

DECOLONIAL ENGLISH TEACHING IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL: THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SYLLABUS THROUGH A TRANSLANGUAGING LENS

ENSINO DE INGLÊS DECOLONIAL NO SUL DO BRASIL: A CONSTRUÇÃO DE UM
CURRÍCULO ATRAVÉS DAS LENTES DA TRANSLINGUAGEM

ENSEÑANZA DE INGLÉS DECOLONIAL EN EL SUR DE BRASIL: LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE UN
PLAN DE ESTUDIOS A TRAVÉS DE LAS LENTES DEL TRANSLINGUAJE

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ABSTRACT: Drawing on translanguaging and decolonial studies, this article examines the co-construction of the syllabus for an English as an additional language course for young adult racialized emergent bilinguals, members of a community located in southern Brazil. The research is situated within an adult education project developed by one of the authors in partnership with a community-based Civil Society Organization. A needs analysis study was conducted to map students' profiles and interests. The data was generated through the answers to a questionnaire and the transcription of two conversation circles held between the community members and the researchers. The resulting syllabus and lesson plans were constructed through a translanguaging and decolonial framework, tailored to individuals whose bilingualism has been marginalized by the formal education system. The lesson plans aim to promote the dynamic and fluid language practices among students. In this article, we present the syllabus construction process and how the needs analysis was carried out to profile relevant topics for the students. By proposing a decolonial pedagogy that promotes social justice, we hope to contribute to the language education of racialized emergent bilinguals in non-formal education contexts.

KEYWORDS: Translanguaging. Decolonial Syllabus. Social Justice. English as an Additional Language.

RESUMO: Explorando os fundamentos da translanguagem e dos estudos decoloniais, este artigo descreve a construção conjunta do currículo de um curso de inglês como língua adicional para jovens adultos racializados e bilíngues emergentes, pertencentes a uma comunidade no sul do Brasil. O cenário de pesquisa é um projeto educativo para adultos desenvolvido por uma das autoras em parceria com uma Organização da Sociedade Civil localizada na comunidade. Um estudo de análise de necessidades foi realizado

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para mapear os perfis e interesses dos estudantes. Os dados foram gerados por meio das respostas a um questionário e da transcrição de duas rodas de conversa realizadas entre os membros da comunidade e as pesquisadoras. A análise dos dados resultou no currículo e planos de aula construídos de maneira translíngua e decolonial, destinados a indivíduos cujo bilinguismo foi negado pelo sistema formal de ensino. Os planos de aula visam fomentar usos dinâmicos e fluidos das práticas linguísticas dos estudantes. Finalmente, apresentamos o processo de construção do currículo e como a análise de necessidades foi realizada para perfilar temas relevantes para os estudantes. Esperamos contribuir para a educação linguística de bilíngues emergentes racializados em contextos não formais de educação, propondo uma pedagogia decolonial que promova a justiça social.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Translinguagem. Currículo decolonial. Justiça social. Inglês como língua adicional.

RESUMEN: Explorando los fundamentos del translenguaje y los estudios decoloniales, este artículo describe la construcción conjunta del plan de estudios de un curso de inglés como lengua adicional para adultos jóvenes racializados y bilingües emergentes, miembros de una comunidad en el sur de Brasil. El escenario de investigación es un proyecto educativo para adultos desarrollado por una de las autoras en colaboración con una Organización de la Sociedad Civil local. Se llevó a cabo un estudio de análisis de necesidades para mapear los perfiles e intereses de los estudiantes. Los datos se generaron a través de las respuestas a un cuestionario y la transcripción de dos círculos de conversación realizados entre los miembros de la comunidad y las investigadoras. El análisis de datos resultó en un plan de estudios y planes de lecciones construidos de manera translíngua y decolonial, diseñados para individuos cuyo bilingüismo ha sido negado por el sistema educativo formal. Los planes de lecciones tienen como objetivo fomentar los usos dinámicos y fluidos de las prácticas lingüísticas de los estudiantes. En este artículo, presentamos el proceso de construcción del plan de estudios y cómo se llevó a cabo el análisis de necesidades para perfilar temas relevantes para los estudiantes. Esperamos contribuir a la educación lingüística de bilingües emergentes racializados en contextos no formales de educación, proponiendo una pedagogía decolonial que promueva la justicia social.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Translenguaje. Plan de estudios decolonial. Justicia social. Inglés como lengua adicional.

1 INTRODUCTION

- AUTHOR: Pensem numa palavra pra nomear, ilustrar a expectativa de vocês pra esse curso. [Think of a word that illustrates what you guys expect from this course].
- SONIA¹: Animação [Excitement].
- AUTHOR: Excitement (repeats in English).
- ARETHA: Passa, que eu vou pensar outra palavra. [Go ahead, I'll think of another word.]
- KOBE: Ex..-cit-ment.
- AUTHOR: Excitement. Great!
- MAYA: Motivation, motivation.
- NINA: Aprendizado. [Learning]
- AUTHOR: Learning (repeats in English).
- SUELI: Alegria [Joy]. Happ.. Joy. Joy!
- AUTHOR: Joy... Yeah, very good!
- MARTIN: Desenvolvimento [Development]
- AUTHOR: De-ve-lop-ment! (repeats in English).
- CAROLINA: Descobrimento [Discovery]
- AUTHOR: Discovery! (repeats in English).
- KOBE: Discover Kids! Ahh, agora faz sentido. [Discover Kids! Ohh, it makes sense now.]

¹ Fictitious names were used to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. The choice of names was based on black figures (Nina Simone, Maya Angelou, Aretha Franklin, Sueli Carneiro, Kobe Bryant, Martin Luther King, Carolina Maria de Jesus, Anita Canavarro, Sonia Guimarães).

The vignette above is part of a conversation circle held between one of the authors of this article, and a group of young adult racialized emergent bilinguals members of the Sol community², which is located in a central area of Porto Alegre, a large city in southern Brazil. The author is a volunteer for a Civil Society Organization (CSO) that acts within the community. She is a bilingual Portuguese and English teacher who has experience teaching English to Brazilian emergent bilinguals.

All participants in the vignette are collaborating in the co-construction of the syllabus of an English course intended for them and other racialized emergent bilinguals, members of the Sol community. The joint construction of the syllabus is part of Author's Master's thesis. Aretha (age 60 years old), Maya (age 50), Nina (age 60), and Sueli (age 64) are black women who work at the CSO, Maya as the president and Sueli as the vice president of the organization. Carolina (age 20), a white girl, and Sonia (age 22), a black girl, spend their time between studying to finish high school and working part-time as a handywoman. Kobe (age 20) is a black young man who is in the military, and Martin (age 22) is another black young man who works as an administrative assistant. Since childhood, all of them had been eager to study English, yet they have had never had the chance to learn the language properly. This lack of opportunity is rooted in a history of educational inequality for racialized individuals and the precariousness of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the Brazilian basic education system, attributable to insufficient investments and government educational policies.

This article aims to report on a study³ held during the co-construction of the English course syllabus, contextualizing it within the broader issue of racial disparities in education, particularly in ELT, in Brazil. We start by explaining the reality concerning ELT in the Brazilian public school system. We then clarify why, despite the fact that English is a colonial language, teaching it to marginalized communities is an act of resistance in Brazil no matter how contradictory it may seem (Janks, 2004). Next, we base the construction of the syllabus on decolonial curriculum theories, decolonial perspectives on language, and translanguaging. Next, we provide a description of the research context and the methodological framework used. Finally, we present the investigation results and outline the final considerations.

2 EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY IN BRAZIL: A RACIAL PERSPECTIVE

The period from 2010 to 2019 witnessed substantial disparities in the educational experiences of black and white students in Brazil, as highlighted by the Center for Studies and Data on Racial Inequalities (Cedra)⁴. The concept of age-grade distortion, a term used by education professionals, revealed that 7.6% of black students in the early years of elementary school experienced delays, compared to one in thirteen white students. In spite of a decrease in the disparity over the years, the persistence of racial inequality remains evident, particularly in secondary education, where 36% of black students faced age-grade distortion, contrasting with 19.2% of white students.

The National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep) School Census (2012-2019) further exposed racial gaps, indicating that, on average, 78.5% of black students successfully completed high school, compared to 85% of white students. Disparities extended beyond academic achievement, with the study revealing that schools with a majority of affluent students were predominantly white, emphasizing the social asymmetry between the two groups.

As documented in the study, the structural aspects of schools also contribute to educational disparities. Between 2013 and 2019, only 33.2% of teachers in predominantly black schools had adequate qualifications, while in schools with a majority of white students, the figure almost doubled to 62.2%. Additionally, the divide between public and private education showcased a 2.6 times higher likelihood for white students to access private education in 2019, enhancing their chances of advancing to higher education.

² The concept of community in Brazil is usually related to peripheral or marginalized places such as slums and favelas.

³ The content of this article, as well as the data and results presented in the text, stem from a Master's research project aimed at investigating the dialogical process of curriculum development for an English course in a community in the city of Porto Alegre, RS. The project received approval from the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (CEP UFRGS) with an opinion issued under CAAE number 32281920.2.0000.5332.

⁴ Source: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/educacao/noticia/2023-12/pesquisa-aponta-distorcoes-entre-negros-e-brancos-na-educacao>

The study's findings underscore the persistent racial inequalities in the Brazilian education system, requiring urgent attention and reform efforts.

3 THE REALITY OF ELT IN BRAZILIAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Brazil, surrounded by Spanish-speaking countries, stands as the only South American nation where Portuguese is the primary language—a legacy from the Portuguese colonial era and ongoing hegemonic language policies. Regardless of the prevailing myth of monolingualism, it is estimated that around 250 languages are spoken in the country, including indigenous, immigration, and Afro-Brazilian community languages (Altenhofen; Morello, 2013; Megale, 2018).

Despite this linguistic diversity, expectations of diverse languages being taught in the basic school system are not fully met. While some special schools address historically relevant languages in specific communities (Altenhofen; Morello, 2018; Karnopp, Zanini; Pokorski, 2019; Lorenzetti; Torquato, 2016; Sobrinho, Souza; Betiol, 2017), a solid colonial logic still prevails. The imposition of English as the exclusive additional language in secondary school curricula, mandated by the 13,415 Bill in 2017, exemplifies a colonial logic that significantly affects marginalized communities. This impact is particularly pronounced among the black population, the majority of whom attend the public school system, as elucidated in the preceding section.

However, the choice to include the English language in Brazilian basic education curricula is aligned with Janks' (2004) "access paradox," which highlights the complexities of teaching a hegemonic language, recognizing that privileged access to this language can contribute to inequalities. Despite concerns about the cultural and linguistic hegemony of English (Pennycook, 2018; Kubota, Miller, 2017), depriving students of this access, especially the underprivileged ones, perpetuates their marginalization in a society that values English as a sign of distinction (Janks, 2004).

Simultaneously, these challenges intersect with racial disparities, as evidenced by the proliferation of supposedly bilingual schools in the private sector. This stands in stark contrast to the struggles of public schools, further perpetuating social inequalities. Although English holds global importance in communication and knowledge exchange, educational inequality in Brazil exacerbates disparities in access to ELT based on economic class and, therefore, racial background.

The historical challenges faced by ELT in the country, including perceived ineffectiveness in primary and secondary education, teacher demotivation, and a shortage of professionals, are compounded by constraints such as limited class time and overcrowded classrooms. Public school teachers, facing low wages and the need for additional employment, have limited time for professional development, creating a gap in ELT access between public and private school students (Baumvol; Sarmiento, 2019). Windle and Nogueira (2015) emphasize the unequal access to English by Brazilian families, highlighting how those with financial means employ different strategies to enhance their children's bilingualism. These strategies include extended overseas school exchange programs, short language courses, tours with hotel-style accommodation, overseas holidays, private English courses, enrollment in bilingual or bi-national schools, and schools with special language programs (Windle; Nogueira, 2015, p. 181).

As for this last strategy, Megale (2018) explains that there has been a proliferation of schools that claim to be bilingual in Brazil in recent years⁵. This has driven the private education sector to invest in the offer of Portuguese-English bilingual schools (Megale, 2018). Meanwhile, public schools struggle with the educational delay resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and the scarcity of resources caused by an economic crisis, not to mention the historical scrapping of the Brazilian public education system evidenced by a lack of investment in infrastructure, and a shortage of specialized professionals (Schlatter, 2009; Araújo et al, 2016, British Council, 2015).

⁵ There are no laws regulating the operation of bilingual schools in Brazil. For this reason, the schools that claim to be bilingual are in fact framed as monolingual schools. At the national level, the Brazilian National Council of Education has issued an opinion containing guidelines for definitions and attributions of schools that offer bilingual education. The CNE/CEB 2/2020 has already been approved but not yet ratified and is being processed by the Ministry of Education.

According to hooks (2013), breaking away from the culture and logic of the oppressor is essential when we find ourselves immersed in it. To illustrate this point, hooks references Adrienne Rich's poem "The Burning of Paper Instead of Children," where Rich acknowledges, "this is the oppressor's language, yet I need it to talk to you" (Rich, 1971, as cited by hooks, 2013). In line with Rich's perspective, we argue that authentic social transformation necessitates adopting a critical and dialogical approach to English language teaching. This approach, aligned with Freire's (1994) principles, becomes particularly crucial within the context of racial empowerment.

Rooted in linguistically marginalized subjects, translanguaging emerges as an important critical pedagogy in socially marginalized educational settings. First, as a practical theory of language (Li Wei, 2018), it is concerned with speakers' creative and dynamic language practices. Second, it empowers emergent bilinguals by rejecting hegemonic political and educational ideologies (Beiler, 2020) and welcoming students' full linguistic repertoires (García, 2019).

4 TRANSLANGUAGING AS A TRANSFORMATIVE PERSPECTIVE

García *et al.* (2021, p.1) have coined the term *racialized bilinguals* to account for "people who, as a result of long processes of domination and colonization, have been positioned as inferior in racial and linguistic terms". As the racialized bilinguals in García *et al.* (2021), the racialized emergent bilinguals members of the Sol community have been subject to the dominant colonial power that gives legitimacy only to knowledge and practices associated with white monolingual forces. Thus, the understanding that belonging to a group of speakers of a given language is not linked to being part of a nation-state becomes a condition for a more just and egalitarian language education.

For all the reasons above, translanguaging seems to us to be the right choice for the language education of racialized bilinguals. As a perspective that approaches language from the "inside out" (Santos, 2007; García *et al.*, 2021), focusing on bilingual individuals' practices rather than language itself, it addresses the education of linguistically marginalized groups. This aligns with a decolonial standpoint, challenging hegemonic models that dictate norms for bilinguals or for those who are becoming bilingual. Therefore, as theory and practice, translanguaging proposes the joint construction of a new way of seeing and living language.

In contrast to a monoglossic viewpoint that regards bilingual individuals as monolinguals in multiple languages, translanguaging acknowledges their possession of a holistic repertoire. This enables a creative interaction with the world and fosters a political process of social and subjectivity transformation, challenging asymmetries of power generated by language and other meaning-making codes linked to nationalist ideologies (García; Li Wei, 2015, p. 43).

As a decolonial pedagogy, translanguaging moves away from the native speaker model that has underpinned language policy and teaching for centuries by offering other ways of approaching language education, in such a way as to promote social justice for linguistically marginalized communities. This way of conceiving language reflects other ways of understanding bilingualism.

Translanguaging emphasizes the pivotal role of repertoires in delineating the language practices of bilinguals. It sees language as a distinctive semiotic repertoire, shaping individuals and reflecting their lived experiences (Busch, 2017; García; Li Wei, 2015). This repertoire serves as a means for self-expression and meaning-making. In a translanguaging framework, designated languages like Portuguese, Spanish, and Creole are viewed as social constructs perpetuated by a colonial perspective, aimed at upholding power and subjugating individuals who diverge from the linguistic and cultural norms imposed by dominant discourses.

Despite criticisms regarding translanguaging as a tool for social justice (Japers, 2017; Tuck; Yang, 2012), a translanguaging pedagogical perspective provides racialized emergent bilinguals with opportunities to engage in dialogue, following the Bakhtinian sense, with discourses produced by white monolinguals. It does so while respecting and reaffirming their racialized repertoires and ways of being. We contend that this approach fosters social justice and opposes educational inequality, particularly due to its critical nature. Ultimately, as Flores (2013) argues, any uncritical and depoliticized pedagogical approach contributes to the formation of governable and subaltern subjects in this neoliberal world, further exacerbating racial and class inequalities.

Welp and García (2022) argue that a translanguaging pedagogy runs counter to what occurs in traditional language classrooms, where language practices that are most familiar to students are restricted to the detriment of target language use, even if that means the silencing of students. Instead, in a class aligned with this pedagogy, all language practices are welcome and encouraged. Students in this type of class are invited to use their entire semiotic repertoire to understand and produce oral or written academic/school texts and, thus, develop their bilingual identity.

In a class where translanguaging is acknowledged, students are not seen as mere learners, but as emergent bilinguals (García; Kleifgen, 2018), that is, as integral human beings who, together, build knowledge with their peers, sharing and complementing each other's repertoires. A translanguaging class, in this way, values what students have and not what they lack, as in traditional language classes. Classroom work under a translanguaging pedagogy moves from the language to the subjects and seeks to break down the boundaries between linguistic and conceptual knowledge.

Along those lines, García *et al.* (2017) present what they consider the four purposes of translanguaging pedagogy: (1) to support students in understanding complex content and texts; (2) to encourage the development of students' linguistic practices toward academic contexts; (3) to favor and recognize students' bilingualism and forms of knowledge; and (4) to support students' socio-emotional development and bilingual identities. The authors explain that these four purposes form the *corriente* which consists of the constant flow of students' language practices in the classroom.

In light of that, by liberating "sign systems that have been constrained by socio-political domination, attempting to give voice to all and redress power differentials among speakers" (García, 2019, p. 163), translanguaging seeks to develop linguistic awareness and encourage students to use their full expressive potential and their power of choices about language. According to Prilutskaya (2023), more than using a series of strategies, translanguaging as a pedagogy creates school spaces that enhance the language practices and knowledge of racialized bilingual, or emergent bilingual, students.

5 CURRICULUM PERSPECTIVE

The creation of a course syllabus involves power dynamics among educational institutions, the public sector, and teachers. In the case of Sol and its non-formal education center, the absence of regulations allowed us to construct the syllabus freely, without constraints from regulatory documents or official bodies. Recognizing that curricula are often racialized remnants of colonial power structures, even in our postcolonial era (Quijano, 2012), we found it crucial to define our own curriculum conceptions.

Aligned with Quijano, we view the curriculum as a socio-cultural artifact guiding pedagogical work with sociological, epistemological, political, and linguistic influences shaping identities (Silva, 2015). Examining the racial, gender, and class marks that have marginalized diverse forms of knowledge (Gomes, 2012) is essential. We advocate for a curriculum fostering dialogue, reflection, and problematization, echoing Gomes (2012) in asserting that an intercultural dialogue-based educational project facilitates structural and emancipatory changes.

As a consequence, our syllabus proposal naturally incorporates conflicts, tensions, and divergences, acknowledging that diverse cultures should participate in shaping new curricular, educational, and societal projects (Gomes, 2012, p.105).

Bearing this in mind, we can say that defining the conceptual framework for curriculum development is fundamental given the flexible nature of the term "curriculum" (Sacristán, 2006). Clear articulation of objectives and principles is essential for any teaching project, particularly-when addressing the knowledge conveyed in various forms of oral and written expression. Based on the theoretical assumptions, the central question in curriculum definition is: "What knowledge is considered important or valid to be part of this curriculum?" (Silva, 2015, p.14).

Throughout this article, we emphasize the significance of the needs and interests investigation of the research participants and the importance of dialogue in the syllabus co-construction process. This ensures the course syllabus is effective and tailored to the group's peculiarities. By valuing students' repertoires and knowledge (García, 2019; Freire, 1987) and focusing on relevant themes,

it fosters experiences that promote active participation in the oral communication practices and cultural norms of both English and Portuguese-speaking communities.

6 THE SOL COMMUNITY

The Sol community is made up of approximately 345 residents. It relies on volunteers who are members of a Civil Society Organization (CSO), which was created in 2018, and, in 2019, had its headquarters built in the community. Since then, numerous events, such as workshops on art, cooking, and handicraft, lectures, and mini-courses, among other activities have been carried out with the involvement and dedication of residents and volunteers. All events are organized by subprojects, including the specific project on additional language teaching to residents, which started in the second half of 2021, as an initiative by Author.

The CSO's headquarters are inside the Sol community, which is located in the center of Porto Alegre, a large city in southern Brazil. In addition to the team composed mainly of residents, the institution has the support of hundreds of volunteers from various professions, different social classes, and coming from different places in the city, which reflects the inclusive and diverse nature of the institution. Because of Author's relationship with the community, especially with the president and the vice president, and on account of her active participation in the projects of the CSO, the researchers were able to connect with people interested in taking the course.

Striving to be consistent with the translanguaging and decolonial perspectives we chose to adopt, we sought to recognize the potentialities, suggestions, and perceptions of students, *with* them (García, 2017), during the pedagogical process. In what follows, we present how the data generation that served as input for the syllabus planning was conducted.

7 THE STUDY: NEEDS AND INTERESTS ANALYSIS

The objective of the study⁶ was to map the needs and interests of the racialized emerging bilinguals, members of the Sol community, in such a way as to jointly construct an English course syllabus intended for the participants. Twenty-three members of the community participated in one, two or three of the data generation stages. From the general objective, two research questions derived: (1) How to develop an English as an additional language course syllabus in a context of non-school education for racialized emergent bilinguals, members of the Sol community? (2) What themes and social practices that meet the needs and interests of the students/participants should compose a syllabus based on translanguaging and decolonial studies?

In this section, we outline the methodological procedures for the needs analysis, which was carried out in four stages using mixed-method data generation: (1) application of a needs and interest questionnaire and further analysis of the data; (2) realization of the first conversation circle and pre-definition of the themes from the data resulted from stage 1; (3) realization of the second conversation circle, subsequent analysis of its resulting data, and definition of the themes; and (4) selection of the structuring discursive genres that would make up the syllabus and organization of the syllabus in four Teaching Modules comprising four lessons each.

Next, we describe each of these stages in detail and present the results obtained in each one.

Stage (1)

Twenty people completed the questionnaire individually at the CSO headquarters, with Author providing assistance as needed. Taking approximately 15 minutes, the questionnaire aimed to profile participants for the study, featuring factual questions (Dörnyei; Taguchi, 2010). Comprising five parts with both open and closed questions, the questionnaire, designed in Portuguese due to limited English proficiency, focused on participant demographics.

⁶The research was approved by the ethics committee of Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

Part 1, "Identification," aimed to outline the demographic profile, covering gender, color and ethnicity, education, occupation, number of children, and marital status. Predominantly, the majority of the 20 participants were black single women ($n = 16$), aged 31 to 65, without children (Table 1). Varied professions and educational backgrounds among participants promised enriched classroom discussions, enabling exploration and sharing of diverse professional experiences.

Race and Ethnicity	(3) white (7) brown (10) black
Age	(8) between 18 and 24 years old (3) between 25 and 30 years old (9) between 31 and 65 years old
Gender	(4) men (16) women
Schooling	(4) Elementary Education (6) Middle-school (2) High school (5) Incomplete High School (3) Undergraduate
Job	(5) unemployed (1) self-employed (4) handywoman (1) army services (2) manicures (1) joiner (1) president CSO (1) vice-president CSO (2) administrative assistant (1) saleswoman (1) tarologist

Table 1: Research participants' demographic information

Source: the authors

In the second part, "motivation to learn English", the questionnaire included questions about the reasons for learning English, how they could use English in the future and in which situations they would do it, how often they had contact with the English language, and how they had access to English.

When answering this part of the questionnaire, most participants mentioned wanting to learn English for oral communication, meaning that they had the desire to perform oral exchanges with a greater number of people: "Tenho amigos que falam e para a comunicação global o inglês é o idioma mais falado" [I have friends who speak it and for global communication English is the most spoken language] (Kobe, 20), and "para conversar com as pessoas" [to talk to people] (Carolina, 22), "Para entender músicas e conversar com pessoas" [To understand songs and talk to people] (Nina, 60). It was noticeable their willingness to use language to engage in social practices and to understand the world through the study of English.

Part 3 of the questionnaire focused on their "prior experience" with English. They were asked if they had ever studied English and what had been most striking about that experience, for example, a teacher who had inspired them, some activity carried out at school or in a course, and if they had had contact with an English speaker who did not speak Portuguese and how they felt about it.

When reporting about their experience with English in formal education, most showed a certain difficulty related to their learning experience: “No curso de biblioteconomia, sim, foi o período que mais tive contato com inglês, com muita dificuldade, mas gostei muito” [In library studies (in college), yes, it was the period that I had contact with English the most, with a lot of difficulty, but I really liked it] (Maya). Others brought their experiences with teachers: “Matava aula porque odiava minha professora” [I skipped classes because I hated my teacher] (Adriana, 18 years old), and “Adorava meu professor de inglês na escola” [I loved my English teacher at school] (Aretha, 54 years old). Finally, experiences related to linguistic content were also observed in the answers: “Sim, na escola e na faculdade. Na escola foi marcante a fixação do verbo to be” [Yes, at school and in college. In school it was remarkable to learn the verb “to be”] (Elza, 30 years old).

In part 4, “general interests”, they were asked about preferences for activities in their free time, musical tastes, study interests, contact with social networks, and ways of learning. We explored specific questions, such as “What kind of people do you follow on social media?”, “What shows do you watch on TV?”, “What do you do in your free time?”. For the last questions, most respondents reported watching series, reading, and listening to music, which contributed to the possibility of exploring numerous discursive genres and reiterating the possibility of approaching series and songs. In the category “other”, walking appeared considerably, which was also taken into consideration for the selection of themes.

One of the questions about music, “What kind of music do you like?”, became relevant since the topic was chosen to structure some of the lessons. Also, later on, throughout the conversations held in the first conversation circle, almost all of them mentioned their interest in learning English through music. As for the different musical genres, as shown in Figure 1 below, there was a diversity of preferences, pagode⁷ being the preferred one, a relevant fact, since it is of Brazilian origin and aesthetically black, followed by rap music. In identifying this, we stress the need for the use of translanguaging and the decolonial perspective in the development of the syllabus. First, the approach through songs in different languages would allow the expansion of their repertoire in the English language from what they already know. In addition, diversity and cultural issues related to the origins of different musical genres could also be explored. Highlighting the rhythms of African and Afro-Brazilian origin would also be a possibility since the community is mostly black.

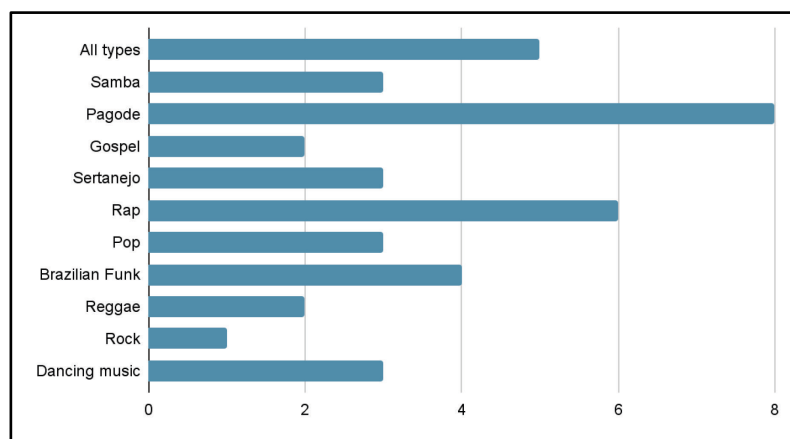


Figure 1: Music genre preferences

Source: the authors

Part 5 focused on the preferences of the course itself, therefore it was composed of questions related to topics and activities of interest, course and class duration, preferred period of the day to attend classes, and aspects that were considered the most important to be taught in an English course. Part 6 was open for comments and suggestions.

Among the things that were considered when designing the course was the fact that, although most participants stated that they had studied English at school and some at university (65%), the group was composed mostly by people who were at initial points of their bilingualism continuum. As expected by the researchers, they had a significant repertoire in Portuguese with very little English in it,

⁷ Type of Brazilian country-folk traditional style of music.

especially considering that they have not had the opportunity to learn English properly. All data generated through the questionnaire were taken into consideration before the conversation circles, whose script was organized based on the answers to the questionnaire.

Stage (2)

In June 2021, two days after the participants answered the questionnaire, we conducted the first conversation circle. The 20 participants' answers to the questionnaire helped us think of a script to guide the discussion (Table 2). The idea was to get to know the students, understand their desires and needs and help them reflect on why they were willing to study English. The circle was organized in the headquarters of Sol. Eight people were present: Aretha, Maya, Nina, Sueli, Carolina, Sonia, Kobe, and Martin. We transcribed the 38-minute audio and systematized the data into categories, crossing it with the results of the questionnaire's answers.

<p>1. Presentation + check-in (how I'm feeling at that moment): Say your name, your age, comment how you're feeling at that time and what your expectations are for today.</p> <p>2. Development: Guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tell us about a situation where you felt like understanding and/or communicating in English with someone. - Share at what times you have contact with English in your day-to-day life. Whether it's through movies, videos, music, books, talking to someone, etc. - How do you intend to use English in the future? - In what contexts and with whom? - Comment on some of your knowledge/skills that can be interesting and pleasurable in the English class. - Think of a pleasant and interesting English class. What would it look like? <p>3. Check-out : Think of a word that expresses your expectation for this course.</p>
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Table 2: Script for the first conversation circle

Source: The authors

The choice of the conversation circle as a methodological tool is supported by the idea that the circle consists of “an instrument that allows the sharing of experiences and the development of reflections on the educational practices of the subjects, in a process mediated by interaction with peers, through internal dialogues and in observant and reflective silence.” (Moura; Lima, 2014, p.99). By aiming at the development of a pedagogical process based on dialogue, we believe that, in addition to providing an efficient source of data generation, it also promotes the co-construction of the process with the participants.

Besides reflecting the decolonial perspective to which we align, this methodological choice reinforced the importance of the dialogic nature of the knowledge co-construction process. As a legitimate approach in qualitative research (Moura; Lima, 2014), the scientific character of the conversation circle comes from the quality of the data that it provides through the collective debate in which the subjects engage, expressing and listening to themselves and others in a reflexive way about a certain theme. We believe that, if the issues raised had not been awakened in the dialogue and sharing of ideas and concerns, it is likely that some important elements for the selection of relevant themes would not have surfaced.

Drawing from the principles of liberating education, and valuing students' knowledge in the educational process (Freire, 1987; hooks, 2013), participants were asked to comment on some of their knowledge or life skills that they could bring to class to share with the teacher and classmates. As the group manifested itself, interesting answers about practical and subjective experiences started emerging in the conversation: “O meu conhecimento sobre a comida também que é o veganismo, e sobre o Budismo

também” [My knowledge about food also, that is veganism, and about Buddhism as well] (Carolina, 20). “Em 2016 fiz um curso de design gráfico e criação de sites de logotipo. Fiz dois anos” [In 2016, I took a course on graphic design and website logos creation. I took it for two years.] (Martin, 20). “Eu acho que um pouco de sorriso assim é o que me fortalece e eu acredito sempre que vai ter um dia melhor, um dia após o outro, acho que essa forma de ver a vida assim. Posso trazer o sorriso” [I think a little smile like that is what strengthens me, and I always believe that there will be a better day, one day after another. I think this way of seeing life like this. I can bring the smile] (Maya).

Crossing the data generated from the questionnaire and from the first conversation circle allowed us to understand what type of lessons the participants were expecting. By interpreting their contributions, it was possible to get to the themes to be approached in every class and design the first draft of the syllabus (Table 3), corroborating the importance of language education on the students’ terms, based on their own language practices (García et al, 2021).

Teaching Module I- “Alegria, sim! Alegria, amor e a minha paciência”
“Joy! Joy, love, and my patience”

1. O eu na comunidade e no mundo.
Me in the community and in the world.
 2. Pessoas inspiradoras e representatividade.
Role models and representativity.
 3. Caminhos e territórios.
Pathways and territories.
 4. Religião e crenças, no que eu acredito? *Religion and creeds, what do I believe in?*
-

Teaching Module II- “Quero uma aula com feijão!”
“I want a class with beans in it”

5. As origens da nossa comida. Da planta ao consumo.
The origins of our food. From the plant to consumption.
 6. Alimentação e cozinhas diversas.
Diverse cooking and eating.
 7. Rótulos no dia a dia.
Labels on a daily basis.
 8. Influenciadores digitais e estilo de vida.
Digital influencers and lifestyle.
-

Teaching Module III- “Letras de Música! Eu te falei uma vez que eu sou muito curiosa”
“Lyrics! I told you once that I’m very curious”

9. Não existe isso de inglês ruim - Diferentes gêneros musicais e variação linguística.
There is no such thing as bad English. - Different Music Genres and language variation.
 10. Para além do convencional: vozes do sul.
Beyond the mainstream: Voices from the south.
 11. Rappers brasileiros e influência social. *Brazilian rappers and social influence.*
 12. Citações e músicas: nossos lemas.
Quotes and songs: Our personal mottos.
-

Teaching Module IV- “Filmes também! Não botá dublado”
“Movies too! Don’t put it in the dubbed mode”

13. O poder do cinema e a democratização da arte.
The power of cinema and art democratization.
-

14. Representação e identificação nas produções cinematográficas. Representativity and identification in cinema.
15. Estrelas além do tempo: uma conversa. *Hidden figures: a discussion.*
16. Para além de Hollywood: produção de filmes.
Beyond Hollywood: Filmmaking.

Table 3: The course syllabus framework

Source: The authors

Stage (3)

After preparing the first draft of the syllabus, we organized a second conversation circle to submit it to the participants' approval. Our intention was to have them collaborate in all the steps of the construction, for that reason their opinions were fundamental. More than creating a course *for* them, we wanted to create it *with* them.

Due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the second conversation circle was held two months after the first (in August 2021), again in the headquarters of Sol. A total of eight participants attended, which was understandable given the pandemic. Five of them had participated in the first conversation circle: Maya, Sueli, Sonia, Kobe, Martin. The other three were new participants who had been unable to join the previous session: Anita (age 40 years old), Miles (18 years old) and Janet (18 years old). We judged this would not affect the results of the needs analysis since the syllabus was to be designed for any member of the Sol community. The interaction lasted 34 minutes. We once more recorded and transcribed the audio later.

This second conversation circle was held to confirm, or not, the syllabus we had come up with. The meeting was organized around the pre-selected themes, that is, the conversation took place as the themes defined in the previous methodological steps were presented. In line with our proposal, we established some guiding questions to carry out the data analysis: (1) Did the students show interest in the topics? (2) What suggestions did they make on each of the themes? (3) How can these themes be explored critically?

In general, they all agreed with what we proposed. Since we decided to name the teaching modules and lessons after their contributions from the first conversation circle, they recognized their voices in the themes as they were presented. The only change they asked for was in the Teaching Module III, class 11, in which we had proposed to approach discussions around Rap music in Brazil and in the world. Instead, they preferred talking about all music genres and songs they like, especially Pagode, which had been noted before.

In what follows, we present the final syllabus outline that was a result of the needs analysis process.

8 THE RESULTS: THE SYLLABUS OUTLINE

When thinking of students' needs, we realized that it would be difficult for them to maintain class attendance, as everyone has a busy life. Thus, we planned independent lessons, which did not require a progression in the syllabus. So the course was structured in four Teaching Modules of four classes each. Each Teaching Module was organized around an umbrella theme, from which four sub-themes would be derived: one for each class. We sought to address issues within what the participants had shared in the data generation, articulating their needs and interests with themes connected to the decolonial movement.

By following the guiding questions, the planning of each Teaching Module was presented to the students to check their opinions. Each of the themes was revisited leading to ways to problematize them in the lessons. The possibilities to be explored were identified to finally get to the final version of the syllabus.

Having a decolonial syllabus in mind, we decided to include guiding questions which we called "Southernizing questions" for each of the Teaching Modules. These questions are presented in a bilingual Portuguese/English format alternately. Also, inspired by the translanguaging pedagogy model by García et al (2017), we divided the objectives into "language use" and "content". Finally, the "proposed action" remained faithful to the principles of the class work, as students would be expected to critically explore what was

to be learned and use linguistic resources to express themselves and produce oral and written texts. Table 4 below presents two teaching modules to exemplify the syllabus, which is composed by four modules in total, as mentioned above.

Teaching Module I- “Alegria, sim! Alegria, amor e a minha paciência”

“Joy! Joy, love, and my patience”

Meeting	Perguntas suladoras/ Southernizing questions	Objetivos/objectives – content and language use	Gêneros estruturantes/ structuring genres	Proposta de ação/proposed action
O eu na comunidade e no mundo/ Me in the community and in the world.	Quem sou eu na minha comunidade? Who am I in my community? Quem sou eu no mundo? Who am I in the world?	<p>Content objectives: Understand the concept of stereotype and its consequences for the subjectivity of the individual. Get to know the opinion of Brazilian people and people from other localities about Brazil and about Brazilians. Relate the other’s opinion to my presence in my community and in the world.</p> <p>Objectives of language use: To speak of your people and your community using language resources in English and Portuguese.</p>	Profile on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok) Video Monologue	Build a profile on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). Build a monologue about yourself.
Pessoas inspiradoras e representatividade. Role models and representativity.	Who do I relate to? Com quem eu me identifico? What makes someone be inspiring for you? O que faz uma pessoa ser inspiradora para você?	<p>Content objectives: Problematize which individual values and characteristics are considered inspiring. Recognize characteristics in the people who represent me.</p> <p>Objectives of language use: Talk about physical and personality traits using the appropriate lexical resources.</p>	Blog post Social network post Video on cultural identity Photo wall	Presentation of the inspiring person through a photo and a small paragraph.
Caminhos e territórios./Pathways and territories.	Where do we come from? Where do we usually go? De onde viemos? Por onde circulamos?	<p>Content objectives: Identify relevant social aspects in the struggle for community housing. Investigate family origins and their territory.</p>	Map (various representations) Timeline Game about black territories in our city	Observation checklist for outing through the neighborhood. Directions on how to get to places in

	<p><i>What is the history of the territory where we live? How was the struggle for living here? Qual a história do território onde moramos? Como foi a luta pela moradia aqui?</i></p>	<p>Objectives of language use: Use linguistic resources (lexical, syntactic, etc.) to locate ones in the physical space. Express your geographical location using the English language. Understand and produce historical narratives.</p>		<p>the neighborhood through audios on Whatsapp (orientations) Collective construction of narrative about the history of the community.</p>
<p>Nossas escolhas e perspectivas futuras. Our choices and future perspectives</p>	<p>O que eu desejo para o meu futuro? E para a minha comunidade? E para o mundo? What do I wish for my future? And for my community? And for the world?</p> <p>Que aspectos culturais e da minha história influenciam minhas escolhas? Which cultural aspects of my history influence my choices?</p>	<p>Content Objectives: Reflect on how each person's history and lifelong opportunities influence choices for the future. Express and identify individual intentions, desires, and wills.</p> <p>Objectives of language use: To produce narratives and express future desires and plans within the theme using linguistic structures appropriate to the textual genre and the proposal.</p>	<p>List of intentions for the future Minibiography Poster</p>	<p>Bucket list</p>

Teaching Module III- “Letras de Música! Eu te falei uma vez que eu sou muito curiosa”
“Lyrics! I told you once that I’m very curious”

<p>Não existe isso de inglês ruim - Diferentes gêneros musicais e variação linguística. There is no such thing as bad English. - Different Music Genres and language variation.</p>	<p>Como as letras das músicas são influenciadas pelos gêneros, contextos e culturas? How are song lyrics influenced by genres, contexts, and cultures? What types of variations are there in music lyrics? Why are some more prestigious than others? Que tipos de variações existem nas letras de música? Por que algumas são mais prestigiadas que outras?</p>	<p>Content objectives: Understand how the language varies according to the context in which the speakers are inserted. Recognize different variants of the English language.</p> <p>Objectives of language use: To express ideas through idiomatic expressions. Contrast language resources from different varieties of Portuguese and English Infer meanings of song lyrics from the linguistic and cultural repertoire.</p>	<p>Video about slang Songs</p>	<p>Collective poster with idiomatic expressions that are part of our daily lives. Collective poster on slang present in songs in Portuguese and In English.</p>
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<p>Para além do convencional: vozes do sul.</p> <p>Beyond the mainstream: Voices from the south.</p>	<p>Por quais motivos conhecemos mais bandas/cantores estadunidenses? <i>Why do we know more American bands/singers?</i></p> <p>Que cantores/as e bandas costumamos ouvir? Por que realizamos essas escolhas musicais? <i>Which singers and bands do we usually listen to? Why do we make these musical choices?</i></p>	<p>Content objectives:</p> <p>Understand english lyrics. Relate the language used in music lyrics with social and cultural aspects.</p> <p>Reflect on musical tastes the individual perceptions about music.</p> <p>Get to know the African origin of most of the musical genres we like.</p> <p>Objectives of language use:</p> <p>Research and interpret the meanings of the chosen song lyrics.</p> <p>Interpret metaphors through the lyrics of the songs. Identify slang and linguistic expressions in different musical genres and artists.</p> <p>Express opinions about music lyrics, musical genres, and artists in English and Portuguese.</p> <p>Understand videos in Portuguese and English about the origin of musical genres.</p>	<p>Video about music genres</p> <p>Songs</p>	<p>Drawing, poem, painting, sculpture... something that helps to express what this song makes the person feel.</p> <p>Songs sung by community musicians</p>
<p>Curte o ritmo: músicas de que gostamos. Enjoy the beat: Songs we like.</p>	<p>Qual a origem das músicas que escutamos? <i>What is the origin of the songs we listen to?</i></p> <p>Que elementos contribuem para o nosso gosto musical (sonoridade, melodia, cultura de massa, influências de pessoas próximas...)? <i>What elements contribute to our musical taste (sound, melody, mass culture, the influence of people close to us...)?</i></p>	<p>Content objectives:</p> <p>Knowing songs from different cultures expanded the cultural repertoire.</p> <p>Perceive the particularity of musical tastes as something personal.</p> <p>Identify different sounds, lyrics, etc., and understand how these elements of music affect each.</p> <p>Objectives of language use:</p> <p>Reflect on the semantic field of words that compose the lyrics of the songs.</p> <p>Relate the linguistic composition of the lyrics of the song with their meaning effects. Express your opinion and feelings about a song orally and in writing in English and Portuguese.</p>	<p>Music Lyrics Photo Post on Instagram Map Comment on Youtube</p>	<p>Comment on Youtube about a music video</p>

Citações e músicas: nossos lemas. Quotes and songs: Our personal mottos.	Por quais motivos algumas letras de música fazem sentido para mim? Why do some song lyrics are meaningful to me? Como essa escolha se relaciona com a minha história? How does this choice relate to my story?	Content objectives: Relate the content of music lyrics with life experiences. Objectives of language use: To relate English phrases with Portuguese noticing the semantic differences between translations. Talk about my experiences and feelings.	Quote lyrics Publication on Pinterest	Phrases/quotations for the production of t-shirts or posters
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Table 4: The final course syllabus framework- Modules I & III

Source: The authors

9 FINAL THOUGHTS

Our designed syllabus, rooted in the translanguaging perspective, aims to transcend disciplinary boundaries and connect emerging linguistic understandings in the classroom to conceptual knowledge through collaborative tasks (Welp; García, 2022). Our work is envisioned to create a safe and welcoming learning environment where students can discuss ideas, reflect, and interact in both Portuguese and English. The research instruments, including questionnaires and conversation circles, have proven effective in understanding individual and group characteristics, providing valuable input for instructional planning. The pedagogical approach employed, justified by the translanguaging perspective, aligns with the goal of developing language practices and supporting critical collective reflection on important social issues often overlooked by the traditional school system.

Throughout the course development, we championed the recognition of our racialized emergent bilingual students' rich repertoire, encompassing historical, philosophical, geographical, political, and scientific elements. By appreciating their histories, experiences, and prior knowledge, we adhered to Freire's (1994) principles, carefully crafting instruction that introduces critical perspectives on social inequality, diversity, racism, sexism, and human rights. Our efforts contribute to decolonizing both our students' thoughts and our own.

The carefully designed lessons aim to unleash participants' creativity and freedom of speech, fostering a learning environment that embraces diversity and challenges prevailing norms. We hope that our work serves as inspiration for similar educational initiatives rooted in dialogue, liberation, and transgression, particularly targeting racialized emergent bilinguals in marginalized communities. In the context of Brazil and other global south countries, projects guided by critical, decolonial, and translanguaging perspectives are imperative to combat educational inequality. Moving forward, our commitment remains strong as we continue to pursue the decolonization of our thoughts and practices, firmly believing that translanguaging pedagogy has the potential to revolutionize language education by incorporating our complete selves into each lesson.

In future research, it is imperative to further investigate the intersectionality of language education, racial disparities, and social inequality. Exploring aspects such as the impact of language policies, teacher development programs, and community involvement can provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in promoting equitable language education. Additionally, investigating the potential of decolonial and translanguaging approaches for students' empowerment, identity formation, and academic success can further contribute to advancing educational practices that address the unique needs of racialized communities.

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Received on February 13, 2024. Accepted on October 21, 2024.