Where is the noise? Rethinking language, meaning, and noise through a decolonial and crip orientation

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INTRODUCTION

Autism is commonly understood through the lens of non-autistic experts and their ethnocentric and gendered methods, which can reduce its complexity and make some concerns invisible. Autistic people can have different relationships with language, externally understood as "noisy," "nonsense," or even disregarded as linguistic production when manifested (Yergeau 2013, Rodas 2018). As a tacit practice, there is even an acceptable type of noise in spaces such as schools, assumed to be natural or even unperceived as such: bells, shouts, chair drag. In contrast, some types of manifestations that neurodivergent people produce can be easily perceived as incorrect or inappropriate (Wood 2018). Still, Milton's (2012) proposal about the "double empathy problem" can remind us that sometimes the noisy are the others. Roughly, the author maintains that miscommunication between autistic and non-autistic people is a two-way issue caused by difficulties in understanding on both sides involved. Simply put, walking individually around in a classroom as a way to think better - a common trait among autistic people - will probably be a bigger issue in a school than an entire class dragging a chair to do a conversation activity in a circle.

The hegemonic communicational transparency myth (Harris 2002) seduces us to naively search for completeness in the linguistic code. This myth of systemic completeness of a transparently shared language relegates everything outside these parameters to noise or unmeaningful manifestations, which may lead specialists to equate, for example, forms of communication of non-speaking autistic people with the behavioral performances of non-human animals trained to mimic certain human-like movements (Kedar 2016). This way of considering language still crosses many academic and non-academic ways of approaching this subject and it can be presupposed even in some ways of thinking about multilingualism. Due to this, it is easy to erroneously believe that some non-canonical language uses would be a sign of deficit or disease. This is even easier to occur when these ways to construct meaning - divergent, queer, crip - are unexpected or undesirable in a kind of "bodymind" (Kafer

2013) normativity that still rules our contemporary hegemonic geo-onto-epistemologies on language studies (Henner, Robinson 2021; Canagarajah 2022).

I also argue that, beyond the limits of abyssal thinking (Santos 2007), many proposed forms of multilingualism can still sound like a monolingualism of the other, from which, as Derrida (2001) would put it, the unexpected other has "but one language - yet that language is not [yours]." Specifically, I consider that this occurs in the case of autistic people and that this is related not only but largely to the current way in which language and communication are still perceived. This, in turn, is linked to modern linguistics and, more broadly, to the same Western science that propelled colonization and now still sustains coloniality. To worsen, even when an autistic's work starts to gain attention in academic settings, readings of such materials often consider them raw materials subject to external and legitimate experts (Milton Bracher 2013).

Challenging these questions, the project "Translating Oneself: Autism in the First Person in Academic Practice" aimed to increase the visibility of the autistic community voice, encouraging participation of the autistic community in public debates about the theme, with the theoretical support of Santos' concept of interpolitical and intercultural translation (2018) and the idea of complex communication (LUGONES. 2006)

Arguing that it is important to "decolonize the crip" as much as to "crip the decolonial" in linguistics, and aligned with Canagarajah's idea of thinking about "disability-as-enabling-vulnerability" towards a decolonial orientation (2022), this text aims to examine tensions related to the concepts of autism, language, and language education. Based on the descriptions and analyses presented here, and supported by the experiences of the mentioned project, it is possible to propose some questions about the limits of our Eurocentric way of thinking about language, which can generate invisibility and exclusion. Therefore, I intend to discuss scenes/cases from the project "Translate Oneself" as ways of attempting to operate outside of this logic, in which "meaning" and "ways of being" create barriers in public spaces, especially due to certain language assumptions that lead to behavioral expectations and expectations regarding what is considered "noise" or "sense," etc.

I also intend to approach these ideas of "noise," "noisy," "language," among others, from a broader semiotic perspective, thinking about these concepts through a decolonial and crip lens.

AUTISM AND NEURODIVERSITY

Nick Walker, an autistic, queer psychology professor known for his work on neurodiversity and neuroqueer theory, proposes defining a set of terms that have been used, especially in the autistic community. This section highlights some of the most relevant terms for the present debate.

For Walker (2014), neurodiversity means "the diversity of human minds, the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species." Therefore, the variations and differences between each person's neural systems are something that is biologically expected, just as people differ with regard to their voices, skin tones, size, and hair color. This variation will also occur in less apparent or evident body parts, such as the neural system. However, it is worth noting that this biological assumption is not necessarily the current or hegemonic view of this phenomenon. McRuer (2006) points out that there exists a compulsory able-bodiedness in our Western society that derives from the capitalist logic of production, imposing a utilitarian view of bodies. This is even the reason why autism and some other neurodivergences can be considered disabilities since the latter term - at least in the perspective prioritized in this work - refers to the idea of a sociopolitical category that emphasizes subjects with rights in relation to systemic social asymmetries.

Judy Singer (2015), an autistic sociologist, also a daughter and mother of autistic women, is known to bring the term 'neurodiversity' to academia. She points out that:

> The "Neurologically Different" represent a new addition to the familiar political categories of class / gender / race and will augment the insights of the social model of disability. The rise of Neurodiversity takes post-modern fragmentation one step further. Just as

the post-modern era sees every once too solid belief melt into air, even our most taken-for granted assumptions: that we all more or less see, feel, touch, hear, smell, and sort information, in more or less the same way, (unless visibly disabled) are being dissolved (SINGER, 2015, SN)

About the term Neurodiversity, Singer considers that:

This word Neurodiversity did not come out of the blue, but was the culmination of my academic research and a lifetime of personal experiences of exclusion and invalidation as a person struggling in a family affected by a "hidden disability" […]. But the term "neurological diversity" was too much of a mouthful to lend itself to sloganeering, until one day I found myself saying that what the world needed was a "Neurodiversity Movement". I wrote about it on InLv[1], mentioned it in my thesis, and in my essay, Why can't you be normal for once in your life?

From this broader perspective, we can also emphasize more specific aspects of this compulsory able-bodiedness. For example, based on the assumption of neurodiversity, it is possible to conceive that there is also neuronormativity (MPSC, 2022), which is a compulsory expectation of how people's neural systems can or should 'work' to be considered adequate.

In this kind of normative world, there will be an idea about what is 'normal', 'ideal', or 'typical' that guides not only personal perceptions of the world but also public policies, academic choices, scientific procedures, among others. Considering these issues, it is worth noting that neuronormativity operates by privileging people seen as neurotypical to the detriment of a portion of the population considered neurodivergent. In this logic, neurotypical "means having a style of neurocognitive functioning that falls within the dominant societal standards of "normal" (WALKER 2014). Neurodivergent people, on the other hand, 'diverge significantly' from this "dominant societal standards of "normal" (WALKER 2014).

Another important aspect of neurodiversity is pointed out by "Abraça" - Brazilian Association for Action for the Rights of Autistic People. In 2021, the institution published a text entitled 'Brazilian Intersectional Neurodiversity Manifesto', highlighting the need to articulate autism and other sociohistorical markers in this debate. The text draws attention to the need to consider the differences in the reality of autistic people: workers, fathers and mothers, poor or rich people, people from different places. So, the manifesto highlights this multiplicity of possibilities in which autistic people can be residents of the capital or the countryside, can be women, lesbians, bisexuals, gays, transsexuals, black people, indigenous people, gypsies, refugees, among other non-excluding identity possibilities.

It is also relevant to say that Abraça is an organization whose presidency can only be held by autistic people, in contrast to most associations, which are usually led by fathers and mothers of autistic people. Since before the publication of the manifesto, Abraça has been chaired by Rita Louzeiro, a black autistic woman from the periphery, educator, activist and also a participant in the Brazilian group of the Black Lives with Disabilities Matter movement.

It is worth emphasizing that the notion of neurodiversity is much more disputed and complex than this short summary can present. It involves a debate about the very validity of the 'neuro' morpheme as an informative or adequate marker since it is a prefix whose origin highlights a biomedical way of interpreting the body and the subject. On the other hand, within the movement, it is understood that this is yet another limitation of the academic way of thinking. That is, at least within the context of Brazilian activism that takes the idea of neurodiversity as an agenda, it is often understood that the discussion about autism and other neurodivergences is something that involves, intrinsically, cultural and biological aspects, a dichotomy that even exists due to colonial heritage more than conceptual necessity.

Bringing such problems into focus raises the need for a dialogue with at least two contemporary academic perspectives and their recent findings: the proposal of a crip theory, as developed by authors such as McRuer (2006) and Kafer (2013), and the choice for a decolonial stance. In other words, the ideas that a compulsory able-bodiedness governs our civilization and therefore must be evidenced, questioned, fought and actively transformed. Still, this

kind of normativity, as well as other forms of asymmetry and domination, are legacies of a matrix of colonial thought, which historically shapes the relations between the former metropolises and the colony but also guides the contemporary relations of power, both on a global scale and in the local realities affected by this process of modernity-coloniality, which currently encompasses the planet Earth as a whole.

Taking all this into account, I argue that the questions presented have the potential to provoke relevant reflections and shifts in the field of language studies. The articulation between crip theory and language studies is not an unprecedented proposal and can be found, for example, in Henner and Robinson (2021). Thinking about this articulation from a decolonial perspective is a path already publicized by Canagarajah (2022). I would like to participate in this debate by focusing specifically on issues of autism, neurodiversity, communication, and language and presenting concrete elements linked to a nationwide research project carried out at a Brazilian university located in the inland region of Minas Gerais, an activity of which I was a proponent and coordinator.

COMMUNICATION IN A NEURONORMATIVE WORLD

In order to locate a noise, someone needs to define what noise is. Upon analysis, different individuals may experience and define noise in different ways, although some definitions may become hegemonic and even monolithic. In the concrete context of our globally expanded Western society, such definitions are still strongly influenced by the monolingual Eurocentric perspective of language, as well as by the prioritization of oral communication over other communicative possibilities, to name just a few aspects. Considering that, this section promotes a reflection on neurodiversity and communication based on theoretical references from various areas of knowledge, from a transdisciplinary, crip, and decolonial perspective, centered on autism and language issues.

I suggest a close relationship between the understanding that autistic people have some communicational deficits with the compulsory able-bodiedness - and specifi-

cally, neuronormativity - of a capitalist society, as well as with the vision of communication and language proposed and even imposed by this society within the processes of coloniality of power, being, and knowledge (QUIJANO 2005, MALDON-ADO-TORRES 2007, MIGNOLO 2008).

First, I would argue that differences in linguistic praxis are still hegemonically thought from the communicational myth - a specific idea of western academic thought - and its historically segregationist way of conceiving language (HARRIS 2001). While linguistic variation has already changed - at least a little - the way linguistic forms are thought of, especially when linked to the phonological and morphosyntactic levels, acting through language is still not marked as contingent. Therefore, it is not properly assumed in discussions about language as an embodied practice.

Differences in ways of being in the world lead to conflicting understandings and communication problems. However, in a neuronormative society, the neurotypical way of communicating is seen as unmarked and natural. So, the traditional view that communication difficulties are solely the responsibility of the autistic person can be linked to this assumption of homogeneity of bodies that unfolds into a later assumption of equal starting points.

This supposed equality, or at least this shared starting point as the basis for the communicative experience, seems to be present in the most diverse and influential language perspectives. For example, Saussure supports the idea of a "common code" to explain the communicative process; Chomsky defends an innate and universal grammar as something biologically constitutive of human beings; Jakobson approaches the engineering of communication and conceives the communicative act as the process involving encoding, encrypted transmission, and decoding of a message between agents sharing a common fixed code; Grice understands concrete communicative practice from the idea of cooperative principles that would need to be previously known and shared by speakers.

The neurodiversity perspective can challenge all these ideas. In fact, Singer (2015) highlights this as soon as she brings the term "neurodiversity" to academic studies when she points out that we do not necessarily "see, feel, touch, hear, smell, and

sort information" in similar ways. These considerations closely match the perception and opinion of another autistic woman, Temple Grandin, about herself and autism:

> What if you're receiving the same sensory information as everyone else, but your brain is interpreting it differently? Then your experience of the world around you will be radically different from everyone else's, maybe even painfully so. In that case, you would literally be living in an alternate reality—an alternate sensory reality. (GRANDIN, PANEK, 2015)

It is also interesting that this proposal can be supported by recent ideas about the neural system coming from biology. More specifically, Damásio (2000, 2003) when analyzing consciousness from a biological point of view, conceives of it as a continuous interaction between the mind, body, and environment. In part, this complex process would depend on a set of specialized circuits and networks to process and integrate information within the neural system. In the author's view:

> mental images of the objects and events outside the brain are creations of the brain related to the reality that prompts their creation rather than passive mirror images reflecting that reality. For example, when you and I look at an external object, we form comparable images in our respective brains, and we can describe the object in very similar ways. That does not mean, however, that the image we see is a replica of the object. The image we see is based on changes that occurred in our organisms, in the body and in the brain, as the physical structure of that particular object interacts with the body (DAMASIO 2003 199)

This issue is important when considering the limits and possibilities of the communicative act. In other words, if we interpret Grandin's ideas and reflect on the assumption of a constitutive neurodiversity of the species from Damásio's perspective, we can consider how possible variants in the configuration of this neural media could generate different readings of the world and the body itself, resulting in varied perceptions of reality. Access to the world is always indirect and presupposes a private mastery of the reading that the neural system makes of the body, of which the system itself is a part. As variability is a characteristic of the species, localized variations in this complex have the potential to create qualitatively different realities among different individuals, including those related to the parts that make up such neural media.

Furthermore, it is an understanding that seems to align with reflections already made on the relationship between autistic and non-autistic people in a social interaction. For examplo, the notion that communication difficulties between autistic and neurotypical individuals are a two-way street forms the basis of Damian Milton's concept of the 'double empathy problem.' According to the researcher, a lack of mutual understanding between individuals with different communication styles and sensory experiences can result in miscommunication and problems in social interactions.

Taking these issues into consideration and focusing the text on the discussion of what can be defined as noise and how a decolonial and crip perspective can help us reflect on this, I understand that these ideas can also be linked to some findings and debates in linguistics, such as the notion of what it means to "use language," particularly since what has become known as the "linguistic turn" or the "pragmatic turn."

In the context of the pragmatic turn, Austin (1990) prompts us to think about the specificity of constative language, which is just one category among others. Despite the common impression that the central or most used function of our speech acts has to do with propositions that reference existing things in the world, such as "the sky is blue," "my bicycle broke," "the mayor was not re-elected," a reading of Austin allows us to perceive other equally or more important aspects of language. This understanding mainly arises from a contrast between two forms of acts: the constatives and the performatives.

In other words, we understand that saying something about a referent existing in the world is just one possibility of action

that language allows. Communication focused on a referent, the so-called constative dimension, is also a performative action, such as apologizing, baptizing someone in a ritual, humming a song alone as a way of distracting oneself, among others. Thus, the 'performative', in turn, involves what one can 'do' with language: verify, request, forgive, accuse, bless, invite, etc.

Bringing these reflections can be a contribution when we think that the 'conditions of happiness' of performative acts may depend on elements, rituals, conventions, assumptions to which not everyone has access. Each "bodymind" is unique. And cultural elements, far from being universal, are also asymmetrically distributed among different bodies. The notion of a shared linguistic core that unites us, whether justified by genetic reasons or by the idea of a homogeneous adherence to a universally accessible cultural melting pot, is just one facet of the communicational myth (HARRIS 2001) exist as a hegemonic perception of language in the context of western society.

If the autistic 'reads less' of the other in face-to-face interaction and recognizes less of the unspoken and non-verbal dimension of language that builds the performative act, and often seeks to guarantee their conditions of happiness, what can this tell us? What effort does each one have to make to guarantee the conditions of happiness of their speech acts? Are these conditions achievable in the same way by everyone, or do they symmetrically demand the same effort from each one?

THE RIGHT KIND OF NOISE

The first reading that specifically caught my attention regarding the relationship between "noise" and "autism" was Wood's (2018) study on the perception of noise in the school environment. The author notes that the expressiveness of autistic individuals, such as vocalizations, stimming, and other behaviors, are frequently viewed as disruptive and distracting, and as a result, are perceived as noise in the school setting, drawing attention to themselves as something that does not conform to what is expected in this context. On the other hand, the noisy atmosphere that results from the expressiveness of non-autistic students is often

not even perceived or heard by neurotypical individuals. In other words, this noise is not even recognized as such.

As I became more attentive to this issue, I began to realize how dichotomies such as 'noise' versus 'silence' and 'noise' versus 'meaning' are highly naturalized contingent constructions in Western society. Furthermore, I realized how much these dichotomies are related to the segregationist perspective (HARRIS 2001) that runs through Western thinking about language and communication. This perspective, among other factors, reiterates ableist views about neurodivergent people or people who, for other reasons, communicate by less prestigious modes than face-to-face oral verbal conversation, such as deaf people.

I also began to realize that in the autistic community, far from being a transparent or tacit concept, the notion of 'noise' is constantly on the agenda, and its meanings are being constructed through a kind of interpolitical and intercultural translation (Santos 2018). This kind of 'noisy condition' of language results a practial need to deal with communication in a complex, political way (LUGONES 2006). The term 'noise' is not always explicitly used, but, especially from the considerations of Wood (2018), it is possible to perceive that these dichotomies between 'noise' and 'sense' and 'noise' and 'silence' cross such discussions .The public for this translation sometimes targets the autistic community itself, but sometimes it focuses on disseminating counterpoints and alternative perspectives to the most typical perspectives on the subject. These issues can be observed both in the production of content on social networks, which includes testimonials, memes, and dialogues in support groups, as well as in the emerging academic literature on autism authored by autistic individuals. Some of these productions serve as a form of translation or counterpoint to established interpretive frameworks about what it means to be autistic or about the typical behaviors that are expected, which may not take into account the unique experiences of neurodivergent individuals. In figures 1 and 2, we can see different examples of this. While in @neurowild's post, the author seeks to review what is or can be considered rude when it comes to autistic expressiveness, @autieselfcare's post is the very 'noise' involving the notion of autism that is

on the agenda. Bringing this debate into the public eye is crucial, particularly since differences such as these can lead to autistic individuals being wrongly perceived as deceitful and lacking in credibility (LEE, YOUNG, & BREWER, 2021)

Other texts, such as the memes in Figures 3 and 4, highlight the differences in communication and expectations in social interaction between autistic and non-autistic individuals. There are also texts that play with the way autistic people perceive themselves in contexts of conversation and social interaction, where they are often forced to perform in ways that do not feel understandable, natural or appropriate for the autistic reality. Figures 5 and 6, containing memes produced on the Facebook page /lifeinanautismworld, which is run by an autistic person, illustrate this issue further. Bringing attention to this debate is crucial, particularly since differences in expression,
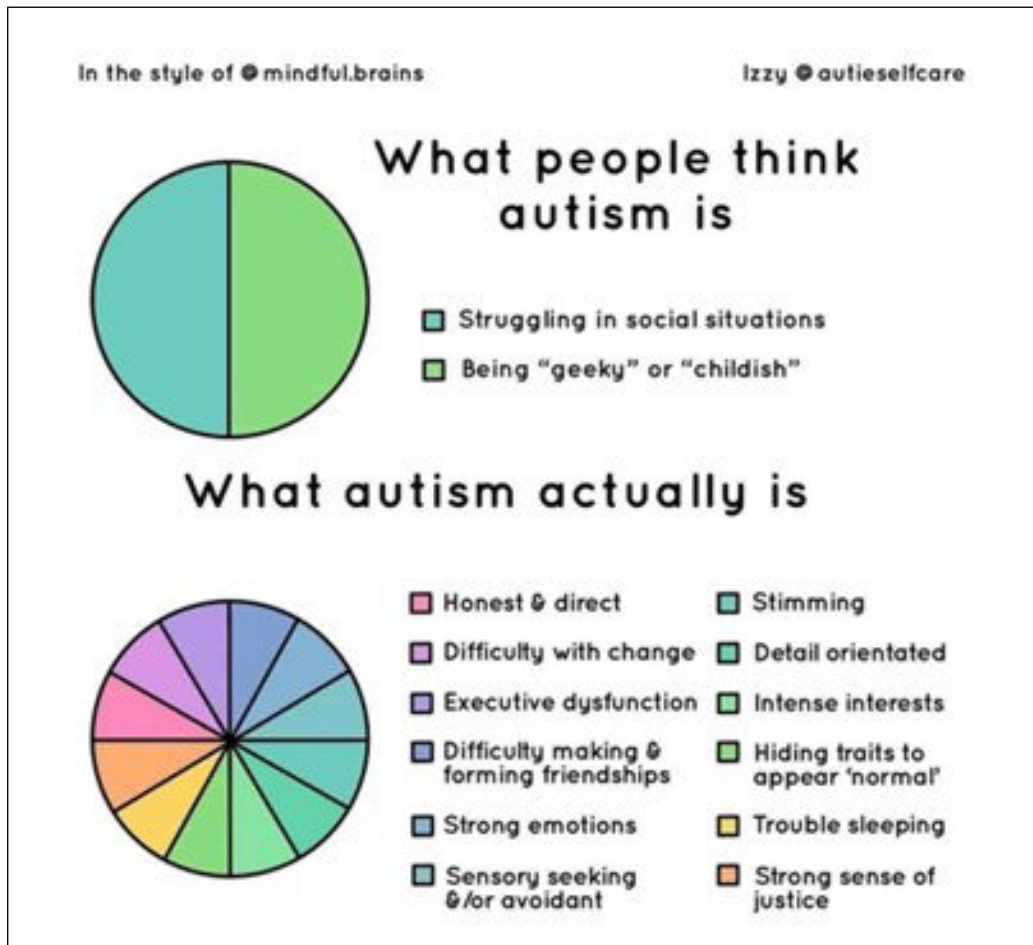

Figure 1: Post about autism by @neurowild

Figure 2: post about autism by @autieselfcare

behavior, and communication can lead to autistic individuals being wrongly perceived as deceitful and lacking credibility (LEE, YOUNG, & BREWER, 2021). Interestingly, this interpretation persists despite some data supporting a tendency for autistic individuals to avoid moral transgressions, as shown by HU et al. (2021).

Milton and Bracher (2013) observed that while the work of some autistic individuals began to gain recognition in academia, it was often viewed only as raw material to be analyzed by external specialists. Despite this, some autistic individuals are producing consistent knowledge, academic or not, that contributes to reducing communicative barriers between autistic and non-autistic individuals. It is noteworthy that one of the topics addressed in some of these references is precisely the issue of divergent perceptions of sensory "noise" and miscommunication.

When discussing the overexcitability of autistic people's neurons and the divergent way we filter stimuli, Devon Price notes that "we tend to be easily disturbed by sounds in our environment, and at the same time, unable to tell when a noise actually warrants our attention" (Price, 2022, SD). Also, pondering at times throughout his text that "visual clutter" can create sensory "noise" for autistic individuals, Price reminds us that the notion of "noise" should not be restricted to sound issues.
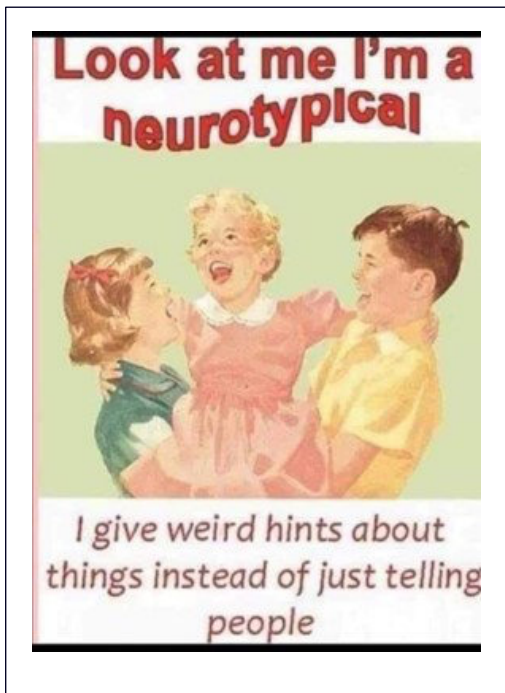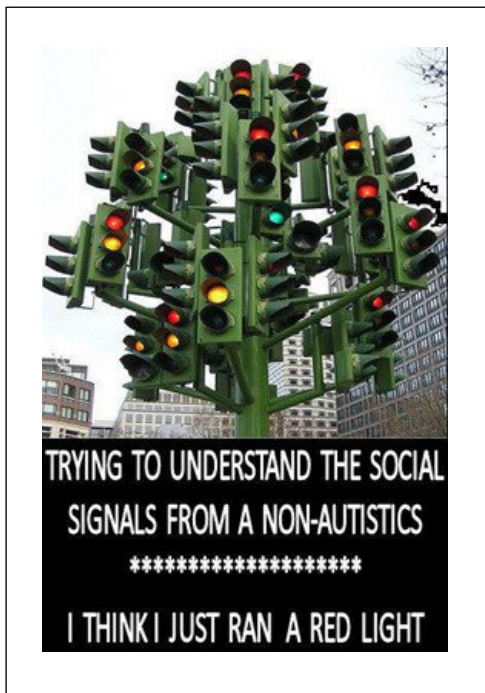
Figure 3: Unknown authorm meme

Figure 4: Unknown authorm meme

**Figure 5: Memes posted on /
lifeinaautismworld[2] Facebook page**

**Figure 6: Memes posted on /
lifeinaautismworld Facebook page**

The author provides an example from their daily routine that illustrates their personal struggle with distinguishing between environmental noise and meaningful sounds, highlighting the relevance of this issue to the experiences of autistic individuals:

> When I walk into my apartment building at night, I'm hit with a wave of discordant sensory information. It's particularly bothersome if I've already had a stressful or emotionally taxing day and my energy is depleted. There's the frenetic chatter of my neighbors, and the chaotic slamming of doors all along the hall. I can hear the elevator groaning to the ground level, my neighbor's music thudding below me, and ambulances blaring in the distance. Each piece of sensory information vies for attention, and doesn't blend into uniform background noise. In fact, the longer I have to endure it, the more annoyed I become. One way I can cope with this is by blockingout the world and dampening all the stimuli that are distracting me. But another, equally effective way to cope with sensory challenges is by seeking out really strong, bold sensations that overpower all that white noise. (PRICE 2022)

He also notes that these kinds of differences can lead to miscommunication between autistic and non-autistic people:

> Unfortunately, when an Autistic person complains about the sensory pain they're in, people think they're being overly dramatic, needy, or even downright "crazy." I can't fully convey how frustrating it is to be in deep distress over a persistent noise my boyfriend can't even hear. When I find myself stomping around the house anxiously, pounding on the floor with a broom to get my neighbor to turn down her music, I feel like I'm being "crazy." (PRICE 2022)

In 2012, Bascom, the founder of The Loud Hands Project, organized an anthology to reflect on and discuss aobut "loud hands" idea - a common autistic trait of constantly moving one's hands as a form of sensory regulation. Unfortunately, this trait is often considered negative without reason by the general population.

Talking about the book and the project, Bascom raises a interesting question related to 'noise':

> A few of us had also met each other in person at autism conferences. But typical autism conferences, run by and for NT parents and professionals, do not tend to be very good places for autistic people to connect meaningfully with each other. There's simply too much going on--too many people, too much movement, too much noise, often fluorescent lights, and above all, the overwhelming onslaught of speakers and articles and exhibits all stressing that there's something terribly *wrong* with us, that we're a horribly defective type of human, and that our very existence is a source of never-ending grief for our families (BASCOM 2012 23)

In a chapter, Herren (2012) describes her experiences with communication and behavioral differences in relation to the expected neuronormative world.

> I have loud hands! I need help finding my place in a room. I can't tell where my body is in relation to things. I need to continually feel my surroundings to know how I fit in my kind little place. I might look pretty weird to the general public, but it is how I can keep myself connected in the world. I really might not want to have loud hands. It is a part of who I am. I could not stop if I tried.

Specifically regarding sound processing, the author comments:

> [...] My hearing is just kind of like my mind; a jumbled up mess of sound, kind of like when you hear the telephone ring. Other people kind of ignore the sound, but I can't. It bounces back and forth in my head all day. My mind gets full of noise. It is just miserable. Kind of like others might feel if they heard the phone, the juice maker, the washing machine, and the doorbell bouncing around in their head all at the same time. You might just go crazy. That is just a feeling of hell!

> Maybe little helpers might not have helped to know that I hurt when there is too much noise. I might not listen in real time, but I do hear like you do. You hear words that might not mean

much; I hear little jumbles of sound. You hear high sounds, I hear only low sounds. You hear pitch, I hear only one tone. You can't imagine just how horrible it is to hear like I hear. My hearing might not be like yours, but it is kind of like popular music is playing in the background.

I need more help to listen to people. You might listen hearing little bits of jumbles, but I hear just little jumbles of noises. You hear little flicks of sounds, but I hear little bursts of sounds. My ears just don't hear like they should. My hearing is different than yours. My hearing might not have the level yours has. I just hear things differently than you do. I just have little hearing differences. I kind of might not hear people when they whisper. I kind of hear in little true lumps. I listen in groups of sound (HERREN, 2012, 139/140)

While this examples shared by autistic individuals may not encompass all the noise and communication issues experienced by all neurodivergent people, they do encourage us to consider variables that are often overlooked in our understanding of communication, language, and social interaction. Considering this complexity, the following section will present and analyze aspects of a research project in which these questions were not only treated as a distant object of scientific study, but also as a daily reflection on the practice of academic work.

INTERPOLITICAL AND INTERCULTURAL TRANSLATION IN NEURODIVERGENT LANGUAGING PRACTICES IN A NOISY WORLD

I was diagnosed as an autistic person in 2015 at the age of 32. At that time, I was already a Doctor on Linguistic Studies, married, a father, and a professor of Language Studies in a degree program at a Brazilian public university. Many of the difficulties mentioned by various authors in this work resonate with my own experiences. Despite seemingly disparate paths in my academic career - including the study of video games and new technologies, Youth and Adult Education, Rural Education from a dialogic teaching perspective, and now entering the field of autism studies - I was surprised to recently realize that a common thread throughout my trajectory has been a restlessness related to constructing meaning, especially in social relationships that involve the validation of specific collective thoughts and voices over others.

Debates about truth, ideology, social construction, fiction versus reality, among others, have always been objects of curiosity for me. During my studies, the notion of meaning as a social and contingent construction particularly caught my attention. Moreover, I had to learn that science itself is part of this social construction and currently has the particularity of being able to advocate for the exclusivity of uttering truths about the world. Since language is a social construction that depends on conventions and context, and science itself is part of these constructions, our perspectives are always constructed and negotiated in relationships. Nonetheless, little of this explained some conflicts of language, behavior, and social interaction in my life. Before I started reading the world from a neurodiversity perspective and before I personally identified as neurodivergent in a neuronormative world, this path did not explain some of my everyday difficulties, especially in social interaction and understanding rules and conventions of various orders.

From 2019 to 2020, I completed a postdoctoral study at Universidade de São Paulo (USP), Brazil, where I observed authorial productions by autistic people. During this time, I noticed a lack of active autistic production and representation in Brazil's academic sphere. As a result, I decided to create a project at my university, Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri (UFVJM), Brazil, to foster networks of dialogue among autistic individuals, both inter-politically and inter-culturally (SANTOS 2018), in order to explore neurodivergent languaging practices in a noisy world. The university is a privileged space in constructing socially legitimated knowledge, and therefore it is politically salient to ensure that it is accessible to people with diverse perspectives and experiences, including those who are neurodiver-

gent.

The project "Translating Oneself: Autism in the First Person in Academic Practice" was created in 2020, just after the conclusion of my postdoctoral study. Its goal was to counteract the "monoculture" of bodies prevalent in academia. Always bearing in mind the idea that language is an act and based both on a notion of complex communication (LUGONES 2006) and also on this need for an interpolitical and intercultural translation regarding autistic expressiveness (SANTOS 2018), the project aimed not only to bring attention to perspectives on autism and language but also to position itself as a complex academic discursive practice that is inherently influenced by colonialism and, hence, structural capacitism that marginalizes neurodivergent expressiveness.

The project remained active until February 2023 and aimed to be both academic research and a practical, everyday action to consider the presence of autistic authorial productions in constructing this epistemic object and promoting access and inclusion of autistic people in the university. Additionally, the project sought to decolonize and "crip" academic knowledge, particularly regarding language, autism, neurodiversity, and disability. We focused on practices of academic literacy that often act as barriers for people with disabilities due to their rigid structures. During this experience, the group reflected on several topics, including how such experiences can mobilize concepts such as "interdependence" (MORAES 2010), "care," (DINIZ 2007), "crip time" (KAFER 2013, FIETZ 2017), and "accessibility" (ANPOCS 2020), and their relation to coloniality, especially in the Brazilian context. These notions are not only of theoretical interest, but they are also ethically relevant to academic routine and practice.

In the interactive practices that emerged from the project's routine, a possible space for conversation between neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals was created. Reports and doubts about communication conflicts and difficulties in understanding academic practices that are considered obvious were not uncommon. For example, a colleague who was seeking to enter a master's program and was searching for journals to publish in found it unclear that certain keywords used as an example in an article model were not neces-

sarily fixed and could be modified. The model did not provide any explicit guidance on this matter, and it was expected that such knowledge would be inferred based on prior academic practices and conventions. Another colleague, who is both autistic and a writer, proofreader, and poet with a completed degree in Languages, also faced difficulties in accessing the postgraduate academic world. This colleague found it challenging to follow the prescribed sections and divisions provided in academic articles and book chapters, as it felt like a dismemberment of their ideas. While this colleague had no trouble revising the texts of others, they struggled to organize their thoughts within the logic expected by academia and its dominant genres.

In short, as the project aimed to promote the access and inclusion of autistic individuals in academic contexts, it attracted the attention of autistic people from various locations who were not necessarily affiliated with or located near UFJVM. These individuals were registered as external researchers, and the resulting collective facilitated conversations about academic practices and genres that are often taken for granted, which may be difficult for an autistic person to understand due to the lack of explicit instructions. Thus, the group itself created a network of conversation that modified - at least for the people involved - the possibilities of communicative practices, repositioning subjects, agencies, and expressivities.

An example that illustrates the notion that noise is contingent is when we studied this material on accessibility that introduced the concept of "ethos of accessibility" (ANPOCS 2020). This work was produced with active involvement from people with disabilities, and it comprises a rich compendium of written texts, references, and even links to videos. During a conference call where most participants were autistic, we discussed the material on accessibility that we had studied earlier. Many participants complained about the background music in the video, which they found distracting and took their focus away from the speeches. This highlights the fact that even materials designed to be accessible and made by people with disabilities may not foresee all forms of barriers.

This underscores the need for accessibility to be an ethos. In terms of language, communication, and social interaction, this

ethos of accessibility may involve assuming competence in others and recognizing that what is considered noise or communication, what information is relevant, what constitutes small talk, what is indirect or an innocent remark, all depends on context. However, it is important to avoid the naive assumption of a horizontal multiplicity because certain bodies are still considered the norm for defining such issues, behaviors, ways of reading the world, and expressiveness. This perspective is rooted in a colonial logic that imposes and maintains the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power.

It's also worth noting that the project made an effort to value a range of possible forms of social interaction within the project's material limits. The project aimed to embrace this concept of "ethos of accessibility," (ANPOCS 2020) which involves thinking about accessibility in a dynamic, dialogical way rather than a fixed way. This included teleconference meetings with flexibility for various forms of participation - with or without cameras, or only via chat - a WhatsApp group for messages and notifications, and the freedom to attend meetings or not. One day, a member of the group even said she would follow the audio conference call meeting while playing video games, as she had a busy day and needed to unwind. It makes one wonder how many academic groups would allow for such dialogue to take place.

After the formal completion of the project, "Translating: Autism in the First Person in Academic Practice," it evolved into a network of partners from different universities, institutions, and movements dedicated to investigating issues related to autism, neurodiversity, and disability from an academic perspective, with a decolonial and transdisciplinary approach.

LAST CONSIDERATIONS AND SOME PERSPECTIVES

As discussed, this work focused on the practice of intercultural and interpolitical translation (SANTOS 2018) and complex communication (LUGONES 2006) as a means for autistic individuals to communicate and express themselves while challenging the structural capacitism that labels neurodivergent expressiveness as inferior, noisy, and meaningless. The article emphasized the ethical dimension of translation and the importance of respecting others, even when ignorant of their experiences. The discussion highlighted the challenges faced by autistic individuals due to the dominant, normative approach to language and communication, which often leads to their unique communication styles being perceived as "noise" or even equated with non-human animal behavior, resulting in their exclusion from society. We can conclude that this exclusion is a form of epistemicide (SANTOS 2008, 2018) that affects a segment of society. On the other hand, intercultural and interpolitical translation (SANTOS 2018) promotes greater dialogue and symmetry in communication and emphasizes the right to name, categorize, and narrate one's experience.

The article also questions the hegemonic communicational transparency myth, which relegates anything outside a transparently shared language to noise or unmeaningful manifestations, sometimes even equating the communication of autistic people with non-human animals trained to mimic human-like movements (KEDAR 2020). The article proposes questions about the limits of our Eurocentric way of thinking about language that generate invisibility and exclusion. Additionally, the article discusses the project "Translating Oneself: Autism in the First Person in Academic Practice" as a means to increase the visibility of the autistic community's voice. It approaches the concepts of "noise," "noisy," and "language" from a broader semiotic perspective, thinking about them through a decolonial and crip lens.

NOTES

1   Independent Living Mailing List (ILMV) forum, where Singer followed virtual activism of autistic and other neurologically different people in the mid-1990. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judy_Singer

2   https://www.facebook.com/lifeinaautismworld/

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