PERCEPTIONS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS ON IDENTITY, ETHNICITY AND GENDER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

PERCEPÇÕES DE PROFESSORES EM FORMAÇÃO INICIAL SOBRE IDENTIDADE, ETNICIDADE E GÊNERO NAS AULAS DE LÍNGUA INGLESA

PERCEPCIONES DE DOCENTES EN FORMACIÓN INICIAL SOBRE IDENTIDAD, ETNIA Y GÉNERO EN CLASES DE LENGUA INGLESA

Samantha Gonçalves Mancini RAMOS[1]
e-mail: saramos@uel.br

Fernanda Machado BRENER[2]
e-mail: fernandabrener@uel.br

Jéssica Marroni FORTUNA[3]
e-mail: jessimfortuna@gmail.com

Nicolas de Oliveira SANTOS[4]
e-mail: nicolas.nicknos@gmail.com

How to reference this article:

Editor: Prof. Dr. Rosangela Sanches da Silveira Gileno
Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

---

[1] State University of Londrina (UEL), Londrina – PR – Brazil. Doctoral and Master's degrees in Language Studies from the State University of Londrina. Associate professor in the department of Modern Foreign Languages.
[2] State University of Londrina (UEL), Londrina – PR – Brazil. Doctoral degree in Letters from the State University of Maringá and Master's degree in Letters from the State University of Londrina. Associate professor in the department of Modern Foreign Languages.
[3] São Paulo State University (UNESP), Assis – SP – Brazil. Master's degree in Literary Studies from UNESP IBILCE, with research in English Literature and Cultural Studies.
[4] State University of Santa Cruz (UESC), Ilheus – BA – Brazil. Master's candidate in the Postgraduate Program in Letters - UESC/BA.

ABSTRACT: Foreign language classrooms can become fertile ground for exploring issues of identity, ethnicity, and gender and promoting education that drives social justice. With a qualitative nature, this research presents the theoretical bases for the study of these themes, exemplifies pedagogical actions in which these questions are explored in the school context, and analyzes the perceptions of pre-service English teachers (via content analysis), linking them to the National Common Curricular Base and the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Initial Training of Teachers for Basic Education. Data were selected from participating in a discussion forum after a webinar. The results indicate that future teachers are interested in understanding the power relations that affect their teaching practices and in acting to overcome racism and sexism in society through school education.

KEYWORDS: Identity. Ethnicity. Gender. Foreign language teaching

RESUMO: *As salas de aula de línguas estrangeiras podem se tornar um terreno fértil para explorar questões de identidade, etnicidade e gênero e promover uma formação que impulsiona a justiça social. De natureza qualitativa, esta investigação apresenta as bases teóricas para o estudo destas temáticas, exemplifica ações pedagógicas nas quais estas questões são exploradas no contexto escolar e analisa as percepções de futuros professores de Língua Inglesa da Universidade Estadual de Londrina (via análise de conteúdo) atrelando-as à Base Nacional Comum Curricular e às Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Formação Inicial de Professores para a Educação Básica. Os dados foram selecionados a partir da participação em fórum de discussão realizado após participação em um webinar. Os resultados apontam que os futuros professores têm interesse em compreender as relações de poder que afetam suas práticas docentes e agir de forma a superar o racismo e o sexismo na sociedade através da educação escolar.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Identidade. Etnicidade. Gênero. Ensino de línguas estrangeiras.*

RESUMEN: *Las aulas de idiomas extranjeros pueden convertirse en terreno fértil para explorar cuestiones de identidad, etnicidad y género y promover una educación que impulse la justicia social. De carácter cualitativo, esta investigación presenta las bases teóricas para el estudio de estos temas, ejemplifica acciones pedagógicas en las que se exploran estas cuestiones en el contexto escolar y analiza las percepciones de los futuros profesores de Lengua Inglesa (a través del análisis de contenido) vinculándolas a la Base Curricular Común Nacional y Lineamientos Curriculares Nacionales para la Formación Inicial del Profesorado de Educación Básica. Los datos fueron seleccionados de la participación en un foro de discusión realizado después de participar en un seminario web. Los resultados indican que los futuros docentes están interesados en comprender las relaciones de poder que inciden en sus prácticas docentes y actuar para superar el racismo y el sexismo en la sociedad a través de la educación escolar.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Identidad. Etnia. Género. Enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras.*

Introduction

Considering that language is not a neutral element of cultures and is filled with meaning and ideology (VOLOSINOV, 1973), foreign language classes can become spaces for social awareness and fertile ground for debating the society we want to experience. The section on the English Language in the National Curriculum Base (BRASIL, 2018, p. 246, our translation) states that "learning the English language allows for the creation of new forms of engagement and participation of students in an increasingly globalized and pluralistic social world". The document also points out that:

> [...] the study of the English language can provide everyone with access to the linguistic knowledge necessary for engagement and participation, contributing to the **critical agency** of students and the exercise of **active citizenship**, as well as expanding opportunities for interaction and mobility, opening up new paths for knowledge construction and continuity in studies. This **formative character** places the learning of English within a perspective of linguistic education that is conscious and critical, in which the pedagogical and political dimensions are intrinsically linked (BRASIL, 2018, p. 246, emphasis added, our translation).

According to the Freirean critical pedagogy (FREIRE, 1986, 2001, 2005), essential practices should be considered in teacher education to stimulate the confrontation of all forms of social domination, to promote conditions for the emancipation of individuals, to create a sense of social justice, and consequently, to establish a democratic society. These proposals can be realized in the initial teacher education through transformative educational practices that break free from the rigid curriculum structures. To make this happen, future teachers should be engaged in activities that make sense and connect them in a participatory way to the local community.

Focusing on exploring critical themes in the initial teacher education of English Language teachers, the *Paraná Fala Inglês/*UEL project[5] organized the online event *Contemporary Challenges on Foreign Language Teaching*[6], n 2020, where future teachers could attend webinars, participate in presentations, and exchange experiences related to teaching practices. The webinar *Why talk about gender, race, ethnicity, and identity in English*

---

[5] The PFI/UEL is an extension project within the State University of Londrina, part of the state-wide Paraná Fala Idiomas project, which aims to promote the internationalization of education within universities. At UEL, the project offers courses in English for specific purposes, focusing on academic reading and writing in English, as well as preparation for international exams.

[6] Available at: https://pfiuel.wordpress.com/eventos-e-projetos-parana-fala-idiomas/eventos-projetos-pfi/projeto-challenges/. Accessed in: 10 jan. 2023.

language classes? Involved students from the UEL English Language who had previously read about the topcic[7], submitted questions to the speakers in advance, and later participated in an online discussion forum responding to the following question: "How can we (English teachers) incorporate these themes into our classrooms?"

This article aims to analyze the students' perceptions in the aforementioned discussion forum regarding gender, race, ethnicity, and identity in English language classes to think about future actions for training teachers who feel confident in exploring such content in their classrooms.

To this end, the study is organized as follows: first, we present the theoretical foundations on which we rely to study identity, ethnicity, gender, and education based on social justice. Next, we will present the methodological foundations for studies of this nature and analyze the data collected in relation to the theoretical references, linking them to the National Common Curriculum Base (from now on BNCC)[8] and the National Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education for Basic Education (hereinafter DCNs)[9]. Finally, we will present our final considerations.

Theoretical foundations for understanding identities through the analysis of social markers

In this literature review section, we will delve into the implications of bringing identity-related themes into the English language classroom, such as cultural diversity, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and social class. Similarly, we will explore examples of practices that can be developed to promote these topics in the school context to foster education based on social justice. Our starting point is the understanding that the school has the function of addressing the identity diversity of its students and, at the same time, promoting new perspectives. According to Teixeira and Ribeiro (2012, p. 197, our translation):

> It is well-known that the school is still a space of multiple differences and diversities, and the classroom is where a learner expands social contact and gradually builds, throughout the school stages: friendships, knowledge,

---

[7] Available at: https://pfiuel.files.wordpress.com/2020/09/challenges-1-material-complementar.pdf. Accessed in: 10 jan. 2023.
[8] Available at: http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br/images/BNCC_EI_EF_110518_versaofinal_site.pdf. Accessed in: 10 jan. 2023.
[9] Available at: http://portal.mec.gov.br/docman/dezembro-2019-pdf/135951-rcp002-19/file. Accessed in: 10 jan. 2023.

learning, and customs. From this perspective, the school is also formally responsible for knowledge construction, as society entrusts it with the formation of the individual. It is clear, therefore, that in this process, the role of the teacher is directly related to the construction of learning, as focusing on the learner's identities is, above all, adopting a suitable pedagogical and political stance.

In this educational scenario, foreign language classes serve as an incubator for discussing **identity issues** because they provide spaces for understanding how people live in other parts of the world, what their dilemmas and difficulties are, and for developing a critical perspective on social inequalities at different levels: social class, gender, sexuality, and race (MOITA LOPES, 2002).

It is the challenging task of the foreign language teacher to pay attention to the student's identity while also broadening their worldview, making them reflect on themselves and others. In turn, language learners are "no longer mere recipients but individuals in formation, capable of perceiving different cultures as a process of their identity formation" (TEIXEIRA; RIBEIRO, 2012, p. 198, our translation).

The National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC) states that English language classes should ensure that students develop specific competencies, including "identifying their place and that of others in a plurilingual and multicultural world, critically reflecting on how learning the English language contributes to individuals' integration into the globalized world, including in the context of the world of work" (BRASIL, 2018, p. 246, our translation).

How do we bring these identity issues into the English language classroom? We understand that the *Discovering your city*[10] project illustrates a proposal focusing on identity issues. The proposed activities lead the students to learn about the history of their city, the early settlers, the names of families that colonized it, the origin of the city's name, the date of its foundation, and other significant facts associated with the use of digital and physical resources that enable data collection for the project. Through information collection, technological resources are used to create media materials to disseminate all the knowledge acquired.

Regarding **ethnicity issues in language classes**, curricular strategies focusing on critical themes make the language more relatable to learners, making it possible to use the language to

---

[10] The project booklet can be accessed here.

redefine oppression through resistance (NASCIMENTO, 2019b). This potential, articulated to bring forth debates about race and ethnicity, can promote the critical expression of identities in and through language, enabling the overcoming and reevaluating of hegemonic forms of using a particular language by bringing it closer to everyday life (NASCIMENTO, 2019b).

From this critical perspective, for example, we can envision language teaching approached from a crucial racial perspective (FERREIRA, 2015) that involves the politicization of this issue in language education, using the signifier "race" to resist racist, homophobic, and misogynistic discourses in English language teaching. In general terms, this stance towards language highlights the political dimension of teaching practice, involving the reaffirmation or opposition to hegemonic discourses (LEFFA, 2001).

Melo (2015) discusses the role of race in the foreign language classroom, particularly in English language teaching, and points out that this space is also a place of transgression and reinvention of contemporary life, questioning and discussing issues related to race and racism. In this perspective, the author suggests that there is a traditional approach to language teaching and social practices. However, we do things with language, starting from our sexualized, racialized, and gendered bodies (MELO, 2015), so language becomes an enunciated action, marking bodies and social practices.

In this way, we can add to the debate the consideration that discourse production is strongly linked to enunciation and the body, to its historical limitations, so language constructs the naturalization of the marked and the unmarked, subjectively and objectively violent. More specifically, since the enunciation of discourses positions those who utter them in relation to their ontological projects, their locus of enunciation (NASCIMENTO, 2021), this perspective also allows us to see the relationship between language and power, which articulates the notion of violence in its different nuances.

Fanon (2008) points out that the confrontation between local ways of life and those of the colonizer is frequent, and the use of language in these contexts implies a process of displacement. According to the author, this is a confrontation that stems from the deprivation and alienation of colonized peoples from their original ways of relating to the world and their culture. Therefore, reflecting on these materializations of the coloniality of power through language, the definition of language invoked in this paradigm is its imagined community (ANDERSON, 1991 apud NASCIMENTO, 2019a, p. 12), based on their idealized identities and the fetish of perfection and performance derived from modern mentality. Considering the relationship between language, locus of enunciation, and power (NASCIMENTO, 2020), we

can see how these aspects are directed toward the maintenance of hegemonies and authoritarianism. Thus, we can assert that "language is, like every product or byproduct created by coloniality, a space for epistemicide" (NASCIMENTO, 2019a, p. 23, our translation).

Therefore, when addressing ethnicity, race, and racism in language education, we are indeed taking into account the debate concerning language, power, and social justice and how they interrelate in maintaining the hegemonies and privileges of modern capitalist life, which are based on racialization. In this perspective, Kubota and Lin (2006) point out that how we perceive race, ethnicity, and culture influences what we teach, how we teach, and, most importantly, how we understand our students. Thus, the language teaching environment encompasses a variety of contexts and histories that permeate it, serving as a contact zone between various groups influencing educational and linguistic policies that have racism as a structural part of their institutional inequities (KUBOTA; LIN, 2006).

Elucidatively, Ferreira, and Camargo (2013) discuss racism and language teaching, particularly the teaching tools, such as textbooks, questioning how social identities of race are represented in this tool, whether the issue is addressed, and how its representations contribute to the deconstruction or maintenance of racial privilege in Brazilian society. This debate also brings crucial points to the current discussion and the theoretical framework of this research because by inquiring about the idea of harmony among the different races that make up the Brazilian social context, the myth of racial democracy, and reinforcing the provisions of Law 10.639/2003 regarding the teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture in schools, Ferreira and Camargo (2013) situate the concept of race as socially and historically constructed.

How do we bring ethnicity issues into the English language classroom? We believe that the *Antiracist School Practices* project[11] illustrates a proposal of this nature. The material provides activities using digital tools that promote critical racial literacy and assist in combating racism and inequalities, promoting the appreciation of Afro identity and culture. Based on the National Curriculum Guidelines for Ethnic-Racial Relations Education and Law 10.639/2003, as well as the general competencies established by the BNCC and scholars of racial issues in the field of education, the project aims to provide tasks with challenging themes that require active student participation to educate them critically and reflectively about their social reality.

---

[11] The project booklet can be accessed here.

Similarly, the project *Disseminating Knowledge: Contributions of Black Scientists* [12] also presents content related to African, Afro-Brazilian, and Indigenous history and culture, which are mandatory themes in Basic Education (Law 10.639/2003), addressing issues related to racism, discrimination, social equality, the inclusion of Black individuals in society, Afro-Brazilian religion and culture, to be discussed in the classroom and worked on by teachers in all areas of knowledge, with the assistance of our multidisciplinary team, which also organizes annual events with cultural presentations, lectures by teachers from various academic backgrounds, and testimonials from community guests. The project aims to promote the theme of social and racial equity, and its overall objective is to produce and disseminate, by students through social media, short videos on the scientific contributions of Black figures from around the world, thereby increasing their visibility.

Regarding practical exercises for the classroom, Nascimento (2019a) discusses and proposes English language reading activities that address issues related to ethnicity and race, focusing on regional contexts and racism. These activities aim to promote educational situations that propose, locally and inclusively, positive engagement and the redefinition of notions in favor of resistance through language.

Regarding exploring **gender issues in foreign language classes**, it is essential to understand the concept of gender, which was created around the 1970s. It considers the categories of "man" and "woman" as social constructions, meaning that they are products of social reality and not derived from the anatomy of bodies. Gender, therefore, differs from biological sex and brings into the discussion the power relations that exist in categorizing individuals within society (SCOTT, 2017).

The school is a space where students with diverse gender identities coexist, and as mentioned earlier, English language classes provide new perspectives through which these students can engage and perceive themselves as part of a society that sometimes excludes what is different. Addressing gender and sexuality issues in the classroom can involve discussing topics related to the construction of social roles for men and women, as well as the domination of one group over another. It also means addressing identities that do not conform to the male/female binary.

---

[12] The project booklet can be accessed here.

Regarding how to bring these gender issues into the English language classroom, we believe the didactic unit *Thinking about Gender in the School Space* [13] illustrates a proposal of this nature. Aimed at working with high school students, the material aims to promote a study of diversity, focusing on gender from a socio-historical and conceptual perspective. The focus is on activities involving laws, decrees, films, research, and debates to encourage students to reflect on gender issues and their various implications in order to propagate ideas of humanization and respect for diversity.

We understand that bringing issues of identity, ethnicity, and gender into foreign language classrooms is a step along the long road to promoting an education that seeks to promote **social justice**. Bell *et al*. (1997) state that "education for social justice is not just about new content but a radical change in the process as well" (1997, p. 299, our translation). Therefore, as teachers, we must consider the means by which we make the pedagogical process more democratic and emancipatory for our students, thinking not only about the content but also about the ways in which we present it. When exemplifying possible approaches for education aimed at social justice, Bell *et al.* (1997, p. 302) assert that our role is to think about who the students are that we imagine as we plan to teach and who we might be leaving out.

Understanding our position as teachers, who perpetuate (or not) limiting views of identity, ethnicity, and gender, is essential to improving teaching and learning processes to promote equity. Besides seeking to understand who our students are and where they come from, we need to ask these same questions about ourselves. As Bell *et al*. state:

> We, as instructors, are, in many ways, texts for our students. The identity of our social group, behavior in the classroom, and openness about our learning process can be significant and challenging aspects of course content. Who we are affects students' perception of the issues we raise. In a way, we are both the messenger and the message (BELL *et al*., 1997, p. 307, our translation).

After delving into the implications of bringing social justice-promoting themes into the English language classroom and exploring examples of practices that can be developed in the school context, we move on to elucidate the methodological foundations for studies on identity issues.

---

[13] Proposed didactic unit submitted to the *Desenvolvimento Educacional Program of the state of Paraná* in 2016 - PDE CADERNOS.

Methodological Foundations for Studies on Identity, Ethnicity, and Gender

As a formal procedure that involves reflective thinking, research methodologically requires the researcher to approach the subject matter from a scientific and constitutive perspective, in the sense of deepening knowledge about a particular phenomenon, situation, or whatever is being studied (LAKATOS; MARCONI, 2003). Therefore, its development involves everything from projecting possible research methods to its execution and the potential insights and assertions that can be derived from this process. This research is qualitative in nature (based on the understanding and interpretation of the meanings of actions and the relationship of non-quantifiable facts) and is grounded in content analysis (GIL, 2008).

As mentioned earlier, this work focuses on analyzing the representations of the students in a forum that occurred after the webinar titled: *Why discuss gender, race, ethnicity, and identity in English language classes?* Hosted by the PFI/UEL. The online discussion forum involved third and fourth-year students in the English Language Teaching program enrolled in Supervised Internship during the second semester of 2020. After participating in the webinar and having a selection of theoretical texts on gender, race, ethnicity, and the school context, students were required to provide comments on the forum, responding to the following question: *How can we (English teachers) incorporate these themes into our classrooms?*

When analyzing the contributions of prospective teachers in the mentioned online discussion forum, the following assertions were identified[14]: 1) there are specific pedagogical practices that can promote the integration of these themes in the school context, 2) there are possible obstacles and barriers that may arise in different school settings, and 3) it is crucial for teachers to seek new knowledge about these themes and oppose neutrality. These themes will be discussed in the next section of this work and will serve as a guide for the analyses we intend to develop.

---

[14] Propositions that are assumed to be true regardless of their content, a statement or proposition made with great certainty, assertive.

The perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding identity, ethnicity, and gender in English language classes

When responding to the question of how English teachers could incorporate themes like gender, race, and ethnicity into the classroom, the students first pointed to **pedagogical practices** that involved the use of videos/films (excerpts 01, 02, and 10), music (excerpts 01, 02, 03, and 10), poems (excerpt 01), debates (excerpts 01, 03, and 04), texts (excerpt 02), games (excerpt 10), and TV series (excerpt 10). One participant suggested the use of social media and questions about their followers (excerpt 05). The development and implementation of didactic sequences (excerpt 06), multimodal proposals (excerpt 07), the choice of non-stereotypical materials (excerpts 08 and 09), creating spaces for sharing experiences (excerpt 08), awareness of sexist language (excerpts 09 and 10), and the opportunity for paradigm shifts (excerpt 11) also appeared in the contributions of the students in the forum, as can be seen in the following table:

Table 1 – Pedagogical practices for the integration of gender, race, and ethnicity themes in English language classes

Excerpt 01	To promote diversity in the classroom, I would bring materials such as **movies, songs, and poems**. I would encourage students to <u>debate</u> identity, ethnicity, and gender issues in groups to raise awareness.
Excerpt 02	We could include **texts, videos, songs, and content in general**, made by people from different genders and races. This way, students will be able to get used to diversity and can become more open-minded individuals.
Excerpt 03	We could insert these themes in the classroom through **songs** or movies that address diversity to make the students <u>analyze</u> and <u>reflect</u> on it. We could also instigate them to <u>question</u> themselves about their views of these themes and **debate** them so they could all express their opinions and learn with the others.
Excerpt 04	Since English is a foreign language, teachers could use these topics in an **oral production class**, for example. Starting with some questions to understand if they are familiar with them is a good option. A <u>debate</u> could be done with their ideas.
Excerpt 05	One possibility to approach any of these themes would be to <u>raise</u> students' <u>awareness</u> of their context. For example, ask them who are the people they follow on **social media** (Instagram, YouTube, etc) and how many of them are women/non-white/LGBT+. Then, to work on the results (ask why someone does not follow any black creator, does not know any LGBT+, or does not follow any women who talk about video games), and ask why. Then, use it to develop activities.
Excerpt 06	Considering what was said on the webinar, one way these themes can be inserted into our classroom is through **didactic sequences** that focus on a specific topic. The didactic sequence will explore the context of the particular vocabulary and help the students <u>develop a critical view</u> of the theme. For all this to happen, we also have to <u>analyze</u> the context that we are inserted in so that we can provide activities that will fit this specific context.

Excerpt 07	During the webinar, the necessity of working with **critical multiliteracies** in the classrooms became apparent. The use of **old** advertising**, movies, and journals** could be used to <u>develop critical thinking</u> on women's position in society and develop a particular grammar topic by <u>analyzing</u> those materials.
Excerpt 08	The teacher can use **materials** whose content does not bring a stereotyped vision of the world that brings diversity to familiarize students with and in contact with. Think of activities that <u>raise awareness</u> among students about diversity and its importance by working with actions that lead to questioning students about the society in which they live, <u>enabling reflection and promoting transformation</u>. Promote **a space for sharing experiences** related to diversity issues to make students feel accepted and create awareness that this happens.
Excerpt 09	When working with racism in class, a simple way to start is by showing racist expressions and language and making them question why they talk like that. This kind of activity fits in all themes of the webinar we can use these to talk about **sexist language** and **homophobia**. One experiment I would like to try in class is analyzing their material so they can also <u>have a critical view</u> of who is being represented if it brings diversity, and so on. We can also work with different (textual) genres, for example, news, to see how they portray black people.
Excerpt 10	For teenagers, we could explore themes with **elements of pop culture** that the students like, such as **series, movies, songs, games**, etc. In an activity, we could ask them to **identify what words, expressions, or visual** components contribute to <u>reinforcing</u> and <u>breaking</u> stereotypes. We could also take a step further and discuss **linguistic aspects** around the importance of using inclusive or neutral language and ensure there is room for practice.
Excerpt 11	A way to work with "body parts" and bring up feminism and patterns would be showing students images of women's body parts with hair, such as legs and armpits, and different types of bodies, such as fat and skinny women. It would be an excellent way to raise the possibility of <u>changing</u> the skinny hairless women <u>pattern</u> in students.

Source: Discussion forum / Google Classroom (our emphasis)

In line with the BNCC (Brazilian National Common Core), the representations of future teachers in the forum extracts lead us to **teach proposals based on multiliteracies** (*movies, songs, poems, games, series, advertisements, elements of pop culture, social media*) rooted in the social practices of the digital world in which knowing the English language enhances "the possibilities of participation and circulation, bringing together and intertwining different semiotics and languages (verbal, visual, bodily, audiovisual) in a continuous process of contextualized, dialogical, and ideological signification" (BRASIL, 2018, p. 242, our translation).

In turn, considering the initial training process of the forum participants, we can see the development of specific competencies in the dimension of professional practice as outlined in the DCNs (National Common Core Guidelines), such as "planning teaching actions that result

in effective learning" and "conducting pedagogical practices of knowledge objects, competencies, and skills" (BRASIL, 2019, p. 2, our translation).

Some of the suggestions proposed by the forum participants align with a critical analysis of the teaching materials used in schools. They aim to understand who is represented in the materials, who is left out, and why these omissions occur (excerpts 07 and 09). Questioning the means through which a foreign language is taught - the teaching materials, the textbook, music, and films - is an important starting point for building a critical social perspective for both teacher trainees and their students.

Excerpt 11, for instance, reflects the ideas presented by Bell *et al.* (1997) regarding how teachers consider their students when thinking about teaching materials or lesson plans. It prompts us to ponder which students are in our thoughts and which are left behind. By suggesting teaching body parts in English with non-stereotyped bodies (*women's body parts with hair, such as legs and armpits, and different types of bodies, such as fat and skinny women*), we can address issues that go beyond just vocabulary related to the body and delve into how students deal with their bodies.

Thus, the suggestions made by teacher trainees, in dialogue with the texts and ideas presented in the webinar, demonstrate how they understand the importance of incorporating issues of identity, ethnicity, and gender into their classes. Moreover, these excerpts also reveal a deep-seated critical perspective already present in their pedagogical practices, underscoring the importance of creating a space for dialogue, such as the discussion forum, where experiences can be shared and training can be fruitful for the students. Next, we will see some possible difficulties they encountered in bringing these issues into their classrooms.

Similarly, when considering the teaching circumstances that allow these topics to be problematized, the students' forum contributions pointed to possible **obstacles and challenges when introducing such issues into the school environment**. As we can see in the table below (Table 2), the students noted the need for caution when bringing up these topics in educational contexts and even checking for approval from the school management team (excerpts 12, 14, and 15). Likewise, they emphasized the need to consider the different realities and specificities of the students (excerpts 13 and 15). On the subject of obstacles, the comments indicated that the school curriculum could often be too "restrictive" to encompass these topics and content (excerpt 16) and emphasized that these themes may not be welcomed in more conservative contexts (excerpts 17, 18, and 19). Regarding teachers, they might feel afraid due to possible reactions from students and educational administrators (excerpt 20).

Table 2 – Blocks and Obstacles to the Inclusion of Gender, Race, and Ethnicity Themes in English Language Classes.

Excerpt 12	Discussing these topics must be done with **much care**, mainly because it affects many people.
Excerpt 13	First, we could insert these themes by getting to know our students more deeply by **understanding their realities and particularities**. From that, it's possible to bring into the classes texts, videos, news reports, and other genres that are related to these themes and that are able to begin a discussion, thus promoting critical thinking.
Excerpt 14	First, let us check if the school's environment **accepts this approach** (e.g. if the school does not have a conservative philosophy); then, consulting the didactic material (book) the class works with, most of these materials bring these aspects and therefore could be input. Another approach would be talking with the class to know their point of view regarding those topics, it is an excellent way to start.
Excerpt 15	This forum was very informative, as I also doubted how I, as an English teacher, would address social issues, such as gender issues, racism, and feminism, in the classroom. In summarizing everything that has been said, it is essential to take into account and **evaluate the context** you are in, and it is also very necessary for the teacher to know, study, and have **knowledge** about these topics.
Excerpt 16	Most teaching contexts require some **tight calendar**, which gives us little room for a more fluid approach to content. Even in these contexts, however, it is possible to **adequate** activities and discussions according to these themes proposed.
Excerpt 17	In my view, discussing these themes in a foreign language class is super valid. I believe that in public schools, the teacher can go deeper talking about identity, ethnicity, and gender in class despite the flexibility in this context. However, in **a private context**, the teacher should pay more attention to the content despite the **conservative system** in the school community.
Excerpt 18	Each topic can be worked out according to the age of the students and also depending on the school we are going to address. For example, some institutions (I will not name names so as not to defame) **do not accept** talking about anything that can be considered controversial, such as gender, football, or religion. In places that are possible, it is feasible to talk about these subjects because in our daily lives, I, as a teacher, would approach them in a very creative way, according to the year they are in, asking for some warm-up, to know if they already know the subject, etc.
Excerpt 19	All the themes presented in the webinar were relevant and inspired me to work with gender ideology, racial literacy, and others. However, when thinking about working with these topics, I am concerned **if the school will accept** these activities or if parents will complain about them, accusing me of forcing my personal beliefs on students.
Excerpt 20	We could insert these themes gradually. It is essential to discuss these themes, and we should integrate them into our classrooms. Many **teachers are afraid** to talk about it because they do not know what the school will do or the student's reaction. However, it is something that we should be prepared for because these themes are important.

Source: Discussion forum / Google Classroom (our emphasis)

The DCNs (National Curricular Guidelines) point out, as a specific competence in the dimension of professional knowledge, "recognizing the life contexts of students" and "knowing the structure and governance of educational systems" (BRASIL, 2019, p. 2, our translation). As indicated by the students in the forum, it is imperative to exercise caution when discussing identity issues in the classroom. "Caution" here means taking into account the specificities of the students and the context in which they live so that this critical discussion is not taken lightly and does not alienate these students from the conversation rather than bringing them closer.

In addition, many comments in the forum are related to the fear of teacher trainees in discussing these issues within more traditional educational systems and, thus, conflicting with the school and the community. This is a significant challenge in the teaching profession, and no simple answers exist. It is crucial to have a dialogue, both with students and with the school and the community, and to gradually introduce these discussions aligned with the curriculum, as mentioned in the forum (excerpt 20). The most important thing is not to let these issues be kept away from students out of fear of retaliation, which is currently a reality for many teacher trainees.

The participation of the students in the forum also points to the **role of the teacher** as someone who seeks new knowledge on the subject (excerpt 21), as a promoter of critical practices with respectful stances (excerpt 22), an encourager of new perspectives (excerpt 23), and a reviser of misconceptions (excerpt 24), as can be seen in table 03 below.

Table 3 – The role of the teacher in the integration of gender, race, and ethnicity themes in English language classes

Excerpt 21	I need to **know more** about the subjects to introduce them in any way in a classroom. That would be the first step.
Excerpt 22	In my own experience, I once had a student who told me, "Oh, I have nothing against a person who chooses to be gay," and I **couldn't be neutral** in that; after many discussions and debates, this student understood that nobody chooses their sexual orientations and that it is essential to be **respectful** when addressing these themes.
Excerpt 23	We, as teachers, must challenge the student's view of what is 'right' and 'wrong'. We must bring materials and topics for discussion related to identity, ethnicity, and gender so they can **think outside their boxes**, reflecting and considering **new points of view**.
Excerpt 24	First, we must recognize how important it is to talk about these topics. These topics should be brought up through dialogues! The dialogues between students and teachers should involve basic concepts, and students' thoughts about this should also be exposed. Thus, the **wrong ideas could be undone**.

Source: Discussion forum / Google Classroom (our emphasis)

Again, considering the initial training process of the forum participants, the DCNs point to specific competencies within the dimension of professional engagement that future teachers should commit to for their professional development (BRASIL, 2019, p. 19, our translation) in developing the following skills:

> [...] 3.1.1 Build a professional plan using different resources, based on self-assessment, in which one can identify potentials, interests, needs, strategies, and goals to achieve their objectives and fulfillment as an education professional. 3.1.2 Engage in practices and processes for developing personal, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills necessary to self-develop and effectively propose the development of competencies and comprehensive education for students. [...] 3.1.4 Engage in studies and research on school education issues, in all its stages and modalities, and in the search for solutions that contribute to improving the quality of student learning, meeting the needs of their comprehensive development (BRASIL, 2019, p. 19, our translation).

In this data analysis section, we found students' interest in developing critical educational practices, the lack of opportunities to encounter non-traditional forms of language teaching, and the difficulty in discussing issues of race, gender, and identity within a traditional educational context. Considering that pedagogical practice involves teachers, students, schools, and communities, some teachers' fears in training revolve around the difficulties of developing these topics in an open, dialogical, and critical manner.

Discussing these results and following the insights of Pennycook and Makoni (2012), we can observe the need to reinvent the paradigms that limit linguistic forms and identities to

reframe educational practices in favor of equity and social justice. As mentioned earlier, language use strongly influences the effects of creating and accentuating social differences, such as intellectual and political contexts that contribute to conceptualizations of language that define its interlocutors and their specific identities, almost always linked to whiteness.

Furthermore, language teaching in the contemporary context encompasses linguistic practices and the educational context's social, cultural, and historical aspects. Therefore, the pedagogical approach should promote equal participation from different spheres of society (BELL, 2007), and facilitate discussions about the colonizing part of language and the presence of internalized dominant values within the educational context (NASCIMENTO, 2019a).

For identity issues constituted by social markers to become present in the classes of future English language teachers, they must be experienced during their initial training process. In this regard, the curriculum for professional development should focus on promoting the general competencies presented in the DCNs (BRASIL, 2019, p. 13):

> [...] 8. Know oneself, appreciate oneself, and take care of one's physical and emotional health, understanding oneself in human diversity, recognizing one's own emotions and those of others, with self-criticism and the ability to deal with them, developing self-knowledge and self-care in students. 9. Exercise empathy, dialogue, conflict resolution, and cooperation, respecting oneself and promoting respect for others and human rights, with the welcoming and appreciation of the diversity of individuals and social groups, their knowledge, identities, cultures, and potential, without prejudice of any kind, to promote a collaborative environment in learning places. 10. Act and encourage, personally and collectively, with autonomy, responsibility, flexibility, resilience, and openness to different pedagogical opinions and conceptions, making decisions based on ethical, democratic, inclusive, sustainable, and solidarity principles so that the learning environment can reflect these values (BRASIL, 2019, p. 13, our translation).

In this section, we analyzed the participation of teachers in training in the mentioned discussion forum and identified their perceptions regarding the existence of specific pedagogical practices that can promote the inclusion of social themes, even in the face of potential obstacles and hindrances from the educational system. Similarly, we highlighted the role of the teacher in seeking new knowledge about the themes and their opposition to neutrality. In the following section, we will present our final considerations.

Final considerations

Teaching practice aimed at promoting social justice is a process that involves teachers, students, schools, and society in a relationship of mutual learning and construction. The participants in this research demonstrated awareness that, as future educators, they must consider their pedagogical practices in the context of their roles as citizens. This is because the classroom is not isolated from society, and our identity cannot be dissociated from our identity as teachers.

The challenge of incorporating issues related to race, ethnicity, and gender into the foreign language classroom sparked the interest of students majoring in English. Their contributions to the discussion forum lean towards a non-neutral stance in the school environment. When considering teachers as members of a social group, it is worthwhile to discuss how to enhance dialogue on these topics within the classroom, throughout the entire school, and in the community where the school is situated.

In summary, this article revealed the existence of some challenges related to teacher training conditions and their potential. These difficulties are closely linked to the maintenance, erasure, critique, or reconstruction of imaginaries of subservience and coloniality, specifically those related to racism, sexism, and gender bias in society. The interest of the participating teachers in training, who took part in the webinar and the promoted forum, was genuine concerning these challenges in their teacher training process. This, in turn, enables them to question their stance as future educators, seeking to understand the power relations that impact their teaching practices.

REFERENCES

BELL, L. A. *et al.* Knowing ourselves as instructors. *In:* ADAMS, M., BELL, L. A., GRIFFIN, P (org.). **Teaching for diversity and social justice.** New York: Routledge, 1997.

BELL, L. A. Theoretical foundations for social justice education. *In:* ADAMS, M.; BELL, L. A.; GRIFFIN, P. (ed.). **Teaching for diversity and social justice**. 2. ed. Nova York: Taylor and Francis, 2007.

BRASIL. Ministério da Educação. **Base Nacional Comum Curricular**. Brasília, DF: MEC, 2018.

BRASIL. Resolução CNE/CP 2, de 20 de dezembro de 2019. Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Formação Inicial de Professores para a Educação Básica e Base Nacional

Comum para a Formação Inicial de Professores da Educação Básica. **Diário Oficial da União**: seção 1, Brasília, DF, p. 46-49, 20 dez.

FANON, F. **Pele negra, máscaras brancas**. Salvador: EdUFBA, 2008.

FERREIRA, A. J.; CAMARGO, M. O racismo cordial no livro didático de língua inglesa aprovado pelo PNLD. **Revista da ABPN**, v. 6, n. 12, 2013. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263713948_Racismo_Cordial_No_Livro_De_Lingu a_Inglesa_Aprovado_Pelo_PNLD_Cordial_Racism_in_English_as_a_foreign_Language_Tex tbook_Approved_By_The_PNLD. Accessed in: 27 mar. 2023.

FERREIRA, A. J. **Letramento racial crítico através de narrativas autobiográficas:** com atividades reflexivas. 1. ed. Ponta Grossa, PR: Estúdio Texto, 2015. v. 1.

FREIRE, P. **Educação como prática da liberdade**. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1985.

FREIRE, P. **Pedagogia do Oprimido**. 11. ed. Editora Paz e Terra. Rio de Janeiro, 2001.

FREIRE, P. **Pedagogia da autonomia:** saberes necessários a prática educativa. São Paulo: Paz e Terra. 2005.

GIL, A. C. **Métodos e técnicas de pesquisa social**. 6. ed. São Paulo: Atlas, 2008.

KUBOTA, R.; LIN, A. Race and TESOL: introduction to concepts and theories. **TESOL Quarterly**, n. 40, v. 3, p. 471–493, 2006 Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40264540. Accessed in: 27 mar. 2023.

LEFFA, V. J. Aspectos políticos da formação do professor de línguas estrangeiras. *In:* LEFFA, V. J. (org.). **O professor de língua estrangeira**: construindo a profissão. Pelotas, RS, v. 1, p. 333-355. 2001. Available at: http://www.leffa.pro.br/textos/trabalhos/formacao.pdf. Accessed in: 27 mar. 2023.

MARCONI, M.; LAKATOS, E. **Fundamentos de metodologia científica**. 5. ed. São Paulo: Atlas, 2003.

MELO, G. O lugar da raça na sala de aula de Inglês. **Revista da ABPN**, v. 7, n. 17, jul./out. 2015, p. 65-81. Available at :https://www.academia.edu/17576222/O_LUGAR_DA_RA%C3%87A_NA_SALA_DE_AU LA_DE_INGL%C3%8AS. Accessed in: 27 Mar. 2023.

MOITA LOPES, L. P**. Identidades Fragmentadas:** a construção discursiva de raça, gênero e sexualidade em sala de aula. Campinas, SP: Mercado de Letras, 2002.

NASCIMENTO, G. Ethnicity and race in English language activities at a university in Bahia. **Cadernos de Pesquisa**, São Paulo, v. 49, n. 173, p. 208-224, jul./set. 2019a. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336628685_ETHNICITY_AND_RACE_IN_ENGL ISH_LANGUAGE_ACTIVITIES_AT_A_UNIVERSITY_IN_BAHIA. Accessed in: 27 Mar. 2023.

NASCIMENTO, G. **Racismo linguístico:** os subterrâneos da linguagem e do racismo. Letramento, Belo Horizonte, 2019b.

NASCIMENTO, G. O negro-tema na linguística: rumo a uma descolonização do racialismo e do culturalismo racialista nos estudos da linguagem. **Polifonia**, Cuiabá, v. 27, n. 46, p. 01-235, abr./jun. 2020. Available at: https://periodicoscientificos.ufmt.br/ojs/index.php/polifonia/article/view/9560. Accessed in: 27 mar. 2023.

NASCIMENTO, G. Entre o lócus de enunciação e o lugar de fala: marcar o não-marcado e trazer o corpo de volta na linguagem. **Trabalhos em Linguística Aplicada**, v. 60, p. 58-68, 2021. Available at: https://www.scielo.br/j/tla/a/r7rQrXcSvgQFTx3WNft4Rff/. Accessed in: 27 Mar. 2023.

PENNYCOOK, A.; MAKONI, S. Disinventing multilingualims: from monological multilingualism to multilanguage francas. **The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism**, 2012.

SCOTT, J. Gênero: uma categoria útil de análise histórica. **Educação & Realidade**, v. 20, n. 2, 2017. Available at: https://seer.ufrgs.br/index.php/educacaoerealidade/article/view/71721. Accessed in: 27 mar. 2023.

TEIXEIRA, C. S.; RIBEIRO, M. D. A. Ensino de língua estrangeira: concepções de língua, cultura e identidade no contexto ensino/aprendizagem. **Linha D'Água**, v. 25, n. 1, p. 183-201, 2012. DOI: 10.11606/issn.2236-4242.v25i1p183-201. Available at: https://www.revistas.usp.br/linhadagua/article/view/37372. Accessed in: 27 Mar. 2023.

VOLOSÍNOV, V. N. **Marxism and the philosophy of language**. New York: Seminar, 1973.

CRediT Author Statement

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.