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Why Aren't There People of Color In My English Classroom?
Challenging Silence and Working for Social Change

Monografia apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras da PUC-Rio como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Especialista em Letras. Aprovada pela Comissão Examinadora abaixo assinada.

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Rio de Janeiro

Agosto de 2018

I am looking for those silences that tell
a history which has been erased,
omitted and invisibilized.

Acknowledgments

To my father (In Memoriam): I wish we could have known each other better. I hope you are proud I ended up following in your footsteps anyway.

To Sabine: Thank you for being this incredible and energetic person. You are such an inspiration and the best advisor I could have.

To my husband: Thank you for being so supportive and never complaining about my not sleeping and working overnights.

To my family and friends for helping me deal with my anxiety through fun.

To my students for being the reason why I feel in love with teaching English as a Foreign Language.

To my co-workers, to whom I also dedicate this research and invite to join me in this attempt to make some change.

Watson, Ana Elisa Nascimento. Moura, Sabine (advisor). Why Aren't There P.O.C In My English Classroom? Challenging Silence and Working for Social Change. Rio de Janeiro, 2018, 41p. Monograph. Departamento de Letras. Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

Abstract

Despite the fact that English courses have already been addressing issues on race and ethnicity as cross curricular themes, I have noticed from my experience as a teacher that teenagers tend to be silent, hesitate or provide very vague answers when exposed to this kind of topic. In order to analyze this silent dynamic during racial discussions, in this study, I draw upon *the myth of racial democracy* (FREIRE, 1933) as an ideological construction that granted Brazilians' unawareness regarding their black heritage and therefore, their distance from issues of race and ethnicity. Under Fairclough's approach (1992), I analyze the discourse of *racial democracy*, as a strategy to maintain hegemony. I focus on the lexical choices my students might have made oriented by this sense of racial equilibrium to shelter themselves and avoid talking openly about race, concentrating my investigation on the interpretation of "*patterns of silence and rationale strategies*" (DIANGELO, 2012) that often work as discursive strategies to help maintain white hegemony.

Key words: Racial democracy, race, ethnicity, Critical race theory, Critical Discourse Analysis, race literacy, anti racist education, EFL teaching

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1. Introduction

I had never been exposed to explicit racial discussions until I was an adult, even though I am a daughter of interracial parents. My social experiences in life would tell what it meant to recognize and understand myself as a black person in Brazil. I feel like it is vital to mention that I am also in an interracial relationship and only after I got married to a white man would I move out from the suburbs. Consequently, I started going to higher class places and could realize what is it to be the only one everywhere you go.

After six years working as an English teacher, the implications of racial stratification in the private courses I have worked at became quite plain to me. When I first thought about my research topic, for instance, black students were intended to be my participants. As the semester passed by, the few ones I had in my classrooms either moved on to work with other teachers (as methodologically recommended by the course) or dropped off because of the variable consequences of slavery heritage that strongly impact afro descendant's education, life expectancy and income in Brazil. Therefore, I had to review the criteria I was going to use in terms of participant selection and ended up changing who my participants were going to be. My working place became vital to reinforce my late understanding on how much people of color are deprived from equitable social opportunities.

The year I devoted to my Specialization course was, by far, the one with the highest number of black co-workers in the same franchising. Due to the fact that most English teachers are white, it is often very difficult to find those who are able to discuss issues of race, racism, and antiracism in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

My motivation for this paper first emerged from an Exploratory Practice experience, which consisted of planning a potentially exploitable pedagogical activity (PEPA) in order to understand classroom phenomena and therefore improve my teaching practice. This endeavor was carried out for the Specialization course and brought out the solitary experience of black people in

an E.F.L environment. After I started planning my research project, I was driven by my historian inspirations and decided to use the data collected during my Exploratory Practice (E.P) to reflect analytically on the macro social issues that were evoked while trying to understand my students' dynamics.

We were four self-called Black English teachers (myself included) at that time, for this reason I felt very comfortable and safe to share my observations and reflections with my coworkers, although our talks have never brought me any consolation. As a black teacher in a "white" working environment, I found it extremely relevant to investigate why were issues of race simply not handled with by other teachers and students. Even when teachers were political engaged like my aforementioned black co-workers.

Working for understanding through E.P led me to a wide range of possible lines of intervention, however, for this following work, I have decided to adopt a critical researcher position aiming at, moreover, working for change and taking some action by improving my social and teaching practices and also encouraging other teachers and students to do so.

The purpose of this research is to understand how the issues on race and ethnicity are dealt with by my intermediate students at the average age of 16 years when they are exposed to racial discussions in the EFL classroom environment.

English courses have already been trying to develop an understanding of language as part of a sociocultural background by addressing cross curricular themes such as *politics, gender, cultural diversity, technology, social and environmental* issues in English classes. Despite of that, I must point out as a teacher that issues on race and ethnicity have been proven to be quite difficult to cover in EFL classes, at least in the private courses I have worked at. When exposed to these kind of topics, teenagers tend to be silent, to hesitate or provide very vague answers instead of speaking up and exposing their opinions as they usually do.

This monograph aims at understanding why conversation tasks around race seem to be especially difficult for my EFL teenager students and how silence and rationale strategies take place in my student's discursive practices. In order to do so, in the next chapter I will present a brief historical background as an attempt to expose the main basis of racism in Brazil. Then, I will draw upon the myth of "racial democracy"¹ (FREIRE, 1933) as a purposeful construction that granted the unawareness of most of Brazilians regarding their black heritage and therefore, their distance from issues of race and ethnicity. I will also include previous researches I found relevant addressing the works that contributed for my project.

Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach as a framework I will analyze the ideology behind the discourse of "racial democracy", as a strategy to maintain hegemony by suppressing relations of inequalities. Under the tridimensional framework of Norman Fairclough's (1992) I will conduct a CDA on my student's silent response during a racial discussion where the asymmetry of relations of power seemed to be finally apparent. Based on the substantive findings of Robin Diangelo (2012), I will focus on the common rationale strategies they used as tools to shelter themselves and avoid talking openly about race when the order of hegemonic discourse seemed to be acknowledged. The investigation I shall attempt in this paper will concentrate on the use of lexical elements such as "modality" and "intensifiers" to interpret *"patterns of silence and rationale strategies"* (DIANGELO, 2012) working as a discursive and ideological tool to maintain white hegemony. Considering all above, I aim at pointing out some of the implications of the discussions around race and ethnicity promoted in the EFL classroom.

¹ In his first and well-known book Casa-Grande & Senzala, Freire "institutionalizes the idea of "mestiço" as "mixed raced" and portrays the relationship of Europeans, blacks and native Indians as harmonic and peaceful (Gomes, 1995). Although he never uses this term in the book, He is considered to be a great contributor for the "Myth of racial democracy" in Brazil by spreading the belief that Brazil has escaped racism and racial discrimination.

2. Social Context

2.1 Making race invisible in Brazil: A brief Historical Background

There are aspects of Brazilian history that are never heard off on the benches of our elementary schools. We are never told, for instance, that our country was the main importer of African slaves and the last one in the Western world to abolish the slave trade (HERINGER, 2000). It is never said that from its discovery in 1500, our society and culture have been shaped by a colonial system which exploited and enslaved black people. It is never taken into account that the constitution of the Empire of Brazil in 1824 also “remained entirely silent about slavery” (LEITE & ESTEVES, 1991), and therefore, nearly two hundred years of oppression would have never disappeared simply with the abolition of slavery.

It is considerably wide-spread, on the other hand, the belief in the power of the generous white leaders whose legal measurements and theories have provided institutional changes, as though, alone, the “total abolition and the end of the monarchy in the following year (...) would put Brazil on the path of rapid historical progress” (SKIDMORE, 1993). It may be true that a part of Brazil has actually developed into one of the “largest economies and industrial powers of the world” (LEITE & ESTEVES, 1991). Nevertheless, a “considerable proportion of its population is illiterate while a high proportion of its city population lives in illegal settlements (*favelas*)” (p.130), in addition, the city of Rio de Janeiro has always had a large number of peddlers, whose many of them are children.

Regardless, we are taught proudly about our cross-racial society made of the mix of European, African and Indigenous people. However, no one dares to tell us at what cost. The reading of literary classic works is strongly recommended so we can praise writers such as Gilberto Freyre (1933) for the promotion of a national ideal of racial democracy. Yet, strong elements of Afro-Brazilian heritage in the popular culture are ironically marginalized and hidden, revealing “the prejudices of the elite in regard not only to the poor but to popular culture as a whole” (LEITE & ESTEVES, 1991, p.131).

Besides my experience as a student, I can tell as a historian that due to an Eurocentric curricular tradition still predominant in the schools, Africa remains an unknown continent for the most people, and its history is little considered by our historiographical tradition. Africa History and Afro-Brazilian Culture have not been taught properly in most primary and secondary schools and instead of contributing to the rise of some awareness on the issues of cultural diversity, historian practice has helped with the construction of “myths around Brazilian identity” (FLORES, 2006). As a consequence, instead of creating any kind of criticism on the matter, Brazilian citizens at a very early age are directed to a *color-blind socialization*. The omission of race/color related social constraints will later disable even the lower classes to recognize issues of race and racism itself as a “system that perpetuates an unequal distribution of privileges, resources, and power among white people and people of color” (HILLIARD, 1992).

Because of those aspects which have been erased from Brazilian History regarding our colonial past, which included the mixed races as a result of rapist masters, whitening policies and black genocide, just to name a few, this *color-blind* socialization turned into the *myth of racial democracy*². All these factors together, contributed to what Bonilla (2018) called as the “strange enigma of race in the contemporary America” (p.1). This makes it very difficult for the construction of blackness and for majority of people to recognize themselves and the others as black. It is often possible to hear white people declaring that

² “A new self-definition of the Brazilian society emerged over the course of the twentieth century. Brazil would come to be understood as the result of the mixture of three groups— indigenous Brazilians, Europeans, and Africans—who had found a way of live in racial harmony. In other words, according to this vision, there was no racism in Brazil. This mythology, which has become known as ‘racial democracy’, was undergirded by the fact that Brazil, unlike the United States, had never enshrined segregation in law. (...) Despite this political and popular rhetoric of racial democracy, Brazilian officials and elites continued to valorize ‘whiteness’ and ‘whitening’ as physical and cultural characteristics. (...) Afro-Brazilians continue to occupy a position of marginality and exclusion in Brazilian society.” (Araújo, 2015)
<<https://www.opendemocracy.net/author/ana-lucia-araujo>>

they don't see color, only people". The word "black" itself is considered a taboo and is avoided for black and non-black people in regular conversations and out of family contexts.

2.2 Social Implications and Political Responses

As Ferreira has stated, "it is not possible to understand contemporary inequalities in relation to race (...) without reference to history and ancestry" (2011, p. 215). Throughout the years, however, ancestry alone had not been seemed as enough resource to agree on who is black or not in Brazil. Black phenotypes have been mainly connected to physical aspects like skin color as a determiner to race. In this sense, black descendents can feel more or less affected by the systemic structures of oppression, depending on how much their physical characteristics count as an evidence for their "blackness". In opposition to the construction of race in The United States, in Brazil "Mulatto or mixed blood in general, occupies a special place, intermediate between white and black" (DEGLER, 1971, p. 107). This affects our judgment on inequalities we suffer and reduce people's criticism on racial oppression. Degler also points out that "The greater opportunity that mulattoes enjoy for social mobility also encourages them to dissociate themselves from Negroes" (1971, p. 109).

More than racist, Brazil is already being addressed by social movements as a *colorist* society which means "a drift away from ancestry as an important component of assigned race and towards a greater focus on color" (HARRIS, 2008, p. 54). In this sense, regardless of whether people racially identify as white or black, skin color turned to be the most important social good, revealing hierarchies of privilege and disadvantage within a "mixed-raced" society.

The latifundist sugar monoculture and its large male population of masters and servants contributed not only to the establishment of systemic racial discrimination and oppression but also to the foundation of the patriarchal mentality that strongly runs in Brazilian culture and society. It is shown in a hierarchical and authoritarian structure that "extended down into the family system, where the male head of the household enjoyed a power over the

women and children which could border on sadism” (SKIDMORE, 1993). This institutionalized dynamic of domination raised up even black men far above women in terms of power, while pushed down women of color to the end of this hideous scale of systemic oppression.

As Black women and men, we cannot hope to begin dialogue by denying the oppressive nature of male privilege. And if Black males choose to assume that privilege for whatever reason – raping, brutalizing, and killing black women – then ignoring these acts of Black male oppression within our communities can only serve our destroyers. One oppression does not justify another” (LORDE, 2007, p. 63).

Black and feminist movements³ have been struggling to make public the debates on color, race and gender and the hardships of women and people of color in Brazil. Together, they have been trying to bring some visibility to the issues of race in our country on the media, fighting for social policies, and pressing the government so that black people’s demands can be heard, as for example, the implementation of law 1639 which makes mandatory the teaching of African history in schools, and which is not yet applied.

As a response to historical and systemic issues and practices, social politics such as “*quotas*”⁴ were established as an attempt to promote diversity in schools and universities and equitable access to education in Brazil. Djamila Ribeiro (2015), Brazilian activist and advocate for racial equality, recently reinforced in an interview for the *aquaviário* channel the importance of “quotas” as “a way to try to reduce the gaps that exist between whites and blacks beyond education”⁵. There is an ideologically constructed stigma that people who apply for educational institutions through quotas are inferior in intellectual capacity. In this interview Djamila also reinforces that

³ To name a few black feminists around the world: Audre Lorde (1934-1992) Angela Davis (1944-), Kimberlé Williams (1959-), Bell hooks (1952-), Chimamanda Adichie (1977-) Djamila Ribeiro (1980-).

⁴ “Quotas” are an affirmative action law requiring Brazilian public universities to reserve half of their available spots for low-income and non-White students. (Kirakosyan, 2014)

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLhXw_tZ3ss> Published on November, 21st, 2015.

quotas do not relate to intellectual capacity, but rather, to social opportunities that are not the same, due to a post-abolition process that did not create inclusion mechanisms for the black population, leaving African descendants at a social disadvantage in relation to white population⁶ (2015).

The African descendants kept on struggling to increase their position in society and to gain equitable visibility and representation in political, economic, and educational institutions since then. According to Skidmore (1993), Since 1940, Brazilian Censuses have been revealing “gross differences in income by race”, and the more recent ones, have “established beyond doubt that race was a significant independent variable affecting key life chances, such as education, infant mortality, life expectancy, morbidity, and income”(xiii). Bonilla (2018) wrote that black people

are about to be more likely to be poor than whites, earn about 40 per cent less than whites, receive an inferior education compared to whites even when they attend integrated institutions. In terms of housing black-owners units comparable to white-owned ones are valued at 35 percent less. Blacks receive impolite treatment at stores, restaurants and in a host of other commercial transactions. Blacks are targets of racial profiling by police, which combined with higher racialized criminal court system, guarantees their overrepresentation among those arrested, prosecuted, incarcerated, and if charged for a capital crime, executed (p.2).

The remaining issues of these long-lasting phenomena have had profound effects on Brazilian society until nowadays. But still, the myths of *racial democracy* and *meritocracy* seem to be on the way for little actions to be taken in order to promote equitable opportunities in terms of race and gender. Moreover, there is a constant struggle to discourage and diminish black voices; there is an urgency to silence those who dare to expose the systemic racism and its consequences in Brazil.

Last year, on the day of Black visibility, the actress Thais Araújo spoke up to expose racism in Brazil in a lecture posted on TED-x⁷. César Benjamin, the secretary of Education, made fun of her declarations and Marielle Franco,

⁶ “cotas não dizem respeito a capacidade, mas sim as oportunidades que não são as mesmas, em virtude de um pós- abolição que não criou mecanismos de inclusão pra população negra deixando- a em desvantagem social em relação a população branca”. (translation by author)

⁷ < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2lo3y98FV4&feature=youtu.be> > Published on Nov 14th, 2017.

prominent human rights activist, one of the few black women who occupied a position of power in government as a Councilor went public to reply to his accusations:

Do not talk about racial democracy. The problem is not the difference. It is when this difference takes away equality of rights, representation and opportunity. Now we understand why the teaching of Afro-Brazilian culture in schools is not a priority of its secretary.⁸

Marielle fought for black lives of a quarter of Rio's population who live in Favelas. *She* was a respected teacher and researcher who graduated in Social Sciences at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), and received her Master's in Public Administration at the Federal Fluminense University (UFF). In her dissertation she criticized the role of UPPs ("Pacifying Police Units"), a law measurement which aimed at fighting drug-dealing gangs. She had been recently assigned to monitor the military intervention which is accused of terrorizing and violating communities.

More than erasing Black history from its people, Brazil has been erasing Black people from its history. Marielle was brutally shot dead on March, 14th after leaving a political event. The main line of investigation leads to her execution.

⁸ "Não me venha falar de democracia racial. O problema, não é a diferença. É quando essa diferença nos retira igualdade de direitos, representação e oportunidades. Agora entendemos porque o ensino de cultura afrobrasileira nas escolas não é prioridade da sua secretaria." (Psolcarioca.com.br, 2017) (translation by author)

3. Literature Review

Recently, a broader conversation about race in the United States brought up an important analytic tool that offers critical perspectives on race, and the causes, consequences and manifestations of racism, inequity, and the dynamics of power and privilege in schooling: the Critical Race Theory (CRT). As Ladson-Billings (1998) emphasized, “adopting and adapting CRT as a framework for educational equity means that we will have to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing it” (p. 22).

As Guinier (2003) stated, a racially literate person can use “race as a diagnostic device, an analytic tool, and an instrument of process” (p. 202). Undoubtedly, a better understanding on the issues of race helped me strengthen my identity as a black woman and inspired me towards the commitment with social change through antiracist education, since:

An antiracist education seeks to interrupt these relations of inequality by educating people to identify, name, and challenge the norms, patterns, traditions, structures, and institutions that keep racism and white supremacy in place (DIANGELO, 2012).

It was very clear while looking for contributions to carry out this work that “there is a noticeable silence in literacy research and teaching around issues of race, racism, and antiracism” (GREENE and DAWN ABT-PERKINS, 2003). The explanation might reside in the fact that not only Brazilian society, but also Brazilian scholars, for a long time have avoided the topic and regarded “the question of race and race relations as a virtual nonsubject” (SKIDMORE 1985, 1991).

Yet, there has been research on issues of race, literacy, and whiteness around the world. Rogers and Mosle (2006) presented an exploration project called “*teaching for literacy acceleration within a critical framework*” in a second-grade public school classroom in St. Louis, Missouri, a city known by its history of racial segregation. They used multimodal tools of critical discourse analysis to look for patterns on videotapes of guided-reading lessons they have promoted

aiming at understanding how relations of race were dealt with through children's book. Their findings indicated that

as the children become racially literate within an accelerative literacy classroom, they transferred the sociocognitive problem solving (e.g., questioning the author, noticing conflicts between the illustrations and the text, looking for absences and contradictions) across literacy practices. The finding is significant because it demonstrates that racial literacy can create spaces for white, working class children to step into texts to identify, problematize, and, most importantly, reconstruct whiteness in relation to social justice (p.483).

Cultural plurality as a cross-curricular theme is indeed an issue that has been discussed in recent times in Brazil due to the implementation of the new National Curriculum Parameters. However, English as Foreign Language teachers seem neither to understand nor address 'race'/ethnicity in education. Ferreira (2011) has also carried out a qualitative research in south of Brazil to investigate how cultural plurality as a cross curricular theme (CPCCT) is addressed by EFL teachers in Grey City. She reinforced the importance of the teacher's role when it comes to promoting equality in terms of race/ethnicity in the learning environment, and states that "unless teachers have an adequate understanding of issues like race/ethnicity, issues of CPCCT will be addressed inadequately in schools" (p. 220).

Paulo Freire (1970) urged educators to teach critically from the bottom up against the myths and inequities imposed from the top down. In a Freirean approach, critical teaching asks students to question the status quo, to connect learning to their personal context and the larger social context. To Freire, critical thinking was a social inquiry into the historical and personal meaning of any knowledge.

From where I stand as a teacher, learning English as a foreign language must be focused attention on much more than developing communicative competence. It can be combined, in an efficient and productive way, with an interest in understanding social problems and working for social change.

In other words, there should be more focus on critical thinking and anti-racist teaching in E.F.L Brazilian classrooms. Incorporating the awareness of discourse and ideology in language teaching might be vital in order to promote individual and collective changes, and transform language education into cultural action for freedom in and beyond the classroom.

3.1 Race, Discourse and Politics

One of the main challenges I have been facing as an English teacher is to deconstruct a practical idea students and teachers have when it concerns to learning/teaching English as a foreign language. Besides using language to say things in the sense of performing communicative activities such as asking and providing information, doing things or expressing emotions, preferences and desires, it is important to make the school community aware that language serves other less functional and precise purposes in our lives.

Language allows us to do things but also to be things. Therefore social sciences have entangled themselves and “language has being accorded a more central role in social phenomena” (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992, p. 2). The term ‘discourse’, for instance, is no longer associated simply with pieces of either spoken or written language. The usage of this term proposed by Gee (2005) integrates the notion of a Discourse, with a capital D as “a characteristic way of saying, doing and being” (2005, p. 30). A socially situated tool that allows us to access to different identities and practices which builds up our ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling and believing. On the same degree, in linguistics, a “text” has been seeing as a dimension of discourse and simultaneously “an instance of discursive practice and social practice” (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992, p. 4). Therefore, the language we learn cannot be assumed just like an abstract system composed by a set of rules to accomplish functional purposes.

Another example is that the term politics is usually restricted to government issues, candidacies and elections while should be taken into account that since everything depends on money, status, power, and

acceptance, living in society per se is a political act. As Gee (2014) has already stated, living in society is a constant dispute of these social goods, *being* is always political and our discursive practices are never disconnected to broader contexts and Discourses within the world we live in. It includes all the normative social taboos we were taught and often reproduce.

It is sometimes helpful to think about social and political issues as if it is not just us humans who are talking and interacting with each other, but, rather, the Discourses we represent and enact, and for which we are “carriers”. The Discourses we enact existed before each of us came on the scene. Discourses, through our words and deeds, have talked to each other through history, and, in doing so, form human history (Gee, 2014, p. 35).

In this sense, teachers should help students understand language as a tool to perform discursive practices and build up social identities in a way they find language emancipating. “Changing discourse practices contribute to change in knowledge (including beliefs and common sense), social relations, and social identities” (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992, p. 2). This teaching approach could be of enormous benefit making the experience of learning a language an attempt to inspire learner’s criticism and autonomy while thinking about the status quo and questioning social conventions.

4. Methodology

When I first started this work, I was *puzzled* by a very common behavior while dealing with racial discussions in my classes. Since my first motivation it was to understand and promote mutual learning in the classroom context, I decided to integrate my teaching practice into an independent research within the framework of Exploratory Practice. E.P is a common research approach in educational language studies which the main goal is to understand classroom dynamics.

The starting point for the collection of my data was inspired by a potential pedagogical activity P.E.P.A. which consists of an activity applied in the classroom in order to understand a particular phenomenon. It has been typically used by teachers as a research tool for understanding the pedagogical context under E.P approach. As “Classroom puzzles seem in fact to have been about the quality of life in a particular classroom setting, for a particular person or group of people” (ALLWRIGHT, 2002), my understanding of ‘life in the classroom’ sooner turned out that “life in the language classroom is necessarily social” (ALLWRIGHT, 2002).

Considering that much went on while the recordings were being analyzed, and articulated with my background as a Historian, the conduction of this research took an even more critical direction as an attempt to evoke the social matters involved. Therefore, I decided to take some advantage of the qualitative research as a *multimethod* framework to “deploy a wide range of unconnected methods, hopping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand” (DENZIN and LINCON 1994, p.2), and in order to do so, multiples approaches will be applied to this current work.

From this perspective, Critical Race Theory offered, as a methodological tool, “greater ontological and epistemological understanding of how race and racism affect the education and lives” (PARKER & LYNN, 2002, p.7 - 8). Understanding E.P as a broader approach and a *multimethod* framework for classroom understanding is within the Critical paradigm and under CRT as a

framework I aim at investigating and interpreting the data generated during my potential pedagogical activity. By integrating both E.P and C.R.T I am seeking “not merely understanding but change” (RICHARDS, 2003, p. 40)

4.1 Critical Discourse Analyses

Because there are a variety of approaches to apply Discourse analyses, I will be using CDA (Critical Discourse Analyses) under Fairclough’s theory (1992) to investigate the ideologies embedded in my student’s discursive practices. As according to the author, “Discourse analysis is ought ideally to be an interdisciplinary undertaking” (1992, p. 225), the analyses of the role of silence in racial discussions also demanded the interrogation of the “historical forces” that are often taken for granted and naturalized, achieving the status of “common sense”. For this reason, I attempted to depict a brief historical background so that I could relate the role of silence in the investigation I am conducting to “the power relationships that permeate social structures and interactions” (RICHARDS, 2003 p. 40).

Fairclough’s theory links together “text, discursive practice and social practice” (1992, p. 62) as an attempt to produce a multifunctional analysis integrating “*reality, social relations and identities*” (1992, p.29). I will be starting from micro aspects of form and meaning to interpret macro discursive practices in relation to ideology and hegemony. Understanding form, as the elements presented in the text structure such as vocabulary and grammar, and meaning to infer how lexical choices might be reinforcing power relations and conveying ideological meanings. Since “texts are produced in specific ways in specific contexts” (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992, p. 78) I aim at building up connections between the features that I interpreted as patterns of silence in our activity and the overall social context considering the relations of power and ideologies that might be composing their systems of knowledge and beliefs and consequently, shaping their discursive practices.

Using the substantive findings of Diangelo (2012), I will be analyzing the potential social implications for the linguistic choices my students made while trying to evade from racial discussions. Aiming at interpreting the unspoken, unmarked norms and behavioral patterns, I will draw my attention to the participants who are often neglected in opposition to those who dominate racial discussions and invalidate people of color. I shall focus on the ones who rarely speak and have to be asked to join in, in order to understand how this common dynamic turns into hegemonic struggle through their discursive practices while taking up in racial dialogues.

Using the Whiteness frame and the “us and them” approach on social identities (DUSZAK, 2002), I shall focus on “the various ways that white silence functions in discussions of race to maintain white privilege” (DIANGELO, 2012, p. 2) during the conversation I promoted in my EFL classroom. As “there is no set procedures for doing discourse Analysis” (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992, p. 225), for the purpose of this work, I will focus on the combination of particular textual features I found relevant during our interaction such as *modality* and *intensifiers*.

Considering that CDA is an interpretative approach, the following analysis does not intent “to read off social meanings from the text” (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992, p. 29). My interpretation aims at reading a particular event in my learning environment as a situational context in which my student’s discursive practices took place, combined with a broader social context, taking into account the aspects of our social identities, interpreting the textual features presented in their discursive practice that might be associated with political and ideological contexts, according to my perspective considering the aforementioned background.

In other words, I believe that my analytical process will be a result of my Brazilian history understanding and motivations as a historian, my social position and identity, my personal experience as a black female teacher of a private course in a middle-class neighborhood, and the theoretical sources I have.

5. The Situational Context

My research took place at a private English course in Vila Isabel which is located in a shopping mall in a middle-class neighborhood, in Rio de Janeiro. This course claims as its educational goal the development of the students besides their linguistic abilities (speaking, writing, reading and listening). It means that the learning process will be also concerning academic, cultural and personal growth, such as leadership and self-motivation by stimulating free speech in order to make them able to overcome inhibitions and barriers during their learning process.

There are applied two different methodologies claiming to better fitting the student's needs. They offer traditional teacher-directed classes and student-oriented multi-book classes. In the former, a *hierarchical mode*, the teacher "is the person in charge of all major decisions in the learning process", in the latter, a *cooperative mode* the teacher "shares some power and decision-making with the group and guide them towards becoming more self directing".(ARNOLD, 1999 p.20) Although these classes are conducted differently, both work under a mix of the *audiolingual method* - which consists of the isolated practice in drilling language patterns - and *communicative approach* – as an interactional attempt to create communicative experiences so that students can use the structures they have learned. Multi-book classes are composed by students of all ages separated by their level of proficiency all in the same room. The institution works with groups of students from beginners to basic who still need Portuguese language support and groups from intermediate to advance, who are no longer expected to demand instructions in their first language.

The multi-book classroom model focuses on meaningful interaction through collaborative learning and encourages the development of student's autonomy aiming at changing the paradigm of learning from the teacher only. They work independently with their own books and tablets, in which they select their audios and listen according to their lessons using headphones. Their classes are set up in five moments: a *warm up* activity in which they interact as a unity, followed by a *virtual teaching*, where they listen to their lessons and

interact with the tablet, and while doing it, the *personal teacher*, working as a coach, goes each by each to elucidate questions that might raise and help them with grammar structures and pronunciation. When they finish listening to their lessons, *peer works* are assigned so they can practice what they have learned among themselves, and at the end of the class they come back as a group for a *closing* activity.

During the time that my data was collected in 2017, this franchise unit had 38 classes going on counting a total of 272 students. Each classroom normally contained between 7 and 10 students. A total of 149 of them were male and 124 of them were female. The teachers who I worked with provided me the core information which I started my research with: The number of students of color attending classes at that franchising.

Considering the complexity of engaging in the nomenclatures in the Brazilian context, in which “the term ‘Black’ is associated with skin color and physical features rather than ancestry” (FERREIRA, p. 310). I asked them to take into account the social construction of color skin as equivalent of race to facilitate their collecting of this data. A total of ‘3’ students were perceived as black: A young woman, who worked as the receptionist of that unit, a student of mine, who was a very young man, and a female middle aged woman who by the time my data started being generated had already left the course. It’s based on their testimonials I started carrying my research out.

5.1 Challenging Silence - The Pedagogical Activity

I’ve carried out a potential pedagogical activity (PEPA) with two different groups. The first group was a peculiar advanced multi-book class, which guaranteed a very plural group composed by adults and teenagers. By the day of the activity the adults were absent. The second group was a regular one, a traditional advanced class composed by teenagers.

The activity was divided in two parts in order to help my students attain some racial literacy, by drawing their attention to the issue of the lack of black students in the English Course.

The students were asked to help me with my final project for the Specialization Course and agreed on doing so and also being recorded. They were explained they would have to help me answer a question.

The two groups of students were given a question individually in which they had to use present perfect as a grammatical feature to help them organize their thoughts regarding their experience as an English learner.

The students were asked *“How long have you been studying English, and how many students of color have you studied with so far?”*

After writing down their answers using a few lines in a small rectangle on a piece of paper, the participants were asked to share their answers among themselves. While reading out loud, most of them realized that their answers were very similar. In an average period of 5 years, they had never studied with a person of color, and those who have experienced this, have studied with just one or two throughout the whole course.

To complete their first task, they were invited to speak up their impressions and complete their answers by exposing their assumptions for the causes they believed it happened so, collaborating with their own findings to discuss critically on the matter.

The second activity I had planned was a debate on *quotas*. The students were asked whether they agreed or not with *quotas* as a social action. However, since the activities worked differently with the groups, considering that the latter actively participated in the discussions while the former assumed a posture of hesitation, for the purpose of this work, only the extracts of the participants of the first group in the first activity will be analyzed.

6. Working for understanding

The chart below corresponds to the selections of their written answers and our spoken interaction and were chosen based on a range of particular textual features that I am going to refer to as “*patterns of silence and rationale strategies*” (DIANGELO, 2012) that were used for all the participants while being encouraged to talk about the matter. They are followed by my first impressions on their discursive practice.

GROUP 1: “I don’t know”, “I really don’t know why”, “I don’t know at all.”			
What was asked: “How long have you been studying English, and how many P.O.C have you studied with so far?”			
Who	What they wrote:	What they said:	What I say from what they said:
H. 13 years old, female.	“I’ve been studying English here since 2012 and I never studied with a P.O.C and <u>I really don’t know why.</u> ”	“My answer won’t <i>to</i> help you.” “ I (...) I really don’t know why.” “(…) I don’t know the <i>question.</i> ” “(…) I don’t know the <i>question.</i> ”	When she said she “didn’t know the question, actually, she meant, she didn’t know the answer.” She was one of the most resistant student to debate the matter, and the one who insisted the most in proving her answer worthless in the classroom.
E. 19 years old, male.	“I have been studying in xxx for 5 years and I never studied with a P.O.C. in my opinion the society <i>prejudice this</i> people and tries to segregate them for one reason that <u>I can’t really understand.</u> ”	“I don’t know at all.”	He shared that this kind of discussion was very common in his college. However, he was very brief and used similar strategies not to keep on speaking about the matter.
E. 20 years old, female.	“In 6 years here, I <u>think</u> I have been in the same class as a person of color once <u>or</u> twice. I <u>think</u> that’s because they have less opportunities than us, <u>maybe</u> they <u>might</u> not have the money to spend, even <i>in</i> education.	“(…) his answers are probably the best <i>one.</i> ” “He is used to.” “(…) ahnnn so... I don’t know.”	E. was finishing her last lessons and getting ready to become an English Teacher. Although she argued more than the other students, she used different linguistic strategies to remain in silence before she finally started talking about the topic.

6.1 How does silence take place in students' discursive practices?

6.1.1 H. 13 years old, female.

I will start by focusing on an aspect of my student's social identity I believe to be relevant for my interpretation of her texts. It is important to point out that the producer of the first excerpts was the youngest student in the group and the one with the lowest level of proficiency according to the standards of the course. However, when she first resisted taking part in the conversation, I didn't relate what seemed to be a precise refusal to answer my question to any language difficulty, since her skills had never been on her way when it came to expressing herself in English on other topics.

3	H. 13	"My answer won't to help you." (overlapping)
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Only after she answered my question would I start paying attention in some patterns that I selected oriented by my interpretation of the social aspects that might have influenced her choices during our interaction.

4	I:	"Won't help me? Why?"
5	H.	"Because I (...) I (***) really don't know why."

I found interesting that not only F. declared she couldn't help me with my question, but also she emphasized her statement more than once during her discursive practice, by using the modifier "*really*". Because intensifiers are normally used as an affective tool to increase or give an additional context to a proposition, I will focus upon the usage of "*really*" since I considered it to be a very meaningful linguistic choice taken into account the macro context.

22	H. 13	"I'm in cap xxx for 8 years and (...) in the first year we
23		debate a lot about this kind of thing like to respect
24		other religion, and other color and other opinion, (...)
25		and (...) I don't know the question (...) I don't know the
26		question."

In the following extracts her attitude may be taken as keeping on trying to state she had total lack of knowledge about the topic even though she had declared racial conversations to be very common in her school environment.

She repeated “she *really* didn’t know the question” meaning “she didn’t know the answer”, even though she had admitted herself to have been discussing this kind of matter at least in her first year in college.

I was surprised, considering the previous information, since I expected her to be used to taking part in activities like that. Instead, not only she seemed to avoid responding the question as she acted like struggling to make a way to reinforce that her thoughts on the matter would not contribute for the debate.

When combined with a broader social context, her usage of this particular feature sounded as a discursive strategy to avoid talking openly about race, which suggested in a more direct way, a possible urge to evade dealing with the racial inequality that had been exposed by my question. From the interpretation of our interaction, I could reinforce my assumption that a topic which exposes a privileged group and the relations of dominance strongly denied in our society often encounters resistance from the participants.

6.1.2 E. 19 years old, male.

The producer, who was finishing the course and was just a step away from getting his degree, started by telling the group he had already been in contact with racial discussions:

6	E. 19	“When I studied <i>in</i> UERJ is a normal question. You have this (...) <i>in</i> the walls.”
7		

He also seemed to understand the complexity of the reflexive activity I was proposing, and voiced how much difficult it seemed to him to name the reasons why he had never studied with a black student throughout his course. He also went back to his first experience in college while trying to justify it.

13	E. 19	“yeah, when they asked e for the first time, it is so complicated. So <i>much</i> things that (...) that (...) do it. (...) <i>I don’t know at all.</i> ”
14		
15		

But then, a similar dynamic seemed to take place when he ended up using the intensifier “at all” to emotionally enhance his inability to elaborate his thoughts.

Once again, a discursive rationale seemed to play an ideological role of silence when it came to my student’s lexical choices and their implications. Kumaravadivelu stated that a broader context, a historical background and also an ideological convention determines “what can be said or heard and what silenced, what is acceptable and what tabooed” (2000, p.460). When I tried to include myself as an attempt to agree on the complexity of naming the causes for inequality in the classroom, He went even further, and seemed to use English as an excuse not to develop his thoughts.

16	I	“I think that we (...) know, (...) but is not, as you said, something that is easy to put (...) in words...”
17		
18	E. 19	“in words, yeah” (overlapping)
19	I	“specially in two lines...”
20	E. 19	<i>“in English.”</i>

I found it extremely meaningful, considering he was finishing the course, and therefore had a higher level of proficiency. Never had he showed any difficulty with the language while talking about other topics. DiAngelo (in press) points out that when challenging the norm and talking directly about race, which is a taboo, we expose the inequality in place and make it uncomfortable and destabilizing for many whites.

6.1.3 E. 20 years old, female.

Due to the fact that besides a student, E. had already become a co-worker who had been recently assigned for teaching in the same institution, I took for granted that her language skills would not be a concern.

While answering my question, she firstly seemed to be the most confident and skilled participant, and therefore the one who better expressed herself about the topic. Lately, then, while I was reading her writings and

connecting with her performance in the recordings I realized she used different strategies to remain in silence before she finally started talking about the topic.

10	E. 20	"So he's perfect and his answers are probably the best
11		one. (overlap) He is used to."

In this extract, as soon as another student mentioned this topic to be common in his college environment, E. tried to evade from the discussion by suggesting that he would be the most competent participant to talk about the matter, and, in opposition to other classes in which she spoke a lot, she remained quiet until she was invited to talk. For this reason, I asked her to join us with a provocation:

32	I	And you miss speaker?
33	E. 20	"I think that ahnn (...) it's hard for <i>maybe</i> in private
34		ahnn public... private ahnnn <i>locations</i> where you have to
35		pay to be there, (...) <i>maybe</i> is harder for people of
36		colors be there because they usually not always are
37		people with less opportunity, because, because <i>they</i>
38		have been living with and dealing with more
39		difficulties than than <i>us</i> . Because <i>they</i> usually are the
40		people that are living in the favelas and <i>they're</i>
41		usually people that are discriminated and and <i>maybe</i> in
42		some places it happens that it <i>they they</i> don't walk
43		around <i>their</i> area because is not <i>their</i> area, ahnnn so...
44		<i>I don't know.</i>

When she starts, other two particular textual strategies called my attention: the first of which was modality. In the traditional approach to grammar "modality concerns the extent to which producers commit themselves to, or conversely distance themselves from propositions" (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992, p. 142). However, according to the author, not only modal verbs such as *must*, *should*, *might* and so forth are used to manifest degrees of affinity. In my interpretation, her using of words such as *think*, *maybe*, and even *or* in the extract I selected from our interaction, can be associated with low affinity and used to build relations of distance with the topic.

This difficulty in connecting with the topic may be caused by the perception of whiteness defined by Frankenberg (1997) as "a 'standpoint,' a

place from which white people look at themselves, at others, and at society.” Another strategy that is related to it but also to a supposedly distinction between social and discursive white and black environments, it was the distinction she makes, consciously or not about “*people of color*” as an out-group she doesn’t belong to. By repeatedly referring to black people as “*they*”, she seems to be reinforcing her discursive practice through a white socio-construction of herself in the “us-them” dynamic (DUSZAK, 2002).

When it comes to race, white and black people tend to see themselves differently. “While whites understand themselves as unique individuals, blacks and people of color recognize themselves as members of a racial group” (DIANGELO, 2012, p.8). because through language is it possible to identify and be identified as a member of a group, that may be the reason why she showed difficulty in providing accurate explanations for the big picture she was presenting.

From where I stand as a teacher, the way she was talking about herself and the others, only reinforced her reference points as a white person. She could have even recognized at that very moment where she was socially and economically positioned in relation to people of color when she finally decided not to conclude her propositions by saying “I don’t know”. As if she had realized she was exposing her privileges, and given up on making any sense to give some credit to everything she had struggled to argue that far.

According to Diangelo refusing taking part in racial dialogues is a very common way to protect a structural place of advantage, which, as a consequence, maintains a structure of racial comfort and a sense of equilibrium that is “rooted in norms and traditions that uphold relations of inequality” (2012, p. 4). Therefore, finishing the debate by saying “she doesn’t know” could be an attempt to regain some comfort and sense of racial stability. In this sense, exposing the classroom as a collective group to racial discussions can become a valuable tool to make students take a more critical view on whether their discourse serves a powerful group over a less privileged one.

7. Working for Social Change

7.1 Why do conversation tasks around race seem to be especially difficult for EFL teenager students?

Firstly, I believe that most of us have been socialized to rely on the myth of *racial democracy* as a result of a *color blinded* socialization that makes particularly difficult for Brazilians to recognize issues of race and racism. Secondly, Brazilian colorist mentality persuades the way our society deals with the concept of *mulatto* and the varieties of shades of skin colors, in a way that “it literally blurs and thereby softens the line between black and white” (DEGLER, 1971, p. 225) making difficult to acknowledge structures of oppression since light skinned people are guaranteed a special place in Brazilian society.

As Francis E. Kendall (2002) has stated, “Privilege, particularly white or male privilege, is hard to see for those who were born with access to power and resources”. Conversations around race can be extremely difficult since people who see themselves as white or non-blacks go unaware they benefit from systemic structures of oppression.

In this sense, most people cannot recognize “the dimensions of racism that serve to elevate white people over people of color (DIANGELO, 2006a)”. For them, their daily experience it is just normal, privilege is taken for granted and they rely on the belief that the power and resources they share are “universally available to everybody” (p.1). As Fairclough has pointed out, “our society was built up over the centuries at the cost of racial inequality as to establish white domination”. Therefore, discussions around race usually place people in a position of discomfort in which the “*universality of power and resources*” are deconstructed and relations of domination and subordination are exposed.

Talking to the other black teachers who engage in racial discussions, it was possible to understand that silence was not a phenomenon presented only in my classes. Because we are socialized in a white dominant society, when

people make use of silence as a mechanism to avoid talking openly about race, especially when in mixed-race groups, it works as a discursive strategy to maintain white hegemony.

7.2 What are the implications of the discussions around race and ethnicity promoted in the EFL classroom?

Classroom represents a micro society in which many aspects of our macro reality are reproduced. Because it is localized, a closer look to the details at this fragmented picture of our society works as zoom lenses that allow us as teachers and the students to see aspects that might have gone unnoticed in our everyday lives.

By situating discourse in a wider context of historical and social relations it is possible to increase the impact on the learners. Neil Mercer (2000) states that "'social interaction and collaborative activity' in class can provide 'valuable opportunities' for learning". For this reason, the discussions and debates in classrooms as discursive events may be an opportunity to problematize the common-sense and social conventions. ,“Antiracist education seeks to interrupt these relations of inequality by educating people to identify, name, and challenge the norms, patterns, traditions, structures, and institutions that keep racism and white supremacy in place” (DIANGELO, 2012). The way we, as a teacher approach and deal with race issues in our classes can contribute enormously to transcend the current orders of discourse, but for this to happen, “the focus of attention and investigating discursive change should keep alternating between the discursive event and such structural changes.” (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992, p.98) hegemonic discourses are tactical elements, rhetorical techniques to maintain structures of power, and there is no other way to restructure the hegemonic orders of discourses without restructuring our discursive practices.

It is possible to contribute for significant social changes from every particular moment by adopting antiracist practices. I remember once when a student asked me “how to say ‘*morena*’ in English, and at that very moment she

understood that the meaning of *'Brunnet'* didn't encompass what she understood as a definition for her color of skin. At that moment, a simple class about describing yourself and the others worked as a tool for a much deeper discursive change that would certainly influence the way she was used to read herself and the world around her. After a moment of confusion, she looked up as though she were lost about everything she had learned concerning her own identity and asked me: "*so, what am I?*" and aware of what my answer would represent considering our racial context and the things that are never told, I replied with a big smile in my face, proudly and confident: "*you are black, just like me.*"

Other very common situation recurrent during coloring activities in which we could actively challenge the hegemonic order of discourse is when preschoolers ask for a "skin-color-pencil" that is usually either light pink or light nude. I learned from my sister who is a black elementary teacher, to reply with a very sincere question: "*which skin?*" And to ask kids to look around the amount of varieties of colors presented in the classroom through her classmates' skin color (when it is possible, when there are), while comparing to the variety of colors in their pencil holders so they can decide which one to choose. A simple question can help denaturalize this European ideal of color that reinforces a racist discourse, serving as a tool to make visible the existence of race and color diversity. The "I don't see color" discourse is harmful, because it blinds people not only for the color diversity, but also for the system of oppression which deprive people of color for equal opportunities while benefit whites.

By involving my students in racial discussions I have tried to promote understandings in terms of race/ethnicity in the EFL environment beyond focusing on language development but also critical thinking and social change.

The pedagogical activities that I planned and adapted as an attempt to enhance my student's awareness of Brazilians racial and social dynamics, not only improved my teaching practices but also enabled them to acknowledge the environment they had been learning and the systemic relations of power that were implicit in their everyday life as well.

On the degree that discourse analysts started focusing on the social aspects of discourse such as *ideology*, *power*, and *resistance*, it was possible to use my learning environment and our own classroom's dynamics to reflect collectively on the outside world and build some critical examination of relations of power we construct, in order to work for changing discursive, and consequently social practices.

By expanding their acknowledgments to the outside world "a discursive change, whether social, political, or cultural, can, therefore be effected only when the entire community, not just an individual, changes its ways of thinking and knowing, speaking and doing." (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2000, p.460)

8. Final Thoughts

From the Exploratory practice I carried out and the analyses of my group's interactions I understood that, the communication skills might not be the main reason why EFL students avoid taking part in racial conversations, despite of what most English teachers I have talked to first tended to believe, including my coworkers and I.

As an illustration, I must detail that in opposition to the silent experience I am reporting and basing my work on, the participants of the other group I worked with to whom the same aforementioned activity was presented, seemed able to share their understandings and perspectives, overcoming with a surprisingly sense of humor the difficulties raised because of their lower level of proficiency, besides their lack of vocabulary related to the topic in comparison to the participants of this research as it can be seen in the annex².

It is not my intent for this paper, however, to analyze the data they produced, not even to promote any kind of comparative analyses. The data presented here works as a complement to point up a different experience while approaching the topic, since our interaction had been crucial for me to investigate and review, as a researcher, a common sense rationalization for silent behavior during racial conversations.

By listening to our interactions over and over, and returning to my transcriptions again, I found it interesting to realize that particular aspects of my students identity such as gender, age or English level of proficiency, will probably not be in the way of their discursive practices, if they were either unaware or felt at least little comfortable regarding the position they occupy in society in relation to black people. In this sense it is important to understand

how might racism depend on white people not thinking about these issues? Being new to the concepts is not an end point or a pass to only listen and not speak; it is a key entry point into the discussion and into furthering self-knowledge (DiAngelo, 2006, p.10).

From where I stand for, an antiracist education is the key to build mutual understanding about race, privilege and social inequality. But firstly, as teachers, “we must address our own latent racism as well as the racism that underlies society” (EDWARDS & SCHMIDT, 2006). As Ferreira (2011) suggested, strategies need to be created in order to develop teachers into racial sensitive and more responsive educators on this sense. Only after teachers start addressing issues of race adequately will we be able to make visible the debate on race and color in EFL classrooms.

For this dream to become true, we need to learn how to move from step one to two. The *myth of racial democracy* has been naturalized as an ideological construction of reality, and has achieved a status of common sense (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992, p. 87), therefore, every time the feeling of racial equilibrium is shaken, it turns out immediately into hegemonic struggle, which often means: silence.

As DiAngelo (2012) has stated, “silence in discussions of race can, of course, be a constructive mode of white engagement”, but we need to be aware and learn how to differentiate between the positive and the negative silence. The former works as an empathetic exercise in order to allow black people to take the floor in their favor to speak up so people can be actively listening. The latter, on the other hand, is of my deeply concern since it consists on “silence as the primary or only mode of engagement”.

Potential pedagogical activities that explore the use of language can be used as a tool to provide interactions that involve “bringing personal value systems to the surface in the classroom” (ALLWRIGHT, 1984, p.157). In this sense, racial conversations can serve to negotiate world-views and review the negative status of “racism” from a taboo word into a reflexive practice. But for this, the student must feel very comfortable to do so. Exploratory practices can develop into a way to challenge “whiteness as a ‘standpoint,’ a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society.” According to Critical Race Theory, “we must begin working in our own spheres of influence to bring about change to make race visible” (EDWARDS & SCHMIDT, 2006). When

aware of “whiteness” as a discourse we can be able to confront not the students, but the hegemonic discursive order and therefore, change the relations of power in order to promote some social change. As the feminist Audre Lorde has already stated “Is not difference that mobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken” (p.44).

In this paper, I talked about the aspects of Brazilian history that are omitted in formal education, reinforcing the belief in the myth of “racial democracy” as a result of a “color blinded” socialization that makes particularly difficult for Brazilians to recognize issues of race and racism in Brazilian society.

I gave a brief overview of some researches (GREENE AND DAWN ABT-PERKINS, 2003 - ROGERS AND MOSLE, 2006 – FERREIRA, 2011) while looking for contributions for my project. And the difficulties I encountered in finding Brazilian material on the matter, because of the invisibilization afore mentioned regarding race as a problem.

I explained my motivations for this work, considering how much the issues on race and ethnicity have been proven difficult to cover in my English classes. And pointed out a recurrent issue I had been dealing with while trying to expose my students to racial debates: discursive rationales that I interpreted as silence.

To better understand how silence took place in racial discussions, I carried out two potential pedagogical activities in order to have two different groups of students participating in class discussions. Under “Critical Race” and “Critical Teaching (FREIRE, 1970)” I directed our interaction to a critical debate on the causes and consequences of inequity, and the dynamics of power and privilege among black and white people. I recorded and analyzed the interactions as to investigate the strategies used by my students while engaging in racial discussions using “Critical Discourse Analyses”.

I specifically analyzed the “*patterns of silence and rationale strategies*” (DIANGELO, 2012) through the use of lexical elements such as “modality” and “intensifiers” as a shield to help students avoid get involved in debates on about racial issues, and found out that silence can play the role of a discursive and ideological strategy to help maintain white hegemony.

As the project was run with white teens, I would like to reconsider my first aim and carry out other exploratory practices on the impressions of my black students regarding the same issue. These works would be of enormous importance for me personally and academically, since I would be able to gather two different perspectives of similar social practices from two opposite contexts and social backgrounds. I am sure these experiences would provide me valuable tools to acknowledge more understanding regarding an antiracist teaching practice, helping me improve my mains to promote racial literacy in my EFL classes. Moreover, I strongly believe our interaction could be extremely profitable for all the participants of my next journey, considering that an empathetic teaching practice must be the first active step toward any social change.

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10. Annex

10.1 Written Data

GROUP 1:
"I'm studying here since 2012 and I never studied with a P.O.C and I really don't know way." H. 13 years old, female.
"I have been studying in *** for 5 years and I never studied with a P.O.C. in my opinion the society <i>prejudice this</i> people and tries to segregate them for one reason that I can't really understand." E. 19 years old, male.
"In 6 years here, I think I have been in the same class as a person of color once or twice. I think that's because they have less opportunities than us, maybe they might not have the money to spend, even <i>in</i> education." E. 20 years old, female.
GROUP 2:
"I have been studying here for 5 years and I never studied with P.O.C. I think that happens because <i>almost of them</i> don't have <i>totally</i> money to pay a course and <i>most of time</i> they suffer prejudice because of their color." J. 15 years old, female.
"I have been studying here <i>there's</i> 6 years, and in all this time, I have never had a P.O.C in my class. Even though black people <i>being</i> more than half of our society, they have a social problem coming from our way of colonialism. Black people came as slave, so they came without money and structure. They had to work against <i>they wanted</i> , however in 1888 it finished (...) they started their free life without any help or structure." H. 16 years old, female.
"I'm studying at (...) course for 6 years and I have never studied with a black person. I think that happened because the most of <i>them</i> P.O.C are poor and don't have access to the <i>necessary structure</i> to participate of a English Course and <i>the principal part of this fault</i> come from their parents that don't give <i>them necessary attention to knowledge</i> ." J. 16 years old, female.
"I have studied English for four years and I just had one black classmate during this time. I think the prejudice and the legacy of slavery in Brazil, that limited the financial power of these people, are the things that restrict the freedom and the rights <i>from</i> them, like having a good education." G. 18 years old, female.
"I've been studying English for five years and I only studied with two black classmates. I think it happens because in Brazil we have a cultural heir that results <i>that</i> most black people aren't able to pay a English course." G. 18 years old, female.
"I've studied for 4 years <i>English</i> and I've never seen a P.O.C in my room, I don't know the <i>really</i> reason because each of us is able to learn a second language, the color doesn't interfere <i>it</i> , maybe it would be because most of them don't have the same condition <i>than</i> us, but we can generalize it." I. 21 years old, male.

10.2 Spoken Data

10.2.1 Group 1

3 students from 21 to 13 years old in a multi-book class:

1	I:	"What did you think of your answers? What did you think of
2		the question? I just wanted (...) to listen from you..."
3	H.13	"My answer won't to help you." (overlapping)
4	I:	"Won't help me? Why?"
5	H.	"Because I (...) I (***) really don't know why."
6	E.19	"When I studied in UERJ is a normal question. You have this
7		(...) in the walls."
8	I	"Really? (...) So it wasn't (overlap ...) It wasn't the first
9		time (overlap ***) that somebody asked you.
10	E.20	"So he's perfect and his answers are probably the best one.
11		(overlap) He is used to."
12	I	"But (...) is it a question for you? Has it been a question
13		for you?"
14	E.19	"yeah, when they asked e for the first time, it is so
15		complicated. So much things that (...) that (...) do it. (...) I
16		don't know at all."
17	I	"I think that we (...) know, (...) but is not, as you said,
18		something that is easy to put (...) in words..."
19	E.19	"in words, yeah" (overlapping)
20	I	"specially in two lines..."
21	E.19	"in English."
22	I	"English is not a problem here. Is perfect!"
23	H.13	"I'm in cap UERJ for 8 years and (...) in the first year we
24		debate a lot about this kind of thing like to respect other
25		religion, and other color and other opinion, (...) and (...) I
26		don't know the question (she meant answer) (...) I don't know
27		the question."
28	I	"Yeah but to respect is important to (...) deal with..."
29	H.13	"Yes, there are a lot of debates..."
30	E.19	"Place you don't have these people you don't need to deal
31		with"
32	I	"How can I respect the differences if the differences (...) "
33		
34	E.19	If there aren't ...
35	I	"There are not in my room. if I don't deal with the
36		differences."

37	I	"And you miss speaker?"
38	E.20	"I think that ahnn (...) it's hard for maybe in private ahnn
39		public... private ahnnn <i>locations</i> where you have to pay to be
40		there, (...) maybe is harder for people of colors be there
41		because they usually not always are people with less
42		opportunity, because, because they have been living with and
43		dealing with more difficulties than than us . Because they
44		usually are the people that are living in the favelas and
45		they' re usually people that are discriminated and and maybe
46		in some places it happens that it they they don't walk
47		around their area because is not their area, ahnnn so... I
48		don't know. "

10.2.2 Group 2

6 students from 15 to 21 years old in a regular class:

1	I	I have a question for you: "Do you agree on racial quotes to
2		enter the universities?"
3	H.16	I agree but I think that this not resolves the problem.
4	I	Do you think that there's something that solves the problem?
5		
6	H.16	No I think not. I think it's a work that need to be...
7		"feito"?
8	I	Done.
9	H.16	Be done with the years. We cannot... the quote is a try to
10		resolve the problem not with the structure but in the end.
11		have the base and we have the top. Problem the MEC is trying
12		to resolve the problem not in the top but in the base. So
13		this is the problem.
14	I	Do you agree on it?
15	J.15	I agree but I think many people <i>burlam</i> ...
16	All:	hahahaha
17	J.15	Tá, burlam the rule, because my aunt, she is my color, and
18		she says that she is <i>parda</i> .
19	G. :	: /Struggling/ I agree with quotas but (...) quotas were
20		created to not to resolve the problem abut is a temporary
21		thing that In the future whe-when the problem (... é) will
22		being resolved that-that happens but if-it em, is the thing
23		that, (...)ai meu deus, "tem que acontecer".
24	I	Must happen.
25	G.18	éee, will be extinct.