

EXPLORING CRITICAL RACIAL LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: EXPERIENCES FROM A TEACHING INTERNSHIP

EXPLORANDO O LETRAMENTO RACIAL CRÍTICO NO ENSINO DE LÍNGUA INGLESA: EXPERIÊNCIAS DE UM ESTÁGIO DOCENTE

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ABSTRACT

This article is about the teaching internship experience conducted during the master's program in Languages, in which the course "English Language I" was taught to incoming students of the undergraduate course in Languages (Portuguese/English), at the Federal University of Sergipe. Alongside covering topics outlined in the course syllabus, focusing on the teaching of English, discussions were held on critical race theory and its place in the educational context, through classroom activities based on critical racial literacy and intersectionality (LADSON BILLINGS, 1998; CRENSHAW, 2004; FERREIRA, 2023). So, we examined our practices as educators and the reflections arising from this experience, which broadened our understanding of ethnic-racial issues, their connections with English language education, and the impacts on contemporary social practices, including exchanges of experiences with the students. Thus, this article aims to share reflections arising from the aforementioned experience. It is a qualitative and interpretive study (MOITA LOPES, 1994; SALDAÑA, 2009), focused on the analysis and interpretation of the meanings constructed during the teaching internship, involving reflections from the researchers' field diary and records of classroom activities (PARDO, 2019; PAIVA, 2019). The analysis follows the strand of Southern studies (SILVA JR; MATOS, 2019; PENNYCOOK; MAKONI, 2020), which advocate for the inclusion of voices from socially marginalized groups. The results of the experience indicate the relevance of building bridges between academic knowledge production and the social practices of marginalized groups in English language education.

Keywords: teaching internship; critical racial literacy; English.

RESUMO

Este artigo trata de uma experiência de estágio docente realizado durante o mestrado em Letras, no qual foi ministrada a disciplina "Língua Inglesa I" para estudantes ingressantes no curso de graduação em Letras (Português/Inglês) da Universidade Federal de Sergipe. Além de abordar os tópicos da ementa da disciplina, com foco na língua inglesa, foram realizadas discussões sobre a teoria racial crítica e seu desenvolvimento no contexto educacional, por meio de atividades didáticas fundamentadas nas teorias de letramento racial crítico e interseccionalidade (LADSON BILLINGS, 1998; CRENSHAW, 2004; FERREIRA, 2023). Neste contexto, examinamos nossas práticas como docentes e as reflexões advindas dessa experiência, as quais ampliaram nosso entendimento sobre questões étnico-raciais, suas conexões com a educação linguística em língua inglesa e os impactos nas práticas sociais contemporâneas, incluindo as trocas de experiência com os discentes. Assim, este artigo objetiva compartilhar reflexões decorrentes da experiência citada. Trata-se de um estudo qualitativo e interpretativo (MOITA LOPES, 1994; SALDAÑA, 2009), focado na análise dos sentidos construídos durante o estágio docente, envolvendo reflexões do diário de campo dos pesquisadores e registros de atividades de sala de aula (PARDO, 2019; PAIVA, 2019). As análises seguem a corrente de estudos Suleados (SILVA JR; MATOS, 2019; PENNYCOOK; MAKONI, 2020), que preconizam a inclusão de vozes de grupos socialmente marginalizados. Os resultados indicam a relevância da construção de pontes entre a produção de conhecimento acadêmico e as práticas sociais de grupos marginalizados na educação linguística em inglês.

Palavras-chave: estágio docente; letramento racial crítico; inglês.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since our partnership as advisor and advisee started, back in 2019, through the Institutional Program of Scientific Initiation Scholarships (known as Pibic in Portuguese) for undergraduate students at the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS in Portuguese), we, the authors of this article, have been discussing, researching and expanding the discussions about new literacies (KNOBEL; LANKSHEAR, 2014) connected to the teaching of English and pre-service and in-service teacher education. But it was during the transition from the undergraduate to the graduate course (master's degree) of one of the authors that the interest to study critical racial literacy

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(FERREIRA, 2014) arose and we had to embark on a journey of not only learning about this literacy together but also to deepen its discussions into a level that was expected for a master's thesis (CARDOSO SANTOS, 2024).

The discussions regarding critical race theory, critical racial literacy, and ethnic-racial issues have garnered attention within educational contexts and applied linguistics research (FERREIRA, 2014, 2023; NASCIMENTO 2016; MELO, 2023), emphasizing the importance of addressing racial identities and power dynamics in teaching and learning processes. This article seeks to contribute to this ongoing conversation by sharing reflections from a teaching internship experience conducted within the context of a master's program in Languages. More specifically, the internship involved instructing the course "English Language I" to undergraduate students at the Federal University of Sergipe, Brazil. In addition to covering traditional syllabus content related to English language instruction, the internship provided an opportunity to engage students in discussions informed by critical race theory, exploring themes of racial identity and intersectionality within the educational sphere.

The primary objective of this article is to examine our practices as educators involved in the internship and reflect on the insights gleaned from this experience. By integrating critical racial literacy and intersectionality into classroom activities, the internship experience aimed at broadening participants' understanding of ethnic-racial issues and their implications for English language education. Furthermore, this article seeks to elucidate the broader societal impacts of these discussions on contemporary social practices, including the exchange of experiences involving educators and students.

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive approach, drawing upon methodologies advocated by scholars such as Moita Lopes (1994) and Saldaña (2009). Central to the analysis are the reflections documented in the researchers' field diaries, supplemented by records of classroom activities. By employing a qualitative lens, this study aims to dive into the nuanced meanings constructed during the teaching internship, allowing for a deeper exploration of the intersection between critical race theory and language education. Following an interpretive approach, language is viewed as a factor shaping the social world and the meanings derived from it. This perspective emphasizes the significance of understanding the diverse voices, whether vocalized or silenced, that contribute to the construction of meanings within society. Such interpretive investigations also delve into the power dynamics inherent in this social milieu (MOITA LOPES, 1994). Throughout the research, we recorded observations in our field diaries. Pardo (2019) highlights the process of maintaining a field diary as a means for researchers to assert control and take ownership of their experiences during scientific inquiry. This practice not only allows for the construction of meaning from these recorded experiences but also serves as a platform for reflecting on the various stages of the research.

Researchers in the field of applied linguistics (PENNYCOOK; MAKONI, 2020; SILVA; MATOS, 2019), have initiated discussions on what they have labeled as epistemologies of the South, prompted by the imperative of this area of study to interact with socially relevant theories (ROTH; SELBACH; FLORÊNCIO, 2016). This perspective emphasizes the importance of not only including the voices of the socially marginalized of the Global South within academic discourse but also expanding our epistemological repertoires by acknowledging that we must recognize that investigations in applied linguistics conducted in other parts of the world should be seen as opportunities to explore new ways of thinking (PENNYCOOK, 2023).

The term "South" in these epistemologies does not merely denote geographical location but signifies an epistemic South, embodying the experiences of marginalized communities (SILVA; MATOS, 2019), those subjected to ongoing oppression, injustice, and systematic dismantlement perpetuated by colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy to the extent that their humanity remains unrecognized (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2008; SOUSA SANTOS, 2018). This is juxtaposed with the hegemony of the "North," encompassing nations and populations that have participated in and benefited from global economic advancements and social policies, positioning themselves as "first world" entities today (PENNYCOOK; MAKONI, 2020). Emphasizing the importance of establishing connections between knowledge production and these communities, epistemologies of the South aim to create opportunities for marginalized groups to have their expertise recognized and their perspectives amplified by challenging dominant epistemological paradigms. The outcomes of this experience underscored the importance of establishing connections between academic knowledge creation and the societal activities of marginalized communities in English language education.

In order to present and analyze our experiences, we decided not to have an exclusive theoretical section in this article. Instead, we decided it would make more sense to articulate the data we discuss with the theories that

are fundamental to our classroom decisions. Therefore, we thought that separating data from theory would not establish the dialogue we see as fundamental to the work we developed.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

To properly contextualize the situation, it is essential to acquaint oneself with the individuals participating in the experience, who are the authors of this article. At the time, we were working together as professor and assistant professor. The professor holds a tenured position in the Department of Foreign Languages, at UFS, and also works as an advisor in the graduate program in Languages, also at UFS. Meanwhile, the advisee, who was still pursuing a master's degree at the time, had previously completed the undergraduate English Language program at the same institution. Together, we were tasked with instructing a class of freshman students majoring in Portuguese and English within the course titled "English Language I".

The Federal University of Sergipe (UFS) is located in the state of Sergipe, situated in the northeastern region of Brazil. Sergipe is the smallest state in the federation. According to statistics from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE in Portuguese), in the 2022 survey entitled "Social Inequalities by Color or Race in Brazil", a significant majority of 77.7% of the population in Sergipe (2,338 million inhabitants) self-identifies as black or brown. This demographic also represents those with lower income compared to white individuals and often find themselves in poverty (IBGE, 2022).

Therefore, considering the significant racial diversity and socioeconomic disparities prevalent in Sergipe, the relevance of studies on critical racial literacy becomes evident. When we refer to "diversity", it is because, despite 77.7% of people in Sergipe identifying as black or brown, within the brown identity there is still significant difficulty in identifying their ancestral origins. This challenge stems from the historical process of colonization in Brazil, which involved the sexual violence perpetrated by colonizers against both indigenous and black women, leading to the erasure of distinct identities. The whitening policies, such as the thesis presented by João Baptista de Lacerda in the early 20th century, sought to eliminate black and Indigenous identities through racial mixing. As a result, many brown individuals today struggle to trace their heritage due to the deliberate suppression of Indigenous and African identities (SOUZA; SANTOS, 2012).

Considering the demographic expressive number of people who identify themselves as black or brown and the associated challenges they face, it indicates the need to address these issues through the critical reflection on race and its influences on the lives of black individuals, questioning and deconstructing the structured oppression that surrounds black people (FERREIRA, 2019, 2022, 2023). In this context, critical racial literacy holds the capacity to incite societal changes by acknowledging these contemplations as a social practice (LADSON-BILLINGS, 1998; FERREIRA, 2014).

The teaching internship within the master's degree curriculum of our graduate program at the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS) is offered as an optional opportunity. However, upon careful consideration, we agreed that it could be an interesting experience, allowing us to put into practice the concepts and theories that we were researching. Additionally, it could also be an opportunity for exchanging experiences with the first-year students from the Portuguese and English language undergraduate course, who were fresh out of their high school education. In the 60-hour course, 20% of the teaching coordination (12 hours) is the responsibility of the advisee. For those hours, we agreed to plan a didactic sequence of 4 encounters (which would take the form of classes - each encounter happened once a week and lasted 3 hours each), which will be detailed in the next section.

PLANNING AND HAVING THE ACTIVITIES IN CLASS

When addressing the studies of critical racial literacy, we have approached them with the concept of critical literacy, which implies that to be a critical citizen we need to be able to recognize that, in every form or mode of language, there will always be power systems involved that silence some voices while privileging others (VASQUEZ; JANKS; COMBER, 2019; MONTE MÓR, 2013), and that neutrality is a concept that will never be fit to describe any areas of the society we live in, and that also includes the educational context. Connecting these discussions to language education, as Paulo Freire once said, before we learn how to read and write the written

text, we must be capable of reading the world around us, because “The reading of the world always precedes the reading of the word” (FREIRE, 2009, p. 9). This understanding of critical literacy aligns well with the conception of critical language education (SILVA, 2018), as, from this perspective, language is seen as a social practice. It is through this interaction with the world that we shape our subjectivity. By reading and understanding the reality around us, we recognize ourselves as active subjects, capable of acting and transforming the environments in which we are inserted.

With the acknowledgment that our understanding of the world is influenced by the environment in which we grow up and live, we must also consider that there are a lot of social factors that can change how we experience these contexts. For instance, even if two individuals originate from the same neighborhood and attend the same school, various social dynamics, such as race, gender, sexuality, and social class, among others, can significantly impact how they perceive and interpret their surroundings. Consequently, despite sharing similar backgrounds and residing in the same locale, individuals may have entirely divergent life experiences and interpretations of their environment. Hence, just as our experiences are shaped by these multifaceted factors, so too is our language usage impacted. Both written texts and our comprehension thereof are inevitably biased by external influences, rendering it impossible to perceive any form of communication as truly neutral (VASQUEZ; JANKS; COMBER, 2019).

The idea of critical literacy we adopt in this text and our teaching experiences is not a practice that is limited to the four walls of schools or college, but it is through pedagogical approaches of teaching that some activities can be introduced to students to bring possibilities of building their critical thinking with the help of diverse activities that involve social questions such as race, gender, sexuality, social class, among other possibilities, focusing on how language can be used for social transformation (VASQUEZ; JANKS; COMBER, 2019).

We see a correlation between discussions on critical thinking and critical literacy and those addressing race and racism in both society and academic settings. The Critical Race Theory (CRT) represents an academic movement that actively opposed the liberal movements that impeded progress in the civil rights of Black individuals in the United States (LADSON-BILLINGS, 1998). Gloria Ladson-Billings, as noted by Ferreira (2014), is credited with introducing these discussions into the educational sphere. CRT originated as both an offshoot and a distinct entity from a leftist legal movement known as “Critical Legal Studies” (LADSON-BILLINGS, 1998, p. 10). Its connection with education arose from the civil rights struggle, aiming for equal rights, opportunities, and treatment between black and white individuals under the United States law. This movement acts as a tool for critical reflection and deconstruction of the structures that permeate oppressive discourses present in various social and political spheres of society, which have been established as the most enduring and efficient tool of oppression (FERREIRA, 2014; QUIJANO, 2005; MUNIZ, 2016).

Within this context, the significance of Critical Racial Literacy becomes evident, encompassing the impact of race on individuals’ and groups’ political, social, educational, and economic experiences (FERREIRA, 2014). We interpret Critical Racial Literacy here as a social practice that entails critical examinations of race and the diverse contexts influenced by this notion; with the viewpoint that, through these analyses, opportunities for dismantling and rebuilding oppressive structures and discourses in society are provided, allowing us to progress towards equity (LADSON-BILLINGS, 1998; hooks, 2013; FERREIRA, 2014).

We approach these studies from an intersectional perspective, beginning with recognizing that individuals often belong to multiple marginalized groups. Instead of examining each type of discrimination in isolation, intersectionality examines how these various identities and systems of oppression intersect. For instance, a black woman may encounter gender discrimination, racism, and potential issues related to social class, simultaneously. These forms of discrimination are intertwined and cannot be neatly separated, as is often attempted in conventional civil rights discourse. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the lived experiences of these individuals and ensure that their civil and human rights are protected (CRENSHAW, 2004; AKOTIRENE, 2019). To promote a more inclusive fight against various forms of oppression, intersectionality studies emphasize the importance of acknowledging and comprehending these intersections. This entails recognizing the multiple layers of disadvantages experienced by certain individuals because of the interplay between different identities and systems of oppression (CRENSHAW, 2004; DAVIS, 2016; AKOTIRENE, 2019; KILOMBA, 2019).

Following the focus of the master’s degree thesis, written during the internship this article results from, since its emphasis was on investigating the representation of black people in educational materials (CARDOSO SANTOS, 2024), we approached the didactic sequence with the theme of constructing a positive black identity

in didactic materials (LADSON BILLINGS, 1998; FERREIRA, 2014; NASCIMENTO, 2016). This aligns with the guidelines of the Brazilian National Textbook Program (PNLD in Portuguese), a governmental initiative in Brazil aimed at providing educational materials, including textbooks, to public schools across the country. The PNLD is an effort to provide equitable access to education. The PNLD also advocates for the positive portrayal of Afro-Brazilians, showcasing their prominence in various professions and positions of power in society. It also seeks to promote a positive view of Afro-Brazilian cultures and history, avoiding stereotypical representations of this population (BRASIL, 2018).

When planning the didactic sequence of four classes, we structured it in a way that, at the end of each class, students would engage in group work to create, share, or present their reflections—whether orally, artistically, or through postings on Google Classroom, which was a tool used during the course. This allowed them to express their insights and understanding of the themes and concepts discussed in class. For the first class, our activities drew inspiration from the work of Carvalho (2020), about teaching materials focused on racial-ethnic diversity. The main objective of the first class was to value and understand black identities, using art and literature. The class was structured in several stages that encouraged reflection, discussion, and artistic expression from the students.

In the first stage, students were invited to close their eyes and imagine a beautiful person. Then, they were told to draw this person and share their drawings with their colleagues. This initial activity aimed at promoting personal expression and open space for a discussion about perceptions of beauty, encouraging students to reflect upon beauty standards and their cultural and personal origins. Additionally, it prompted students to confront how these perceptions often favor whiteness, which is commonly associated with the standard of beauty in our society. As a result of these white beauty standards, even black individuals may feel compelled to dislike their physical features to conform to them (KILOMBA, 2019). Notably, in this first activity, none of the students drew a black person when asked to imagine and portray a beautiful person.

The second stage involved analyzing images from some handouts we provided students with. The objective was to carry out discussions about the relationship between the occupations and activities performed by the people depicted in the handouts. The images showed stereotypical depictions of black people as enslaved individuals and domestic workers. Additionally, there were pictures of black people being dehumanized by being depicted as animals in a Zoological Garden in Belgium, being compared to a gorilla, and even labeled as criminals solely based on the color of their skin. The discussion focused on these representations of black people in the images, inciting discussions so that students could identify, and question stereotypes associated with black individuals.

Following this, students were introduced to the poet Langston Hughes by reading the first part of his biography available on Wikipedia. This aspect of the activity aimed to present an influential black figure in African American literature, offering historical and cultural insights that enhance comprehension of the texts to be examined later. It also corresponds with a fundamental aspect of Critical Race Theory (LADSON-BILLINGS, 1998; FERREIRA, 2014), which emphasizes the validation of creations, personal experiences, research, and narratives from racialized individuals as legitimate forms of knowledge, essential for understanding the complexities of racial reality. This principle permeates various activities presented in this article and it is applied in the didactic sequence.

Students then read the poem “My People” by Langston Hughes. After reading, they answered questions that explored the imagery used by the poet to depict the faces, eyes, and souls of black people. Hughes compares them to the beauty of nature, such as when he likens the beauty of the night to the beauty of black faces. This literary analysis aimed to deepen students’ comprehension of the poetic representation of beauty and the significance of this poem and other art forms that portray black people in a similar light.

Subsequently, students were asked to reflect on their impressions of the poem and discuss its relevance today, considering it was written in 1923, in the United States. This discussion provoked students to connect the text with contemporary contexts and critically think about issues of identity and black people’s representation.

Then, students had the opportunity to watch a short clip of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s (2009) TED Talk presentation titled “The Danger of a Single Story”. Chimamanda, a Nigerian writer known for her works on cultural identity and post-colonialism, discussed how stereotypes create single stories about people, and how these single stories contribute to depriving them of their dignity, disregarding the numerous other stories that shape those individuals (ADICHIE, 2009). With this video, our goal was to provide students with the opportunity to reflect on how stereotypes are formed and how they can affect and influence cultural, racial, and even national perceptions. We connected these discussions with a reflection on how these issues relate to education, more specifically, on

how black people are portrayed in educational materials. Additionally, we introduced the concept of Critical Racial Literacy (LADSON-BILLINGS, 1998; FERREIRA, 2014; NASCIMENTO, 2016) to students. Finally, students were requested to create a piece of art, parody, song, poster, or any other form of artistic expression in reaction to the poem, drawing inspiration from examples of art present in the material.

In summary, this first class laid the groundwork for the following classes on the didactic sequence. Through critical analysis and artistic expression, students were encouraged to reflect upon black identity and appreciate Afro-descendant cultural contributions. It not only introduced students to important figures and texts in African American literature but also stimulated insights and discussions about the representation of black people in art and its various iterations.

The following week, in our second class of the didactic sequence, we began by engaging students in a discussion to outline the primary focus of our classes. We highlighted that our emphasis on this theme was driven by its origin in the, at the time, ongoing master's degree thesis (CARDOSO SANTOS, 2024). To start, we talked about how one of the strategies adopted by colonizers to justify their supposed superiority was the use of race as a tool of oppression. This involved the widespread consideration of physical characteristics, knowledge production, and cultural expressions of the colonized as inherently inferior to those of the colonizers. Thus, race emerged as one of the most powerful and persistent means of subjugation, as discussed by Quijano (2005) and Muniz (2016) in their studies on the process of racialization.

In this class, we expanded the discussion by provoking the students to reflect upon the stereotypes and representation of black people that they have seen in televised media (TV series, movies, commercials, etc.), regularly. We presented some examples of negative representations and stereotypes, ranging from depicting black individuals as criminals to portraying black women as aggressive or mentally unstable. Moreover, we emphasized the persistent portrayal of black people as originating from poverty, along with instances of blackface (a racist practice involving white individuals darkening their skin with makeup to caricature and ridicule black people), and the white savior complex (the problematic belief that black or indigenous people require the intervention of white individuals to be rescued or saved from certain dangers or circumstances).

To illustrate this issue, we discussed two consequences: the dehumanization of black individuals and the phenomenon of black individuals denying their black identity, which not only strips black individuals of their humanity but also instigates a complex internal struggle regarding identity acceptance. According to a 2022 study from Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE)¹ entitled “Social Inequalities by Color or Race in Brazil” (IBGE, 2022, our translation²), out of 2.338 million inhabitants in the state of Sergipe, 77.7% identify as black or brown, yet only 7% self-identify as black, indicating a significant discrepancy in racial identity perception and acknowledgment. During these discussions, we also addressed the topics outlined in the course syllabus. These included countable and uncountable nouns, quantifiers, and WH questions (such as Which? What? Why? How?). Throughout our discussions and moments of sharing among colleagues, they learned to use these grammatical forms and different forms of vocabulary within the context of discussions on critical racial literacy.

By the end of the class, students were tasked with preparing an oral presentation on a prominent black figure to share with the class. They were instructed to highlight the individual's contributions to the black community, spanning areas such as music, movies, literature, etc. We also highlighted they should bring information such as their name, age, nationality, birthplace, birth date, and occupation. This task aimed not only to exercise the vocabulary they had learned previously following the course syllabus but also to encourage reflection on discussions about critical racial literacy. As an additional task, they were also requested to browse through their previous school English books and take pictures to post on Google Classroom. The objective was to examine how families were portrayed in the books—whether there were any representations of black families, or if only white families were depicted.

The week after, for the third class, we continued our discussion from the previous lesson, focusing on the impacts of black representation, particularly on the upbringing of black individuals. We began by questioning whether there are any disparities in the childhood experiences of white and black children. This examination is grounded in studies in applied linguistics which highlight the intersection of social identities such as race, social

1 The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE, as the primary provider of data and statistics in Brazil, plays a fundamental role in providing essential information that meets the demands of a variety of sectors of society. (IBGE, [s.d]).

2 Desigualdades Sociais por Cor ou Raça no Brasil.

class, gender, etc. advocating that although these identities may differ, they often intersect due to Brazil's historical context of colonization, characterized by practices such as the slave trade and latifundia (NASCIMENTO, 2016; CRENSHAW, 2004; AKOTIRENE, 2019; DAVIS, 2016; KILOMBA, 2019; FERREIRA, 2019). To provoke debate and reflection among students, we showed two videos. In one of them, Brazilian actor and director born in Bahia, Lázaro Ramos, is asked by the interviewer what he would tell his younger self if he could go back in time. Lázaro replied:

I'm going to say something quite playful, but I would say 'dream.' It seems like a simple thing, but it's not. For a long time in my life, I didn't know that I could dream. [...] I didn't have references; I didn't know I could have goals. And I say this with sorrow because I know that even today, many young people don't know themselves to be able to accomplish things. (RODA VIVA, 2022, our translation³)

After Lázaro's interview, we focused on another video that showed the reaction of black children cheering as they watched a black woman who resembled them, from her skin color to the locs in her hair while watching the trailer for the film "The Little Mermaid" (SBS NEWS, 2022) starring the African American actress Halle Lynn Bailey, who faced global backlash for being Disney's first black princess in a live-action remake.

After this initial moment of critical reflection on how the intersectionality of these identities affects black individuals throughout their lives, we dedicated a moment to their presentations, which we had previously requested about prominent black figures and their contributions to society. Some of the prominent individuals presented by students included Brazilian figures such as the trans artist Liniker, the musicians Djavan and Emicida, and the journalist Glória Maria. Additionally, they highlighted activists from the USA like Malcolm X, Angela Davis, and the legendary Ray Charles. Afterward, we asked the students how, as future educators, they can apply the social practices of critical racial literacy in their teaching practices. That's when we dedicated the rest of this class to explaining to students, in more depth, what Critical Racial Literacy is and its origins through Critical Racial Theory and its five fundamental principles.

Firstly, it embraces the concept of intersectionality, recognizing the intricate interplay between race and social class, to which we incorporate gender identity, aligning ourselves with studies on intersectionality (CRENSHAW, 2004; AKOTIRENE, 2019; DAVIS, 2016; KILOMBA, 2019; FERREIRA, 2019). Secondly, the theory challenges prevailing societal ideologies, debunking notions of meritocracy and colorblindness. Thirdly, it advocates for social justice by striving to dismantle systemic barriers that hinder the advancement of black individuals. This commitment, espoused by Kilomba (2019) and Ferreira (2019), extends to creating equitable access to educational and institutional spaces. Fourthly, Critical Racial Theory adopts an interdisciplinary lens, as highlighted by scholars like Ferreira (2014), to dissect how racial inequality permeates various fields of study. Finally, the theory emphasizes the importance of centering the voices and experiences of marginalized communities, recognizing their narratives as valid forms of knowledge essential for understanding the complexities of racial dynamics in society (LADSON-BILLINGS, 1998; FERREIRA, 2014).

In between the explanation of the principles of Critical Racial Theory, we planned an activity to exemplify the second principle, acknowledging the systemic barriers and unequal distribution of opportunities based on race, social class, and gender (LADSON-BILLINGS, 1998; FERREIRA, 2014). We were influenced by a YouTube video experiment (PETER, 2017), in which participants stood in a line and were asked to take a step forward based on their perceptions and answers to certain statements or questions read aloud by the facilitator. In our case, we (professor and assistant professor) were the facilitators. We addressed various societal advantages/disadvantages individuals may encounter based on their racial identity, social class, or gender. For example, statements used in our version of the experiment addressed experiences related to racial discrimination at school/university and/or in job applications; financial stability; or if they had to start working at an early age.

After a series of statements, we instructed them to turn around and look back at the line so they could realize that, while some people were far ahead, others hadn't moved at all. This visual representation highlights how, although a simple and rudimentary experiment compared to a genuine social or scientific study, it can still demonstrate how certain privileges or disadvantages associated with race, social class, and gender can impact

3 Eu vou dizer uma coisa bem lúdica, mas eu diria 'sonhe'. Parece uma coisa simples, mas não é. Durante muito tempo na minha vida, eu não sabia que eu podia sonhar. [...] Eu não tinha referências, eu não sabia que eu podia ter objetivos. E eu falo isso com pesar, porque eu sei que ainda hoje vários jovens não se sabem possíveis.

individuals' opportunities and experiences (LADSON-BILLINGS, 1998; FERREIRA, 2014; CRENSHAW, 2004; AKOTIRENE, 2019; DAVIS, 2016).

For the final task of this didactic sequence, we instructed students to form five groups, with each group assigned one principle of Critical Racial Theory. Starting from their assigned principle, they were tasked with planning a classroom activity relevant to English teaching, connecting the principle with one of the themes, grammar, or vocabulary topics covered in the course syllabus. The fourth and final class was dedicated to the presentations of the activities prepared by the groups, followed by our feedback on their planning and execution.

REFLECTING UPON THE ACTIVITIES AND FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Upon reflecting on the teaching internship experience within the master's program in Languages, a multifaceted journey emerged. As we navigated through dialogues and discussions and listened to the students' personal experiences, we found ourselves confronting our approaches to the concepts of Critical Racial Literacy, particularly when discussing intersectionality (CRENSHAW, 2004; AKOTIRENE, 2019; DAVIS, 2016). The class consisted of freshman students majoring in Portuguese and English, representing a rich diversity of social class contexts, races, sexual orientations, gender identities (including cisgender, non-binary, and transgender students), and a varied range of ages, as UFS hosts a Research and Action Center for the Elderly (NUPATI in Portuguese). NUPATI is a project that aims to provide older individuals with opportunities to learn and grow in various fields such as science, culture, politics, and emotional intelligence. By involving them in activities at UFS, the project aims to demonstrate that they are valuable members of society with significant contributions to offer (NUPATI, [s.d.]). One of the most known actions is by having the elderly who are interested, enrolled in some undergraduate courses we offer, such as "English Language I", in which the experience we analyze took place. That semester we could have two older students as part of the group.

One of the most significant moments during the internship occurred due to the participation of one of the NUPATI students in our classroom. During one of these discussions on social practices of Critical Racial Literacy, one of the two students from the program expressed her gratitude for the chance to participate in the class. She shared with her classmates how meaningful these discussions were and emphasized the privilege they had in engaging in such exchanges in the classroom. She reflected on how, during her school time, these discussions were not even considered to be approached by her teachers, and she thanked us for providing moments like those for her and her colleagues. Undoubtedly, this was a moment that we, as educators, will carry for the rest of our lives.

Observing the students' evolving perception of how negative representations and stereotypes related to black people influenced their worldview, as well as witnessing their development of critical racial literacy throughout the course was remarkable. Initially, during an activity in which they were asked to envision and draw a beautiful person, none of the drawings depicted a black individual. However, as the course progressed, they demonstrated a shift in perspective, creating poems, posters, and drawings that celebrated black beauty. In another activity, tasked with preparing oral presentations on prominent black figures, they not only delivered compelling presentations but also supplemented them with additional materials such as videos highlighting the achievements of black musicians, journalists, athletes, activists, and intellectuals. Furthermore, during a side task examining older English textbooks, they noticed how, in some older textbooks, there were no representations of black families. Lastly, in the final activity, they integrated all these social practices and critical reflections on race, social class, and gender (CRENSHAW, 2004; AKOTIRENE, 2019; DAVIS, 2016; FERREIRA, 2019), planning activities based on the principles of Critical Racial Theory (LADSON-BILLINGS, 1998; FERREIRA, 2014) while also teaching English.

We were already aware of the importance of listening to the voices of the South (PENNYCOOK; MAKONI, 2020; SILVA; MATOS, 2019; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2008), and this experience has further reinforced this understanding. It's not just about listening; there is also a pressing need to build bridges between academic knowledge production and the social practices of marginalized groups. These connections are crucial for expanding our epistemological horizons, as they provide opportunities to explore new ways of thinking, theorizing, and producing knowledge (PENNYCOOK, 2023). The difference between what the master's thesis would have been without this experience and what it ultimately became is vast.

When we began the teaching internship experience and analyzed the topic of intersectionality, we initially considered the intersection of social class and race identities, only, as we believed that adding more identities to this analysis could make the master's dissertation topic too extensive, given the two-year duration of the master's program. However, with the contributions of the trans student in the class and her accounts of how her gender identity affected her social, political, economic, and all areas of her life, we realized that it would not be possible to analyze the data collected in the master's dissertation from an intersectional perspective without considering gender identity as well (CRENSHAW, 2004; AKOTIRENE, 2019; DAVIS, 2016; FERREIRA, 2019). Therefore, we understand that working with Critical Racial Literacy in English language teaching is not only a possibility, which was widely shown throughout this article and the experiences shared but also a great opportunity to be considered in English language teaching. Lastly, we also would like to highlight the importance of teaching internship practices that take place during graduate programs as both a way of rethinking research and teaching, which offers the possibility of learning for all individuals involved.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION DECLARATION

The two authors participated in writing the article entitled "Exploring critical racial literacy in English language teaching: experiences from a teaching internship", including the final review for publication after receiving anonymous reviews of the article. The two authors performed the data analysis. The first author individually wrote the introductory section and the final section. The second author individually wrote the contextualization and data analysis sections in its first version. The first author critically read the two sections of the manuscript written by the second author, making the necessary changes. Both contributed to theoretical and conceptual discussions and changed all sections of the text.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no affiliation or involvement with institutions that may have financial or non-financial interests in the subject discussed in the article.

RESEARCH DATA AVAILABILITY DECLARATION

Public data supporting the conclusions of this study include: the lecture "The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the Call Notice 04/2015 of the National Textbook Program (PNLD 2018) of the Ministry of Education, and the report "Social Inequalities by Color or Race in Brazil" by IBGE, available at https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story, http://portal.mec.gov.br/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=39561-pnld-2018-edital-pdf&Itemid=30192 e <https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas/sociais/populacao/25844-desigualdades-sociais-por-cor-ou-raca.html>, respectively. Additionally, the video "Social Inequalities Explained in a \$100 Race" by Peter (2017), the interview with Lázaro Ramos on the program Roda Viva (2022), and the reaction of children to the trailer for The Little Mermaid (SBS News, 2022) are available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K5fbQ1-zps>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3z8CT6dq6Vs>, e https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9v_JVI8rE4. Institutional information about IBGE is accessible at <https://www.ibge.gov.br/acesso-informacao/institucional/o-ibge.html>.

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