboration.

What we were saying here was that the collaborative process goes both ways. It is never linear. It never means that the university academic researcher's role is to teach the teacher in the school (or any other participant). They will teach and learn. As Freire (1996) says, people have different types of knowledge; and we are all learning and teaching. These roles are not socially divided as the traditional educational precepts would have us think. Every participant should be comfortable enough and confident enough to intervene in ways that would allow the others to move forward. If the process were one-sided, i.e., if researchers only taught, and other participants only learned, we would be talking of persuasion; not collaboration. And there would be no equity or fairness in this world construction.

Often, student-researchers fail to ask questions that can actually probe into the words of the other participants, and so miss an opportunity to allow them to rethink their (language) practices. And sometimes, the researcher only realizes this when they initiate the analytical process (the data analysis). However, at these moments, we ask them to be their own other, i.e., look at the data as if they were another person, and analyze their own questions and linguistic interventions, to think at what they might have done differently if they had the chance, and see how much they can learn from the speeches of the other participants. In these moments, the novice researcher can clearly see that even if the other participants did not ressignify

their practices, they themselves have (or are in process of transforming their practices as researchers). In this sense, collaborative work is what we, in the lesson taught, call 'linguistic behavior'.

> S: (…) And when we say it is a linguistic behaviour, this is what we mean: Listening responsively and producing utterances that are based on … that are argumentative (in our case). We think that lessons, for example, are always argumentative… in their construction. And that's why we think we need to ask questions, share opinions during every lesson. A lesson is not a lecture. We don't think of the word 'lecture' as an appropriate word for the way we teach. We have argumentative lessons…

… where concepts and notions are constantly negotiated. Collaborative work assumes that all participants should ressignify their practices (speeches included), regardless of whether they are in a classroom or carrying out research. Everyone has a say and a duty to interact with the others, asking questions, probing into words, even rephrasing or paraphrasing, so that knowledge is re-co-constructed (or co-constructed repeatedly, reviewed repeatedly) - or, as Smyth (1992) says, based on Freire's work, this would be *action reflection*, a cycle, a reflection after each action, and even after the reflection itself, considering that it too is an action.

> S: (…) In intervention research, collaboration aims at establishing trust between participants, bringing them together to share meanings and produce knowledge by working in complimentary ways. So again, as Ia did, we were talking about something and Ia identified that we missed the notion of the kind of human being we have in mind, and she asked the question. She did not actually ask the question, but she posed the idea. So this is a complimentary way of working that creates context in which participants may take risks to establish conflicts and contradictions. (…)

> (…)

> Ciça: Yes. (…) that's a point for us. But there is something I wanted to say about the difference between the relationship…. between the concepts cooperation and its relation to contradiction and conflict. Contradiction is a very important Marxist category. And it's important because it can show the conflicts. That's the reason why contradiction is so important. It's very difficult for us to see contradiction in the discourse, but we can, we can easily see the conflicts through the linguistic verbal or non verbal language. So,

> we can find the conflicts and then you can look for ways to understand the contradiction. So that… so, I don't know if I was clear about this difference.

> (…)

> Ciça: Yeah (…) So. you cooperate when you work together with others, but in different parts of the task, together, but with different purposes. But collaboration is much more doing things together, at the same time (…). So, you go, you learn much more. And you can look at yourself and transform your way of looking and thinking and organizing through collaboration. But with cooperation it is much more difficult…

… Because cooperation fragments collective activity (i.e., each member of the group does one part of the task according to their means and abilities). In collaboration, activities are jointly carried out, jointly discussed throughout the process and continuously restructured, a continuous to-and-fro movement that will enable all participants to learn in a way that Vygotsky (1930/1984) defined as learning that puts into motion a diversity of possibilities for development.

> S: (…) I just wanted to work on what you've {Ia} just said. So when you say that the conflict is at the surface, I agree entirely; Ciça, as well. And I think that's why it's so visible. For us linguists, it's visible in the question. It's visible in the speech in the utterance; the way the person speaks, this is the surface. And that's one of the reasons why we work with the cycle, the critical reflective cycle: Descrever - that's where the surface is. They describe the situation, - the description is at surface. But when we start asking questions for them to go on to Informar (inform and confront), then… these are… we are going beyond the surface {we are creating a locus for the participants to go beyond the surface}. Actually, the question we ask in confrontation (not the question we ask the participant, but the question we ask ourselves, and then we have to find ways of asking the participant) is exactly this: In my reality, by doing what I'm doing, i.e., what I just said in the description, by doing this, am I reaching the objective that I want. So, if you think about it, the informar is finding contradictions beyond the surface, but the confrontar is finding contradictions socially, beyond the surface and socially. That's what the confrontar should do, the confronting part of the critical reflective cycle. And because we're building this together with the participants, it would allow them to reconstruct their practices. So that's, that's the beauty, I think, of the of the reflective cycle. The critical reflective cycle

is precisely this. It's another, of course, it's another frame. It's another theoretical framework, because Smyth was not using Marx's category, but the idea is similar. That's why we say the questions we ask the participants in informar are to allow them to think why; why are they doing what they're doing? Were they brought up like that? So we are looking at the individual. But then, the 'confrontar' is social. It says: Do I achieve the objective that I have envisaged for the classroom by doing this? Do all of us in this school? Are we working in the direction we want to work by doing things the way we are doing? So, in a way, when we look at that framework, at the reflective cycle, we are doing something similar by using other categories, but the idea is the same. Don't you agree, Ciça?

Ciça: Yes. And I say that there are two questions in 'confrontar' that I think are very interesting: what does what I am doing mean? It is asking for the concepts that bases the view of the participants, as unique, yet collaboratively learning with others. And what kind of student/teacher am I constituting with this teaching? That's another thing.

(…)

Ciça: So I think, in 'confrontar', we have the social, the critical part, because then you say, 'well, am I educating students to be critical?' Am I developing agency? So, am I developing students that are going to work to change society?

Laure: These questions, do you ask them directly?

Sueli: No, no, this is… this is what we have in mind, this is where we want to get, but then we have to think in each case, depending on what the participants say, what kind of questions you have to ask to allow them to get to this position, to this point that we have in mind. So no, we never ask participants these direct questions. Because if we did, they would feel defensive. And that's not what we want. We don't want them to feel defensive. We want them to feel comfortable to speak about their practices and the way they constitute this practice.

… and it is never just the researcher. All participants are actively involved in the question-asking and the negotiating-answering components of the lesson/ investigation process.

Ciça: We use modalization too…: Could you tell me what….?

S: That's why I speak of probing into words. We use the words they are using, the words they have just spoken to ask questions that will lead them to reach the point where

they will say, "Oh, I see that that's not what I meant," or, "oh, I don't think that's what I wanted to do". You know? They… but they have to get to that realization, not us. We don't tell them. (…)

The types of questions and linguistic intervention that the researcher uses in this kind of work is at such a fine line between being collaborative and being commanding, dominant or authoritarian that most works in the field discuss this matter, and most Master's and Doctorate students have difficulty to actually carry out this process adequately.

To illustrate what probing into words is, we bring an anecdote: A Master's researcher who was supervised by Sueli, interviewed the parents of a 6-year old deaf student. The mother referred to the other students in the school as 'normal students'. The researcher then asked her how she understood 'normal students'. This type of question exemplifies the discussion held in the lesson transcribed above. In this case, the mother explained that she did not see her son as 'not normal', but society did. But, from that moment on, she did not refer to the school as normal or abnormal ever again, understanding that, by using the expression, she too was strengthening and idea that she with which she did not agree.

In lieu of conclusion – the development of transformative agency

Here, we have discussed some of the concepts that we consider essential to be used in our investigations, especially with a view to developing both transformative agency and a better understanding of the practice-theory relationship, i.e., one in which theory arises from school practices, and require (motivates, supports) the teacher to become an intellectual of their own school work, their own teaching-learning actions.

We consider it important to highlight that, as Ninin and Magalhães (2017, p. 2) state,

> Studies have, in different fields, been dedicated to the understanding of how individuals engage in society and how they can perform their roles in such a manner that may provoke transformations for sustainability. In fact, the focus is to think about how the activities in which the human being is involved are organized so as to push them to act with a view to transformations that will affect the future. In this

sense, the aim in every learning activity is not solely the transformation of the individual, but that of society, precisely by enhancing creative and critical modes of action.

In other words, the investigation methodology briefly discussed here is one of many others that have the focus on provoking "transformations for sustainability". Others, for example, are discussed in this Special Issue of the Psychology Journal. Perhaps, the essential focus on language (during data production and analysis) is an item that may differentiate this methodology (PCCol) from others. In common with the two methodologies discussed in this Special Issue we could mention, besides the main theoretical framework (i.e., Vygotsky's work), the commitment with resignification or/and transformation of society in order to promote justice – which we believe to go beyond the notion of equity (Magalhães et al., 2022).

Besides, in order to promote the objective of transformation, we must support a locus in which all participants can see their transformative agency emerge – from the interactions, from the struggles even. Again, Ninin and Magalhães (2017, p. 5) say that "In this perspective, the transformative agency emerges from the displays of contradictions, i.e., displays of conflicts and dilemmas experienced by the subjects when involved in collective activities.".

One could say that the focus on collectivity carries with it the need to also maintain the focus on each one's agency uniqueness – and this inevitably will bring to the fore conflicts that must be dealt with throughout the entire linguistic process of socially re-co-construct knowledge.

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