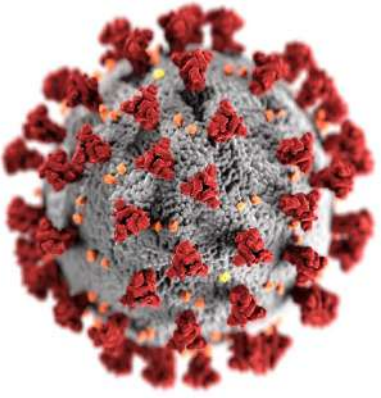
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Language, Literacy, and Education in Times of Crises: 'Introductory' Notes

Linguagem, letramento e educação em tempos de crise: notas introdutórias

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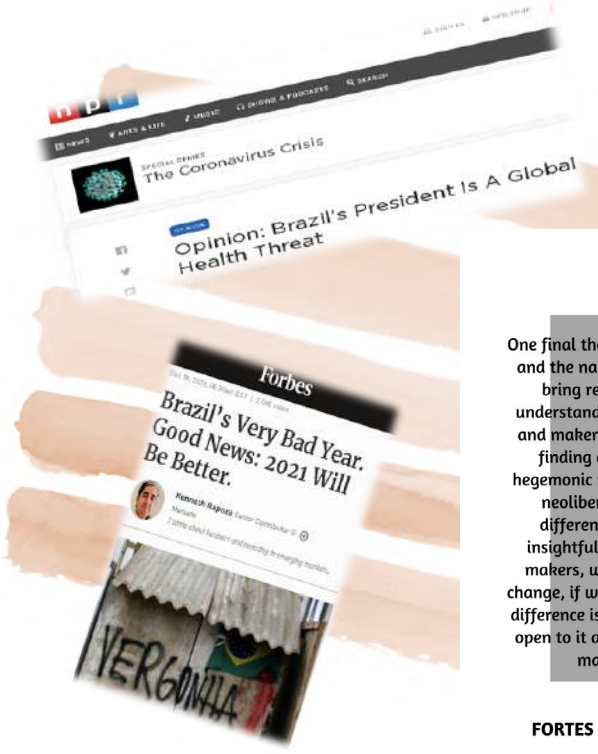
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By the time we began to draft the introduction of this special issue, we came up with the challenge of putting our ideas into words: ideas related to our personal interpretations in our encounters with the texts in this volume; ideas related to our academic viewpoints on the intrinsic relation between language, literacy, education, and society; ideas related to ourselves in relation to a world that has been historically marked by crises of all sorts. This special issue refers to crises, in its plural form. As we are politically and socioculturally situated, greater attention will be drawn to the COVID-19 crisis in all the complexities, disparities and challenges that arise when an unprecedented pandemic faces a neoconservative and neoliberal governance.



The breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic in the beginning of the year 2020 undeniably makes us ponder whether the world has changed for the better or for the worse. We still lack a prompt answer. Nevertheless, for Sousa Santos (2020, p. 5), when one thinks about the concept of crisis, one needs to acknowledge that "The current pandemic is not a crisis condition clearly opposed to a condition of normality". The author goes on to argue that "Since the 80s – as neoliberalism imposed itself as the capitalist prevailing version and as the latter became more and more subjected to the logic of the financial sector, the world has witnessed a perennial crisis situation" (our translation).





> One final thought about the pandemic and the narratives we would like to bring relates to our ability to understand that we are all products and makers of history. As products, finding ourselves immersed in hegemonic narratives such as that of neoliberalism, engaging with difference can certainly be an insightful and rich experience. As makers, we can only engage with change, if we wish to do so, as long as difference is present to us and we are open to it and to the conflicts that it may engender (...)"
>
> **FORTES & FERRARI, this issue**

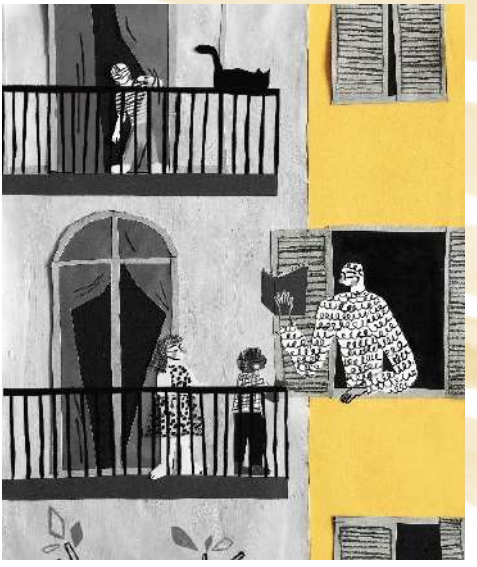
Human beings all over the world have been experiencing a mental, physical and emotional vertigo marked by fear, anxiety, loss, pressure, and loneliness. Brazilians might add a few more categories to such unfortunate scenario: despair, disbelief, discontent, to name a few. The escalating neoconservative political actions founded on neoliberalism, fundamentalism and anti-communism that came out in the 2018 presidential election (DUBOC; FERRAZ, 2020) now gain momentum, for

> "What lies behind Bolsonaro's project is a new form of colonialism that seeks to wither or even erase difference of all kinds. Feelings of xenophobia, homophobia, racism, sexism and misogyny which now flourish openly among Bolsonaro's supporters show history that the target has never changed: the poor, the migrant, the indigenous, the homosexual, the black, the woman" (DUBOC; FERRAZ, 2020, p. 2).

Right on spot! The microscopic coronavirus does have specific targets whenever it meets a necropolitics in action.



In times of all sorts of crises, it is imperative that contemporary Applied Linguistics assertively responds to the challenges put forward by this new social landscape. Recent literacy research and practice have been heavily criticized, provided that they seek to problematize literacies and their relations with language education in multifaceted and dialogical, and agonistic ways, questioning the dichotomies built by the paradigms of modernity (regulation vs emancipation, science vs non-science, inferiority vs superiority, us vs them). Thus, this special issue calls on researchers to reflect on the potentialities and limitations of the following themes: teacher language education, language/literacy conceptualizations, and language/literacy education in their intrinsic relation to political, cultural, ideological, and technological aspects.



> This is why I want to borrow Krenak's assertion mentioned in the introduction of this essay – life is implicated with other lives – to advocate in favor of a literacy pedagogy that I call implicated literacies, that is, literacy pedagogies that include and welcome environmental concerns; that underpin the pedagogical proposals with the acknowledgement that life on Earth begets life; that considers the Earth as a giant living organism (...)"
>
> **BATISTA**, this issue

Outlining a co-authored introduction to a special issue often demands, on the one hand, the a priori establishment of the writing strategies that suit both authors, and, on the other, the scope definition, which has to be in line with the set of contributions in the volume. The main difficulty in writing this introduction about crises in times of crisis is that we ended up questioning to what extent introducing the topic turns out to be redundant. What is to be introduced when many of us are deeply immersed in pain and perplexity in face of an explicitly orchestrated necropolitics and the widening of abyssal social disparities?



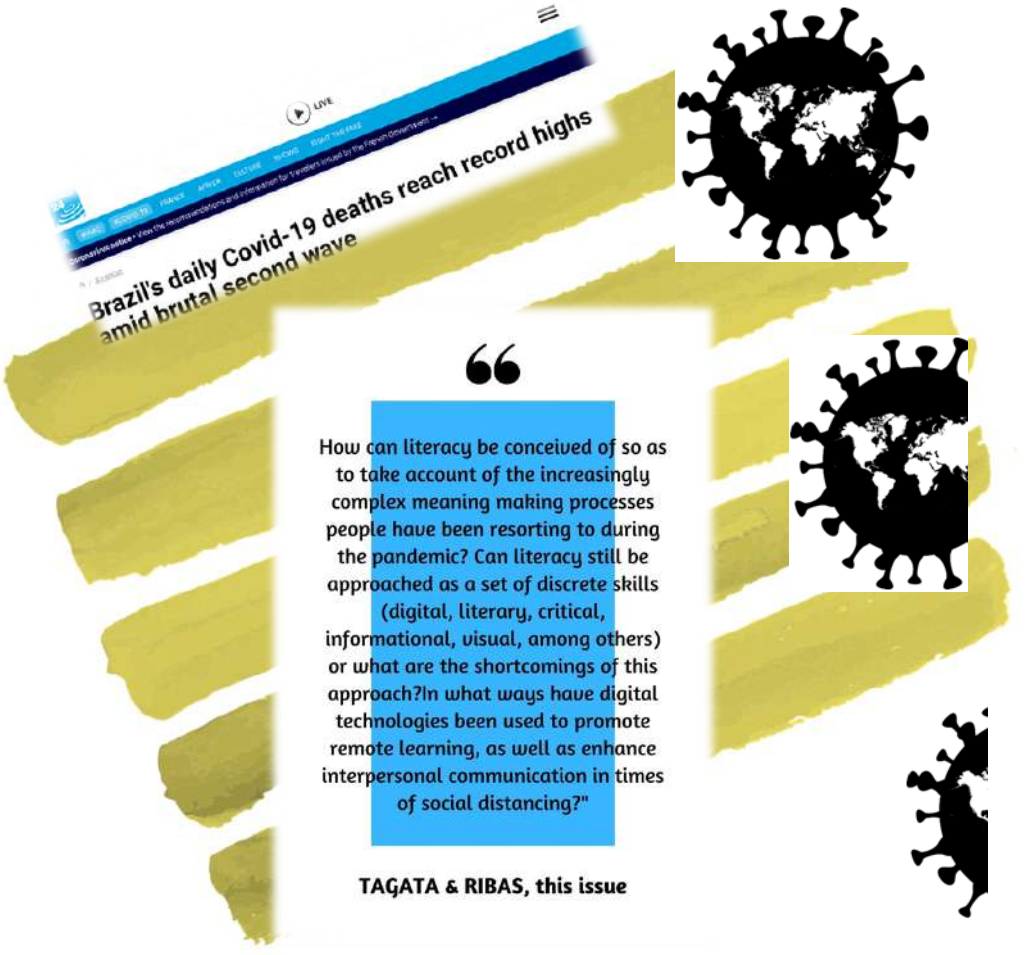


> (...) in order to live with the crises put forward by modernity and humanism, "a politics of representation in which power is in the community and not in the State or in any other equivalent administrative institution" (MIGNOLO, 2008, p. 298) is necessary. The cartoons, photos and memes that weave our narrative as knowledge arise from epistemologies of the Global South; they constitute voices that seek to cross the invisible abyssal lines that divide the world into different universes. We conceive of these images as procedural micropolitics that have the potential to build "new modes of subjectivity."
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> **MIZAN & FERRAZ, this issue**

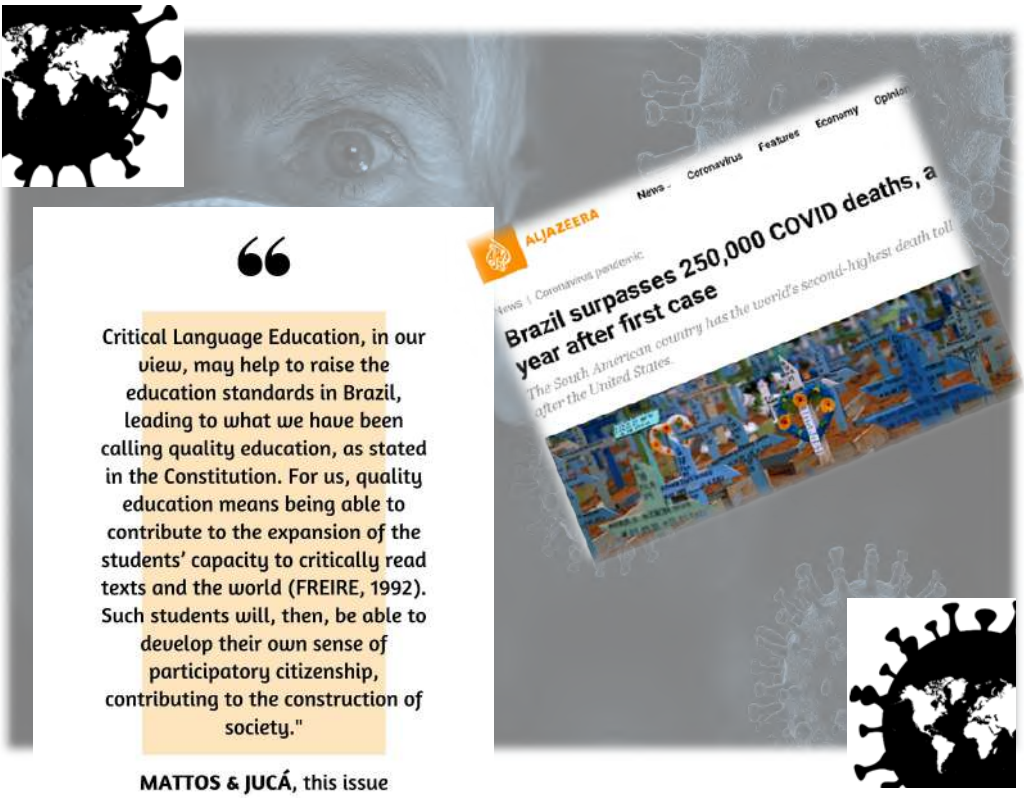
It took us some time to eventually draft an outline as our personal and professional lives have profoundly been altered with the pandemic, echoing the emotional, cognitive, mental and physical side effects that many of us are coping with. Our hands seemed to stubbornly postpone the task, wishing to deny the act of writing a linear introduction. A shortcut emerged out of our lived experiences. For Ferraz (2019), besides problematizing, expanding and questioning the traditional concept/field of Teaching and Learning of Languages/Foreign Languages/English Language, Language Education (LE) or Critical Language Education (CLE) revisits the teaching and learning of languages, taking into account linguistics, critical and sociocultural dimensions. In doing so, the author is fond of visual literacies work (FERRAZ, 2014) and has vastly published on the topic so as this mosaic of integrated and multimodal visual elements soon became a must have.



As "writing" could never be fully abolished in academic genres, this split introduction was inspired by Duboc's recent reading of South African-born Nobel laureate J. M. Coetzee's metafictional work *Diario de um ano ruim* (2008). The creative novel takes the form of a set of political essays written by Señor C who hires a young Filipina female neighbor as a typist. The essays, which take up the larger part of the page, are accompanied by diary entries displayed beneath them and between divided lines through which readers get access to both Señor C's and Anya's desires and viewpoints. This introduction was, then, inspired by Coetzee's visually split-novel layout so that beneath our bricolage composed of contemporary news headlines, visual art, and quotes (this volume) come glimpses of our meaning-making processes.



Needless to say, beyond any conventional view that still conceives of visual images as mere representation of the written language, what turns out to be the core element within this introduction is the non-linear mosaic itself whose material dispositions will surely bring distinct affective and political reactions. At first, we thought of bringing the mosaic itself with no recourse to this bottom metanarrative entry. Nonetheless, we wished to write something, not in the sense of explaining or clarifying our bricolage, but in the sense of addressing the potentialities of collective action along with critical language work.



With regards to **collective action**, this special issue celebrates the ten-year "National Project on Literacies: Language, Culture, Education and Technology" (henceforth PNL) for its relevance in addressing language research and language teacher education from critical lenses. Coordinated by Walkyria Monte Mór and Lynn Mario Trindade Menezes de Souza (USP), PNL is a collaborative network amongst more than 30 public Brazilian who have developed local actions aimed at: i) reflecting about language teaching policies; ii) designing language education programs in Higher Education; iii) designing courses to/with public school teachers; iv) establishing international agreements and exchanges with foreign universities with the participation of graduate students and post-doctoral students in internship programs.



“When the CNE authorizes pre-service teachers to have practical activities and internships during remote classes in basic education schools, it seems that they are ignoring or pretending not to see all the problems people, especially from “south of quarantine”, are facing to survive and to have access to remote classes. That attitude reinforces how anti-intellectualism has played an important role in the Brazilian society. After all, are researchers and educators being heard on that matter?”

NASCIMENTO, FAÇANHA & AUGUSTO DE SOUZA, this issue



“Defending critical language education with children implicates placing emphasis on children’s subjectivity, individuality and history, as well as on their complete development. It means creating possibilities for children to question and expand their views (MONTE MÓR, 2019) on what has been traditionally imposed by society. In this sense, we argue thatreframing teacher education is necessary so that TEYL is part of teacher education programs and the concept of teacher education can be expanded to include all teachers’ efforts in this search to have specific qualifications to work with children.”

KAWACHI-FURLAN & TONELLI, this issue

The texts in this issue portray a collective effort to discuss the social and political role of language and literacy theory and practice *vis-à-vis* contemporary crises. The quotes are brought to the fore in our genuine acknowledgement of the collaborators’ care and self-implication imbued in their own local ongoing language and literacy research and practice involving children, teenagers, families, school teachers, policy makers and student teachers, unveiling less authoritative and horizontal attitudes towards more dialogical practices between university and society.



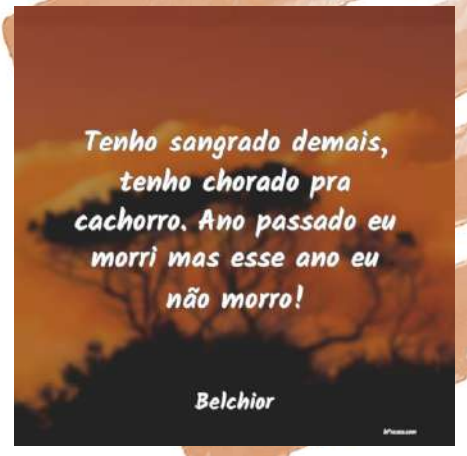
Emphasis is also brought to the **critical language work** itself fostered by collaborators in this issue. Critical language and literacy education have delineated foregrounding theories in the PNL and might provide a substantive basis for rethinking the crisis/es put forward by the COVID-19 pandemic. More recent studies have approached language and literacy studies to decoloniality and transdisciplinarity as ways to change the terms of the conversation so as to fight against social disparities resulting from colonial epistemic racism, along with the still hermetic intradisciplinary academic practices.





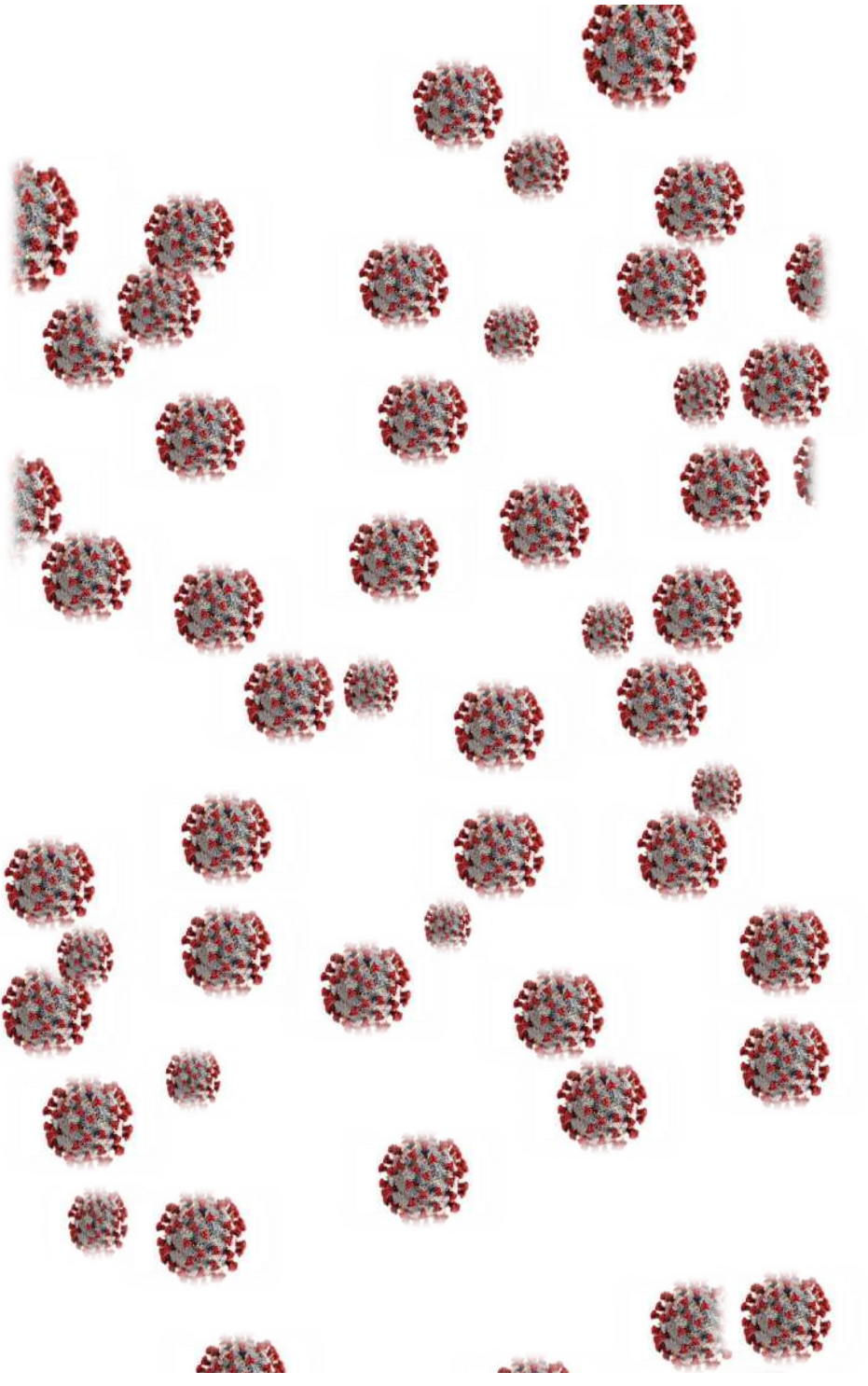
Transgressing boundaries and changing deep-seated beliefs and habits related to technology, critical literacy and ethics/social justice are some of the compelling reasons for us to get busy with the other for the other. In pandemic times, practicing physical distance, wearing a mask and applying alcohol gel are examples of ethics for the collective other and also for the self. Nevertheless, the proximity-distancing amidst uneven relations of power in local-global, transcultural entangled human, non-human, inhuman coexistence goes much beyond such a practice."

TAKAKI, this issue





The texts you are about to read reclaim and restate the importance of language and literacy debate in addressing alternatives to crises of all kinds. Scope and viewpoints differ in accordance to each authors' research interests, acknowledging the very refracted nature of language and the multiple interpretations of realities. A common ground, though, is to be found: they all acknowledge the ethical responsibility and self-implication of language and literacy researchers and teacher educators in preventing society from "invisible" viruses. For now, the fight is against the coronavirus. In the past and upcoming years, the fight has been and will be against all sorts of discriminatory practices resulting from coloniality. Enjoy the reading and stay safe.



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References (images)

Note 1: All quotes were designed by Daniel Ferraz through a free-of-charge graphic design software.

Note 2: All photos were taken from the Unplash and Pixabay websites and are free to download and use under the Unsplash License and Pixabay License. No permission needed. Specific attribution is followed below.

Note 3: Some photos were edited by the authors (e.g. color changing) through Word tools.

1. Photo of the colored coronavirus by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Available on https://unsplash.com/photos/k0KRNtqcjfw?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditShareLink. Access March 11, 2021.

2. Black coronavirus: Available on: https://pixabay.com/vectors/corona-virus-map-world-disease-5269197/ Access March 13, 2021.

3. Background 1 (man wearing a mask along with the coronavirus): Available on https://pixabay.com/photos/coronavirus-mask-infection-virus-4957673/ Access March 13, 2021.

4. Background 2 (transversal large stripes): Available on: https://pixabay.com/illustrations/watercolour-pink-violet-purple-4117017/ Access March 13, 2021.

5. News headline print "Opinion: Brazil's President is a global health threat": Available on: https://www.npr.org/2021/03/04/973662184/opinion-brazils-president-is-a-global-health-threat?t=1615148904546 Access March 13, 2021.

6. News headline print "Brazil's Very Bad year. Good News: 2021 Will Be Better": Available on: https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2020/12/14/brazils-very-bad-year-good-news-2021-will-be-better/?sh=70fc7526423f Access March 13, 2021.

7. Photo (white mask along with blue disposable gloves): Available on: https://pixabay.com/photos/disposal-road-irresponsible-5021447/ Access March 13, 2021.

8. Photo "The kind neighbour" by Fernando Cobelo and submitted for United Nations Global Call Out To Creatives - help stop the spread of COVID-19. Available on https://unsplash.com/photos/Swob1SdFmJU. Access: March 6, 2021.

9. Photo "A protestor's shirt with handwritten messages" by Maria Oswalt available on Unsplash: https://unsplash.com/photos/qFkVFe9_d38?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditShareLink. Access March 11, 2021.

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11. News headline print "Brazil surpasses 250,000 COVID deaths, year after first case": Available on: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/26/brazil-surpasses-250000-covid-deaths-a-year-after-first-case

12. Photo (a girl wearing a mask): Available on: https://pixabay.com/photos/girl-child-face-mask-covid-kid-5760039/ Access March 17 2021.

13. News headline print "Brazil's, Covid Crisis Is a Warning to the Whole World, Scientists Say": Available on: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/03/world/americas/brazil-covid-variant.html .Access March 17 2021.

14. Lyrics excerpt by Belchior, Our translation: "I have bled so much, I have suffered to death, last year I died, but this year I won't die". Image available at: https://bfrases.com/autor/belchior/ Access March 17 2021.