

DESIGNING A TEACHER DEVELOPMENT MOOC CAMP TO PROMOTE ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION

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Abstract

In Brazil, there are at least two laws that prescribe the teaching of Afro-Brazilians' and Brazilian Indigenous peoples' cultures and histories at schools: law 10.639/03 and law 11.645/08. However, although these laws are about 20 years old, they have not been thoroughly implemented yet. Studies (Dias, 2024; Figueiredo, 2025) have pointed out that one of the reasons for this failure has been the fact that teachers do not feel well-prepared to implement them. While some of these teachers mention that they do not know how to adapt the curriculum, others not even know or understand exactly what the laws are about. Therefore, this participatory action research (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 2011; Cardoso, 2023) aims at finding effective ways of implementing these laws. The idea is not simply to prescribe activities, but to understand collaboratively what could be done to minimize the problem. To do so, we have been developing a series of activities, including a MOOC camp, which consists of an on-line course with weekly sessions for discussion (Cardoso, 2021, 2022), to be used for sharing readings and videos about the topic and as a kind of repository of materials developed during the two-month camp. This MOOC camp is being prepared by a group of graduate and post-graduate students who are (future) language teachers. The on-line course is divided in six modules based on the series of lectures *Towards an Anti-Racist Basic Education*, which were organized by our research group in 2023. The theoretical framework of the research includes discussion on anti-racist education (Cavaleiro, 2001), Critical Racial Literacy (Ferreira, 2015, 2017) Critical Applied Linguistics (Pennycook, 2021; Pennycook; Makoni, 2020; Rajagopalan, 2003; Silva; Pereira, 2022) and critical-reflective teacher development (Cardoso, 2024, Celani, 2002; Freire, 1998/1996; Liberali, 2015; Liberali; Carrijo, 2024). As it is a long-term ongoing study, there are no final results, but project assessment is constant and some of the findings will be discussed during the oral presentation.

Keywords: *Anti-racist education, critical racial literacy, critical-reflective teacher development, MOOC camps.*

1. Introduction

This study is part of a bigger research project called CEALD (Collaboration, Learning Strategies and Digital Literacy), which has as one of its main aims the development of critical and reflective language teachers. In this cycle of the research, we focus on the promoting a more decolonial and anti-racist language education.

In Brazil, slavery was abolished in 1888. However, still today black people and indigenous people are discriminated against and suffer prejudice. Although the black population comprises more than half of the population (55,5%) (Brazilian Census, 2022), we are still treated as a minority and in many ways marginalized. This fact is the result of the coloniality in which we still live, but which we are trying to combat. One way of promoting this decolonial turn (Maldonado-Torres, 2023) is through education.

There are at least two Brazilian laws that prescribe the teaching of Afro-Brazilians' and Brazilian Indigenous peoples' cultures and histories at schools: law 10.639/03 (Brasil, 2003) and law 11.645/08 (Brasil, 2008). However, although these laws are about 20 years old, they have not been thoroughly implemented yet. Studies (Dias, 2024; Figueiredo, 2025) have pointed out that one of the reasons for this failure has been the fact that teachers do not feel well-prepared to implement them. While some of these teachers mention that they do not know how to adapt the curriculum, others do not even know or understand exactly what the laws are about.

For the development of a decolonial and anti-racist linguistic education, we understand that it is not enough to know that these laws exist; we need to collaboratively think about ways to implement them in all segments of Basic Education, as well as in all subjects of the school curriculum, including the Portuguese language and additional languages (Figueiredo, 2025; Cardoso, 2024).

Therefore, the main objectives of this specific study are the following: (a) to find effective ways of implementing the laws 10.639/03 and 11.645/08 and (b) to understand collaboratively what could be done to minimize the problem.

2. Theoretical background

This study may be situated in what is called Critical Applied Linguistics (Pennycook, 2021; Pennycook; Makoni, 2020; Rajagopalan, 2003; Silva; Pereira, 2022;) since, as mentioned by Pennycook; Makoni (2020, p. 13), it “makes a case for a greater role of local forms of knowledge about languages, their use, their social and cultural roles, their place in education”. We believe in an “applied linguistics that can embrace Global South perspectives needs researchers who are culturally grounded, political engaged, continuously self-reflexive, and capable of adopting dialectic and multiple perspectives on data” (Pennycook; Makoni (2020, p. 12).

Besides the Critical Applied Linguistics, its theoretical framework of the research includes discussion on other different concepts, such as decoloniality, anti-racist education, critical racial literacy and critical-reflective teacher development.

Although the space here is limited to discuss all these concepts, I would like to briefly present two of them that are essential to this study. One is the “Anti-racist Education”, proposed by Eliane Cavaleiro (2001/2024) and the other is “Critical Racial Literacy”, coined by Aparecida de Jesus Ferreira (2015, 2017).

Cavaleiro (2001/2024, p. 128-129) presents as the main characteristics of an Anti-racist Education the following:

1. Acknowledges the existence of racial problems in Brazilian society.
2. Constantly seeks reflection on racism and its derivatives in daily school life.
3. Rejects any prejudiced and discriminatory attitude in society and in the school environment, and ensures that interpersonal relationships between adults and children, black and white people, are respectful.
4. Does not disregard the diversity present in the school environment: uses it to promote equality, encouraging the participation of all students.
5. Teaches children and adolescents a critical history of the different groups that constitute Brazilian history.
6. Seeks materials that contribute to the elimination of Eurocentrism from school curricula and address racial diversity, as well as the study of black issues.
7. Considers ways and means of educating for the positive recognition of racial diversity.
8. Develops actions that enable the strengthening of the self-concept of students belonging to discriminated groups.

Based on Cavaleiro’s studies and the Critical Race Theory (Gillborn, 1995), Ferreira (2015) proposes to educators the development of Critical Racial Literacy, that she understands as:

Critical racial literacy is about reflecting on race and racism, and it allows us to see our own understanding of how race and racism are treated in our daily lives, and how much race and racism impact our social identities and our lives, whether at work, in the school or university environment, in our families, or in our social relationships (Ferreira, 2015, p. 318).

The intervention activities used in the study are developed aiming at the development an anti-racist education and for the narrative interviews/research will be based on Ferreira’s Critical Racial Literacy, as we will use autobiographies to reflect on live experiences of racism and how to deal with them.

3. Research methodology

As mentioned before, this participatory action research (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 2011; Cardoso, 2024) aims at finding effective ways of implementing these laws. The idea is not simply to prescribe activities, but to understand collaboratively what could be done to minimize the problem.

To do so, we have been developing a series of activities, including a MOOC camp, which consists of an on-line course with weekly sessions for discussion (Cardoso, 2021, 2022), to be used for sharing readings and videos about the topic and as a kind of repository of materials developed during the seven-week camp.

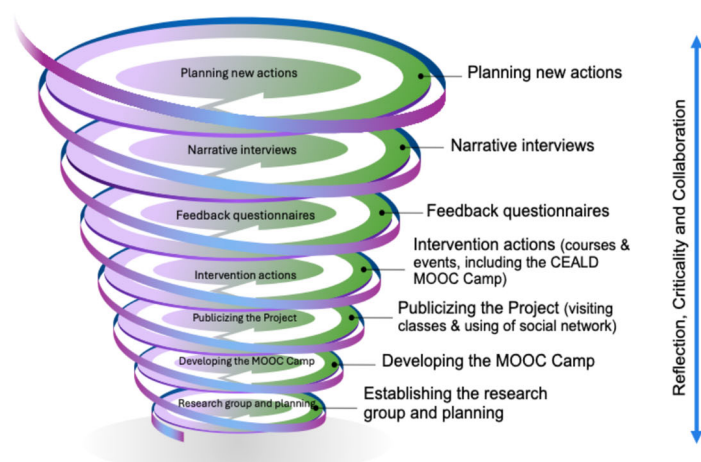
The MOOC Camp is part of a bigger Participatory Action Research and Narrative Research, which will be used to consider the impact of the development and implementation of the

3.1. Participatory action research

We consider this study a Participatory Action Research Project because the reflexive process begins during the teaching practice itself. Besides, we seek social transformation by inviting other (future) teachers to think with us, participating in narrative interviews, conversations, or outreach activities such as events, lectures, courses, or by creating reflective journals. It is a type of study where there is often no distinction between subjects and researchers, as we are all participants of the research.

To represent the different phases of the study, instead of using the common single action research cycle (planning => action & observation => reflection => new plan), we prefer to use an elliptical series of reflective cycles (Fig. 1) because we never come to the same point.

Figure 1. Reflective Cycles of the Participatory Action Research.



Source: Adapted from Cardoso (2023, p. 39)

As shown in the picture, reflection, criticality and collaboration are present during the whole process. Kemmis & Wilkinson (2011, p. 41-43) describes the participatory action research as social, participative, practical and collaborative, emancipatory, critical and recursive (reflexive and dialectical).

For this study we will concentrate on the cycle Developing the MOOC Camp. The main phases of this part of the research are the following: (1) establishing research group and planning; (2) editing the videos and searching for reading texts; (3) structuring each module and preparing activities; (4) put the modules together and assess the final product; (4) register the course; (5) promoting and implementing the pilot course; (6) first narrative interviews.

During the whole process, participants will be encouraged to use a research diary to take notes of aspects they find interesting in relation to the project.

3.2. Narrative interviews

Besides the research diary, another research technique to be used are autobiographical narratives, instead of a formal interview, based on Ferreira (2015, 2017), the idea is to use a set of reflective questions to let participants narrate episodes of racism and to think of ways to develop a more anti-racist language education.

In one of his books, Ferreira (2017) presents three reflective questions before each chapter of the book:

- (1) What do you understand by anti-racist education?
- (2) What does anti-racist education have to do with language teacher training?
- (3) How can anti-racist education contribute to language teacher training/development?

We would like to use these questions during the preparation of the MOOC Camp and later with the participants of pilot course. But before then, another question would be used. It is from Ferreira (2015, p. 53):

(4) How did you become aware that racism exists? How did you realize that racism exists?

Other possible questions to be asked would be:

(5) Do you remember how many black professors you had(have) at the university? Did(Do) you identify with them? Why(not)?

We are also considering the possibility of using images as prompts for the construction of these autobiographies.

3.3. Research participants and the MOOC camp

The MOOC camp is being prepared by a group of post-graduate students who are language teachers, but also by some undergraduate students (future teachers) and other professors. Right now, we are about fourteen people involved in the process. At least two people will be responsible for each module. But before that, we are watching all the videos of the lectures, and we will meet by the end of March to organize the pairs or trios and choose the corresponding module.

Some of these participants will be invited for the narrative interviews and we will also invite teachers who will participate in the pilot MOOC. The idea is to reflect on the process during the whole time: development of the course, while piloting and after the first group. Parallel to the development and implementation of the MOOC Camp, our idea is to organize events, including a second cycle of lectures, produce articles and organize at least one book about the topic.

The MOOC will consist of seven modules: an introductory one; and six which will correspond to each lecture of the 2023 event: Critical Racial Literacy; Indigenous People Bilingual Education; *Pretuguês* (Black *Português*); Original People Literature; Black and Indigenous Brazilian Important Professionals (who be celebrities, but are still unknown by most of us); How to implement the laws 10.639/03 and 11.645/08.

4. Expected results

As it is an ongoing research project, there are no final results yet, but we expect that with this study to contribute to develop initial and ongoing training of more critical-reflective language teachers, through the sharing of knowledge and experiences, participation in research, and collaborative production in publications. We also expect to promote appreciation of the languages, literatures, and other cultural aspects of the African, Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous peoples, and an understanding that Brazil is not a monolingual country. In other words, we expect to transform some colonial beliefs into decolonial ones (Fonseca, 2024), while contributing to the elimination of linguistic and non-linguistic prejudices.

5. Conclusions

Being part of the group which is planning the MOOC is also formative. Watching videos, choosing which part(s) of these videos to be used in the course and searching for adequate reading passage(s) for each module make us already reflect on our own practice. We consider what we have done so far and what can be done in the future to develop more social aware anti-racist learners and teachers. At the same time, collaboratively designing activities is a good way of understanding importance of promoting this kind of activity (project work) with our own learners.

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