ARTIGO

DOSSIÊ QUESTÕES RACIAIS, EM INTERSECÇÃO, COMO AGENTES DE TRANSFORMAÇÃO NO CAMPO DOS ESTUDOS DA LINGUAGEM

REFLECTIONS ON BEING A LANGUAGE EDUCATOR IN BRAZIL AND THE UNITED STATES: WHY RACIAL IDENTITIES ALWAYS MATTER

(Reflexiones sobre ser un educador de idiomas en Brasil y Estados Unidos: por qué las identidades raciales siempre importan)

(Reflexões sobre ser uma educadora linguística no Brasil e nos Estados Unidos: por que identidades raciais sempre importam)

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RESUMO

Este artigo visa a compartilhar algumas perspectivas sobre ser educador de línguas no Brasil e nos Estados Unidos. Meu foco principal é em experiências de aprendizagem e ensino racializadas e como elas podem moldar nossa práxis em estudos de linguagem. O conceito de interseccionalidade (CRENSHAW, 1989) é fundamental para minha discussão, enquadrada em três eixos principais: raça, linguagem e classe. Utilizo a autoetnografia como processo e método de reflexão sobre minhas experiências sobre o que vejo a partir de minhas lentes transnacionais. A discussão explora como as experiências racializadas são importantes em dois contextos que são tão semelhantes, mas tão diferentes.

Palavras-chave: Estudos Linguísticos, autoetnografia, formação de professores

ABSTRACT

This paper aims at sharing some perspectives on being a language educator in Brazil and the United States. My main focus is on racialized learning and teaching experiences and how they may shape our praxis in language studies. The concept of intersectionality (CRENSHAW, 1989) is fundamental to my discussion, framed around three main threads: race, language, and class. I use autoethnography as a process and a method for reflection on my experiences concerning what I see from my transnational lenses. The discussion explores how racialized experiences matter in two contexts that are so similar yet so different.

Keywords: Language studies, autoethnography, teacher education

RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene como objetivo compartir algunas perspectivas sobre ser un educador de idiomas en Brasil y los Estados Unidos. Mi enfoque principal son las experiencias racializadas de enseñanza y aprendizaje, y cómo pueden dar forma a nuestra praxis en los estudios de lenguaje. El concepto de interseccionalidad (CRENSHAW, 1989) es fundamental para mi discusión, enmarcada en torno a tres hilos principales: raza, lengua y clase. Utilicé la auto etnografía como proceso y método de reflexión sobre mis experiencias respecto a lo que veo desde mis lentes transnacionales. La discusión explora cómo las experiencias racializadas importan en dos contextos que son tan similares pero tan diferentes.

Palabras clave: Estudios de Lenguaje, auto etnografía, formación docente.

After working for more than two decades in Brazilian higher education, I started working at a University in the United States. Being a Black Brazilian woman, with my race stated in my birth certificate as parda, I find myself between two different realities concerning the impacts of slavery in two of the largest countries in America. Both Brazil and the United States struggle with racism in particular ways. Historically, Brazil can be perceived as a fake racial democracy, while the United States is known for the Civil Rights movement created to abolish institutional racial segregation.

This paper is framed by experiences I lived in from 2020 and 2021. This time frame is meaningful because it is marked by significant events that have made racism visible in the two countries for very similar reasons. In 2020, both countries had to handle the trauma of police violence against Black bodies. In the United States, an unarmed Black man, 46-year-old George Floyd, was murdered in Minneapolis by a white police officer. In Brazil, five-year-old Miguel Otávio Santana da Silva died when he fell from the ninth floor of the high-rise where his mother worked as a domestic worker for a white family in Recife, a city in northeast Brazil. Miguel, a Black child, was left in the care of a white woman, Sarí Corte Real, his mother's employer, as his mother, Mirtes Renata Santana de Souza, was requested to take the white family's dog for a walk. In the United States, the media showed Floyd's last moments, before and while an officer killed him by pressing his knee into Floyd's neck. In Brazil, the audience could see Miguel's last moments of life, as the media broadcasted security camera footage showing how the white employer pushed the top floor bottom and left Miguel alone inside the service elevator. The imprint of slavery both in Brazil and the US was acutely felt in these two moments of 2020. Floyd's killing triggered protests in different countries, and, in Recife, Brazilian protesters took the streets claiming justice for little Miguel and marched protesting against police brutality against Black Youth. In 2020, anti-racism protests swept the world, and Brazil and the United States once more were trying to heal the wounds of anti-Black racism that is structural to both countries.

A challenging year, 2020 was also the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic. Brazil and the United States were severely affected by Covid-19. In both countries, the Afro-descendant populations were more drastically impacted by the first waves of the pandemic. Both countries were led by presidents who responded to the outbreaks of Covid-19 by publicly minimizing its impacts and neglecting important public health measures (KAKISINA *et al*, 2022; FREITAS; NEGREIROS, 2021). Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, and Donald Trump in the US "responded to outbreaks by publicly downplaying the significance of the crisis and argued that overly restrictive health measures would create too sizable an economic risk" (BÉLAND *et al*. 2021, p. 413). The racism that pervades Brazil and the US increased Black communities' exposure to pandemic risks within their reduced access to quality healthcare (MINGO, 2021; GOES *et al*., 2020).

This article considers various approaches and understandings of autoethnography. Autoethnography is used in this paper as a retrospective analytical approach (Buckley, 2015) where I relate on some fragments of my memories to examine how they are interrelated or related to the environment and others. Hence, I start this paper by introducing how an ethnographic approach is used to guide my work. Then, I organize my discussion in three threads: Language, race and social class. This autoethnography is based on my transnational condition as a Black Brazilian scholar working in the United States.

Being a transnational scholar, during 2020 and 2021, I was confronted with the condition of being in-between two different places. Geographically, my house, my job, and my body were in the US. However, my family, most of my friends, and my home were in Brazil. Being an Afro-descendant woman, my racial place is very well marked wherever I am. Despite my blackness being very different in Brazil or the US, the pain caused by anti-black racism is the same. My in-betweenness, then, reflected that I was living these two years positioned as a Black Brazilian professional in the US, observing, in my two countries, presidential leadership whose discourses supported xenophobia, anti-immigration, anti-blackness, and anti-democracy. Then, where was I among all the chaotic scenarios that emerged in 2020 and 2021? What did it mean to be a Black scholar in Brazil and the United States? These questions guided my engagement with profound self-reflective moments in the past years. From an autoethnographic point of view, this paper aims to share some of my analysis of how I experience my profession through racialized experiences in two different countries. I hope that this paper may contribute to the critique of the persistent color-blindness that persistently affects language studies.

1. AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AS CRITICAL AND EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH

Qualitative research allows the discussion of possible meanings of the complexity of human experience without providing a single and definitive account of reality, offering less false accounts of experience (EZZY, 2003). The findings and implications of qualitative research represent a

contribution to a broader conversation around a topic. According to Ezzy, "the hope is that a better understanding can inform political conversations and political actions, resulting in greater equity and justice." (EZZY, 2003, p. 30). Ethnography and correlated research methods, such as autoethnography (MACKINLAY, 2019) and duoethnography (SAWYER; NORRIS, 2013), are powerful in generating research that merges research and life. Paulo Freire sees education as a political act, and educational research, as I see it, also needs to be a tool to transform unequal and unfair practices.

My intent in this paper is to focus on my own life and professional experiences, and autoethnography is the approach that allows me to dive into self-reflection and analyze these experiences. My understanding of autoethnography aligns with Diversi and Moreira (2017), who see autoethnography "as a way of knowing that has the potential to examine social justice, systems of oppression, and neocolonialism from our encounters with experiences lived in-between identities and worlds" (DIVERSI; MOREIRA, 2017, p. 39). Both a process and a product (ELLIS *et al*., 2011), autoethnography recognizes self-experience as a social phenomenon valuable and worthy of examination (EDWARDS, 2021).

Despite a central focus on self-experience, autoethnographic accounts and approaches also involve others. As stated by Bochner (2017), "every story of the self is a story of relations with others" (BOCHNER, 2017, p. 76). The relational nature of social identities is, as I see it, one of the strongest reasons why autoethnography is a potent tool for discussing the experience of members of minoritized groups, whose accounts of oppression, exclusion, and injustice are still seen as cathartic, self-victimization, and some paranoid thinking.

The writing of an autoethnography is not framed by any rigid structure. In this article, I use the metaphor of tapestry to explain how I will recollect my memories and weave them together to create a single work. The threads of a tapestry roughly illustrate the complexities and inter-dependence of the strands that will guide my writing.

An essential concept in this work is intersectionality. According to Crenshaw (2015), intersectionality is both an analytic sensibility and a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power. Intersectionality is then a lens for seeing how various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other (Steinmetz, 2020). For example, my professional identity is intersected with my race, class, and linguistic identities. These social identities situate my life with larger contexts of power that permeate and structure my experience in unequal social orders. I will always identify myself as a Black Brazilian scholar and a working-class scholar. However, how I experience and perform these identities in Brazil and the United States are affected by how the two different countries have historically, socially, and legally addressed the challenges posed by racism.

1.1 First Thread: Language

Being an international scholar and speaking English as a second language also positions me differently in the United States and Brazil. In Brazil, I did not differ from most of my peers concerning my birthplace or my first language. My first language is Portuguese, and I learned standard Portuguese at home. I do not believe I have suffered any form of linguistic racism (NASCIMENTO, 2019) or prejudice. In Brazil, as Frantz Fanon asserts, the historical processes of racial mixing instilled in Black people the belief that to talk is to speak like white people (Fanon, 2008).

I learned English mostly when I was in college and became a fluent speaker. In Brazil, being fluent in English means owning important cultural capital that can be converted into social, or economic capital (BOURDIEU, 1984, 1987). For example, early in my career I worked at a prestigious private language school, being one of the few Black teachers in that system. However, my race and original social class were latent traits that affected how I perceived myself or was perceived by others in my profession. These social identities crossed my identity as an English teacher, as my body is not the body of those who have access to learning foreign languages. I remember when I introduced myself as the English teacher, and my interlocutor would ask, "... but, do you speak English?"; students would ask if I had traveled abroad, leading me to feel I owed them something, that my English was not enough.

I was also one of the few Black applied linguists in my early career as a college professor, and one of the first in my field to racialize conversations about race and foreign language education. Teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) brings people from various racialized backgrounds together in teaching, learning, and research. As Kubota (2006) states, race, racialization, and racism are all intrinsically tied to the contact zones created by teaching English in different parts of the world, and constitute significant research topics. In this sense, being a Black person teaching English in prestigious institutions was not a common situation in Brazil, and I was the only Afro-descendant person in many professional settings.

My English in the United States has different meanings. In a midwestern city of the United States, I teach, write, and interact with others in my English, and I have a foreign accent. A speaker's accent, which reflects their pronunciation style, reveals information about their social identity (KIM et al., 2019). I am fluent in English and navigate Portuguese and English with ease. In English, I perform my identity as a transnational scholar, and an immigrant. On my campus, attending conferences or professional meetings, I am in safe zones where I expect my peers to be critically aware of my transnational condition. In other spaces and everyday life situations, I do not think that people will have reflected on language ideologies or linguistic prejudice (LIPPI-GREEN, 2012).

Research has evidenced how language may impact listeners' moods and thinking differently depending on their group membership (LÓPEZ; WU, 2019). The monolingual ideology that prevails in the United States equates bilingualism with the category of limited English proficiency, and language practices other than those of "native speakers" channel ideas about inferiority (ROSA, 2019). As Kim et al. (2019) point out, listeners assess not only the speaker's verbal performance but also their overall competence:

> The perception of lack of fluency of nonnative speakers can lead to subtle forms of discrimination, underevaluation of foreign employees' competences, and fewer career opportunities (KIM *et al,* 2019, p. 74)

The concept of raciolinguistics, or how language shapes race and how race shapes language (ROSA, 2016), is crucial for discussing how I navigate higher education in the United States. In higher education, international scholars are seen as "drivers of international consciousness at universities; they are often top researchers" (ALTBACH; YUDKEVICH, 2017, p. 8). Altbach and Yudkevich (2017) highlight the importance of transnational faculty for the contemporary global academic environment and see transnational scholars as relevant to both the symbolic and practical aspects of internationalization, as distinguished scholars are recruited by higher education institutions worldwide. However, in a study by McCrocklin *et al*. (2018), focusing on student perceptions of university instructor accent data elicited from students, showed linguistic stereotyping and discrimination concerning their willingness to take a class with international instructors. Language, national origin, class and gender intersect in ways that affect, for instance, how students perceive faculty competence.

Both in Brazil and the United States, the embodied identities related to race, class and language of faculty from minoritized groups affect how they experience the academy. Gutierrez y Muhs *et al*. (2012), in their book Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia, explore the challenges faced by women of color in academia and how they are seen presumed incompetent in their roles as researchers, instructors, and administrators, as explained in the following excerpt:

> This book demonstrates, however, that the women of color who have managed to enter the rarefied halls of academia as full-time faculty find themselves in a peculiar situation. Despite their undeniable privilege, women of color faculty members are entrenched in byzantine patterns of race, gender, and class hierarchy that confound popular narratives about meritocracy. Far from being above the fray, faculty at institutions of higher education are immersed in the daunting inequities and painful struggles taking place throughout an increasingly multicultural America. (GUTIERREZ Y MUHS *et al*., 2012, p. 2).

In the U.S., I took training regarding Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that prohibits sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity) discrimination in any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance system. U.S. universities generally have specific offices that enforce Title IX. Administrative and faculty staff, and in many universities, students are required to take various training regarding Title IX. I was surprised to find out that it was compulsory to take that training and others regarding research ethics and other topics. In addition, title XI enforces that the administrators, witnesses, or the victims should report discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation-based discrimination. While taking the training, I felt some relief learning that the campus community had an opportunity to get some education regarding gender relations and develop the awareness of the legal aspects of discriminating against gender identity and sexual identities.

There is also different training required, or optional, for faculty on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) offered by my university. One example of optional training on U.S. campuses is the Safe Zone. This program teaches about LGBTQ+ identities, gender and sexuality, prejudice, assumptions, and privilege. When faculty complete the training, they receive a sticker or a sign indicating safe zone training. The stickers displayed on office doors are visual indicators that the faculty office is a safe zone for LGBTQ+ individuals, and the faculty member is prepared to support this group.

I am not naive to consider that the above-mentioned training and professional development initiatives guarantee the end of discrimination on campus. Programs for staff development do not ensure empathy or anti-racist, anti-sexist, or oppressive behaviors. However, the absence of initiatives such as administrative instances focusing on DEI, Title IX, or sexual identities are examples of how an institution can avoid victims ending up being helpless, as well as models for showing that the institutions will not tolerate any forms of discrimination.

Professional development for language teachers has been the focus of my work for two decades. In Brazil, my struggle and advocacy are related to the need for excellence in foreign language teaching in public schools (JORGE, 2009, 2018). I also advocated for multiple languages in Brazilian schools (JORGE, 2001) and that the majors in Linguistics and Literature should not neglect teacher education in favor of non-teaching degrees. Unfortunately, Brazilian universities operate under the false understanding that Brazil is a monolingual country, and rarely a department offers languages that do not belong to Classic (Greek and Latin), Romance (French, Spanish, Italian), Germanic (English, German), and Vernacular (Portuguese) languages. Indigenous or African languages have minimal spaces, if any, in our curricula.

In the United States, I observe how immigration has shaped multilingual classrooms. For example, in Saint Louis, school districts have language access teams that support students whose English is not the first language and their families. In addition, interpretation services to support families in school meetings, robocalls in multiple languages, and personalized phone calls in various languages are available for sharing information with families.

My work in the United States involves preparing language and content teachers to successfully teach English Language Learners (ELLs), or emergent bilinguals (E.B.). The expanding number of ELLs has a significant influence on schools and teachers across the United States. Schools in Saint Louis also reflect the linguist diversity of the community, and the schools may have students whose first language may be Arabic, French, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Vietnamese. In the TESOL courses, undergraduate and graduate students learn approaches, methods, and techniques (RICHARDS; RODGERS, 2001) aligned with state standards and the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) (ECHEVARRIA; VOGT, 2017) and Wida (measure of developing English language) instruction and assessment models (WIDA, 2020).

Teacher educators are under pressure to ensure that pre-service and in-service teacher education in all disciplines and grade levels are equipped to teach emergent bilinguals (RAMIREZ et al, 2018). Teacher education programs, especially TESOL (teaching English as second or other languages) graduate programs prepare teachers for ELL. The ethical commitment to prepare teachers to teach emergent bilinguals successfully raises questions concerning the specifics and commonalities of teacher education in general.

Lucas and Villegas (2010) developed a framework that supports teacher educators to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge, orientations, and skills for teaching linguistically diverse students. The linguistically relevant teaching (LRT) framework developed by Lucas and Villegas (2010) includes seven tenets: sociolinguistic consciousness, value for linguistic diversity, advocacy for ELLs, learning about ELLs backgrounds, experiences, and proficiencies, identifying linguistic demands of classroom discourse and tasks, knowing, and applying principles of second language acquisition, and scaffolding instruction to promote ELLs learning.

I see that the United States would benefit from the discussions made in Brazil concerning teaching languages to forcibly displaced immigrants. The concept of Welcoming Language present in the studies of scholars such as López (2018), Amado, (2013) and Miranda and López (2019), who focus on Portuguese as a Welcoming Language (PWLg), would also be helpful to teachers in the United States, just as the LRT framework would be helpful for the Brazilian context.

Teaching languages to immigrants is not enough, according to the idea embedded in the Portuguese word acolhimento, translated here as welcoming. The etymology of the word acolher in

Portuguese leads to the multiple meanings of the Latin word *accogliere*: to hold, to lodge, to shelter. When a language is taught to a community of people sheltered in a host country, the community also needs to be educated about transnational migrants, towards an anti-xenophobic, anti-racist education, and, ultimately, developing the awareness that

> The assumption that people will live their lives in one place, according to one set of national and cultural norms, in countries with impermeable national borders, no longer holds. Rather, in the 21st century, more and more people will belong to two or more societies at the same time….Transnational migrants work, pray, and express their political interests in several contexts rather than in a single nation-state. Some will put down roots in a host country, maintain strong homeland ties, and belong to religious and political movements that span the globe. These allegiances are not antithetical to one another. (LEVITT, 2004)

Being a transnational scholar in the United States and being aware of how my language shapes my experience, I feel the need to connect my personal experiences to my professional life. Similar to my scholarly agenda in Brazil, in the U.S, I see the urgent need to educate teachers and the community to develop multiple understandings of languaging and immigration. I also anticipate a future for Brazilian classrooms where various languages will be more present, so we need to start educating Brazilian teachers for challenges to come. Teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners, as I see it, require intentional anti-racist, anti-xenophobic and inclusive approaches to teaching that need to be part of teacher education curricula.

1.2 Second Thread: Race

Life led me to move to the United States and start a new phase in my career. In Brazil, I taught courses to prepare teachers to teach foreign languages. In the United States, I am an endowed professor of education and international studies, and, besides my research in these fields, I teach courses that prepare teachers to work with emergent bilinguals (GARCÍA et al., 2008). I acknowledge that knowing English, along with my scholarly work and previous international experiences, were important affordances for my professional transition. I see that my experience in Brazil, personal and professional, is an asset for my current context. My campus is in a city where the racial divide is clear. In Saint Louis's history, policies and practices from the government and various sectors of society have systematically excluded African Americans from access to decent housing, quality education, and health care (WEATHERSBY; DAVIS, 2019). Delmar Boulevard is the line that divides Saint Louis on maps, showing the educational, spatial, economic, and other discrepancies between North and South St. Louis City. However, as explained in a quote from the St. Louis Magazine:

> What those maps don't show are the ghost neighborhoods, once-black communities ripped out of both city and county. Gates and wrought-iron fences that segregate wealth. Tight ethnic enclaves. Blocks, gangs, and country clubs, each with their own exclusions. Two states sharing a metro area and vying for its resources. (COOPERMAN, 2014)

When I came to Saint Louis, I knew what racial discrimination is like in the United States and how severe the education inequalities for African Americans are. However, becoming a member of this community meant that I was making sense of new spaces, both in academia and in the city. Coming from a large city in Brazil, I knew how racial and social inequalities affect the education of minoritized populations.

For more than a decade teaching in Brazilian Higher education, my students' clinical practice in foreign language teaching took place in public schools, where the structural inequalities in Brazil were visible. I quickly learned how language education needs a racialized pedagogy by supervising my students' training and analyzing their discourses about the public schools, their students, families, and communities.

During the past years, I saw critical race theory (DELGADO *et al.,* 2017) is under attack by conservatives in the USA (BOHANON, 2021). Some states have banned it from schools. The critical race theory (CRT) movement is, according to a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power:

> The movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up, but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, context, group- and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law. (DELGADO *et al*., 2017, p. 3)

Living in the social isolation of the pandemic, witnessing the race-based health disparities in two countries, I kept thinking about my role as a critical teacher educator in the post-pandemic world (JORGE, 2020; JORGE; BARBOSA, 2020). I could not stop relating the discourses against CRT circulating in the USA to the discourses produced in Brazil during the first years of implementing affirmative action measures in Brazilian higher education. The ideas of reverse racism, victimism, national divide, and the absurdities that I used to hear in Brazil were part of a reaction against the movement Black Lives Matter (LEBRON, 2017). The efforts and insistence of those who hold privileges to deny racism need to be addressed and challenged by our research and teaching agendas. Language studies is a privileged space for engaging in anti-racist education.

1.3   Third Thread: Social Class

I remember my college years as the years I discovered new worlds. Even though I had to work to cover expenses at home and at school, public higher education in Brazil is tuition-free. I took classes in the mornings and evenings, and I worked afternoons. My campus was a lively place. Many professional associations hold their conferences on our campus, and students could attend events without spending extra money. Junior research and extension programs had students present their work at scientific events. Students from different majors mingled at the campus restaurant, parties, and political events.

There were also free cultural events and free concerts with renowned singers. I remember seeing live shows of great artists such as Elza Soares, Tom Zé, Gilberto Gil, and Chico César. Famous theater companies performed on campus, and many events I would never be able to attend if I wasn't a student in a tuition-free institution were part of my college experience. I traveled to different cities and states in Brazil to participate in student-led events. I experienced college in the classrooms, but all the other opportunities I had meant to enhance my cultural capital and educational experience.

During the pandemic, I noticed my students struggle to keep their jobs and be able to pay tuition. Many students live away from home, which is expensive; others come from working-class families and are entirely responsible for college expenses. These students don't have much time to enjoy all campus activities at ordinary times. Moreover, academic events are generally held in conference centers. Campus life is different in the US. I observed how students were worried about Covid-19 affecting their families or their ability to continue working. They were concerned that their struggle would affect their grades, resulting in paying more tuition. Some of my students are parents; others are teachers learning to handle remote schooling.

Social class affects how students experience higher education. Both in Brazil and the United States, I noticed administrative efforts to create a more inclusive experience for all students in my work. College, social engagement programs, may assist working-class students more than middle- and upper-class students, and involvement in college influences working-class students' educational aspirations, hope, and determination (SORIA; BULTMANN, 2014). However, the curriculum needs to be relevant to working-class students beyond social engagement. The sense of marginalization that often accompanies many students may be reduced by affirming class identities in our teaching service and research activity. In the specific case of literacies, languages, and culture, I envision curriculum design through the lens of social identities, addressing how inequality persists in some groups' lives and denouncing the fallacy of meritocracy. The intersections of race, class, language, and other

identities should be an essential part of the decision-making processes we engage in every facet of our academic work.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: WEAVING THE THREADS

The US is a different geographical territory where I continue being a scholar in language studies. It is where I am making new meanings of higher education, professional roles, and identities. The condition of being transnational permeates how I experience life in the United States. My transnational identity is crossed by language, race, and class, despite the different meanings this identity takes in this new space.

The intersectionality of language, class, and race marks transnational scholars' experience. However, it is vital to introduce a difference between Brazilian and U.S. academic policies and efforts to address potential discrimination at the workplace. Professional development for faculty and administrative staff is an example I have constantly reflected on.

My social and psychological affiliations are transnational (CANARAGAJAH, 2019). I crossed the border just one year before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the conservative governments of my two countries sent hostile and violent messages against minoritized groups. Efforts of making the familiar unfamiliar mark every experience, so I can see what the places tell me. I am always in-between worlds: the pandemic, the territories showing the impacts of racism, the uncertainty concerning better times in the future. As I write this paper, I am making sense of two experiences in language studies. My references are two countries that have racist structures. My body, marked by my race, ethnicity, and social class, is a different text for different readers, and my languages position me differently in both countries. I re-read myself every time I make meaning of my new experiences. I see, for example, one institution where a whole legal approach exists to prevent and condemn discrimination at the workplace. In my previous experience, I saw institutions updating anti-racist discourses but operating under the myth of racial democracy in daily practice.

As any other aspect of our lives, the field of language studies is permeated by racism. A majority of white researchers have been socialized in racist structures, and many still quietly keeping their unearned privileges. Brazilian higher education has started to seek some commitment with anti-racist initiatives less than two decades ago concerning academic cultures and structures. Implementing affirmative action measures and racial quotas in Brazilian universities was a significant starting point for administrators to stop enabling colorblindness at every level of academic life. The present times have shown some significant advances that have taken place in Brazilian higher education. However, I do not see that we have not reached the smallest amount of opportunities,

possibilities, and needs pointed out in research made by scholars who have long problematized and denounced racism in Brazilian Academia. As Nascimento and Windle (2021) state:

> Generations of white linguists reported social inequalities in the absence of Black scholars, adopting what sociologist Guerreiro Ramos (1954) termed "Black-as-theme." Black-as-theme is defined by Guerreiro Ramos as a mere object of analysis, by contrast to "Black-as-life," a dynamic, plural subject which cannot be pinned-down. Black-as-theme characterizes the unmarked and universalizing perspective of the white subject (Menezes de Souza 2018), which in Brazil takes the whiteness of the global north as its exemplar. (NASCIMENTO; WINDLE, 2021, p. 284)

Departments of Black Studies, African American Studies, and Africana Studies have existed for decades in the U.S. I remember, for example, that at the University of California Santa Barbara, I witnessed classes of 150 students from different majors taking a course on the education of the Black child. At that time, I did not know about anything similar in Brazilian universities. In 2003, Law 10,639/03, which establishes requirements for teaching Afro-Brazilian history and culture in schools, was enacted. Law 10, 639/03 has completed its 21st anniversary and is still not fully part of our university's souls. As Nascimento and Windle (2021) remind us, the federal government canceled affirmative action measures for graduate programs in 2020 (a move that was reversed), and undergraduate affirmative action initiatives established under Lula da Silva's left-wing government will expire in 2022. The current government is opposed to their renewal. The legislation that opened access to Brazil's most relevant and tuition-free higher education institutions, if not renewed, will directly affect poor, primarily black, students, and the entrance to the prestigious public research universities will, again, be confined to the predominantly white Brazilian elites.

In times of transdisciplinary approaches to knowledge construction, there is a long journey ahead of us, scholars from both Brazil and the U.S. However, I believe the myth of a racial democracy, which denies the existence of racism in Brazil, has kept Brazil behind. Despite the emphasis on teaching, acknowledging the structural inequalities based on oppressed identities should matter to every sense of academic life. For example, even though most Whites benefit from white supremacy's systemic brutality, many scholars still deny believing in racial hierarchies or participating in racist academic praxis (KROSKRITY, 2021). Concerning language studies, research teaching, internationalization, and service could intentionally establish a new agenda towards a transformative approach to language studies. Again, intentionality is the keyword, as I do not believe that claiming incidental contributions to progressive actions has not done the job.

Based on this autoethnography, I see as an excellent example of possible directions for language studies, the transperipheral paradigm explored by Windle and al. (2020). A group of scholars in Brazil put together transperipheral literacies and projections at a particular nexus that

connect scenarios beyond national borders. Souza (2011, 2020) coined the term literacies of reexistance to refer to the ways Brazilian hip-hop communities integrate local and translational Black identities. Souza (2011, 2020) highlights how practices of reexistance "are built on the materiality of participants' lives, connections to racial, social and political issues in Brazil and beyond." (WINDLE *et al.*, 2020, p. 1581). Muniz (2020) approaches literacies from the lenses of the ancestral epistemologies and interactions of Afro-Brazilian religions. Maia (2018) research explores how the everyday struggle of Brazilian favelas' residents is transformed through art, and survival literacies are shaped by their experiences for surviving in the periphery (WINDLE *et al*., 2020).

Race matters whatever identity intersections we consider. Language studies as a political act will benefit from trying new paradigms to make meanings of the contemporary landscapes of languaging.

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