

<https://doi.org/10.1590/198053146287>

ETHNICITY AND RACE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES AT A UNIVERSITY IN BAHIA

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Abstract

English Language Teaching in Brazil has been challenged by the emerging universities resulted from the presidency terms of Lula and Dilma. In our case, the Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia is one of the last universities to be founded in a black-majority state. In this paper, I discuss ethnicity and race at play in the context of reading activities during three courses taught in one year-period whereby activities concerning regional context and encouraging discussion on racism were used to employ a more inclusive methodology in order to engage black students. The results point out a positive engagement by the students if they have the inclusion of their own identities.

LANGUAGE TEACHING • RACE • ETHNICITIES • ENGLISH

ETNICIDADE E RAÇA EM ATIVIDADES DE LÍNGUA INGLESA EM UMA UNIVERSIDADE NA BAHIA

Resumo

O ensino de inglês no Brasil tem sido desafiado pelas novas universidades, resultado dos governos de Lula e Dilma. A Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia é uma das últimas fundadas no país, tendo sido construída em um estado de maioria negra. Neste artigo, discuto etnicidade e raça no contexto das atividades de leitura em língua inglesa em três disciplinas ministradas durante um ano, em que o foco no contexto regional e na discussão sobre o racismo foi usado para empregar uma metodologia mais inclusiva para envolver os estudantes negros. Os resultados apontam um engajamento positivo dos estudantes nas aulas se eles conseguirem ter inclusão de suas próprias identidades no programa.

ENSINO DE LÍNGUAS • RAÇA • ETNIAS • INGLÊS

ETHNICITÉ ET RACE DANS LE CADRE D'ACTIVITÉS EN LANGUE ANGLAISE DANS UNE UNIVERSITÉ À BAHIA

Résumé

L'enseignement de l'anglais au Brésil a été remis en question par les nouvelles universités créées à l'époque des gouvernements Lula et Dilma. L'Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia dans un État à majorité noire est l'une des dernières à avoir été fondées dans le pays. L'objectif de cet article est de discuter les questions d'ethnicité et de race, abordées dans le cadre d'activités de lecture en langue anglaise dans trois disciplines offertes au cours d'une année académique. Le contexte régional et la discussion sur le racisme ont été mis en avant, afin d'élaborer une méthodologie plus inclusive visant à impliquer les étudiants noirs. Les résultats montrent l'engagement positif des étudiants en classe si leurs propres identités sont intégrées au programme.

ENSEIGNEMENT DES LANGUES • RACE • ETHNIES • ANGLAIS

ETNICIDAD Y RAZA EN ACTIVIDADES DE LENGUA INGLESA EN UNA UNIVERSIDAD EN BAHÍA

Resumen

La enseñanza del inglés en Brasil ha sido desafiada por las nuevas universidades, resultado de los gobiernos de Lula y Dilma. La Universidad Federal do Sul da Bahia es una de las últimas fundadas en el país, construida en un estado de mayoría negra. En este artículo, analizo el origen étnico y la raza en el contexto de las actividades de lectura en inglés en tres materias impartidas durante un año, donde se utilizó el enfoque regional y la discusión sobre el racismo para emplear una metodología más inclusiva que involucra a los estudiantes negros. Los resultados muestran una participación positiva de los estudiantes en la clase siempre que puedan incluir sus propias identidades en el programa.

ENSEÑANZA DE IDIOMAS • RAZA • ETNIAS • INGLES

FIRST WORDS

MUCH ABOUT ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE (ESP) (CELANI, 1998; HUTCHINSON; WATERS, 1994; GÓRSKA-PORĘCKA, 2013) has been said in English language teaching (ELT) in the world, including issues related to reading in educational contexts.

In this respect, the emerging universities in Brazil, established during the administrations of former presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, entailed new ELT practices because black and indigenous students have become increasingly frequent in English classrooms in academic contexts, which brought new demands. Thus, these new identities represented in the universities also brought some challenges to educators, policymakers and applied linguists.

Among the main concerns of the administrations above was the creation of suitable educational conditions for black and indigenous students who passed the admission test and entered universities as an opportunity to overcome inequalities inherited from colonialism. Further, universities have changed not only because of students' new racial profile but also because they were now seeking to provide students with social support and funds.¹

¹ Here, I refer to support from the federal government.

Although universities' curricula have been discussed over the years, they have failed to keep up with these social changes. Particularly in ELT, some discussions in Applied Linguistics were conducted as an interplay of social identities and curriculum (FERREIRA, 2014; TÍLIO, 2010; NASCIMENTO, 2016).

In the context of southern Bahia, many black and indigenous students enrolled in university majors and programs and began to attend ELT courses because of curricular requirements that involved English classes in order to attain a degree. Accordingly, in the specific context of the Federal University of South Bahia (UFSB), a university which was designed to be an affirmative action itself, the curriculum explains the importance of ELT as a key element for students progress. In addition, the identity of ELT, which, as I have mentioned, is undergoing a social change in Brazil (NASCIMENTO, 2014), has been conducted in the institution so as to provide adequate reading and writing skills in English as core competencies for students in their early contact with the university. This said, the curriculum defined Oral English Communication as the first course so as to stimulate students to practice oral comprehension in the target language, and later reading and writing comprehension courses so that students can interact with texts in English from basic to intermediate level.

These students usually come from public schools and most often from precarious educational contexts, which resulted in some difficulties in the classroom and new demands for needs analysis² in ELT.

In other words, the context of southern Bahia's educational precariousness arises from reported misuse of public policies, which led to a disregard of these local realities marked by ethnicity and race. In this respect, black and indigenous peoples are the majority of the population in southern Bahia.

In this paper I will call into question the debate over the realities of emerging black and indigenous identities in ELT classes in southern Bahia by discussing the way activities of a syllabus with ethnic-conscious objectives were performed by black and indigenous students concerning their ethnic identities. Considering these aims, I collected data from three ELT courses I taught at the UFSB.

For this study, I build on the discussion about English for Specific Purpose (ESP), by focusing on the point of the analysis of students' needs and their processes of initial signification, in addition to building on theorization from area of Applied Linguistics based on racism and racialization theories. I stress this concept in an attempt to establish the perspectives of race and ethnicity as signs of resistance against inequalities both in second language education and in Applied Linguistics.

² According to in Applied Linguistics and English for Specific Purpose (ESP), needs analysis refers to an analysis of the needs in the process of learning a language when it comes to setting the starting strategy and defining the specific purpose of an ELT course (HUTCHINSON; WATERS, 1994).

ESP FOR NEEDS ANALYSIS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Applied Linguistics and neoliberalism have emerged during the same time in history (the period after World War II), from the economic foundations inherited from social changes arising from globalization in the West. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1994), the expansion of commerce and technology has encouraged the rise of English language to handle these capitalist demands:

These ideas married up naturally with the development of English courses for specific groups of learners. The idea was simple: if language varies from one situation of use to another, it should be possible to determine the features of specific situations and then make these features the basis of the learner's course. (HUTCHINSON; WATERS, 1994, p. 7)

So, the rise of English as a *Lingua Franca* has been developed as a project at the core of the US Department of State and, as a consequence, funds were allocated to the development of new methods in Second Language Acquisition (ALMEIDA FILHO, 2005). Whereas ELT's status rose in an effort to provide learning for speakers of other languages (TESOL), I argue that Applied Linguistics arose as the field responsible for its scientific status. This status will be situated within both neocolonialism and the neoliberal policies that have taken control over black and indigenous peoples since formal colonial times, in a process that Robert Philipson (1992) termed *linguistic imperialism*. Kubota (2004) sheds lights on this in her criticism by linking Applied Linguistics to the so-called liberal multiculturalism in the United States and Canada. She says that neoliberalism is present in language teaching and it is responsible for giving immigrants in the United States the most inequitable contexts because of their purported status of second class citizens.

One of the major voices in ESP in Brazil, Celani (1998) developed her studies within the umbrella developed by Paulo Freire and his literature in literacy and popular education. Directing her analysis more broadly to the contexts of ESP, she affirms that a distinct focus must be used with each real need emerging from each ELT classroom in what she calls "purpose".

It is worth noting that Celani criticizes the way needs analysis (as a teaching methodology) can be limited solely to a certain skill in order to enhance ELT, with *specific* meaning a specific skill and not a specific purpose. In doing so, she has collected data for research which demonstrated that reading was the only skill used in the universities involved in the ESP national project under her coordination at the time:

In the initial needs analysis survey, it was found that of the twenty universities visited, in only two there were activities involving the spoken language, and this only in two specific courses at post-graduate level which were being taught by

foreign lecturers. Consistent with ESP practice, a programme focusing on the development of reading skills was set as a priority for the Project. (CELANI, 2008, p. 414)

Thus, Celani (1998, 2008) does not seem to be limited to a dichotomy of whether we must focus on speaking as a skill in ELT classes or not, but rather that needs analysis is necessary in order to comprehend and construct the English meaning in specific contexts. In her remarks, she considers many different steps for assessing it, without limitations and actually considering needs analysis as relevant to effective learning.

Thus, since her approach is informed by a Freirean framework, Celani (2008) recommends for teachers to carefully analyze students' previous interests, their basic competencies, their previous knowledge, and also the stimuli to speech that can help them develop individual strategies.

I consider this a remarkable primary approach to ESP for ensuring the pursuit I primarily develop here of needs analysis performed towards social change, in which indigenous and black people can be seen as a part of the syllabus and also part of daily ELT activities.

RACE AND ETHNICITY AND IDENTITIES IN LANGUAGE

The theorization of spoken language as interaction has arisen mostly from Bakhtin's studies (VOLOSÍNOV, 1973) which viewed the relationship between language and social injustices through Marxist lens.

I address language here as linked to social injustices because injustices often seem to materialize in language, with the use of language ideologies, myths and dominance repertoire. Thus, the black theorist Frantz Fanon chose language as his first concern, as follows:

To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization. Since the situation is not one-way only, the statement of it should reflect the fact. Here the reader is asked to concede certain points that, however unacceptable they may seem in the beginning, will find the measure of their validity in the facts. (FANON, 2008, p. 8)

In a broader sense, Fanon (2008) further considers that black people represent their own identities in language mainly by reproducing patterns of colonizers' language while trying to escape their own original identities as way of surviving through longstanding coloniality. In short, I conclude that language is not performed externally to power, but within power's own composition:

The progression of one type of imperialist control to another parallels the way power can be exerted by means of sticks (impositional force), carrots (bargaining), and ideas (persuasion). Language is the primary means for communicating ideas. Therefore an increased linguistic penetration of the Periphery is essential for completing the move away from crude means, the sticks of colonial times, and even the core discreet means of the neo-colonialist phase of asymmetrical bargaining, to neo-neo-colonialist control by means of ideas. (PHILIPSON, 1992, p. 53)

Thus, here I dwell on the position of ELT as linked to policies of coloniality and imperialism used to take control over ex-colonies through language. Thus, English language has to do with coloniality and power, rather than simply with a social injustice:

It seems to me, having been involved for many years with teaching English as a so-called second or foreign language, that there are deep and indissoluble links between the practices, theories, and contexts of ELT and the history of colonialism. Such connections, I want to suggest, run far deeper than drawing parallels between the current global expansion of English and the colonial expansion that preceded it. Rather, I want to argue that ELT theories and practices that emanate from the former colonial powers still carry the traces of those colonial histories both because of the long history of direct connections between ELT and colonialism and because such theories and practices derive from broader European cultures and ideologies that themselves are products of colonialism. In a sense, then, ELT is a product of colonialism not just because it is colonialism that produced the initial conditions for the global spread of English but because it was colonialism that produced many of the ways of thinking and behaving that are still part of Western cultures. European/Western culture not only produced colonialism but was also produced by it; ELT not only rode on the back of colonialism to the distant corners of the Empire but was also in turn produced by that voyage. (PENNYCOOK, 2002, p. 19)

In this respect, race and language are mutually connected in their relationship with colonial power. Even in academic theory, whenever one is tempted to affirm the neutrality of knowledge, that is where epistemic racism is performed, as analyzed by Mignolo (2011). Mignolo (2011) defines epistemic racism as the epistemic knowledge that keeps privileges (which here I assume to

be related to whiteness), which calls for an attitude of disobedience by colonized peoples.

Yet, rather than being only a weapon of the abyssal thinking used to implement epistemicide³ (SOUSA SANTOS, 2014), race can also form a sign of resistance in/through language because people who are victims of coloniality are always in motion by protesting and speaking against the oppression they suffer.

This is to say that the black race is given from the outside (not by black people), but used by black people to resist. Mbembe (2014), for instance, views race as designed by whiteness and coloniality:

But what should we understand by *Blacks*? It is commonly accepted that, of Iberian origin, this term will only appear in a text written in French in the early sixteenth century. It will, therefore, be only in the eighteenth century, that is, at the peak of the slave trade, which it becomes usable, definitively. (MBEMBE, 2014, p. 76, emphasis on the original)

Therefore, *black* is a sign given to me and not a sign that I claim. Whenever race as a sign is not questioned, we must resist while showing its meaning as a sign designed to oppress, but also resignified by black racial identities towards resistance. In other words, race will have different meanings depending on the identities who will designate its meaning either to resist or assimilate. In my case, I am trying to further elaborate on race as resistance.

That is what Moura (2014) found out as a result of his research concerning the history of slaves, quilombo-communities⁴ and black guerrillas in Brazil. Through the race that was given to them during slavery, black people from quilombo-communities built a way to unite African peoples (i.e. Nagô-Yorubas, Gege, Ashanti, etc.) in Brazil. Therefore, I comprehend the interplay of race and language as allowing means of resistance by black racial identities, not to accept an oppressive sign as it is generally interpreted, but to resignify it towards a new epistemology and ontology and, to that end, language is necessary to signify race in terms of resistance.

THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH BAHIA (UFSB)

The UFSB was born from the pressure of Brazilian social movements (unions, student's organizations, etc.) who sought to increase the expansion of post-secondary education in south of Bahia, the blackest state in Brazil. As a university located in the blackest state in Brazil, its Guiding Plan establishes a university committed to producing epistemologies of and from the global south.

³ Epistemicide occurs when others' knowledge is killed by coloniality, according to Sousa Santos (2014).

⁴ According to Moura (2014), a quilombo-community is a territory where slaves used to go when escaping captivity, and a territory where they formed African republics to preserve African cultures.

Even with the majority of the population being black and indigenous, because these groups were the main demographic ones in the region, we black and indigenous peoples have remained underrepresented in local universities so far. Taking this local reality into account, UFSB was born to be an affirmative action-based university, as affirmed in its Guidance plan:

The UFSB announces its *raison d'être*, based on solidarity and sharing of knowledge, skills, desires, dilemmas and utopias that, in short, are the intangible and material wealth we call wisdom or spirit of an age. In this perspective, its agenda relies on the following political institutional principles: academic efficiency, with optimal use of public resources; nonnegotiable commitment to sustainability; expanded access to education as a means for social development in the region; pedagogical flexibility and creativity, with methodological diversity and of training areas; systemic interface with Basic Education; inter-institutional articulation of public higher education in the region and promotion of national and international mobility for its community.⁵ (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO SUL DA BAHIA, 2014, p. 10, our translation)

As an affirmative action-based university,⁶ 55% of enrollment slots are reserved for black and indigenous people, as well as for students from local public schools who are mostly black and indigenous. However, its main purpose as an affirmative action institution is given by a network of community schools, in partnership with existing state government schools, with 85% of slots reserved to the ethnic groups above.

This measure has allowed us to rethink about the role of affirmative actions through multiple partnerships, guiding the principles of inclusion of local students, who are mostly black and indigenous.

In addition, it provides access to first-cycle programs (baccalaureates and teacher education programs in general areas, such as Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Sciences, Bachelor of Humanities and their respective teacher education programs) as a form of using an interdisciplinary curriculum that requires students to take ELT reading courses. In order to move on to second-cycle

5 In the original: "A UFSB anuncia sua razão de ser, baseada na solidariedade e na partilha de conhecimentos, habilidades, desejos, dilemas e utopias que, em resumo, são a riqueza material e intangível que chamamos de sabedoria ou espírito de uma época. Nesta perspectiva, a sua agenda baseia-se nos seguintes princípios institucionais: eficiência acadêmica, com ótimo aproveitamento dos recursos públicos; compromisso inegociável com a sustentabilidade; ampliação do acesso à educação como meio de desenvolvimento social na região; flexibilidade e criatividade pedagógica, com diversidade metodológica e de áreas de formação; interface sistêmica com o Ensino Básico; articulação interinstitucional do ensino superior público na região e promoção da mobilidade nacional e internacional para sua comunidade."

6 By affirmative action-based university I mean the institutions focused on developing their programs and policies entirely within the core values of recent laws that set affirmative actions as a means to fight racism in Brazil (such as Law 12.711/2012 or Law 10.639).

programs (baccalaureates and teacher education programs in specific areas, such as Law, Medicine, English, Portuguese, History), students must attend ELT courses like English Oral Communication, English Written Communication and English Text Workshops as required courses for all programs and majors.

Given the gaps in speaking and listening skills because public schools did not provide students with proper second-language background (this does not mean these skills were not taught, but they were not taught effectively through the linguistic policies encouraged in Brazil), students who usually attend English Oral Communication require ELT lessons in Portuguese. Therefore, students need to attend the English Written Communication course. The last one is the English Text Workshop, where English use is related to the specific aspects of the field that students will pursue as their specific training (Arts, Science, Humanities or Health).

In conclusion, I point out that program curriculums do not seem to properly meet the needs found in class, and I raise these questions here because identities, even when mentioned in the objectives and described in the syllabi as important, produce their own objectives and always bring new needs. To establish this debate, I will analyze some data from activities proposed in classes and developed in three courses taught during three academic terms, in order to put forward how these black and indigenous students dealt with activities related to their own interests and realities.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Firstly, if one wonders why I am insisting on naming academic English classes as Specific Purpose English (ESP), since in academic issues this is usually called English for Academic Purposes, I should say that although most of the issues in the curriculum may be seen as fixed, the very reality of educational contexts implies reflecting on teachers' traditional planning *versus* a planning focused on the problems of real and local identities. For example, rather than reading activities, students may require more grammar classes.

According to Leite *et al.* (2011) on their remarks about curriculum, if teachers consider the need for an inclusive educational system, the curriculum must be always in motion rather than fixed. Thus, building on Maria Antonieta Alba Celani and Paulo Freire, Sturm (2011) addresses the importance of reflective and critical curriculums for teacher education programs, making them committed to classes' real needs. In my case, I will dwell on the possibility for courses' curriculums to remain always in motion by mixing different objectives; therefore, English Oral Communication, English Written Communication and English Text Workshop can be used to encourage reading in ELT, since concerns regarding ESP, in this case, are used to perform inclusive activities in order for students to further participate during classes.

In my view, these courses imply multiple objectives that will develop from the realities existing in each class. In this respect, I taught these courses taking into account the ethnic identities produced by local issues, which justifies the idea of specific purpose at play in this article, as well as the number of black

and indigenous students, the university's Guiding Plan and my own research in Applied Linguistics (which is about racial profile in language education).

This study was developed during a 12-month period (third term of 2017 and first and second terms of 2018) with approximately 40 students in each classroom. I collected data from the activities regarding local questions, including ethnic and racial ones.

For the English Oral Communication course, I suggested thematic presentations in English in order to promote the use of multilingualism and a dialogue between English and local realities. I refer to multilingualism (although it can have different meanings) as something to be encouraged because in Porto Seguro, Coroa Vermelha and Cabrália,⁷ Portuguese is not the only language spoken. For example, Patxohã, a language of the Pataxó people is used to maintain their cultural heritage over the years. To carry out the activities, I previously divided the class into groups with different themes: Jobs, Science, Internet, and Grocery Store. I chose to work with different themes while asking students to highlight local issues during their presentations. Thus, one of the groups carried out a thematic presentation about Grocery Store by recreating a street market (which is more common in Brazil's low income areas than grocery stores) in the classroom with local and non-local fruits, and playing the roles of street market vendors by communicating their jobs and services in English.

FIGURE 1
ENGLISH ORAL COMMUNICATION - THEMATIC PRESENTATION - GROCERY STORE



Source: Personal archive.

⁷ These are students' home cities.

For example, Biri-biri is a well-known fruit in the area. It came from South Asia, but is locally used in many dishes such as Bahia’s fish stew (“moqueca de peixe”), as well as in pepper sauces, products for laundry and natural medicines. They chose to not translate the way people from Bahia name this fruit, “Biri-biri”. They had asked me about words they were unable to translate and we decided not to translate local terms.

Additionally, in the Text Comprehension course, I used opinion pieces, news stories and scholarly papers. The texts used were “What is racism?” (a newspaper article),⁸ by Ramon Grossfoguel, “Brazilian women lead in science, technology and innovation, study shows” (opinion piece) by Sophia Huyer and Nancy Halfkin⁹, “Brazilian judge approves ‘gay conversion therapy’, sparking national outrage”, by Dom Philips, published in *The Guardian*,¹⁰ and “Indigenous as ‘not-indigenous’ as ‘us’?: a dissident insider’s views on pushing the bounds for what constitutes ‘our mob’”, by Gordon Chalmers.¹¹ With different text genres of an advanced level of difficulty, students were required to turn these texts and their original genres into other texts and genres.

By doing this, they were able to lead their learning process through a creative lens. I chose this strategy based on their own opinions. In addition, they were required to produce a glossary about each text divided in two word groups: general (with basic words students would find in the texts) and specific (with specific concepts, by talking about them and their racial experiences). As for rewriting the texts into different text genres, I followed the arguments of Dolz and Schneuwly (2011) about the use of oral text genres. In this respect, group 1 used the sentence “What is racism?” to turn the text into a demonstration (with handmade posters, a video where they roleplayed situations of racism in English, etc.).

FIGURE 2
ENGLISH TEXT COMPREHENSION - GROUP PRESENTATION (“WHAT IS RACISM?”/
DEMONSTRATION)



Source: Personal archive.

⁸ Available at: <http://jwsr.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/jwsr/article/view/609>.

⁹ Available at: <https://www.elsevier.com/connect/brazilian-women-lead-in-science-technology-and-innovation-study-shows>.

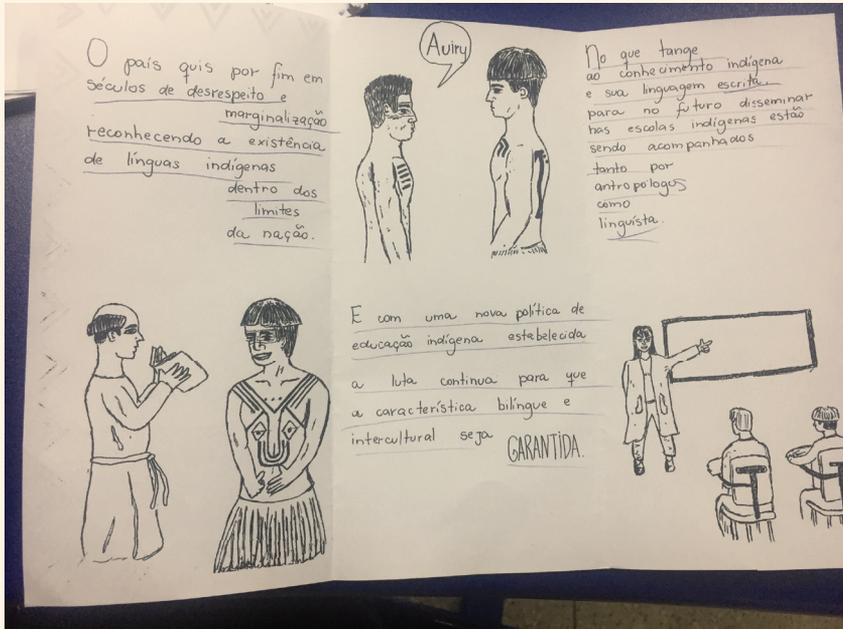
¹⁰ Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/19/brazilian-judge-approves-gay-conversion-therapy>.

¹¹ Available at: <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/91414/3/91414.pdf>.

Moreover, during the presentation, they conducted the so-called “The privilege game”.¹² In a number of ways, black students demonstrated their own high self-esteem by using English to criticize and debunk racism in class.

Finally, in the English Text Workshop course, I had students prepare seminars where they were to present the thematic rewriting of the texts we had discussed earlier. By way of illustration, the students of one of the groups decided to rewrite the text “Remapping Writing: indigenous writing and cultural conflict in Brazil”¹³, by Lynn Mário Trindade de Menezes e Souza, into a lecture. More particularly, this group invited a student who was an indigenous leader to answer questions based on the text. Another group working with the same text rewrote it as a leaflet.

FIGURE 3
ENGLISH TEXT WORKSHOP - LEAFLET OF THE TEXT “REMAPPING WRITING: INDIGENOUS WRITING AND CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN BRAZIL”



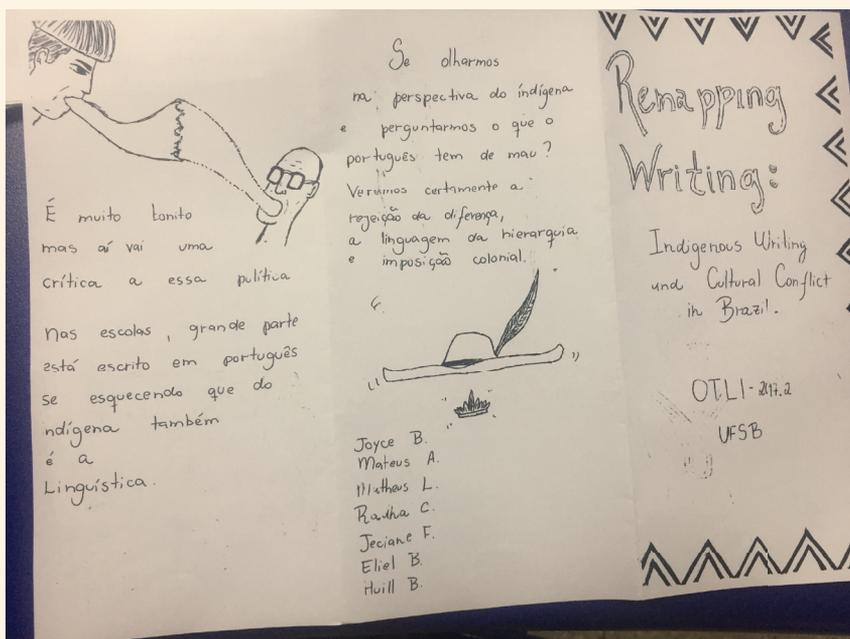
Source: Personal archive.

¹² Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOMpxsUg2Q>.

¹³ Available at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Lynn_Menezes_de_Souza/publication/242455202_Remapping_Writing_Indigenous_Writing_and_Cultural_Confl_ict_in_Brazil/links/54d7d3f20cf2464758182c84/Remapping-Writing-Indigenous-Writing-and-Cultural-Confl-ict-in-Brazil.pdf.

FIGURE 4

ENGLISH TEXT WORKSHOP - LEAFLET OF THE TEXT "REMAPPING WRITING: INDIGENOUS WRITING AND CULTURAL CONFLICT IN BRAZIL"¹⁴



Source: Personal archive.

The figure above shows an example of a text that students rewrote in Portuguese portraying their own reality. The themes they identified allow us to conclude that local issues in ELT can offer positions of dignity and self-representation, as well as high self-esteem for their racialized identities when required by faculty and informed by antiracist policies.

SOME RESULTS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Research in Applied Linguistics and language teaching has driven ELT in many directions so far. I used the idea of specific purposes in this paper through the possibility to analyze students' real needs through local and racial contexts. In this case, though research in ESP has addressed a number of issues, such as *corpora* studies (GAVIOLI, 2005), problem-based learning (WILKINSON, 2008), teacher-centered analysis (GÓRSKA-POR CKA, 2013) etc., the fact that I speak from my own position as a faculty member and a researcher at a university located in a city and state historically affected by racism, makes me understand that:

The main distinction of ESP is that the English taught caters for the needs of learners in specific disciplines other than the arts and languages. ESP teaching uses the methodologies

¹⁴ Students' names and class information were hidden to protect their privacy.

and activities of the various disciplines it is designed to serve, and it focuses on the language, lexis, grammar, discourses, and genres, of those disciplines rather than using the general grammar, learners' dictionaries and general public genres and discourses. These absolute characteristics are broad and distinguish ESP from general English courses in that ESP students are already assumed to possess some general knowledge of English. The purpose of learning the language is to communicate within a specific academic, occupational or professional domain. (RAISANEN; FORTANET-GOMEZ, 2008, p. 12)

In this case, this was the first reason I considered when trying to comprehend features of the ESP context as I developed, in my own experience, the idea that ESP should be seen as interdisciplinary. This means that scholarly contexts also imply multiple objectives, such the mixture of more academic inputs and more general ones brought by students which are valuable to foment the language objectives based on positive racial experience. Thus, students' real needs became a point to be explored in each of the classes, though during the courses the teaching of grammar as an essential topic was avoided.

Still agreeing with Raisanen and Fortanet-Gomez (2008), I used interdisciplinary activities in class assuming that they could be used in many social issues that they preferred to deal with, like cultural conflicts and ways to face racism.

Results illustrate that identities can manifest critically in language and through language towards new perspectives to rethink about how black and indigenous students can learn English. In this case, local issues meant ethnic ones because the university is located in an area where ethnicity is affirmed through land/ethnic conflicts (by indigenous students) or racial conflicts (by black students). Thus, I could see a more intensive use of English by the students when I suggested that an ESP course be based on curriculum changes, stimulus to thematic presentations, rewriting with both oral and written texts and encouragement of multilingualism in the classroom (since presentations were given in English and Portuguese, with students also communicating their phrases in Patxohã, the indigenous language spoken in the area).

In a broader sense, these findings demonstrate that reading can be better conducted within an analysis of real needs that can encompass a specific purpose which, in our case, was students' local realities.

As future developments, following what this text has discussed, I identify multiple possibilities to further comprehend local racialized identities and ELT in relation to the local context of the south of Bahia. The main implication to be stressed is the comprehension of the relevance of taking into account race and ethnic identities in ELT in our public schools and universities.

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

NASCIMENTO, Gabriel. Ethnicity and race in English language activities at a university in Bahia. *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, São Paulo, v. 49, n. 173, p. 208-224, July/Sept. 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1590/198053146287>

Received on: JANUARY 20, 2019 | Approved for publication on: MAY 6, 2019



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