

Queering Bolsonaro's mediatic discourse: Strengthening Brazilian LGBTQIA+ communities through language education

Original study

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Abstract: Contemporary societies, especially some Western countries, have faced the return of neoconservatism, along with a desire for homogeneity, consensus, standardization, polarizations, and universalism in several social relations. With the election of alt-right, authoritarian, misogynist, and homophobic Jair Bolsonaro in 2018, many Brazilian citizens have faced a herculean challenge in relation to the maintenance of democracy and the provision of citizenship and critical education. The purpose of this paper is to problematize some media discourse produced by Bolsonaro and to investigate how such discourse has influenced the lives and education of our research participants (pre-service teachers). The first section investigates discourses and regimes of truth by explaining how discourses and ideologies influence our students' lives and their future career. Section two points to the urgency of problematizing homophobic discourses, and section three queers Bolsonaro as an act of resistance.

Keywords: Bolsonaro; governmental discourses; LGBTQIA+ communities; language education.

INTRODUCTION

Brazil has been entrenched in controversy since the election of Jair Bolsonaro as President in 2018. According to Fonseca et al. (2020, 222), Brazil is currently experiencing a “resurgence of authoritarianism on the part of the Bolsonaro’s government” and respect for any form of sexual and gender diversity and rights relating to it are indeed not part of his political agenda. Whereas the previous governments of Lula da Silva (2003–2010) and Dilma Rousseff (2011–2016) implemented important national policies for the protection and empowerment of women and LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other possibilities/ variations of gender and sexuality) communities (Borba 2019), the current government has not implemented policies favoring these identities. On the contrary, under the slogan “Brazil above everything. God above everyone”, Bolsonaro’s government has continually emphasized its indifference and hatred towards LGBTQIA+ communities

by reaffirming that the Brazilian family should be conservative and heteronormative (Ring 2019).

Former presidents Lula and Dilma implemented the Ministry of Women, Racial Equality and Human Rights, the legalization of same sex marriage, and the project Brazil Without Homophobia, among other social development initiatives (Borba 2019). These national laws and policies empowered political and social lives of LGBTQIA+ communities as public awareness campaigns deconstructed homophobia and facilitated important formal and informal educational programs aimed towards respecting LGBTQIA+ communities.

Unfortunately, the current alt-right movement in Brazil, led by Bolsonaro, has stated that these changes towards LGBTQIA+ inclusion go against the values of the conservative middle class (Borba 2019). Bolsonaro’s motives for spreading homophobia aim to bolster the support of some of his evangelical voters, and when political

leaders begin to demoralize LGBTQIA+ communities, they grant their citizenry permission to do the same (Ferraz, Mizan 2019). Thus, one of the ways to solve this negative impact may be through language education, as it offers a potential emancipatory and resistant space for LGBTQIA+ people.

While there can be several definitions of language education, according to Ferraz (2018), language education revisits traditional language teaching/learning paradigms and contends that language students should be linguistically educated through sociohistorical and critical perspectives. There is an urgency in language education for more queer research in Brazil given the oppressive elements of the current political regime. We respond to this urgency by arguing that queer theory, as understood in a Foucauldian sense, is a useful lens for language researchers and educators who wish to explore gender and sexual diversity in their practice.

There are two important steps in this study as we briefly discuss language education. The first one analyzes discourse from mass media and social media as contextual material for our critique of the current Brazilian government. Mass media and social media are often conflicting and contradictory, as both have produced their own regimes of truth that can influence the passive learner. We (as critical language educators) must be critically aware of our media choices, but also remain cautious of the traps and fallacies put forward by both forms of media. The second one recognizes that we are situated within complex modern, traditional, conservative, and neoliberal-capitalist political contexts, and even if we consider ourselves critical language educators, in Freirean terms, we must recognize that our writing style can be binary and positivistic. Building a critical momentum is difficult, and these two moves are the starting points for a necessary political and social movement through language education.

The purpose of this paper is to problematize the discourse produced by Bolsonaro and to examine how such discourse has influenced the lives and education of our research participants (i.e., pre-service teachers of English Language Education). As we explain below, the paper draws on discourse studies (Foucault 1972, 1978, 1980, 1988), gender and sexuality studies (Butler 1990, 2011), and queer theories (Gedro, Mizzi 2014; Miskolci 2011; Pelúcio 2016). The first section, *LGBTQIA+ Communities and Bolsonaro’s Discourse*, investigates discourse and regimes of truth by explaining how they influence our students’ lives and their future careers. Section two, *Queer Theory in Brazil*, points to the urgency of problematizing homophobic discourse, and section three, *Queering Bolsonaro: Resisting and Fighting Back*, queers Bolsonaro as an act of resistance.

In this article, the reviews of literature and data are presented and problematized together. The data is based on qualitative research using virtual ethnography as the method for data collection. According to Hine (2000, 65), “virtual ethnography involves intensive engagement

with mediated interaction. [...] This kind of engagement adds a new dimension to the exploration of the use of the medium in context”. In other words, virtual ethnography expands the traditional face-to-face ethnography by offering the possibility of virtual exchange and distance communication that can reach various communities. We applied queer theory and gay and lesbian approaches to our virtual ethnography. This application advocates for an emphasis on processes of normalization including those of race, class, and age differences “along with the context of place, culture and time in researching experiences, discourses and identities related to this normalizing sexual order” (Filax et al. 2005, 81). According to Filax et al. (2005), research informed by queer theory can engage several different kinds of social science research methods. They argue that

because queer theory is primarily interested in how particular orderings of sexuality and gendering have been given primacy over others, the questions that guide research focus on both the constructions of and the experiences of personal and collective identities (Filax et al. 2005, 84).

For this study, we investigated the experiences of personal and collective identities of gay, lesbian, asexual, and heterosexual people in the city of São Paulo in Brazil.

The participants are all pre-service teachers of the English Language Education at the University of São Paulo. This population was chosen especially because university degree programs in English Language Education in Brazil generally do not include discussions such as gender and sexuality in the curriculum. The researchers saw an opportunity to amplify sexual and gender diversity perspectives among pre-service teachers. The data were obtained by means of two virtual meetings in which we recruited 10 participants. The table below shows their pseudonyms, ages, and sexual orientations:

Pseudonym	Age	Declared gender and sexual orientation
Jonas	20	gay man
Miguel	21	heterosexual man
Denis	21	heterosexual man
Antonio	21	heterosexual man
Louis	23	gay man
Lilian	24	heterosexual woman
Vivian	20	heterosexual woman
Gianny	23	asexual woman

Table 1. Meeting 1 (May 4th, 2020)

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Pseudonym	Age	Declared gender and sexual orientation
Luana	24	heterosexual woman
Renata	23	lesbian woman

Table 2. Meeting 2 (May 5th, 2020).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Discussions took about 2 hours and were carried out in the Portuguese language. The authors transcribed the excerpts and translated them into English. Students' names were changed to protect participant confidentiality. Both meetings focused on sexuality, homosexuality, and homophobia in Brazil, and participants were asked to comment on the four questions below:

1. How do you relate to the LGBTQIA+ communities?
2. How has Brazilian society dealt with these communities? More specifically, how has Brazilian Government been dealing with LGBTQIA+ themes?
3. As future teachers, how would you include this discussion in your classes?
4. What else should be included in this research project?

The significance of these questions is related to our ambition to understand the place of queer theories in language education in Brazil. To a certain extent, the questions respond to Filax et al.'s (2005, 84) proposal of gay and lesbian approaches to research: "What meanings do those who identify in different sexuality categories bring to their daily, lived experiences?" (related to question 1 above); "How are gay, lesbian, transgendered and heterosexual identities socially structured and policed?" (related to question 2 above); and "How are these experiences of identity influential to the organization of societies and cultures?" (related to question 3 above). In the next section, we explore the participants' answers to questions one and two above by discussing how LGBTQIA+ communities have been acknowledged under Bolsonaro's government.

1 LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITIES AND BOLSONARO'S DISCOURSE

"Nobody likes homosexuals, right? Nobody does. We put up with them."—Jair Bolsonaro (Ericgalles 2011, 0:25)

In the book *The History of Sexuality* (1978) Foucault refers to power relations that are inherent in discourses of sexuality. As he points out, "the nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life [...] with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology" (Foucault 1978, 43). What remains of homosexuality are labels of the different, dysfunctional, mysterious, abject, and odd. In this sense, "a person" that

becomes "a body" becomes nothing but "a sexuality" that is not acceptable in the concept of the bourgeois family, which is strengthened by religious institutions.

According to Foucault, it was in this context that there came the discursive formation of sexuality, in which heterosexuality was casted as the "norm." Discursive formations, in this view, are the statements which govern the positions to which the subject ought to be constrained, prescribing the "set of rules" common to all of those who comply. Through a "working of powers", constitutive of the genealogies, there are several subjugated knowledges, produced through the established discursive formations that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: "naive" knowledge, located down on the hierarchy or beneath the required level of scientific expertise.

Ultimately, Foucault questions the view that has led us to the illusion that truth would be something of the realm of objectivity. In this sense, truth is produced through discourse, it is "a thing of this world" (Foucault 1980, 131) and therefore subject to contextual interpretations. Following this course of thought, he states that there are types of discourse that are accepted as true, which in turn constitute a regime of truth of a given society: discourses that will be valued as true in opposition to others valued as false. For Foucault (1980), this means "seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false" (Foucault 1980, 131). By the same token, we could argue that ideology would be within the regime of truth established in a society through history.

When a public person like Jair Bolsonaro attacks minoritized peoples on the basis of their sexuality, gender, or race, he is attempting to consolidate a form of discourse that is underpinned by a specific regime of truth. This regime has been successfully employed by several far-right leaders in the world. For them, there is no alleged bias permeating their discourses. This becomes clear in two of our students' critique of Bolsonaro's claims:

Louis: I think that his discourse made people act against this kind of education. What I mean is that the president doesn't need to create a law against LGBTQIA+ people. He can simply legitimize hate through his discourse. I will never forget what happened to my family when he won the election: right after he won, I was with my boyfriend at my mom's, and then a car passed by in front of my building and people screamed: "The president is going to kill the faggots". This was very shocking to me. This shows a politics of extermination through discourse. That's what he's doing.

Renata: This government was an absurd idea before it came to power, it was trash, and now it has gotten worse. We LGBTs have no support from the government. I've heard of friends who got married at the end of 2018. They got married in a hurry,

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you see, they were not even living together, they didn't have a fridge, but they got married in a rush because they were afraid of losing their rights after Bolsonaro's election. Society is not helpful as well. It does not support this community: we can see this in our own families!

In 2018, Brazil went through its most polarized and decisive election since its re-democratization process, which took place in the 1980s after a period of brutal dictatorship that lasted for two decades. Seen, at that time, as the "Trump of the tropics" (BBC News 2018), Bolsonaro made use of homophobic discourse to reify the traditional, heteronormative Brazilian family.

The racist, homophobic, xenophobic, and misogynous statements Bolsonaro (re)produced in the media and the subsequent effects they had on those who support him may be seen through the lens of the dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure. As our students Louis and Renata observe, Bolsonaro's discourse represents his priorities, and through his position as a leader, he expands his oppression by legitimizing those who agree with him to vociferate the same sentiments without remorse.

Similarly, Bolsonaro and his supporters seek to endorse an ideology that changes the significance of pluralism to that of homogeneity. In fact, according to Galindo et al. (2017), the cis-heteronormative culture in Brazil marginalizes LGBTQIA+ people once sexuality has become a sort of dispositive, in a Foucauldian sense, articulated so that a set of specific practices are organized, institutionalized, and enacted as natural and adequate.

More recently, in a speech during the 74th session of the UN General Assembly, Bolsonaro claimed that "ideology has invaded our homes" and "ideology has invaded human soul itself so that it could chase God away as well as the dignity He gave us" (Verdélío 2019, 1, our translation). By making use of such discourse, Bolsonaro strived to bring forward a regime of truth long-established and maintained through religious dominance—or, more specifically, his interpretation of Christianization. Galindo et al. (2017) have contended that many propositions or proposed laws being debated in Brazil have been put forward by conservative religious groups. The authors also claim that, according to the Alt-Right¹, the menace of ideology reaches "culture, education and media" to the extent they must be defeated so that the order of things can be re-established. By 'order of things' they mean the maintenance of a regime of truth which chooses what (and who) must be regarded as part of the accepted norm as well as what (and who) must be put aside and marginalized.

If we assume that meaning is conveyed not by its content, but by the intersection of enunciative positions,

we can also assume that it is dependent on the sociohistorical context in which this intersectionality inserts itself, which connects to the Foucauldian concept of genealogy. As Sara Mills (2003, 5) explains, Foucault's "genealogy is a development of archaeological analysis which is more concerned with the workings of power and with describing the "history of the present"". Mills further argues that Foucault's genealogy is also concerned "with an ontology of ourselves, that is, we need "to turn that analytic gaze to the condition under which we, as individuals, exist and what causes us to exist in the way we do" (Mills 2003, 5). This point can be perceived in Louis's words:

I come from the East zone of the city and in my childhood and my adolescence I suffered bullying in school. (...) I saw myself as a gay person, but I never came out. It was just when I started University—USP—that I felt good with myself. It was a big rupture because it was in this environment that I felt welcomed. Nowadays, I feel like I am in a bubble of love because I feel these sexualities are more present than before.

Louis's narrative portrays the history of many LGBTQIA+ people who have not been allowed to fully experience their bodies, genders, sexualities, and affections lest they suffer from discursive to physical forms of violence. At the same time, Louis acknowledges that it is by speaking out and standing up for who they are that the community resists and fights the forces that seek to silence them.

Such proposition relates to Foucault's (1977) genealogical analysis of homosexuality. The author contends that the several discourses which appeared in the nineteenth century established means of control and regulation of those who were perceived as perverse and deviant. However, it was such context that made it possible for a "reverse discourse" to be introduced. Hence, "homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf" (Foucault 1978, 101) and, in doing so, incorporated the discourses and vocabularies which have sought to delegitimize it as weapons of resistance.

2 QUEER THEORY IN BRAZIL

If, as Foucault proposes, we begin to observe ways in which homosexuality absorbs and makes use of what had first constrained it, we cannot help but establish a parallel between such context and the use of "queer". As Teresa de Lauretis (2019) has explained, the term queer has been used for more than four centuries, the meaning which it had been initially associated with was not related to sexual dissidences, but to all the bodies perceived as undesirable and worthless. For instance, it was only after the trial of writer Oscar Wilde that the term

1 The Alt-Right Movement in Brazil follows former US President Trump's white supremacist propaganda. For example, Jair Bolsonaro's culture secretary paraphrased Nazi Propaganda by minister Joseph Goebbels (Phillips 2020).

"queer" was associated with homosexuality, its usage designating a form of sexual stigmatization.

However, in the light of political effervescence that governed the sixties and the seventies, the term "queer" was embraced as a declaration of pride by the gay liberation movement. According to Gedro and Mizzi (2014, 449), "If the term queer becomes a marker of a resistance, then 'queer theory' forms the theoretical pulse to the movement". This draws connections to de Lauretis' (1991) scholarly work on lesbian and gay male sexualities. In de Lauretis' terms, 'queer' in the scholar context would convey "a double emphasis—on the conceptual and speculative work involved in discourse production, and on the necessary critical work of deconstructing our own discourses and their constructed silences" (de Lauretis 1991, 6).

It is of relevance to pinpoint that, unlike in the United States, queer theory was not embraced as part of a political expression of social movements in Brazil. Instead, it entered the front door of universities since it was first framed as theories within research contexts. We do believe that even nowadays queer theory needs to be acknowledged and wrestled within academia and by social movements and educational stakeholders in Brazil. In this sense, Miskolci (2011) points out that while queer theory in Brazil probably had the reading of Judith Butler as the starting point, its creative breakthrough took place in 2001 when Brazilian educator Guacira Lopes Louro published the paper *Teoria Queer: uma política pós-identitária para a Educação*.

Louro calls attention to the fact that, by the end of the 1970s, the homosexual rights movement shifted its activism more structurally, with meetings being organized and newspapers being released. Alongside, a "theoretical and political discourse" emerged, which aimed at portraying homosexuality as something positive to identity-development (Louro 2001, 544). As a result, there came the development of a new type of subject and identity with all their possibilities and limitations. Louro explains that the movement embraced an assimilationist attitude; that is, instead of unveiling and dismantling the mechanisms through which sexual hegemonic values were established, the movement sought to reclaim its place in 'normality'. Being very much aligned with white, middle-class values, their major concern was to show society they were respectable, 'normal' people (Miskolci 2017, 25). At the same time, nonetheless, the queer movement raised its voice by questioning the heteronormativity that would potentially be incorporated into gay and lesbian experiences. Heteronormativity, in this sense, is defined as the set of prescribed rules that positions heterosexuality as dominant, and this dominance permeates society, even if not made explicit (Miskolci, Pelúcio 2008). The idea of a homosexual identity, once thought to be unified, began to fall apart and new "post-identitarian propositions and formulations" (Louro 2001, 544) were on the horizon.

Digging further, Veras and Pedro (2017) argue that a "queer historiographical operation" would be important

for the unravelling of a binary logic that permeates the formation of societies, such as man and woman, masculine and feminine, heterosexual and homosexual, normal and abnormal. They argue that such "queer historiographical operation" can "deconstruct the constitution of these pairs" and uncover "power relations (let us remind of Michel Foucault) that legitimate them" (Veras, Pedro 2017, 137, our translation). Some of these regulating forces that are to be uncovered are materialized through Bolsonaro's discourse aimed to constantly and recklessly assail and taunt LGBTQIA+ people's refusal to comply with heteronormativity.

Luana, another participant in our study, expands the discussion by criticizing Damares Alves, Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights, whose conservative and religious approaches come as no shock. In 2016, Alves, who is an evangelical pastor, clamored during a congregation: "It is time for the church to tell the nation that we have come. It is time for the church to govern" (Phillips 2018, 5). In this sense Luana shares:

She has stated that boys wear blue and girls wear pink, and this is something absurd! Also, the supporters of this government help with the attacks towards the LGBT community. So, the government, the minister of the family, and their supporters are all attacking LGBT communities in this country right now.

Luana is referring to a specific scene that became viral. During Damares' inaugural speech, she stated that "it's a new era in Brazil: boys wear blue and girls wear pink". Declaring that under Bolsonaro's government there would be no room for "ideological indoctrination of children and teenagers in Brazil", she continued that "girls will be princesses and boys will be princes" (Madov 2019, 1).

Similarly to Bolsonaro, Damares also asserts that there would be an alleged indoctrination taking place, that is, allowing girls to be princesses and boys to be princes would imply reclaiming the so-called 'natural' state of things. Independently of the cultural layers which fail to be acknowledged by the minister, such mindset draws on limited notions of gender that Damares insists on defending and overshadows matters that are far more complex than the binary facade blue for boys / pink for girls. As Gedro and Mizzi (2014, 446) explain, "it is about how women and men are assigned different roles, responsibilities, and respect by authority and collegial figures based on their sex in their daily activities".

Having said that, we may use Butler's (1990, 7) work to better develop our reasoning. "What is sex, anyways?", she asks. Would it be pre-cultural and pre-discursive? Would it represent a biological truth? What she put forward in her book *Gender Trouble* was that "If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender". Following this line of thought, she questions "to what extent is 'identity' a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience?" (Butler 1990, 16).

Drawing on Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory, Butler proposes that gender is constructed by means of performative acts, that is, it is through the materiality of socially, culturally, and historically shared acts that we construct it. Considering its performative character, we may say we are in a constant process of reconstituting gender. In this sense and resorting to Foucault's contribution, Butler questions "to what extent do regulatory practices of gender formation and division constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed, the self-identical status of the person?" (Butler 1990, 16). We suggest that Butler's account on gender is an invitation to rethink the category of identity to its very core for, once it is produced by means of heteronormativity, a person who fails to conform to this "internal coherence of the subject" is therefore dehumanized, becoming abject.

Building on Butler, Gedro and Mizzi (2014, 447) contend that gender is continually being reconstituted by a range of repetitive and regulatory acts that operate outside of the self. Gender is not something a person is born with; rather, gender is constructed according to social rules and practices that assign rigid masculine and feminine roles to men and women.

Similarly, Guacira Lopes Louro (2008, 18, our translation) tells us that "the construction of genders and sexualities occurs through innumerable learnings and practices, it is insinuated in the most diverse situations, and undertaken in an explicit or disguised manner by an inexhaustible set of social and cultural instances", and all this happens in very subtle and naturalizing ways.

3 QUEERING BOLSONARO: RESISTING AND FIGHTING BACK

Bolsonaro's crusade against Brazilian LGBTQIA+ people is not a recent phenomenon. On March 5, 2019, he tweeted a pornographic video reportedly filmed during carnival in Brazil (Londono, 2019). The tweet was banned from Twitter, but Bolsonaro's attempt to discredit the community and the Brazilian carnival was supported by many Brazilians who voted for him. In addition, on December 20, 2019, he launched a homophobic attack on a journalist, stating that "You have a terrible homosexual face" (UOL 2019, 1:00). He was applauded by his supporters, who laughed at the mockery. Bolsonaro had already previously targeted the LGBTQIA+ communities. In 2011, he said he would be "incapable of loving a homosexual son" (El País 2018, 1:07). In 2002, he declared, "I won't fight against it nor discriminate it, but if I see two men kissing each other on the street, I'll beat them up" (Suwwan 2002).

We have pointed out that not only do Bolsonaro's words represent official discourses, but they also signify them, by maintaining a regime of truth established by his homophobic discourses. As can be seen from the data, the participants acknowledge the symbolic violence in Bolsonaro's discourses, and the potential of physical violence aimed towards LGBTQIA+ subjects. Likewise,

we believe the participants showcase their need to resist such demeaning discourses.

A case can be made to queer Bolsonaro, as a form of counter-hegemony and resistance. This can be seen through the recognition of the value of queer theory in students' education and lives. As Renata puts it, "I just realized I called myself a lesbian when I entered University; that is when I started studying feminism and then I started studying the lesbian feminism and Queer Theory." Put differently, when faced with harsh homophobia environments, there is agency in troubling what the oppressor represents, expresses, and constructs.

We suggest embracing queer theory as a set of epistemological and political apparatuses that equip queer bodies and subjectivities so that they resist and demand their humanity to be recognized without having to conform to established and imposed regimes of truth. It is about putting at stake the forms of intelligibility that so often marginalize subaltern bodies. But how, one may ask, can we 'queer Bolsonaro', that is, how can we transform what is stigma and violence into *sine qua non* resistance and fight?

In the first chapter of Grada Kilomba's (2010) book *Plantation Memories*, titled *The Mask*, the author analyses the symbolisms of the "mask of speechlessness", a brutal instrument forced onto enslaved people that was a constitutive part of the colonial project Europe had developed. Kilomba states that it is the mouth that represents enunciation and, as far as racism is concerned, "it represents the organ *whites* want—and need—to control [original italics]", and the mask, in this sense, would carry a perception of "speechlessness and fear, inasmuch as the mouth was a place of both muteness and torture" (Kilomba 2010, 16). Through this notion, we infer that speech bears the possibility of creating things, truths, and power but it also creates silencing, violence, and oppression.

Thus, queering Bolsonaro means fighting against the symbolic mask of speechlessness. From the very moment we experience this silencing, this violence, and this oppression, and turn them into an embodiment of subversion, we may generate language resistance. Queering Bolsonaro means that we do not wish to be 'normal' as purported by Bolsonaro, for 'normality' is a fragile construct that requires reinforcement unceasingly. Queering Bolsonaro states that it is of little account if "nobody likes" us, as he affirmed, for we do not need such approval or likeability to exist; what we need is the possibility of remaining as "multitude of differences" (Preciado 2011, 18) that calls into question various regimes of truth. It is about using, twisting, confronting, and adapting Bolsonaro's words so that we reclaim our bodies and argue, every single day, that we do not wish to *fit* into discourses of normalization, but to *be* our own identities, practices, relations, and understandings.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary societies, especially Western countries, have faced the return of neoconservatism, and an

extreme validation of neoliberalism. Along with these moves, we have witnessed a desire for homogeneity, consensus, standardization, passivity, binarisms, polarizations, and universalism in several social relations. In this sense, Brazil stands as a frustrating case. With the election of alt-right, authoritarian, misogynist, and homophobic Jair Bolsonaro in 2018, millions of Brazilian citizens (at least the ones who did not vote for him) and educators have faced a herculean challenge concerning the maintenance of democracy and the provision of education. The relation between the federal government and the educational field should be smooth yet vigorous. However, it has turned out to be an ideological persecution endorsed and stimulated by this government's politics, something based on extremisms, fascisms and neoliberalism present in many nation states (Brazil included) in the world (Ferraz, Mizan 2019). How to respond, we are left wondering, "how can one deal with superdiversity and pluriversity intrinsic to these realms?" (Ferraz, Mizan 2019, 1376). What is our role as language educators in contexts where silencing and polarization, as well as the subsequent oversimplification of matters, dawn upon us? These questions are at stake for everyone who wishes to collectively unpack and ethically respond to the challenges people face, since there are expressions of religious, racist, homophobic, anti-environmentalist, pro-guns, market-driven + corporate + neoliberal, and authoritarian decisions the present Brazilian government has taken (Ferraz, Mizan 2019).

In response to these expressions, we argue that language education for sexual and gender diversity needs to encompass:

1) *A conceptualization beyond gender and sexuality categories*: In this sense, the discussion on Foucauldian queer theory and intersectionality might be a good start. It is paramount to pay attention to the contradictions that are inherent to the relations between gender, sexuality, class, race, and educational background, bearing in mind the menaces of conforming to pre-determined rules instead of demanding more acceptance of diversity. Besides shedding light on the urgency of expanding categories we usually deal with, we point to the power relations that constitute our society—or, as Mizzi and Byrne (2015, 359) observe, a "marginalization process" whose outcome is, "in practical terms, unbalanced power structures with little or no representation of marginal voices".

2) *Self-critique and dialogue*: Thinking critically about ourselves and our discursive practices helps us realize that we are one way or another embedded in those unbalanced power relations, which, as Foucault reminds, are never one-sided. This means using our voices to share and using our ears to listen. An education that aims at social transformation and emancipation requires dialogue as well as collective efforts. After all, "thinking with others and with oneself might constitute a process in which change is provided, for it consolidates the very idea of dialogue [original italics]" (Duboc, Ferraz 2018, 242).

Having said that, we keep the conversation focused on the very ongoing resilience of LGBTQIA+ people as defiance of what drives government leaders. By queering Bolsonaro, we suggest that the existence and perseverance of those who have been historically marginalized is evidence that Bolsonaro's truth is a fallacy; it also shows that our counter-hegemonic behaviors involve the daily questioning of the fragile heteronormativity he has struggled to build. Ultimately, the existence of those who escape hegemony represents an unwavering call for mistrusting and suspending 'truths'. Through language education and other cultural spaces, we will resist oppression and fight back against it.

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