Action Research and intercultural dialogue: An experience with Brazilian Indians

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This paper has resulted from researches with an emphasis on action re-search, which is regarded as an important means for dialogue, exchange and production of decolonial knowledge. The paper presents some lessons that we have learnt with Indigenous people and that have constituted us as educators/researchers; among them we can highlight the following: a) the statement of identity produces / strengthens the fight against economic in-equality; b) it is always necessary to put into question the theories and make new significance in them; c) the ethical indigenous community re-sists the advance of neoliberal individualistic society. We conclude that by living and conducting research with indigenous people, we are learning the ways to decolonial and intercultural pedagogy and epistemology.

Key words: interculturality, indigenous peoples,
Action Research in education, epistemology, decolonialism

1. Introduction

This paper[1] relies on the experience of the authors, who have taught Indigenous students for more than nine years (2005-2014) in undergraduate and post-graduate courses. Such experience can be seen as being in line with action research. The paper is also based on researches carried out by the authors with a focus on Indigenous peoples. One investigation analysed the reflections developed by Indigenous individuals on the process of exclusion from 2011 to 2013; the other study, which started in 2012 and finished in 2014[2], approached the possibilities of intercultural education by means of new technologies. We think that in education "[…] the one who teaches also learns while teaching and the one who learns also teaches while learning" (Freire, 2002, p. 25). In this paper, we aim to show part of what we have learned from our experience, as educators or researchers, or even as educators/researchers[3], since "[…] every kind of teaching involves research, and every kind of research involves teaching. There is no real teaching without research in the form of questions, inquiry, curiosity, creativity" (Freire, 1999, p. 192). Likewise, "[…] there is no research in which nothing is learned because we already know [what is being investigated], and nothing is taught because we learn" (Freire, 1999, p. 193).

Therefore, more than evidencing what we have supposedly taught to Indigenous students, we intend to show some lessons that we have learned and which have constituted us as educators/researchers: "[…] it is on the inconclusiveness of a being that knows oneself as such that education is grounded as a permanent process. Women and men have become educable, but the awareness of their inconclusiveness is what has generated educability" (Freire, 2002, p. 64).

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[2] Researches funded by CNPq.

[3] The expression "educator/researcher" refers to one or both authors of this paper.

For more than nine years, we have had the chance to be in contact with Indians of several ethnicities from different Brazilian states: Terena[4], Kadiwéu[5] and Guarani/Kaiowá[6] from Mato Grosso do Sul; Tuyuka[7] from Amazonas; and Xavante[8] from Mato Grosso.

This paper problematises stories heard in the classroom and in other places, as well as narratives taken from other researches, considering that such settings are not dissociated. We regard the classroom as a preference place for an action research. In this paper, we narrate some events that have marked our identities as educators/researchers, thus changing the ways we see Indig-

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[4] Terena people lived in the Chaco region in Paraguay and arrived in Brazil in the late seventeenth century. They actively participated in the Paraguay War; when the war was over, they lost their lands to farmers, to whom they worked under a regime of servitude. In the early twentieth century, there were the first demarcations of land for Terena people. In Mato Grosso do Sul, they are presently distributed over seven cities: Campo Grande, Aquidauana, Dois Irmaos do Buriti, Miranda, Sidrolandia, Rochedo and Anastacio (Silva, 2009).

[5] Kadiweu people belong to the Mbaya branch and did not live in Brazil. They have come from the Chaco regions of Paraguay and Argentina. They were nomadic before becoming sedentary in Brazil. They had a warrior tradition and used to incorporate children, youths and adults from other peoples (Africans, Europeans) who were captured during the wars, which are no longer part of their culture. Kadiweu live in the wetlands in Mato Grosso do Sul, around the cities of Bodoquena, Bonito and Porto Murtinho (Vinha, 2004).

[6] Guarani/Kaiowa people are part of a larger branch, the Guarani, also including Mbaya and Western Guarani. They live in Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia. In Mato Grosso do Sul, they live in the southern region of the state, due to a confinement process, since they were originally nomadic and had a very balanced relationship with nature. They practiced itinerant farming, thus preserving the soil vitality by moving every two or three years to allow the soil to recover (Colman & Brand, 2008).

[7] Tuyuka people are concentrated in the region of Alto Rio Tiquie, partly in Colombian territory, partly in Brazilian territory, in the northeast of Amazonia. They belong to the linguistic family known as Eastern Tukano. They are characterised by their constant inter-ethnical relationship with Tukano people by means of marriage (Rezende, 2007).

[8] Xavante people belong to the linguistic branch Je, which is part of the Macro-Je group. With a warrior tradition, they lived in several regions in Brazil (Maranhao, Goias, Rio de Janeiro...). The process of moving to and settling in Mato Grosso was caused by the advances made by the colonizers; despite their warrior tradition, Xavante people had to abandon their lands in order to escape from attacks and menaces by white invaders and their fire guns. In 1970, they were given land in the state of Mato Grosso, where they have lived since then (Tsi'rui'a, 2012).

enous peoples and showing us the (im)possibilities of an intercultural dialogue. In addition, we will discuss the action research contribution to intercultural dialogue and to the production of decolonial epistemology.

2. Interculturality and dialogue

Candau and Russo (2010), based on the analysis of literature produced in Latin America and interviews with Latin-American researchers, have detected a consensus on the emergence of the term "interculturality" from the context of Indigenous education, which has been seen as a tool for Indigenous peoples to defend their identities, cultures and territories. The term "interculturality" has emerged as a means to question the imposition of the Eurocentric way of thinking, knowing, being and living as superior and universal, since it subalternises and inferiorises other ways of life, particularly those of Indigenous peoples: "[…] we regard interculturality […] as a set of fights, practices and processes that question the Eurocentric, colonial and imperial legacy, and intend to change and construct radically different ways of thinking, knowing, being and living" (Walsh, 2010, p. 221).

However, the fact that this term was produced in that context does not mean it is unnecessary to explain its current meaning. According to Walsh (2013), there was a conservative appropriation and incorporation of the term through the adoption of policies in several Latin-American countries, which the author has called functional interculturality. This eliminated the critical, political, transforming and insurgent meaning of the term, and it was put into service of global and market capitalism. This kind of interculturality emerged together with the rhetoric of dialogue, without questioning inequality, social injustice and exclusion processes which have been often linked to cultural differences. This functional interculturality has pacifically lived with the neoliberal logic, resorting to some State policies that, far from meeting the demands of social movements, attempt to both control the fight and decrease its demands for redistribution and social and cultural justice.

Besides this kind of interculturality, the author mentions the relational interculturality. This perspective restrains interculturality to a contact, meeting and interchange between different cultures by understanding that the human

groups have always been intercultural. From this perspective, asymmetries and interests of subjugation and subalternisation as seen in the Latin-American context have been neglected and secondarised. Latin-America has been marked by colonialism and later by coloniality, which is still seen in the twenty-first century. Acknowledging that we live under coloniality involves saying that the standard of power constructed in the colonial period, based on hierarchical ethnical-racial differences, still marks power relations in the present context: "[…] the coloniality of power […] was and has been completely active, because it is part of the global context in which processes affecting all the real places of domination occur" (Quijano, 2002, p. 13).

By not questioning asymmetries produced by colonialism and coloniality, and concealing the structures of power and domination, rather than encouraging the questioning of discrimination and subalternisation processes, the relational interculturality contributes to the maintenance of such processes and tends to increase social and economic inequality.

Finally, Walsh (2013) mentions critical interculturality. It is an unfinished project which is daily constructed in social fights, with an emphasis on the fights of Indigenous peoples. Unlike the two previous forms, which have been put into service of the hegemonic, cultural, economic and political model, critical interculturality has consistently questioned the power frameworks that legitimise the status quo. From this perspective, the major issue is neither the ethnical-cultural diversity, nor the inclusion of different groups in the present society (functional interculturality); rather, it questions the standard of power that has been built around the ethnical-racial difference and how it serves the maintenance of submission and subalternisation of certain groups (power coloniality), particularly the Indigenous groups. Based on this questioning, the goal is to construct other ways of living, being, thinking and living together.

It is worth highlighting that critical interculturality, by suspecting the intentions of dialogue in both relational and instrumental interculturality, is not against dialogue; rather, it sees it as something only possible when asymmetries of power, knowledge and life produced by colonialism and coloniality are radically questioned. In a way, inspired by Walsh (2013), we could say that the hegemonic culture proposes a functional dialogue to meet its interests

of subalternisation, submission and, thus, maintenance of coloniality, while the critical dialogue perspective acknowledges that it is not outside relations of power and is marked by tensions and conflicts: "[…] the intercultural perspective attempts to encourage [critical] dialogue between different kinds of knowledge and acts on the tension between universalism and relativism at the epistemological level, thus acknowledging the conflicts that emerge from this debate" (Candau, 2012, p. 245).

This critical dialogue fosters other ways of thinking, being, living and relating. In this sense, particularly for critical interculturality, it is important to try to establish a critical dialogue between different groups concerned with the construction of other worlds. It is "[…] a political project in a Latin-American context, but aiming at and dialoguing with other projects that point to the construction of fairer worlds" (Walsh, 2010, p. 219).

Santos and Nunes (2003), concerned about alternatives for present society, which is marked by a number of forms of exclusion and inequality, by proposing some theses about emancipatory possibilities and the fights against domination, pointed to the dialogue between cultures as an imperative to create conceptions of human dignity and justice that are more suitable for the current context.

Therefore, in this paper, we refer to the construction of an intercultural dialogue with Indigenous peoples by considering the critical dimension of dialogue and interculturality. We are aware that this is not always possible because we are still deeply marked by coloniality.

In the next section, we will attempt to show what we, as educators/researchers, have learned in meetings/dialogues with the Indians, "[…] always attentive to the colonising potential the knowledge developed in the first world (the centre) can exert on the third world (the periphery)" (Montecinos & Gallardo, 2002, p. 155).

3. Some of the several lessons we have learned with the Indians

On writing, we always make arbitrary choices in terms of relevance, and this section is not an exception. We have learned a lot, and here the lessons that

have marked our identities of educators/researchers are organised in three axes which are the following:

3.1 Identity affirmation produces/strengthens the fight against economic inequality

The initial education of the educators/researchers occurred in the 1980s, and it was strongly marked by the critical theory centered on the class analysis. No matter how much we were interested in the post-critical theories, concerned with other issues rather than class, including other domination and exploitation processes, such as those deriving from ethnicity/race, gender, generation, belief and other relations, somehow that mark always caused the sensation that fragmentation weakens the fight for equality. Bauman's analyses (2003) had much influence on that feeling. He has strongly claimed that the search for identity generates division and separation: "[…] when the poor fight the poor, the rich have every reason to rejoice" (Bauman, 2003, p. 95). This means that the search and fight for identity serve the "[…] old tried and tested adage of 'divide and rule' which authorities of all epochs have willingly reached for as soon as they have felt threatened by an accumulation and concentration of varied and dispersed grievances" (Bauman, 2003, p. 95).

However, living with Indigenous people has deconstructed such thought. Following the Federal Constitution of 1988, in which some of the Indians' historical claims became laws (particularly the acknowledgement of their social organisation, their customs, languages and traditions, as well as the use of their mother tongue and their own learning processes), due to the resistance and fight of Indigenous movements, the battle for ethnical identity was strengthened: "[…] today most of them are and act in a movement for reaffirmation of identities in an intense process of dialogue with the national society" (Bergamaschi & Medeiros, 2010, p. 60).

In this sense, it is worth highlighting that in our classes/meetings in the master's course, the Indigenous students often mention their pride of being Indians, the need to stand up and be spirited, contrasting that with a time when many did not want to be Indigenous and felt ashamed of their origin. The same situation was observed in a research at the end of 2011, coordinat-

ed by one of the educators/researchers and carried out with several under-graduate Indigenous students. The students talked about their pride of being Indigenous, their community, the valorisation of their culture and identity. On being asked about the main goal of education, a Terena student, in a representative speech, pointed out the process of construction of the ethnical Indigenous identity that occurs in the relationship with non-Indigenous people:

> [...] the main goal is to know their Indigenous origin so that they can know where they have come from and where they are heading to, and the non-Indigenous people can know where the Indians have come from and respect the ethnical difference existing between the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous (Terena student[9], Pedagogy course).

Research with Terena people was co-ordinated by the other educator/researcher, with an emphasis on the critical use of new technologies and their utilisation as educational tools. Besides the classroom meetings, there were virtual meetings through posts on Ning and Facebook social networks, online platforms that enable the creation of multiple individualised social networks, sharing of common interests, introduction to hypermedia and hypertext, and synchronous and asynchronous communication. In the social networks, the Indigenous teachers also recorded and still record their pride of being Indians, their fights and achievements, including the fight for the acknowledgement of their identity, from which we can highlight:

> [...] today I can stand up for myself and my rights, but I had to undergo a learning process before [...] to be able to tell my real story as an Indian. I have overcome every obstacle in my life that prevented me from attaining success (Terena teacher's testimony posted in September, 2012).

Still aiming at evidencing how the ethnical issue is central to Indigenous peoples, we will present the story of a Guarani/Kaiowa master's student that, after attending another class focused on Stuart Hall, in the autumn of 2010,

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[9]   This paper has considered narratives by Indigenous students and teachers.

went to the office of one of the educators/researchers and talked about her plight[10]:

> [...] professor, I'm sorry for taking your time, but there is something bothering me. We have discussed Stuart Hall's ideas, I liked that, I understood how racism has been constructed and why it occurs, but I'd like you to help me solve a personal problem. My son loves playing soccer. He insisted a lot to have soccer classes, so I enrolled him in a gym. It's everything all right at home, we've taught him to be proud of being Indigenous, and he's fine. But at the gym it's different, not because of the money, because I pay on time, but he has no friends; during the matches, they don't pass the ball to him. He's been discriminated, and I'm sure it's because he's an Indian. What should I do, professor? What can I do for him not to be discriminated? (Guarani/Kaiowa master's student).

At that moment, the educator/researcher did not know what to say. He said to the mother that she should keep telling her son that neither he nor their people were a problem, and that the problem was in the ethnocentric colonising culture, which makes difference look like inferiority. Therefore, the problem was neither in the child, an Indigenous boy, nor in their community, but rather in the discrimination practice, which should be always fought. The mother's narrative made us think further about how we, educators/ researchers, must be articulated with different educative spaces/times. This shows us the vital importance of the political and epistemological engagement and ethical commitment we should have with subalternised groups. With that Indigenous student, as well as with other stories here presented, we have learned that class and race/ethnicity may be and often are articulated, but it is impossible to explain every process of domination, subalternisation and exploitation through the class category (Hall, 2003).

We have also learned that far from weakening the fight for access to economic goods, the process of identity affirmation has reinforced it, as we can see in constant battles for land that Indigenous peoples have fought in different states in Brazil, especially in Mato Grosso do Sul. Therefore, with the

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[10] The conversation was not recorded. It was transcribed by one of the educators/ researchers.

emphasis on the identity affirmation, rather than decreasing, the fights for access to land have become stronger and stronger.

3.2 It is always necessary to question the theories and re-signify them

As we have argued in this paper, we can establish relationships inspired by action research in the classroom and in other settings. However, we have learned that the theories should not be seen as unquestionable, either in those places or in other contexts. On the contrary, they change according to specific contexts.

In the autumn of 2005, having just started working at the Master's Programme, one of the educators/researchers passionately explained his recent doctoral finding: rigorously following what Bhabha (2001) had claimed, identities were always in a process of negotiation. Then an Indigenous master's student raised his hand and said: "There are things that Tuyuka don't negotiate"[11]. The educator/researcher went on with his argumentation by saying that such negotiation was not necessarily conscious, and it would take place in-between, in an interstice, and that this process would change identities. The Indigenous student asked to speak again and said:

> [...] I'll explain that better: there are things that Tuyuka don't negotiate. We don't negotiate what we regard as fundamental in our identity. For example, a Tuyuka man can become a priest, but that will not change his social position among his people. Birth is what marks the social position; for Tuyuka, being a priest or not doesn't make any difference. We do what white people tell us to do, but we don't believe them. For example, in a wedding, the priest asks: "Have you come here of your own free will and choice?" We say "yes", but it isn't true. Our weddings are arranged by our parents (Tuyuka master's student.).

This experience has both marked us and taught us to rethink our theories, in an attempt to avoid an "epistemicide", which in turn would lead to an "identiticide" (Santos, 2008). As the Tuyuka student taught us, why should we not consider that there are things one cannot negotiate? "[…] acknowledging the

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[11] The conversation was not recorded. It was transcribed by one of the educators/ researchers.

other is one of the most important weaknesses of the modern epistemology"[12] (Santos, 2008, p.314).

The same student also taught us something we had never suspected. The educator/researcher was teaching the use of semi-structured interviews and explaining that the interviewer should be silent and listen to what the subject was saying, as Bogdan and Biklen (1995) recommended. The Tuyuka student said: "[…] not if either the interviewer or the interviewee is a Tuyuka, because in our culture, when one speaks, everybody else repeats what that person said to show respect and show that they are paying attention" (Tuyuka student).

He also told us how this custom caused an impasse when priests taught them to attend the Mass, because when the priests said "[…] may God be with you", they would repeat "[…] may God be with you", and the more they were reprimanded by the priests, the louder they would repeat what the priests had just said, including the reprimands. His explanation was very useful, particularly to remind us that it is not enough to say that there are no universal knowledges; we have to make a decolonial effort on a daily basis to avoid the trap of universal knowledges, which are always particular knowledges that have been universalized through power (Santos, 2008).

In September, 2010, one of the educators/researchers was discussing with his students Skliar's (2003) ideas about the other who is radically other, indefinable and incomprehensible. A Xavante student then said:[13]

> [...] the author is mistaken, I didn't like this expression "the other". Who is the other? Is it me? White people can't say who I am. I know who I am! I'm Xavante! I have my culture, my identity! For us, the other is somebody who is close, who is important, not that one Skliar is talking about (Xavante student).

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[12] Despite our intention to act against the modern epistemology and favor a decolonial epistemology, we acknowledge that, as modernity's offspring, even fighting against it, we are not immune to its claims of superiority and universality.

[13] The conversation was not recorded. It was transcribed by one of the educators/ researchers.

Again, we have learned that a text is always plural and the way it affects us has to do with our identities. The Xavante student incited us to think that those who have tragically experienced the colonization process and the physical and symbolic violence it embodied cannot stand being seen as the other. Only the colonizer seems to have doubt in relation to the other. We have learned that we carry marks of coloniality and still have a long way to construct decoloniality, aiming at "[...] a radical reconstruction of being, power, and knowledge" (Oliveira & Candau, 2010, p. 24).

One more situation was experienced by an educator/researcher during the research addressing information and communication technologies. Influenced by Barreto (2011), who has often criticised technical education as something that could guarantee the education process by itself, the educator/researcher designed his research project without considering the technical dimension. He thought that it made more sense to transcend the view of "[...] teaching just for scientific, pedagogical and didactic update [creating] spaces for participation, reflection and education" (Imbernón, 2004, p. 15). Nevertheless, he soon noticed that the Indigenous students also wanted technical education, since five of the participants did not use computers very often, four of them had access to internet at school and three accessed internet daily at several places. The educator/researcher sat with the participants under a tree to talk and share realities, experiences and practices related to the use of ICT in the educational context. The conversation evidenced the difficulty to have access to technologies, considering the small number of computers available at school and the bad conditions of the equipments. Furthermore, the students complained about the internet slow speed, which hindered the development of any educational activity through that means. In this meeting, e-mail accounts were created for the participants that did not have one, and the students were introduced to the Ning social network. Several doubts were related to the instrumental use of technologies. By discussing about this experience, we learned we have to re-signify our theoretical assumptions when articulated with specific cultural fields.

In the same research, we recorded another event. Complying with the request of the Indigenous teachers, the educator/researcher organised a second meeting in a computer laboratory at the University. As time went by, the

educator/researcher noticed that some participants felt uncomfortable indoors and needed to go outside, besides having difficulties to adapt to the timetable established for the activities. The solution was to move to a larger, more ventilated place on the university campus. By reflecting on that experience, we can see the particular way through which Indigenous people assimilate the technologies without giving up their identities. We have learned how important it is to "[…] create alternatives for appropriation founded on the meanings attributed by the collective of subjects in the classroom. Ready-to-use technologies cannot account for inequalities and differences found there" (Barreto, 2011, p. 355).

That experience has also taught us what it means to "[…] exert control over a type of technology and make it useful to human beings […] in defense of freedom" (Freire, 1999, p. 133).

3.3 The ethical Indigenous community resists the advancement of the individualist neoliberal society

In the present context, individualism has been intensified and society is increasingly organized according to the principles of meritocracy (Santos, 2008; Bauman, 2001, 2003; Backes, Baquero, & Pavan, 2006). This culture has been strengthened in the field of education, particularly through the national, regional and local application of tests which supposedly distinguish the ones that deserve to occupy a place in society from those who do not, or even the position that each one should have. According to this individualistic and meritocratic perspective, the subjects are the only ones responsible for what they are, i.e. their individual choices define either their success or failure. For instance, "[…] if we are unemployed, it is because we failed to learn the right interview skills or because we did not try hard enough to find a job, or are just averse to work" (Bauman, 2001, p. 43).

In education, if learners cannot learn, it is because they have a "cultural deficit", are "poor", have "attention deficit" or just do not want to learn. On the other hand, the students that succeed are intelligent, dedicated, industrious, disciplined. However, this is not the real cause of either failure or success: "[…] the meritocratic culture existing in most of daily practices of

people that interact at school attributes personal merit to constructions that are contextual in the lives of those who attend school" (Backes et al., 2006, p. 533). It ignores mainly the social relations of power that unequally position the subjects in society: "the individuals are called to be the masters of their destiny when everything seems to be out of their control" (Santos, 2008, p. 300), since the individualistic rhetoric and the resulting individual responsibilisation occur exactly when "[…] minimal conditions of security and stability that enable the effective exercise of responsibilisation" are eliminated (Santos 2008, p. 311).

Bauman (2003) argues that both individualism and meritocracy have enacted the end of ethical communities and the multiplication of the esthetical communities. In ethical communities, their members have lasting collective bonds, mutual assistance is encouraged and recurrent, each individual feels responsible for the others, and the interests of the group are always above the individual interests. In esthetical communities, the bonds are ephemeral and uncompromising. In fact, the only thing this group of individuals has in common is that they all believe that nobody can nor will help anyone. The esthetical community does not weave "[…] among its members a web of ethical responsibilities or long-term commitments" (Bauman, 2003, p. 67).

However, the ethical community is still one of the cultural characteristics of Indigenous peoples. It is remarkable how present the commitment to the ethical community is among Indigenous students. It often appears when they talk about the reasons why they are taking a higher education course (undergraduate, master's or doctor's course). Their speech always shows that they are there to help their community, their people and their village. By studying, the Indigenous students identify how the authors may contribute to strengthening their community in order to solve the community problems. In every dissertation presented by Indigenous students in the Post-Graduation Programme in which we work the issues approached have invariably been linked to their people and communities.

In 2010, after the presentation of one dissertation carried out by an Indigenous student, a Guarani-Kaiowa master's student said:[14]

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[14]   The testimony was transcribed by one of the educators/researchers.

> I'm very happy today. This is one more achievement of our people, of all the Indigenous peoples. We need more Indigenous masters for our people. With all the respect I have for you, professors, we would like to see Indigenous professors here teaching our people. We would like to have Indigenous PhDs. This is how we'll be stronger to fight for our people. Our communities need that (Guarani/Kaiowa master's student).

In the first semester of 2009, in a class of Sociology of Education taught in the History course, the educator/researcher proposed a group discussion about issues concerning the present society, and one of the groups talked about racial quotas. There was only one Guarani student in this group. A non-Indigenous student in the group claimed that the racial quotas took vacancies from the non-Indigenous people and this was unfair because the number of non-Indians was far higher. The Indigenous student looked at his classmate and said: "[…] you have more than 90 percent of the vacancies. Isn't that enough for you?" (Guarani/Kaiowa student). The Indigenous student, besides subverting that argument, evidenced his concern with the presence of a larger number of Indigenous students from his community in the university for his people to become stronger.

At the beginning of the second semester of 2010, in one of the continued education meetings of the university professors, Indigenous students were invited to tell us how they felt in the space/time of the classroom in relation to the professors. A Guarani student reported: "[…] whenever a professor has prejudice against an Indigenous student, he or she does not have to say it. From the way he or she looks at me, I can tell if he or she has some prejudice against Indigenous people or not" [15] (Guarani-Kaiowa student).

On the same occasion, he said that not knowing the Indigenous people made us miss the opportunity to have great friends, because Indians would not say that a dog was a man's best friend, rather "[…] the one who has an Indigenous friend has a friend forever" (Guarani/Kaiowa student). He was referring to the commitment to the other, to feeling responsible for the other, to being a partner, rather than a competitor as the logic of the esthetical community advocates.

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[15]   Notes taken by one of the educators/researchers on that day.

In the research that interviewed undergraduate Indigenous students, the community was also highlighted, as we can see in the following speeches: "[…] it is rewarding to see that a student is learning everything you are teaching him or her. This is what draws my attention the most, like the children in our community learn" (Terena student, Pedagogy course); "[…] I feel like coming back to my village. […] Because there are several non-Indigenous teachers in our village. [...] So, one day I'd like to see only Indigenous teachers teaching at the school in our village. That's why I want to finish the course and come back to teach there" (Kadiweu student, History course); "[…] we want our community to speak Terena language again in the community where we live. We want it in our whole community, not only at school" (Terena student, Physical Education course).

As we can see, both the community (village) and the concern with its strengthening are recurrent. The Indigenous peoples have not bent to the individualistic discourse. They have repeatedly taught us that living in an ethical community with a web of mutual responsibilities and commitments is not only possible, but also fundamental in the fight against processes of subalternisation and for decolonisation of knowledge, power and being.

4. Action Research contribution to intercultural dialogue and decolonial epistemology

To argue that action research is a modality of research that contributes significantly to intercultural dialogue and decolonial epistemology we follow the articulated action-research to the field of popular education, especially with Freire (1991, 1999, 2002, 2011), Brandao (2003), Pinto (2014), and Streck et al. (2014). We conceive action research as an action planned in the collective and with the collective, aimed at social transformation. In the case of our article, with a view of transforming reality of indigenous peoples, a marked reality both by colonialism, as the coloniality.

To do so, we briefly bring the assumptions of action research and relate them to the field of critical interculturalism, particularly through dialogue and the production of decolonial epistemology. In this sense, we refer to Pinto (2014) who presents eight assumptions of action research.

The first assumption of action research that Pinto (2014) presents refers to the impossibility of neutrality and the defense of the dominated and exploited classes. As stated by Streck et al. (2014, p. 153), the "hegemonic ways of researching occur through techniques that control the knowledge in the pretense idea of neutrality." As well as theorists of action research, the field of critical interculturality also shows that neutrality is a chimera. It is at the service of the hegemonic groups interests. The supposed neutral knowledge of modern science invented colonized peoples "as a population of degenerated types based on racial origin in order to justify the conquest and establish management and education systems" (Bhabha, 2001, p. 111). Neutral and universal scientific knowledge have been systematically used to disqualify indigenous peoples. Instead of neutrality, the field of critical intercultural supports the necessity to show the interests involved in all knowledge, without which interculturality dialogue is not possible, nor the production of decolonial epistemology.

The second assumption that Pinto (2014) presents is that action research epistemologically oppose especially positivism and empiricism. The positivist and epiricist epistemology is totalitarian, not accepting other forms of knowledge as valid (Santos, 2008). Therefore, from the perspective of action research it is necessary to refer to other epistemological assumptions, questioning the hierarchy of knowledge and the disqualification of the working classes knowledge. There are not upper and lower knowledge, they are different (Freire, 2002). As already noted, the critical interculturality also questions the hierarchy of knowledge, highlighting the racial hierarchy produced in the colonial period and which still manifests itself through colonialism (Quijano, 2002) considering the white ways of thinking, living and coexisting superior than blacks and indigenous modes (Walsh, 2009).

The third assumption of the action research is that research is always an unfinished process, therefore, it has no recipe or complete method (Pinto, 2014). The process of action research is constructed with the popular classes in all stages and it can be reset at any time by the participants. In the case of a class that follows this principle of action research, it implies being an open space for different views and different experiences. Both teachers and students find themselves in process of formation, where all are learners (Thiol-

lent & Colette, 2014). The field of interculturality is also open and unfinished. As shown by Santos and Nunes (2003), recognition of the incompleteness of any culture is the condition of possibility of intercultural dialogue. The dialogue makes sense only when we accept that other cultures may have better answers to the same questions and problems, or even when we accept that a problem or question can have more than one answer. In this sense we remember the dialogue with the indigenous Tuyuka presented earlier in which it shows how the research principle of listening carefully to the interviewee does not make sense for these peoples, or, as he calls into question the concept of negotiation from Bhabha (2001), stating that "there are things que Tuyuka do not negotiate," showing that there is no recipe or finished concepts.

The fourth assumption of action research refers to the emphasis on the collective production of knowledge (Pinto, 2014). In the current context, there is an emphasis on individual processes to the detriment of collective processes, also in the knowledge construction process. However, action research continues to see the knowledge construction process as a collective process. In the case of classes with this assumption of action research, it means recognizing that teachers and students, rather than being consumers of knowledge produced by others, "are producers dialoguing through research, with the cooperation or collaboration, in their extent through interactions, observations, reading and reflection "(Thiollent & Colette, 2014, p. 214). For critical interculturality, subjects are always the result of social and cultural relations and never a product of merit or individual effort. In the case of production of knowledge, currently there is a capitalist appropriation of knowledge built collectively by traditional peoples, resulting in what Santos (2008) calls the biological imperialism. The recent interest in indigenous knowledge "[...] becomes another version of 'old' colonial process of transforming it into a resource to be exploited" (Santos, 2008, p. 302). To overcome individualism and capitalist appropriation of knowledge produced collectively, the critical interculturality commitment to collective struggle and emphasis in the collective process of knowledge production. As we saw in the case of indigenous peoples, this fight becomes more possible as well as the exercise of this principle of action research because they are peoples who

continue investing in the community and collective bonds, not seeing as individuals, but as subjects radically committed to their people.

The fifth assumption of action research refers to the search for links between popular and scientific knowledge, not limited to simple exchange, but seeking the construction of new knowledge, intentionally transforming knowledge (Pinto, 2014). The link between popular and scientific knowledge is given, as already emphasised, without establishing hierarchies, but by the possibilities to find ways to transform the reality of domination and exploitation. Scientific knowledge has historically denied to the popular classes and this denial is an integral part of capitalist exploitation. Thus, in seeking the articulation of popular and scientific knowledge, critical ways of understanding reality can be built, aimed at social transformation. Inspired by Freire (1991, p. 83) it can be said that action research "[...] proposes the construction of collective knowledge, articulating the popular knowledge and critical knowledge, scientific, mediated by the experiences of the world." As stated Brandão (2003), there is a science that hides its ideology and defends the interests of capital, but we can defend openly and honestly a science that takes the defense of the people and the commitment to transform reality. The critical interculturality also demands the articulation between different knowledge, recognizing that knowledge makes sense within its culture, but it is possible to translate it and promote dialogues (Santos & Nunes, 2003). The hegemonic culture imposes its knowledge as unique and universal, but to subvert this logic, it is necessary to know it and to appropriate it critically. What matter is to reframe "[...] not only what we think about the social and political contexts and fields, but also the epistemological and theoretical contexts, to intervene with and change our landmarks and logics of thought, knowledge and understanding" (Walsh, 2010, p. 225).

The sixth assumption of action research implies prioritizing the participation in the construction process of knowledge carried out by the organization of groups and collectives (Pinto, 2014). Since knowledge is always a collective product and of a group, it is appropriate to encourage this form of production, facilitating the recognition of this dimension and the strengthening of collective struggle for social transformation. According to Brandão (2003, p. 117) in any human group, being either formed by a couple or a set of forty

students in a classroom, "there is a continuous work that creates, owns, develops and transforms multiple and differentiated knowledge." Somehow all or almost all contribute to produce knowledge of the group. Although this is difficult to develop in research, strictly speaking, nothing should be more solidarity and collective than the action research (Brandão, 2003). The field of critical interculturality also recognizes the collective and solidarity dimension in knowledge production. In this regard, we recall again our dialogues with indigenous peoples, which systematically claim dialogue between knowledge (indigenous and academic) as a means to contribute to their people. Critical interculturality at the same time that understands knowledge as a collective and group process, it struggles against "[...] exclusion, denial and ontological and cognitive epistemic subordination of groups and racialized subjects" (Walsh, 2009, p. 23).

The seventh assumption of action research emphasizes that although it has as a starting point the reality of the groups, the goal is to expand the understanding of reality, linking it to the historical, socio-economic, political and global context, which is why it will always be required a permanent relationship between theory and practice (Pinto, 2014). There are different theories that explain the reality, but none can be considered superior: "There are not unique theories and even 'best', although temporarily there is a theory through which individuals and teams of people can see and think better" (Brandão, 2003, p. 108). This does not mean failing to recognize that there are conservative and transforming theories (Freire, 1999). Theories are not previous to practice, but they are constructed and reconstructed in relation to practice. In this process it develops a world reading increasingly critical, enhancing social change (Freire, 2002). Critical interculturality considers the cultural context of the group as a starting element and through it the group dialogues with other cultures. It also recognizes the diversity of theories, but the euro-usa-centric theory (Walsh, 2010) does not dialogue with other cultures, it seeks to impose its logic to other cultures. It should be convenient to be based on and to build theories that promote intercultural dialogue and contribute to create "[...] better life conditions for marginalized groups and Overcome racism, gender discrimination, cultural and religious discrimination and social inequalities" (Candau, 2011, p. 30).

Finally, the eighth principle of action research is concerned, although it is not its first goal, finding new ways of doing research in all its dimensions (technical, political, theoretical) (Pinto, 2014). As already highlighted, action research calls into question the positivist science. In doing so, it recognizes the multiplicity of methods, while taking as a central concern "[...] the connection between action research and broader struggles for social, economic and political justice all over the world" (Zeichner & Diniz-Pereira, 2005, p. 64). Action research with the purpose of transformating reality, recognizes that there are different ways to research it and to transform it. In this process of transformation there is not a privileged subject, all participate in the research and collectively they create alternatives for social transformation, which often requires new research procedures, methods not yet recognized as legitimate by the hegemonic science. Inspired by Brandão (2003), we can say that action research broadens the understanding of what it means to do a legitimate research. Critical interculturality points out that there have always been different ways of producing knowledge, but with colonialism, the European scientific model was imposed as the only valid and universal one, causing epistemicide (Santos, 2008). Critical interculturality uses different ways of doing research and recognizes that all cultures produce knowledge. In addition, a permanent epistemological vigilance is required to deconstruct the existing colonialism in the academy and also in cultures seen as different, especially indigenous and African cultures. Research in critical interculturality logic is best understood by thinking as indigenous Kadiwéu Batista (2006, p. 142) wrote about his research experience, seeing it as part of everyday life that transforms and strengthens the community: "Today research is part of my everyday life. Through it I get involved and commit myself more with the community. The community knows me better and I know better my community. It recognizes and supports my work."

With the analysis of our experience with indigenous mediated by the assumptions of action research articulated with intercultural dialogue and the production of decolonial epistemology, we hope to have contributed to these (action research, intercultural dialogue and construction decolonial knowledge) increasingly be part of our educational practices as a way to contribute to the overcoming of all forms of injustice.

5. Final remarks

Despite knowing how much we have learned with the presence of Indigenous people in our lives, we know we are still at the beginning of the establishment of intercultural relationships. When a Guarani/Kaiowa student says "[…] he or she does not have to say it. From the way he or she looks at me, I can tell if he or she has some prejudice against Indigenous people or not", referring to discrimination, we reflect on how many times our look may have intimidated and discriminated our Indigenous students, how many times our often eulogistic speech was full of coloniality, superiority and negation of otherness.

How many times, by trying to discuss an author's ideas, have we been unable to understand that, even following the post-colonial or decolonial thought, or even the epistemology of the south, this may have produced a kind of knowledge that carried marks of colonial knowledge, power and being? How many times have we been unable to understand the Indigenous different comprehension? How many times have we made an effort to convince them of the relevance of both an author's thought and our own way of thinking? How many times have we occupied a position to say who the Indigenous people are? How many times have not we heard them in their difference?

When the Guarani/Kaiowa student says "[...] professor, help me solve a personal problem" mentioning the discrimination of her son, we think about the times we must have imposed our (theoretical) problems and been insensitive to concrete problems. How many times have we been unable to articulate theory and the necessary concreteness without which, as Freire (1999) would say, it just becomes "blah blah blah"? How many times have we been "blah blah blah" beings (Freire, 1999) and said meaningless things to Indigenous people because we are still too attached to the canons of the western university?

When the Terena student says "[…] so far, nothing involving ICT and teacher education for my people has been approached", we think about how much we still have to learn to build bridges between "[…] political-intellectual projects both inside and outside the university, critical thoughts and knowledges, their rationalities and geopolitical localizations, particularly in relation to the strong connection between the cultural and the economic, political, social and epistemic fields" (Walsh, 2010, p. 218).

We still think about how the coloniality of knowledge, power and being has inhabited our bodies and how difficult it is to construct other ways of thinking, knowing, understanding and living. It is hard, yet urgent and necessary, to construct "[…] epistemological landmarks that pluralise, problematise and challenge the notion of totalitarian, unique and universal thought and knowledge" (Walsh, 2009, p. 25).

Certainly, an important aspect for the construction of these new epistemologies is the presence of Indigenous students in the university and living with them. With them, inspired by action research assumptions, we have learned the paths leading to decolonial, intercultural pedagogy and epistemology.

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