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Race and Language Teaching

Making The Case For
Anti-Racist Practices in
EFL\ESL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

The compilation thesis “Race and Language Teaching: Making the case for Anti-Racist Practices in EFL\ESL Classrooms” is configured as a review of the available literature on issues of racism and otherization in the EFL\ESL classroom. The thesis will analyze the complex relations between language, language teaching and the categories of race, ethnicity and nativeness through a feminist and post-structuralist lens. The first chapter introduces the concept of Critical Race Theory and its key elements; The second chapter analyzes how racism and white supremacy are profoundly embedded in the field of TESOL and Linguistics; The third chapter presents a review of the available methodologies of language education, highlighting best and worst practices related to anti-racism.

INDEX

INTRODUCTION	4
1. KEY ELEMENTS OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY	8
1. An Introduction to CRT	8
2. Origin and History of CRT	9
3. Tenets of CRT	10
4. The Social Constructivist Nature of Race, Ethnicity and Whiteness	14
i. Race	14
ii. Ethnicity and Culture	16
iii. Whiteness and White Identity	17
1. Whiteness and Class Struggle in Britain	18
2. Whiteness in America	19
3. From Whiteness to White Supremacy	23
5. Conclusion	26
2. RACE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING	33
1. Introduction	33
2. Racism and Language	34
3. Linguaging and Nativist Discourses	36
4. The Case of African American Vernacular English	37
i. Origin and Use	37
ii. AAVE as a Systematic and Rule Governed English Variation	38
iii. The Tense-Aspect System of AAVE	40
1. Invariant <i>be</i>	40
2. Stressed been [BIN]	41
3. Auxiliary Particle <i>Done</i>	42
4. Resultative <i>Be Done</i>	43
iv. The Consensus on AAVE's Internal Structure	43
v. Bias and Resistance against AAVE in School Settings	44
1. The <i>Bridge</i> Reading Program	44
2. The Oakland Experiment: Ebonics in the Classroom	48
5. Racialization, Discriminatory Hiring Practices and TOC	50
i. Native Speakers and The Ownership of English	51
ii. Racialized TESOL Professionals	52
iii. Discriminatory Hiring Practices	57
6. The Racialization of White Teachers	60
i. Race Relations and Coping With Whiteness	61
ii. De-neutralizing Whiteness: Avoidance and Negativity	62
iii. The Effects of a Whiteness-Informed Teaching	64

7. Conclusion	66
3. ANTI-RACIST MATERIALS IN THE CLASSROOM	75
1. Introduction	75
2. Critical Pedagogy	75
i. Origin of Critical Pedagogy	76
ii. CP and Language Teaching	81
3. Critical Race Theory and TESOL	87
4. Intercultural Language Learning	90
5. Proposing Materials for EFL Classrooms	92
i. Baby Names – Discovering Migration through Onomastics	94
ii. Intercultural Menu	96
iii. Changing Dress Codes	98
4. CONCLUSION	102

INTRODUCTION

The thesis *Race and Language Teaching: Making the case for Anti-Racist Practices in EFL\ESL classrooms* stems from my interest in race and ethnic relations – which, as we are going to find out, could be re-configured as *white supremacy* over every other group – and a likely innate passion for social justice.

Another factor influencing the theme of my work is my full-time job as an EFL educator in a private institution based in Rome. I have the fortune – and sometimes the burden – to teach passionate students with a strong interest in the culture of the language I represent, a culture that I have come to know from years of studying and researching and participating in the discourse on American social justice.

Presenting the culture of the language I teach and speak for most of my day has always been part of my work ethics. I've always been interested in how culture is taught and produced inside the classroom, making this topic a fundamental part of my academic career. When we translate theory into practice, however, a plethora of problems arise for both the teacher and the student: the first problem I had to face was understanding not only how to teach culture, but first and foremost *what culture to teach*. Which features of American culture have been, and still are, the most relevant to an EFL students from the other side of the ocean? What features I, as an Italian teacher with a strong American-sounding accent, have come to accept and interiorize? What is the *zeitgeist* of contemporary America and what parallels can be drawn with the lived experience of my Italian students?

The answer, I have been lead to believe, lies in the notions of race and ethnicity and the effect they have in the daily experience of people of color and whites alike. It would indeed be hard to explain what American culture is without taking into consideration what happened and what is happening right now in terms of race relationships; it would be even unfair to tell the story of the Mayflower anchoring at Cape Cod, to make my students daydream about Thanksgiving and the smell of roasted poultry without addressing the voices and concerns of Native American peoples reliving the trauma of being erased from history year after year. When they dream-wander along well-kept rows of suburban

homes, do they know what happened to Trayvon Martin and the reason he had been shot by a white police officer in 2012?

My students, and every one of us living in the Western hemisphere, are bombarded with information coming from America and England in the most disparate forms: from books to music, from movies to Tv series, the anglophone world has become a product to be consumed and our strongest inspiration, as well as a coercive force and a cultural empire that lead us to transform our world-views and customs.

Something as innocent as the consumption of American media can foster stereotypes and confirm bias in the minds of non-anglophone European students: when they listen to rap music, enjoy a Hollywood production, or binge-watch a crime tv-series, they are exposed to images of ghetto-dwelling blacks and Mexicans drug-lords; old and wise Native-American chiefs living a peaceful life in a reservation; Asian-American students struggling against demanding, strong-accented parents. But above all, they witness white Americans' stories of success. They see white faces living marvelous adventures, passionate love stories, terrible situations they overcome with the strength of their rationality and enterprising personality.

When it comes to the anglophone world, the narratives and myths that lie behind its culture(s), are firmly held in the hands of white people. This is something that, I've noticed, eludes Italian students' perceptions. As one of my American colleagues of color used to say "we all look the same" and "the only people of color we get to see are beggars on the streets and criminals on TV". We are not, admittedly, used to racial diversity: as I'm writing this words in a crowded library, I'm surrounded by Caucasian faces, some darker in hue but still definitely white.

Consequently, the problem of implementing race and ethnic issues into the curricula I have to teach is further problematized by the racial biases that my Italian student bring inside the classroom. Biases that led them to believe that a dark skin equals poverty, disease and criminal tendencies; that Muslims and everyone who comes from an Arab country must follow fundamentalist and conservative precepts; that Asian-Europeans are only good at menial jobs and lack imagination.

The ones above are all real comments I've received during the teaching hours or attitudes I have perceived when discussing topics such as food, the job-market, and education. Borne of the political climate in which my students, my colleagues and I live in, these

problematic episodes and mindsets risk to foster and recreate oppressive and racist dynamics both inside and outside the EFL classroom.

What I've noticed during my experience as both a student and a teacher, is the lack of reliable prompts to start a conversation about race and ethnicity within the vast array of commercial materials now at my disposal. Social justice in general seems to be largely overlooked. Within the coursebooks I've used, issues of racism, discrimination, class or gender are hardly ever presented: the main characters in the books are almost exclusively white native speakers; they all have a job and the possibility to travel; they are all able-bodied individuals with strong familiar bonds; everyone is heterosexual, with a healthy and fulfilled romantic life. Such a normative depiction of the world can hardly represent the complexities of a contemporary, multicultural society.

This thesis is the representation of my will to promote a more open attitude towards difference and race as informed by Anglo-American culture through language teaching. I will try to keep my work objective, but I can't deny the presence of activism as a strong component of this dissertation.

The thesis will be subdivided into three chapters: the first, Key Element of Critical Race Theory, will shed light on the theoretical framework I've decided to use throughout the rest of the chapters. The first chapter will deal in depth with the formation and reproduction of notions such as race, ethnicity, culture and whiteness and analyze the framework of Critical Race Theory.

In the second chapter, *Race and Language Teaching*, I will analyze the intersections between racism and the fields of TESOL and Applied Linguistics. I will draw from the available literature and divide the chapter into three case studies: the first concerns linguistic and racist attitudes towards African American Vernacular English and the effect they have on the literacy of black children; the second part of the chapter will deal with the racialization of TESOL professionals of color and the discriminatory hiring practices they are subjected to; the third and last part will analyze the attitudes of white teachers and the effect that a white identity can have on students and curricula. The aim of the second chapter is to show how TESOL and consequently EFL\ESL are "white dominated spaces".

The third and final chapters will deal with the intersections between Critical Race Theory, Critical Pedagogy and the framework of Intercultural Language Learning. The aim of the

chapter is to provide an overview of the available literature on the evolution of Critical Pedagogy and draw parallels between this approach and Intercultural Language Teaching, in order to develop anti-racist materials for the EFL classroom. The last part of the chapter will be dedicated to proposed classroom activities in line with the tenets and methodology I have analyzed during my work.

In my thesis, I will provide examples taken from ESL contexts as well, given their usefulness in raising concerns about racial relations in the classroom, but the main focus of the activity I will proposed will concern EFL.

CHAPTER I

KEY ELEMENTS OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY

1.1. An Introduction to CRT

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a body of knowledge and a framework of reference that aims to address the structural and socially determined causes of racial inequality; Critical Race Theory is strictly related to radical activism, providing a useful tool to unpack those practices and attitudes that cannot be described as overtly racist and discriminatory towards people of color. According to critical race theorists, racism is a systematic phenomenon that has a vital role in shaping society as we know it and its masterfully hidden behind liberal notions of equality, meritocracy, and cultural diversity. CRT can bring these seemingly unremarkable instances of racism to light and thus allow scholars of fields other than sociology and race studies to start researching the formation of racializing processes, inequitable power-relations and racist discourses across a variety of disciplines. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Martinez, 2014; Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010).

Due to this broadly applicable nature, CRT is hard to define in terms of position statements: there is no unitary voice within the field of CRT, which is constantly evolving and refining through different processes of self-enquiry and the scholarship experiences of its theorists (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010). What is shared between CRT scholars is their conceptualization of race and ethnicity as socially constructed – with said social constructivist notion informing the very nature of my thesis - and their commitment to unpack and ultimately dismantle the various systematic means through which people of color are subjugated (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

In this chapter I will analyze the origin and history of Critical Race Theory and its core tenets; I will highlight useful notions such as “race”, “ethnicity” and “whiteness” and investigate their formation and development in relation to colonial and post-colonial processes and American slavery.

The chapter at hand would be useful to provide the reader with key elements of race studies and Critical Race Theory that might be a far cry from the usually apolitical and ahistorical academic background of young educational linguists, as well as a tool to

uncover seemingly harmless classroom practices as informed by white supremacy and racial bias.

1.2. Origin and History of CRT

Critical Race Theory originated in the US during the 1970's and 1980's as independent groups of activists, lawyers and scholars of color started realizing that the advancements and achievements of the Civil Rights Movement had been stalling and losing its momentum (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT was conceptualized, at first, as a reaction to Critical Legal Studies (CLS), a movement that came to life during the 1970's and was mainly concerned with the ways in which the use of law had been utilized to maintain the *status quo* and uphold biases against marginalized groups (Unger, 1983). CLS' approach to racism, however, could be easily inscribed in a liberal, color-blind framework, which Critical Race theorists firmly opposed; that prompted the creation of their own legal doctrine based on race-conscious viewpoints and racial politics as guidelines for scholarly studies (Martinez, 2014).

CLS theorists' failure to acknowledge the particularity of race as far as the nature of discrimination is concerned, and the viewpoint from where they drew their racist critiques was considered by CRT scholars as insufficient to the understanding of race and racism in the USA. While CLS regarded race as effectively non-existent and a myth, drawing from notions of social constructivism, CRT addresses the weight that socially constructed realities have on the daily lives of people of color as well as their profound impact on policies and regulations (Martinez, 2014; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

During the years, the range of scientific fields influenced by CRT have broadened: CRT has touched subjects ranging from women and gender studies and education to statistics and communicative studies, spawning hybrid frameworks such as *Critical Race Feminism* (Wing, 2003), *Queer Ethnic and Indigenous Studies* (Hames-Garcia, 2013), *Critical Race Art History* (Halloway, 2016) and, most importantly for the aim of this thesis, *LangCrit*¹ (Crump, 2014) and *Critical Race Pedagogy* (Liggett, 2013).

¹ A proposed analytical and theoretical framework for the interpretation of linguistic phenomena as intersections between the *subject-as-heard* and the *subject-as-seen* – referencing the speaker racial makeup and their racialized speech patterns (Crump, 2014).

1.3. Tenets of CRT

Despite the heterogeneity and complexity of CRT as a framework of reference and the plethora of foci and subjects it has touched since its creation, we can still identify a set of basic tenets that constitutes its backbone:

- a. *Racism is normal, ordinary, and central as opposed to aberrational and exceptional* (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). It constitutes part of the foundation of Western societies and their ideologies and its paramount to the maintenance of the status quo, namely white supremacy over individuals of color (Villanueva, 2006). Racism and racist practices are so ingrained in the Western landscape that they look natural and ordinary in the eyes of white individuals; instances of white supremacy in schools, courts or across different media had never been fully recognized for what they really represented by society at large until CRT expanded its breadth as a critical tool of analysis for the daily life and media representation of people of color². Given the centrality of racism and its role in shaping the reality of white people and POC alike, formal conceptions of anti-racism and equality can only solve the most basic and overt forms of discrimination while effectively perpetrate and uphold old and new forms of racism (Olson, 2003). These new forms of racial discrimination, which are inscribed within full-fledged racial ideologies, are far from the blatant and violent racism of the Jim Crow era: color-blind racist ideologies are more subtle and difficult to recognize, since they configure contemporary racial discriminations and inequality as the outcome of non-racial dynamics (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Market dynamics, cultural limitations and naturally occurring phenomena lie at the root of the poorer conditions of ethnic minorities, trumping those notions of biological and moral inferiority that are still seen as epitomizing the very concept of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Bonilla-Silva (2006) further analyzes the notion of color-blind racism and the different frames through which it affects society at large. The author conceptualizes these frames as *tropes* that “set the path for interpreting information” (p. 26); the frames are upheld through what he calls “styles”- “linguistic manners and rhetorical strategies like avoidance and projection” (p.53)- and translated into actual “stories” – tales that

² CRT has become the focus of many news outlets such as the Huffington Post, BuzzFeed, and Al Jazeera, with article ranging from analysis of racist media to op-pieces of self-inquiry. Race relationships have been proposed as the central theme of various shows and movies, such as *Dear White People* (2017), *She’s Gotta Have It* (2017); Berry Jenkins’ *Moonlight* (2016) and Jordan Peele’s *Get Out* (2017).

are “socially shared and fable-like” (p.76) and “incorporate a common scheme and wording” (p.76). The four frameworks (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) are termed as *abstract liberalism*, *naturalization of race*, *cultural racism* and *minimization of racism*: with abstract liberalism, the author indicates notions belonging to liberal politics such as choice and individualism, which are blindly applied to marginalized individuals without taking into account the structural and systematic inequalities to which they are subjected, the burden of poverty and educational deprivation, and all those traumas that are passed down through generations³ of families of color (Sullivan, 2013); the frames of naturalization of race and cultural racism are both founded on broad definitions and essentializations of people of color, providing apparently natural – people naturally gravitates towards likeness and value groups dynamics – and cultural – Mexicans are violent and misogynistic; black men make terrible fathers and black single mothers rely on food stamps and welfare – reasons to explain away racist phenomena like black segregation and discriminatory hiring practices (Martinez, 2014; Bonilla-Silva, 2006); the last frame, minimization of racism, creates a narrative that downplays the effect that race and racism have on society, by comparing the situation of people of color today with that of violently racist eras of the past. This last frame configures the legal achievements of the Civil Rights Movement as having completely eradicated not only odious forms of blatant racism, but also discriminations towards minorities in every aspect of the public sphere. (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Omi and Winant, 2009; Martinez, 2014; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)

- b. *Race and racism are socially constructed products* and can be dismantled through processes of self-enquiry and the voices and experiences of POC (Solórzano and Delgado Bernal, 2001). The importance of creating stories and narratives for people of color and marginalized individuals in general lies in the power of storytelling to become a means to challenge racist social constructions of race (Ladson-Billing, 1998; Martinez, 2014; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017); counternarratives to the often one-sided stories that make up racial ideologies in the western world, constitute a way for people of color to avoid reproducing

³ Transgenerational racial disparities can be inherited and manifest physiologically, affecting the cells, hormones and other phenotypical characteristics of individuals of color (Sullivan, 2013). The framework used to analyze this phenomenon comes from epigenetics, the study of heritable phenotype modifications that fail to involve alterations in the DNA sequence (Dupont, Armant & Brenner, 2009)

practices, systems and structures of racism themselves (Martinez, 2014). Not only non-majoritarian experiences become legitimate and appropriate to understand and oppose racial subjugation (Solorzano and Delgado Bernal, 2001), but voices of color acquire a different standing when it comes to tell and frame issues of race and racism. Personal experiences of discrimination and marginalization, as well as belonging to a ethnic minority are reconfigured as “a presumed competence to speak about race and racism” in ways to which white individuals have not the same degree of accessibility (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The idea of counter-storytelling as a means to combat racial discriminations and de-silence minorities is tightly linked to CRT having originated in the legal field (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017): legal storytelling presupposes a *differend*⁴ (Lyotard, 1988) between judicial systems and marginalized persons, especially when they don't subscribe to the fundamental views of the regime that is called to judge them. The superordinate system (in this case we can talk about white society as informed by white supremacy and racist biases) and the subordinate person or persons have acquired conflicting views of the concept of justice, and the latter effectively lack the language to express how they were injured and wronged (Martinez, 2009). Counter-storytelling becomes vital for people of color in its ability to bridge the gaps between theirs and white individuals understanding of the possible meanings of *referents* such as justice, the law, citizenship, knowledge and many others.

- c. *The nature of CRT is intersectional*: intersectionality is a framework of reference that studies the intersections between class, race and gender in a variety of fields. It's a development of the discourse on intersections between social categories that have been characterizing post-colonial and queer feminist theories since the early 70's, while fully entering the field of Critical Legal Studies in 1989 after the publication of Kimberle Crenshaw's *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics* (1989). In her work on legal cases concerning the inequitable treatment of black women, Crenshaw analyzes discriminations as

⁴ The moment when language fails to appeal to relity as expressed by Lyotard (1988): "...the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be... the human beings who thought they could use language as an instrument of communication, learn through the feeling of pain which accompanies silence (and of pleasure which accompanies the invention of a new idiom)"(P.13)

occurring across the different and intersecting axes of race (and subsequently class) and gender – axes of inequality that characterize the socio-cultural structure of most societies. In the case of black women, structures of domination intersect in systems of subordination: Intersectionality’s power lies in its ability to tackle issues of intragroup discrimination, structural gendered and racialized violence towards women of color, vulnerability of migrant women and queer WoC. When it comes to policies and regulations, as well as reformatory efforts to tackle issue regarding women, government agencies and courts often rely on standards of need that encompass the totality of women’s population. Affirmative actions that affect a single axis of inequality, frameworks based on identity politics that fail to address intragroup differences, and essentializing views of single groups of individuals all contribute to the discrimination of the most marginalized (Crenshaw, 1989):

Now, you might ask, why does a frame matter? I mean, after all, an issue that affects black people and an issue that affects women, wouldn't that necessarily include black people who are women and women who are black people? Well, the simple answer is that this is a trickle-down approach to social justice, and many times it just doesn't work. Without frames that allow us to see how social problems impact all the members of a targeted group, many will fall through the cracks of our movements, left to suffer in virtual isolation.

The Urgency of Intersectionality, Crenshaw (2016) – TED Talk

Intersectionality takes into account the role of co-existing structures of inequality in shaping the subjective experience of human beings (Risman, 2004) and reframe social categories in terms of sets of power relationships: class structure, gender order (configured as “men first and women second”, ethnic hierarchies, heteronormativity (in which heterosexual affiliations are considered the “norm” against deviant sexualities) and a potentially infinite range of power imbalances could be part of a critical analysis of racial issues (de los Reyes, 2006).

The three tenets that have been analyzed thus far are the ones that I’ve found more relevant to the thesis at hand and the ones that better justify the need of anti-racist materials design to become part of language instructors’ basic training.

In the next subchapters I will provide an overview of the concepts of race, ethnicity, and culture as informed by CRT, as well as analyzing the formation of the concept of whiteness and its effect on racial relationships.

1.4. The social-constructivist Nature of Race, Ethnicity and Whiteness.

The notions of race and ethnicity, which in popular use are applied interchangeably to categorize different human groups in terms of physical appearance, nationhood and cultural belonging, share a common core related to the idea of descent or ancestry (Fenton, 2010); the terms both implicate the idea of shared cultural myths, values and customs as defining features of human groups. Both terms situate people in geographical, socio-historical and biological terms referring to concepts such as provenience, origin, physical features, nations or non-whiteness (Kubota & Lin, 2006).

Given their ordering power, the concepts of race and ethnicity have often generated – and had been consequently shaped by – racist and essentializing⁵ discourses (Rich & Troudi, 2006). As we will see in this next sub-chapter, these discourses are heavily embedded in a framework that position whiteness and white individuals as “unmarked” and central in the social order of most developed nations (Gibbons, 2018); Whiteness is in fact one of the key players of race relationships, one that has been under-researched and underestimated in terms of its ideological and effective power, and that has recently become central in critical discourses on race (Chen, 2017).

1.4.1. Race

In its general use, the term race indicates a set of phenotypical differences between human beings (Kubota & Lin, 2006); these traits are normally thought of as biological in nature and geographically distinct. Human physical features can, in fact, greatly vary from body proportions to hair texture and, even more significantly, complexion (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2014). Early research on the topic of human beings’ racial make-ups proposed a strict subdivision between “stock” racial typology that presented specific phenotypical traits, most likely as a heritage of the European and Christian conception of fixed categories and the divine origin of the world (Mukhopadhyay et. al, 2014); consequently, early 18th

⁵ Essentialization: attributing natural, essential and unchangeable characteristics to members of a specific social group and creating differentiation between the self and the target group (Atabaki, 2003).

European scientists focused heavily on the classification of natural living species and their variation, as opposed to later scientific frameworks which concentrated on the causes of said differences (Mukhopadhyay et. al, 2014). With the advent of Darwinism, however, the focus shifted again on the evolutionary causes of racial variation and its implication from a biological point of view (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2014). Nowadays, the scientific consensus on racial variation has changed again and, despite the role that biology plays in terms of phenotypical differences between differently classified races, scientists and researchers belonging to diverse fields, most notably genetics, have long discarded the idea of race as rooted and relegated in biology (Kubota & Lin, 2006).

From a genetic point of view, in fact, human beings share 99.9% of their DNA, leaving only 0.1% for biologically different racial traits (Hutchinson, 2005). There is a discordance between physical traits and genetic traits, that was perfectly exemplified in 1964 by Cavalli-Sforza and Edwards (1964): the authors showed the difference in results between two evolutionary trees, one based on physical traits and the other on 20 different human genes (Cavalli-Sforza & Edwards, 1964; Cavalli-Sforza, Menozzi and Piazza, 1994). The reason for that is that most polymorphisms in human physical appearances, including the traits that have been racialized, antecede the separation of humans into continents and are found in every population of the human species (Cavalli-Sforza, Menozzi & Piazza, 1994).

Another reason for this phenomenon lies in the arbitrary choice of traits that people consider racially significant, such as hair texture, skin color and nose shape: the idea of dividing the human species into distinct races (distinctions such as “Caucasian”, “Negroid” and “Mongoloid” come to mind) is furtherly complicated by the fact that those racialized traits that were arbitrary chosen do not covary and are unevenly distributed in geographical terms (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2014). In other words, if we had to divide different populations according to racialized traits such as eyes shape, height and complexion, we would find ourselves with an infinite number of human categories with non-overlapping traits that vary independently (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2014). Additionally, the traits that are normally regarded as racial markers, such as the above cited skin complexion and hair texture, are mostly continuous and not distinctive: if we take skin color as an example, we will notice a continuum of different shades and hues. The same goes with height and body proportion, which makes it extremely hard to categorize different races unless they share a limited territory and are placed at the polar opposites of the continuum – a good example is provided by the height difference between

the *Batwa* pigmy population and the *Tutsi* ethnic group in Burundi (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2014). Furthermore, many of the traits we have briefly analyzed are affected by environmental factors: for example, the origin of different skin colors can be related to the presence of strong or weak UVR within a geographical region, with a higher production of melanin in low latitude regions with intense UVR exposure and the consequent depigmentation of those population who migrated to a higher latitude (Yadufashje & Samuel, 2013).

All in all, and for the above cited reasons, a clear-cut division of human beings into sets of distinct races cannot be based on solid scientific ground and is not, consequently, scientifically sound. Now aware of the fallacies permeating the notion of biological races, scientists and scholars are opting for a view on contemporary racial subdivisions as informed by historical and social processes: Race is, as previously worded by critical race theorists, socially and historically constructed. This theorization of race leads us to the next sub-chapter, in which I'll briefly tackle the notions of ethnicity and culture.

1.4.2. Ethnicity and Culture

The term ethnicity is often used to divide individuals in terms of shared ancestry, nationhood, language or religious affiliation (Fenton, 2017). We can argue that ethnicity is a term that codifies race and racial difference in sociocultural terms and is intertwined with the notion of culture and cultural variation (Thompson & Hickey, 1994; Fenton, 2017). Ethnicity and culture are, however, different in many respects: while culture and ethnicity can be co-terminous in their boundaries, especially if analyzed within a national context, the notion of culture is both narrower and broader than the one of ethnicity, encompassing minority and local cultures as well as transnational and youth ones. The focus of ethnicity is on putative descent, in other words on common ancestry, while culture is an ever-changing entity, albeit based on tradition and continuity (Conversi, 2000).

Furthermore, being based on common ancestry, nationhood and socio-cultural features, the notion of ethnicity is very hard to apply to certain categories, such as diasporic groups and ethnic enclaves (Miles & Brown, 2003; Darder & Torres, 2004). An example of this is the categorization of diasporic Asian individuals who migrated to Latin America during past generations and have now recently moved to The US: They represent an anomaly in the conceptualization of ethnicity both in terms of provenience – having an Asian

ancestral origin and a home country in South America – and culture, with transnational and diasporic concerns that are not normally shared between Asian or Latinx migrant communities (Darder & Torres, 2004).

What the notions of ethnicity and culture share is the problematic way in which they are used to categorize groups and establish social boundaries between individuals (Bonilla-Silva, 2003): with the demise of biological race as the main framework of categorization of different human groups (Fenton, 2017), ethnicity and culture can act as its more benign proxy, with the banners of cultural and ethnic difference being used to perpetrate racist agendas and exclude certain racial groups as undesirable (May, 1999; van Dijk, 1993). This is not surprising, considering the way in which, during the colonization of the Southern and Eastern part of the globe, Western colonizers created a rhetoric that was mainly based on the assumed cultural superiority of their civilization (Bonnet, 1998). Furthermore, at the very core of the terms ethnicity and ethnic, lies the concept of *heathenism*: they originated, in fact, from the Greek word *ethnikos*, with its two principal meaning of “national” and “foreign\heathen” (Fenton, 2017). Consequently, in popular use, the adjective ethnic is almost never used to describe people of Caucasian origins and it’s broadly applied to indicate the “non-white” and “non-western” origin of a product, group or individual – we wouldn’t normally refer to a Dutch restaurant or a Russian nesting doll as ethnic, while the terms ethnic cuisine and ethnic paintings are widely used to describe cultural products originating in non-western parts of the globe or created by non-whites, giving away the underlying racial nature of the concept of ethnicity\cultural difference.

The concepts of ethnicity and cultural difference seem to elude whiteness and white individuals; in the next paragraph I will analyze the construction and invention of the white race and how this antithesis between ethnicity and whiteness came to be.

1.4.3. Whiteness and White Identity

In order to understand the complexity of racism and race relations in the West, and more specifically within a Anglo-American discourse, we need to tackle the issue of what “being white” means and how the category of whiteness came to be.

Continuing on the line of CRT’s conceptualization of race, we will start by framing whiteness as a socially constructed identity, rather than a biological reality; just like

blackness, whiteness as a category has been modeled via socio-historical processes with recognizable patterns and sudden twists and turns; again, not dissimilarly from its counterpart, whiteness is an *open project* that's still subjected to change and reconceptualization (Bonnet, 1998). Its social constructivist nature implies the existence of an ideology of whiteness (Bonnet, 1998; Bonnet, 2017) , grounded on myths and believes that have had profound repercussions on the history of race relations and continues to afford white individuals an upper hand over their non-white counterparts.

1.4.2.1. Whiteness and class struggle in Britain

I will start my inquiry into the history of whiteness, by highlighting its most primordial and pre-modern feature, the association with the color white: in color psychology, white represents purity, wholeness and innocence; it is also the color of perfection and completion (Heller, 2000). The color white has always been associated, at least in the West, with spirituality, religion (Bastide, 1968; Zuffi, 2012), and high social statuses (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 1996). The connection between the color white and notions of nobility is made overt in the ancestral myths of blue blooded nobles, endowed with such light complexions that their arterial blood might be seen through their pale skin; the myth of the almost transparent complexions of nobles seems possibly originated from the leisured and sheltered nature of their daily lives, as opposed to that of peasants and farmers, which was characterized by their exposure to sunlight and natural forces, hence their darker and tanned skin tones (Bonnet, 1998).

This exclusionary and classist feature of whiteness was retained in England throughout the 19th century, at the peak of the colonial power of queen Victoria's Empire: during those times, whiteness became the phenotypical epitome of a healthy and vigorous civilization (Bonnet, 1998), leading to the justification of the British Empire's colonial and expansionistic efforts. In the occupied territories, the British were seen as white, regardless of their social status, and belonging to a superior civilization – that was also due to the particular nature of the organization of colonial societies and economies, within which the access to different occupation, labor associations and different forms of social affiliation was determined by one's own whiteness or lack thereof (Bonnet, 2017) ; however, back in the motherland, where the notion of whiteness was still strictly interwoven with that of high social belonging, the status of white was not accorded on the base of phenotypical characteristics (Bonnet, 1998). the British working class and the

poor were in fact excluded from whiteness and instances of racialization of the British masses were not uncommon (Keating, 1976; Humpherys, 1977; Lorimer, 1978). Numerous examples of this racialization are provided by Victorian writers of the time: Lorimer (1978) quotes a 1866 article of *The Daily Telegraph* in which white working class rioters were described as *negroes*; Malik (1996) reports a description of the working class as found in *The Saturday Review*, which states that ‘The Bethnal Green poor ... are a caste apart, a race of whom we know nothing, whose lives are of quite different complexion from ours.’

It's worth noting that populations that are now considered ethnically white, such as the Irish, were at the time considered “darker” and descendant of a bastard race (Huxley, 1979)⁶. This racial difference was literalized in the anthropological investigations of Joe Beddoe (1885), who noted, through the use of his newly invented “Index of Negriscence”, a “greater tendency for Melanosity” (Beddoe, in Curtis, 1997; 20) within certain areas of Britain, including Ireland. The Irish were also subjected to another form of racialization, manifested through the use of simian-like features to represent them in vignettes and caricatures of the time (Curtis, 1997).

In conclusion, the nature of Whiteness in the colonial British Empire seems to be framed according to notion of nobility, character and, ultimately, class; working class and poor Britons were accorded the status of White only in contraposition with the colonized subjects, with the clear aim of maintaining the colonial status quo and creating a narrative in which European populations, which were considered the “master race”, and their colonial and expansionistic ambitions were fully justified in light of their racial and cultural superiority. This is the first myth related to Whiteness: the phenotypical manifestation of a colonial and capitalistic enterprising character.

1.4.2.2. Whiteness in America

The racialization of the poorest and most marginalized categories of ethnically white individuals is a phenomenon that interested the United States as well, especially during times of intense migratory movements from European countries. The history of whiteness in the US, however, differs heavily from its British counterpart in many ways: Du Bois

⁶ The name the Irish were assigned, Milesians, referred to their supposed descendancy from the Spanish King Leisus, a “race” that had come to be through the interbreeding between Moors and Marrains (Bonnet, 1998).

(1935) links the creation of whiteness in America to a specific strategy of white landowners aimed at disrupting inter-racial relationships between poor Whites and African-American slaves and free workers; during the 17th and 18th centuries, combined efforts on the part of whites, blacks and native Americans against the exploitation of powerful landowners were not uncommon and constituted a serious threat to the propertied class (Goodman, Moses and Jones, 2012).

These inter-racial and inter-class affiliations were effectively dismantled during the 19th century, with the white landowning class removing barriers to the suffrage such as property ownership and employment – requirements that could be fulfilled exclusively by white landowners - for every white male in the federation, virtually and materially establishing a unity based on whiteness and shared European ancestry (Du Bois, 1935).

Now granted “legal whiteness”, white lower classes were convinced of the material power of whiteness and its instrumental and identitarian nature (Roediger, 2008): they received full citizenship and the plethora of advantages and assets it afforded, as well as a “public and psychological wage” consisting of social distance and deference from non-whites and blacks (Du Bois, 1935).

[...]while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools

[...]The newspapers specialized on news that flattered the poor whites and almost utterly ignored the Negro except in crime and ridicule.

(Du Bois, 1935; 700-701)

Not surprisingly, the once dominated class worked extremely hard to maintain their newfound superiority; the landowners’ strategy of uniting white people under the banner of racial commonality created a strong economic and psychological incentive for systematic racism (Du Bois, 1935) that has since continued to inform white racial formations and their consequences on non-white individuals both in legal and economic terms (Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006).

This phenomenon, which can be considered an expansion of American whiteness (Painter, 2010), traces a clear-cut line of demarcation between the American and British experience regarding the managing, endowing and appropriation of whiteness: within the British experience, class was still the dominant factor determining one individual's whiteness or lack thereof; on the contrary, in the American context the language and coding of race trumped and submerged the language of class, making white working classes *assertively* white (Bonnet, 1998).

The enlargement of the suffrage in the 19th century was, however, only the first instance of expansion of American whiteness: a second expansion can be traced back to the late 19th and 20th centuries, when German, Irish and others who had previously migrated from northern European countries started being recognized as true white Americans. That came to be as a response to a wave of new immigrants from southern and eastern European countries between 1880 and 1930: Italians, Jews, Poles and Russians. What the new immigrants brought to the United States, was a set of national – and even local – traditions, which were radically different from those of the Older Immigrants from Northwestern Europe (Goodman, Moses and Jones, 2012); racialization and otherization of these newcomers ensued, along with discriminatory immigration policies aimed at restricting their numbers in the country. Immigrants from the East and South of Europe were deemed racially inferior and pigeonholed into stock categories based on their relations vis-à-vis American institutions and customs (Goodman, Moses and Jones, 2012). Extracts from William Cook's book *American Institutions and Their Preservation* (1929) highlights the racial profiling of the new immigrants:

“Italian

a fiery temper quick to take offence and to revenge an insult real or fancied; an utter absence of scruple in the weapons chosen to attack an enemy ... Some one in America must do the hard, repelling physical toil of the mines, the railroads, the ditch, the streets, and elsewhere. They do that, but can hardly be called desirable citizens [...] they remain a hopeless mass in their relations to American institutions.”

(202- 203)

Jewish

A strange race [...] not a fighter and he has never shown any enthusiastic partiality for American institutions. As a dweller in the cities, as adverse to agriculture and hard labor, as of little physical courage, as opposed to conflict and controversy, he will never really enter American life.

(160)

The instances of racialization and otherization quoted above, shed light on a phenomenon that cannot be comprehensibly explained by anti-immigrant phobia alone: the large influx of new blood from the southern and eastern regions of Europe triggered a discourse based on racial panic, which fueled public fears of miscegenation and corruption of racial purity (Foner & Garraty, 1991), possibly based on the then up and coming “science” of eugenics⁷. In his 1911 book *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, prominent American biologist and eugenicist Charles Davenport voiced his scientifically racist concerns about the future of white America:

"the population of the United States will, on account of the great influx of blood from South-eastern Europe, rapidly become darker in pigmentation, smaller in stature, more mercurial, more attached to music and art, [and] more given to crimes of larceny, kidnapping, assault, murder, rape and sex-immorality [...] the ratio of insanity in the population will rapidly increase."

Davenport, 1911 (219)

Feeding off these new scientifically racist notions, scientists, politicians and other prominent figures of American society proposed abhorrent solutions to this threat, such as mass sterilization, institutionalization, controlled breeding and selective executions (Foner & Garraty, 1991).

However, in spite of the barriers posed by prejudice, racialization and discriminatory practices, even newer flows of migration from non-white countries managed to create the basis for a third expansion of the status of white in the US: after the Second World War,

⁷ A pseudo-scientific field that dealt with the enhancement of inborn qualities in human beings. In the framework of eugenics, different ethnicities were considered stocks with fixed properties and a hierarchical order dominated by the Anglo-Saxon man (Galton, 1904).

Italians and Jews started to be considered white and the very notion of whiteness was overlapped with a pan-European identity and ancestry. On the contrary, newer immigrants from Asian and South-American countries, along with the already present African-American and Native-American minorities, gained or kept their status as non-whites and racially inferior (Goodman, Moses and Jones, 2012).

This new change of perspective resulted in the creation of favorable discriminatory housing practices catered towards Italians, Poles, Jews and other light-skinned immigrant, which fostered the segregation of non-whites into inner-city settings and the formation of white suburbs (Goodman, Moses and Jones, 2012). In terms of culture and political representation, they gained a novel, favorable depiction as normal white Americans within the popular media of the time (Brodkin, 1998).

In conclusion, whiteness in America has been configured as a recurring political strategy, an open project that is reopened as soon as tumultuous times come with inter-class tensions during the 17th and 18th centuries and modern and contemporary migratory influxes as the primary causes of the expansion and restriction of the notion of whiteness throughout the history of the United States. If we continue along the lines of critical race theory, the pan-European conceptualization of whiteness in America and in western countries that were directly influenced by its racial ideology, can be configured as a set of transformations and incentives specifically constructed to uphold and reproduce systemic racism.

1.4.2.3. From Whiteness to White Supremacy

The above discussed notions of whiteness as social constructs with very diverse origins lead us to different conclusions on the nature of white supremacy. The term white supremacy has traditionally been used to denote the domination of whites over non-whites, a dominion that, as highlighted by CRT scholars, has changed from a *de iure* to a *de facto* form (Delgado, 1995; 2017; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 1997). Whiteness has lost its dominion in strictly juridical terms, but retains its authority within a system that affords white persons control over materials resources and political, economic and cultural power; *de facto* white supremacy is upheld through conscious and unconscious ideas of non-white inferiority and white entitlement, which recreate relations

of dominance and subordination across a broad range of institutional and social settings (Ansley, 1989).

As for the emergence of “race” as a discriminatory variable in the allocation of material resources and political\cultural representation, there are different theories and school of thoughts that propose valid explanations, some of which I have briefly touched in the previous chapters on the construction of Whiteness:

- a) Idealists accounts related to culture, symbolism and religious predispositions: white supremacy is theorized as stemming from the self-positioning of European colonizers as civilized and civilizers of the savage and wild others. Within the idealist framework, white supremacy can also be related to color-symbolism and the meaning associated to black and white and darker and lighter complexions (Heller, 2000; Bastide, 1968; Zuffi, 2012; Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 1996 as seen in the previous paragraphs); another aspect of the idealist framework concerns Christianity and the assumed role of missionary evangelism in spreading the good word, which resulted in the stigmatization of other religions as devil-worshipping and heathen (Jennings, 1976).
- b) Materialistic accounts of Marxist inspirations: race as a political and socio-economic project aimed at obtaining cheap labor and the destruction of intra-class solidarity through land expropriation and worker’s exploitation. Within this framework, race becomes the rationale to justify super-exploitative modes of production such as slavery and colonial subjugation (Du Bois, 1935; Cox, 1948; Fields, 1990). In clearer terms, modernity can be theorized as a product of the African slave trade and of colonization, which have provided an exploitable labor force and commodities that were used by the Western bourgeoisies to develop modern capitalism (Du Bois, 1920;1935). Colonization was, in fact, paramount to the construction of western empires and their capitalistic modes of production (Du Bois, 1920):

There is a chance for exploitation on an immense scale for inordinate profit, not simply to the very rich, but to the middle class and to the laborers. This chance lies in the exploitation of darker peoples [...]These men may be used down to the very bone, and shot and maimed in ‘punitive’ expeditions when they revolt. In these dark lands ‘industrial development’ may repeat in exaggerated form every horror of the industrial history of Europe [...] Colonies, we call them, these places where ‘niggers’ are cheap and the earth is rich [...]where [...]white masters may

settle to be served as kings, wield the lash of slave-drivers, rape girls and wives, grow as rich as Croesus and send homeward a golden stream.

Du Bois, 1920 the Internet Archive (2005)

It is possible to trace, in the cracks between the materialistic and idealistic framework of white supremacy, a “color line” (Du Bois 1903) that divides the oppressors from the oppressed. The color line is a durable global structure driven by both economic interests and political and ideological forces, which produces race stratification and formations.

Indeed, a middle road should be taken between the two perspectives: within the idealistic approach to white supremacy and racism, structural and systemic inequalities are at risk of being overshadowed by focusing on personal feelings of hatred and instances of blatant racism on the part of extremist groups. By the “whittling down of racism to sheet-wearing goons” (Anderson, 2012; 100), great numbers of individuals are excluded from being racist in virtue of a reconceptualization that has no bearing on the real functioning of race relationships and conflicts. Narrowing the definition of racism by stripping it of its socio-cultural, economic and political features and nuances prevents white individuals from investing in meaningful anti-racists shifts of behavior and belief, effectively preserving deep seated racial inequalities from eradication.

On the other hand, focusing solely on structural and systemic inequalities might obscure the visceral experience of racism and the real effects it has on black and brown bodies (Coates, 2015), because racism:

[...] dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth. You must never look away from this. You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body

Between the World and Me, 2015 (10)

The removal of white bodies and identities from this level of violence makes them safe, anonymous and unmarked in ways not accessible to any other race. This removal and ignorance, and the sanctioning of violence at the level of systems and structures, is at the core of whiteness, white privilege and white supremacy (Ahmed, 2007; Harris, 1993).

The individual can be, in fact, used to explain the political and structural if we consider systematic racism phenomena as having originated from logical standpoints that negate shared humanity between whites and non-whites: the logic of slavery, which relegates black bodies to property; the logic of genocide and/or assimilation of indigenous populations to give rights to land and resources, and the logic of orientalism, which identifies certain peoples or nations as constant threats to the West (Smith, 2012).

Du Bois analyzed this dualistic nature of racism, structural and ideological, stating that black and colored people in America have to grapple with the idea that the law and policies were not written to protect, but to oppress (1903); at the same time, they are subjected to an ideological discourse that prevents them from being considered full citizens, and on a larger scale denies their very humanity (1903). White supremacy creates a split in the identity of people of color, which are often in contrast and reduce the marginalized individual to operate from a point of inferiority and defection (Gorski, 2011).

In conclusion, white supremacy appears to be a better term to describe racial relations; it has a lasting effect on the livelihood of people of color and white people alike and it's the fruit of centuries of racial policing and ideology.

1.5. Conclusion

In this first chapter I have analyzed the framework of Critical Race Theory and used it to trace definitions and boundaries of and between racial formations and their processes; key features of these useful notions, as informed by CRT are:

- a) Race, ethnicity, culture and whiteness are socially constructed notions that have been evolving for centuries;
- b) Racial formations are both ideological and structural phenomena;
- c) Racial formations can be subjected to swift turns of direction, especially during periods of social unrest.

Critical Race Theory can be used to dismantle and deconstruct these notions and the negative and exclusionary effect they have on persons of color; The intersectional and narrative nature of CRT makes it a perfect framework of reference for the thesis at hand: In the second chapter, in fact, I will analyze narratives of race and language policing,

linguistics and language teaching, considering the intersecting experiences of women and migrants of color.

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CHAPTER II

RACE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

2.1. Introduction

One of the most salient aspects of language teaching and learning, and especially of teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language, is the mutual interaction between students, teachers and researchers belonging to largely diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. The site of this interaction is usually the language classroom, which functions as a contact zone between students and teachers and as sort of miniature society in which different social practices are questioned and upheld. The social nature of language learning and teaching, along with the plethora of identities gathered in the classroom, could – and more likely will – pose problems concerning the way teachers' attitude towards diversity affects the motivation and the learning outcomes of their students.

Furthermore, as a miniature of a greater society, classroom environments are also composed of variously racialized students. In addition, minority students and students of color are also subjected to the attitudes and values concerning race\ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation held by their classmates and English instructors. To no surprise, issues of race, ethnicity and gender are becoming critical topics of discussion in the field of TESOL: scholars and authors such as Kubota and Lin (2006), Curtis and Romney (2006), Motha (2006) have researched in depths how a racialized identity, pertaining both the students and the teachers of English, can inform classroom practices, curricula and teaching materials in either positive or negative ways.

It's useful to note, however, that race and language teaching share a tight-knit history and have mutually informed each other in unexpected ways: as a field that was highly embedded in colonial processes, TESOL retains and reproduces practices of racialization, otherization and subordination, and can be considered a white dominated field.

In this chapter I will analyze the issue of white supremacy and language teaching under two main perspectives:

- a) Standard English as informed by whiteness and the case of African American Vernacular English;

- b) The racialization of TESOL professionals and discriminatory hiring practices;
- c) White teachers' identity in relation to their students of color.

2.2. Racism and Language

The core tenets of this chapter stem from the post-structuralist idea that languages cannot be considered as fixed and stable entities in linguistic terms (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007); on the contrary, the way we distinguish between languages is reminiscent of the way we distinguish between races, ethnicities and social classes in order to create and reproduce boundaries and hierarchies amongst individuals (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). In these terms, similarly to the notions of race, ethnicity and gender, languages appears to be socially constructed and maintained by ways of otherization and discrimination: by recognizing the politically and socially constructed nature of languages, language students and scholars can shift part of their focus away from linguistic systems and into the practice of language as a social and political activity, both regulated by social context and by an underlying system (Pennycook, 2010). In this framework, languages become a fluid part of the speaker's identity – or identities – and a powerful force to negotiate and shape it (Hall, 1995) in an act of linguistic and identity performance (Butler, 1990). The idea of performativity, which is extremely relevant in the field of critical race theory, gender theory and queer studies, leads to the notion that, through speech, the speaker presents, reinforces or contests their multiple and intersecting identities (Butler, 1990); the idea of identities as stable is therefore discounted, and emphasis is put on the ways individuals “enact and negotiate both fixed and fluid identities” (Crump, 2014;10). Language, as much as race, is not something that individuals are able to possess or count (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007); we can, otherwise, talk about linguistic performance and *linguaging* to refer to what people are actually doing with language (Garcia, 2009; Pennycook, 2010), which sadly includes discriminatory practices through language policing and racialization especially in the context of language teaching (Lee, 2015). The power of language as a creator of social realities and, as a consequence, inequalities, can potentially make language performance and linguaging a primal force in preserving white supremacy and preventing social change: linguaging allows us to constantly “do” race, without having to talk about race explicitly (Markus and Moya, 2010). As much as language, race is a fluid and dynamic system rooted in historically derived ideas and practices, effectively backed up by a plethora of institutions (see Chapter 1) that enable

the creation of groups differentiated on the basis of perceived physical and behavioral characteristics and consequently accorded with different power and privilege in order to justify social inequalities (Markus and Moya, 2010).

These ideas and practices are crafted by everyday interactions between individuals in a process of race-making (Lewis, 2003).

individual actors are involved everyday in negotiating and contesting racial boundaries and, in the process, reproducing or challenging them. Racialization is an ongoing process that takes place continually at both macro- and microlevels and involves questions of who belongs where, what categories mean, and what effect they have on people's life chances and opportunities.

Everyday Race-Making. Navigating Racial Boundaries in Schools (285)

2.3. Linguaging and Nativist Discourses

When it comes to language teaching, notions and categorizations that have always been considered commonsensical in the field of applied linguistics and language sciences have been recently reformulated in terms of racial struggles and white supremacy: widely used dichotomies such as native speaker/non-native speaker (Amin, 1997; Shuck, 2006); linguistic phenomenon such as the standardization of American English (Bonfiglio, 2002) and accentedness (Lippi-Green, 1997) have been critically questioned following the framework of critical race theory.

One of these studies (Bonfiglio, 2002) discusses how Standard American English might have originated as we know it *because* of race. The author highlights the disconnection between many European national languages, which tend to arise from their economic and political center⁸, and Standard American, which took as a model the pronunciation of a largely rural area: the Midwest.

“Americans came to recognize the pronunciation of network announcers as a (mid)western norm. The general features of this accent are readily identifiable; the phoneme /r/ is pronounced both before and after vowels, there is no intrusive /r/, as in “I ‘sawr’ her standing there,” diphthongs like /ay/ and /aw/ are not monophthongized, and the phoneme /æ/ is used in words like rather, bath, and calf. Americans came to recognize obvious deviations from these sounds as nonstandard and regional, such as the dropping of /r/ after vowels in New York and Boston, the

⁸ The standard British pronunciation which derives from upper-class London speech or Parisian as the standard for French (Bonfiglio, 2002)

Bostonian pronunciation of “rather” so that it rhymes with “father,” and the southern pronunciation of “right” as /ra:t/.”

Race and the Rise of Standard American (1)

According to Bonfiglio (2002), the rural accent of the Midwest was chosen as the model for standard English because of the relation between rural America and whiteness: the period of standardization of American English – roughly from 1890 to 1930- coincided, in fact, with a massive migration flow to New York via Ellis Island. By 1910, migrants and their children accounted for 75% of the total population of New York. Those massive movements of foreigners, whose status as white was questionable at the time (see chapter 1), prompted the reaction of white, conservative America: in 1921 the emergency immigration quota act was passed in order to effectively restrict the number of southern and eastern European migrants coming to America. The per year number was reduced from an average of 783.000 to a maximum quota of 155.000 in 1921 and 25.000 in 1924 (Chermayeff, 1991). Furthermore, during that same period the social, cultural and economic national capitals of New York and Boston came to be seen as a threat to American “purity”, a narrative of contamination that the author links to “Germany at the turn of the century that idealized the rural German as an unspoiled, un-citified [...] noble man of the soil” (Bonfiglio, 2002; 4) and that eventually led to feelings of aversion towards large cities and a phenomenon of white flight to rural, “unspoiled” areas. For these reasons, American began to emulate Midwesterner, which they considered as truly white, Nordic Men of Anglo-Saxon, or at least norther European origins.

Furthermore, if we analyze general trends related to language and race, we are forced to observe how discourses about language variations draw their formulation by mirroring rhetorical patterns usually connected to discussions of race and ethnicity (Shuck, 2006). In the global, western society, where overtly racist remarks are no longer accepted, linguisticism is configured as a new and subtler way of hierarchizing different social groups in a racist-like fashion (Phillipson, 1992), effectively creating a language ideology based on *nativeness*. This ideology is reflected everywhere in the western world, especially in the United States where a general distrust for multilingual education is still rampant and the use of foreign languages in public spaces is frowned upon by both conservatives and

liberals⁹. It's easy to link those English-only sentiments with issues of race and ethnicity, given the sheer number of video recordings witnessing racist accidents involving Spanish-speaking migrants in the U.S, and can be easily configured as a backlash against Hispanic advancements concerning civil rights and education (Crawford, 1992): just like racism, linguistic discourses are transversally applied to the social category of race ethnicity and class (Urciuoli, 1996; Woolard, 1996). In this context, racialized accents and variations from Standard English become means of discrimination and subjugation (Lippi-Green, 1997). This is particularly evident in the case of African American Vernacular English, the black vernacular spoken by inner-city African Americans in the United States, which we will further analyze in the following paragraphs.

2.4. The Case of African American Vernacular English

In this subchapter, I will tackle the issue of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) to highlight how linguistic assumptions based on nativeness and racialization can lead to discriminatory practices in English literacy teaching and push Black individuals even further to the margins of American society.

2.4.1. Origin and Use

AAVE has its roots in the antebellum rural South of the United States, more specifically in white slaveholding households and plantations, where slaves came into contact with their masters' mother tongue, English. AAVE developed most of its peculiar features after WWI and WWII, when the majority of African Americans left the rural South and moved to northern urban areas (Wolfram, 2000):

“The large influx of African Americans in these metropolitan areas led to intensified racial isolation and, along with other social and cultural ramifications of such de facto segregation, a social environment conducive to the maintenance of ethnolinguistic differences”

The Grammar of Urban African American Vernacular English, 2000 (111)

⁹ The situation of multilingual and migrant students in the U.S is a heated debate. For the latest contributions within the political arena see Marian (2018) on <http://thehill.com/opinion/education/378691-the-us-needs-to-embrace-multilingual-education-our-children-will-benefit>.

This American variety has been called in many different ways, most notably *Black English*, *Ebonics*, *Rural English*, and *Urban English*¹⁰ (Charity Hadley & Mallinson, 2011), and comprises several regional and sociocultural variants (Jones, 2015; Blake, Shousterman and Kelly, 2009).

Throughout its history, AAVE has been disparaged by educational institutions and media outlets (Champion et al, 2012; Jones 2015) and is still viewed as “haphazard, substandard, undesirable, deviant, illogical, lazy and broken” (Charity Hudley, 2014; 109), despite several linguists and language scholars have long demonstrated its rule-governed and systematic nature (Labov, 1972; 1998; Baugh, 1983; Butters, 1991; Dayton, 1996; Green; 2011).

In school settings, this disparaging attitude translates into a devaluation of the Black child based on his or her apparent lack of linguistic skills (Labov, 1972; Champion et al, 2012; Simpkins, 2013) and Black children are often overrepresented in special education programs (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Artiles et al, 2002). As a consequence, Black children – and in a way Hispanic children – still lags behind their white counterparts when it comes to school marks and graduation rates (NCES, 2015). This gap has been partially linked to the negative attitudes that teachers, schools and society in general have towards AAVE and the relegation of this variant to a set of mistakes and errors (Labov, 1972; Simpkins G.A, 1976; Simpkins F. 2013). Studies have found that, on average, teachers – especially white and non-Black teachers - have higher expectation for Black students who don’t regularly use AAVE in classroom settings (Cecil, 1998) and tend to react negatively when AAVE is used (Washington et al, 1989; Champion et al, 2012). Furthermore, these attitudes have not changed much during the last decades and keep on having a lasting effect on black students (Champion et al, 2012).

2.4.2. AAVE as a Systematic and Rule Governed English variation

As mentioned above, the systematic and rule governed nature of AAVE has long been proven by linguists, who have identified several traits that are specific of AAVE, especially in its tense-aspect system. Not surprisingly, given its origin in the antebellum

¹⁰ The terms Rural English and Urban English have been used respectively in the South of The United States and In the North and Northeast (Charity Hadley & Mallinson, 2011).

South, AAVE shares a large portion of grammatical features with Southern American English, a collection of dialects spoken in the rural areas of the South of the United States (Wolfram, 1974; Labov, 1998; Butters, 1991; di Paolo, 1989; Foreman, 1999):

a) Double Modals:

SAE: 'We might can go up there next Saturday' (Di Paolo, 1989;195);

AAVE: 'You might could go to the church and pray a little' (Labov, 1998;33);

b) Negative Concord:

SAE: 'Nobody ain't doin' nothing' wrong' (Foreman, 1999;207);

AAVE: 'It ain't no cat can't get in no coop' (Labov, 1972;70).

Labov (1998) further divides the features of AAVE into three distinct sets:

a) A large set of features shared with SAE and Other American Dialects (OAD),

which includes:

- i. negative concord;*
- ii. negative inversion;*
- iii. lack of inversion in embedded;*
- iv. questions;*
- v. double modals;*
- vi. Expression of person or number;*
- vii. The category of possession;*
- viii. Mood and voice.*

b) A set of features that are absent in AAVE but present in SAE and OAD:

- i. Third singular ending;*
- ii. Possessive morpheme in attributive position;*
- iii. Subject-verb agreement.*

c) A set of features that are specific to AAVE:

- i. Intonation;*
- ii. Auxiliary patterns;*
- iii. Tense\Aspects*

2.4.3. The Tense – Aspect system of AAVE

The most striking features of AAVE, and the ones that can be considered the farthest from standard English concern the tense\aspect¹¹ system, in which the “auxiliary particles” (Labov, 1998) *be*, *done* and *been* [BIN] play a crucial role.

2.4.3.1. Invariant *be*

Invariant *be*, also called habitual *be* or *be*₂, is an aspectual marker referring to an intermittent, habitual activity. Labov (1998) considers invariant *be* to be an «auxiliary particle». Invariant *be* can be distinguished from other use of *be* derived from phonological processes:

a) *She be here in a minute.*

*She be here in a minute, **won't** she?*

*She **won't** be here in a minute.*

b) *If they get a DVD player, they be happy.*

*If they get a DVD player, they be happy, **wouldn't** they?*

*If they get a DVD player, they **wouldn't** be happy.*

c) *Sometimes they be playing tag.*

Sometimes they be playing tag, don't they?

Sometimes they don't be playing tag.

(Wolfram, 2000; 118)

The examples provided by Wolfram (2000) highlight three syntactic properties that further distinguish AAVE from SE and OAD: invariant *be* doesn't accept negative affixation (*they *ben't* playing tag); it doesn't form tag questions (*sometimes they be playing tag, *ben't* they); finally, invariant *be* does not participate in “auxiliary inversion” (*Be they playing tag?).

In some utterances, however, invariant *be* fails to mark a habitual aspect (Labov, 1998):

a) “*Dr. Dre be the name*” (Wolfram, 2000; 118)

b) “*Her Father be your Father.*” (Labov, 1998; 12)

c) “*Hey baby, this be Heywood!*” (Labov, 1998; 12)

¹¹ In linguistics, tense refers to a series of relationships between time spans and utterance time, while aspect refers to the temporal flow (or lack thereof) of an action, event or state denoted by a verb.

Dayton (1996) proposes that in such utterances, invariant *be* marks an extended steady state: it can be argued that invariant *be* functions as a marker of habituality only when followed by *and -ing* form (Dayton, 1996). Apart from *be₂+V-ing*, stativity seems to be the semantic core of invariant *be*. Dayton (1996) also demonstrates that invariant *be* carries no tense information:

- a. *'When they used to tell us that the nipples be pink on pregnant women, we be laughin'; we were laughin' 'cause it don't be like that';*
- b. *When my son was young, the women be givin' him money.*

In Labov (1998;10)

As explained by Green (2011):

"Aspectual be must always occur overtly in contexts in which it is used, and it does not occur in any other (inflected) form (such as is, am, are, etc.); it is always be. Thus the marker is referred to as invariant. It has one form, and that form always occurs overtly; it does not vary in forms or shapes. Aspectual be indicates that eventualities recur, happen from time to time or habitually (...) It does not indicate that an eventuality occurred in the past, is occurring now, or will occur in the future, so it is not a tense marker."

(Language and the African American Child, 2011;50)

2.4.3.2. Stressed been [BIN]

In AAVE, the auxiliary particle *been* [BIN] is used, when stressed, to refer to something that started happening in a remote past and it's still true now (Wolfram, 2000). As reported by Rickford (1973) the utterance *she been married* is interpreted differently by African Americans and European Americans: the latter, in fact, interpret the utterance as a delation of the contracted form of the perfect (*she's been married*) and imply that the woman in question has been married in the past and is now divorced, separated or widowed; speakers of AAVE, on the contrary, interpret *been* as a distinctive aspectual marker indicating that the woman has been married for a long time, and still is. This particular aspectual marker is called remote *been* [BIN]: it's usually followed by a past tense (*remote been + be + Ving* is also possible) and has three semantic components (Labov, 1998,):

- a) The condition referred to was true in the past: *They been called the cops, and they're still not here* (Baugh, 1983 in Labov, 1998; 24);
- b) it has been true for a comparatively long time: *She been told him she needed the money* (Baugh, 1983 in Labov, 1998; 24);
- c) it is still true: *I been been knowing Russel* (Baugh, 1983 in Labov, 1998; 24).

2.4.3.3. Auxiliary particle *Done*

The auxiliary particle *done* plays a crucial role in AAVE: it precedes a verb that make reference to an action completed (completive *done*) in a recent past (Labov, 1998; Wolfram, 2000):

'It don't make no difference, 'cause they done used (up) all the good ones by now.

Wolfram, 2000 (119)

It can also be used to highlight a change of state, or to intensify an activity (Labov, 1998):

After I done won all that money.

I done told you on that.

Labov, 1998 (14-15)

In the last two examples, *done* is followed by the verbs *to win* and *to tell*, which are both punctual verbs¹². In this case, the sense of completion is neutralized and the particle *done* is best seen as carrying an 'intensive' meaning, as opposed to a 'completed' one (Labov, 1998).

However, Labov (1998) highlight a new, relatively recent development of completive *done*:

- a) *'He done slept with Francine and he done slept with Darlene... and he supposed to be a good friend of Henry'*

¹² Punctual verbs refer to situations which do not last in time (durative). Examples of punctual verbs: to win, to reach, to catch, to explode, ecc. (Kibort, 2010).

- b) *'So he went to where she was. . . and got the nerve to lie to me . . . talking 'bout he done went to work'*

Labov, 1998 (15)

The meaning of done in (a) is not clear, since this specific form of cheating is sanctioned by society as something that is either done or not done: sleeping with someone can't be done partially or completely, moderately or intensively (Labov, 1998). In (b), which also concern an act of cheating, "done is used as a modifier of the socially punctual action of going to work" (Labov, 1998, 15).

Labov (1998) argues that the extended meaning of this particle relates with the sense of moral indignation that follows an act of cheating, and can be translated as 'had the nerve to' in the first sentence.

2.4.3.4. Resultative *Be Done*

In AAVE, be and done can also be combined to mark a resultative or conditional state (Dayton, 1996):

- a) *My ice cream's gonna be done melted by the time we get there*
 b) *I should be done lost 70 pounds by the time we get there*

In Labov, 1998 (19)

In those sentences, sequential be done is an equivalent of the future perfect marking the aspects of *completion* and *location in the future*.

Dayton (1996) suggests that a newer use of this form functions more like a future resultative-conditional, referring to an inevitable consequence of a general condition or a specific activity:

The future resultative be done also partakes to the semantic of mood: resultative be done indicates an event whose likelihood of occurrence is more than real (Dayton, 1996). This *surrealis* aspect is also found in invariant be, especially in sentences such as *Dr. Dre be the name*, that we have already encountered.

2.4.4. The Consensus on AAVE's Internal Structure

This long digression on the structure of AAVE has been useful to prove some very important points that will guide us in the rest of the subchapter:

- a) AAVE has been the focus of several studies conducted by esteemed scholars and linguists, which have come to the general consensus that AAVE is rule-governed and systematic;
- b) AAVE is an evolving variety of American English: it has been developing new features over time that further differentiate it from Standard English;
- c) Biases towards AAVE are founded on unscientific premises and stem from racism and linguisticism;

2.4.6. Bias and Resistance against AAVE in School Settings.

As mentioned above, biases towards African American speech have tangible and lasting effects on the literacy and education of black children: Labov (1972) highlighted that one of the most common misconception about black children – and students – is that they would receive an inadequate amount of verbal stimulations from their familiar and social environment: in other words, ghetto-residing black children would not be able to form complete and meaningful sentences and use common and everyday English words. In *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (1972), Labov stated that the concept of verbal deprivation, when associated to the poor school performances of Black students, is nothing but a “myth”. He affirmed that African American children actively participate to a “highly verbal” culture starting from a very early age and therefore receive an high amount of linguistic stimulation from their community. The problem seems to be, again, the attitude of the educators towards AAVE:

[...] the child' teacher has no systematic knowledge of the non-forms which oppose and contradict standard English. Some teachers are reluctant to believe that there are systematic principles in standard English which differ from those in standard English. They look upon every deviation from schoolroom English as inherently evil [...] from this point of view, teaching English is a question of imposing rules upon chaotic and shapeless speech, filling a vacuum by supplying rules where no rules existed before.

Labov, 1972 (201)

When confronted with the notion of verbal deprivation, of which working class black children were and are still accused, Labov (1972) responds that:

The myth of verbal deprivation is particularly dangerous because it diverts attention from real defects of our educational system to imaginary defects of the child (...) leads its sponsors inevitably to hypothesis of the genetic inferiority of black children that it was originally designed to avoid.

Labov, 1972 (202)

Furthermore, the notion of the verbally deprived black child loses its gripping power in light of the fact that black children acquire most of their cognitive abilities and linguistic skills when they are immersed in their African American social context (Simpkins F., 2013), and most of them fail to show any sign of learning disabilities or impairment prior to their first year of school (F. Simpkins, 2013).

The working class black child, when confronted with written words, finds themselves in a tricky situation: they need to comprehend the meaning of graphic symbol first and then translating it into their own language – in many cases, AAVE; in order to learn how to read, the black child needs to face cognitive challenges related to the acquisition of a new language, while acquiring literacy at the same time (Baratz, 1973). The problem is highlighted by Stewart (1969):

in many parts of the world learning to read (even with substantial amounts of formal instruction) may be rendered infinitely more difficult by a tradition of writing primarily or exclusively in some language other than the one (or ones) which the population normally learns to speak [...] one of the most promising innovations in the direction of a viable literacy program is the pedagogical separation of beginning reading from the encumberment of concurrent foreign language teaching. This separation is accomplished by the simple strategy of teaching individuals to read first in their own native language, and then transferring the reading skills thus acquired to the task of reading in whatever foreign language is the goal of the literacy program.

Stewart, 1969 (157-8)

2.4.6.1. The Bridge Reading Program

In what he called a Cross-Cultural Approach, Simpkins (1976) tried to bridge the gap between AAVE and General English by creating Bridge: A Cross-Cultural Reading Program, the first attempt of devising a “dialectal reader” (J. Rickord & A. Rickford, 1995), in which reading materials in SE are alternated with ones in AAVE and literacy in Standard English is “taught as an extension of reading in the students’ familiar dialect” (Simpkins & Simpkins, 1981; 231):

[...] the Bridge reading program attempts to start where the students are and take them to where their teachers would like them to be by using the language and culture the children bring to school as a foundation upon which to build. Materials are sequenced according to Associative Bridging; reading in the mainstream dialect is taught as an extension of reading in the students’ familiar dialect. Black nonmainstream English serves as a springboard from which to move to the presentation of standard mainstream English. Accordingly, materials are written in three dialect versions: Black English, Transition and standard English.

Simpkins & Simpkins, 1981 (231)

The positive effects of this approach to literacy have been verified in numerous studies conducted around the globe: one of the first experiment in this series was conducted in Iloilo, Philippines, by Pedro Orata in 1948 (Cena, 1958). During the so-called Iloilo Experiment, a controlled group of primary students was introduced to their studies in their vernacular language, *hiligayon*, while another controlled group was taught directly in English. Only after two years, the first group started being taught in English (Orata, 1953).

In six weeks’ time, the first group achieved far better results in every taught subject, including oral production in English (Orata, 1953). Similar, successful experiments have been conducted in Europe (Mcnamara, 1967), Mexico (Modiano, 1968) and the United States (Pryor, 1968) as reported by Modiano (1972).

When the Bridge program was finally tested in the United States, the results obtained in a 5 years timespan were at the very least impressive (G. Simpkins & C. Simpkins, 1981): the African American students who used the Bridge Program showed a significantly larger gain in reading (average gain of 6.2 months for 4 months of instruction) when confronted with the ones who were taught with traditional reading methods (1.6 months

for 4 months of instruction). On the basis of these impressive findings, the Bridge Program was published by Houghton Miffling (F. Simpkins, 2013) and marketed nationally (Labov, 1995). However, as reported by Labov (1995), the reader encountered social and linguistic obstacles. Apparently, the backlash from concerned parents and teachers was such that the publisher had to cease promoting it (Labov, 1995) and abandoned any plan of further development.

Parents and teachers weren't the only one to be profoundly troubled with the use of AAVE in schools: Frank Simpkins (2013) highlighted the reaction of society and media to his brother's reader:

(...) "an article on the field test results of the program appeared in Newsweek magazine. The article described the reading program and presented data from its highly impressive field test. The article ignited a firestorm of controversy centered on the pedagogical use of African American Vernacular English. On the television and radio talk shows, in editorials and other public forums, an endless parade of speakers voiced their negative opinions on the use of AAVE in the classroom."

F. Simpkins (51)

John Rickford (1997), a prominent AAVE scholar, provides another witnessing to the negative reaction elicited by Simpkins' reader:

(...) the inclusion of the vernacular in some of the "Bridge" readers elicited knee-jerk negative reactions (...) and this very innovative and promising experiment came to an abrupt end despite its dramatically demonstrated pedagogical success (...) several linguists (...) submitted Op Ed pieces on the Ebonics issue to the major national newspapers like the New York Times, Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times. We have all been declined (...). Sometimes the newspaper will say, "Well, the issue is passé." But the next weekend you'll see another editorial or Op Ed ranting and raving about the horror that Ebonics represents (...) so it's clearly not the timeliness of the issue that's in question but the take on it which linguists represent".

Rickford, 1997, Stanford Edu.

Surprisingly, the reaction of black teachers, parents, and black community leaders was not too dissimilar in condemning dialectal readers: in spite of its proven efficacy, black parents still considered dialectal reader as a less-serious alternative to mainstream materials in standard English (Baugh, 1981); the majority of black parents and activist felt that the use of dialectal readers would disadvantage black children, and some others completely denied the validity of AAVE as a systematic variety of English (Wardhaugh, 1992). Wolfram (1991) points out that, given black children's early socialization into mainstream linguistic values associated with linguistic diversity, as well as the controversy around AAVE elicited by racism in America, the sociopsychological benefits of using a dialectal reader would hardly surpass the disadvantages.

2.4.6.2. The Oakland Experiment: Ebonics in the Classroom

In spite of the controversy it had generated, another attempt was made, in 1996, to introduce AAVE (The term they used was actually Ebonics) into mainstream education: in that year, in fact, a resolution was passed by the Oakland Unified School District (CA) declaring AAVE the primary language of its African American students (Baron, 2000). The resolution openly equated black, inner-city children to Latino, Asian, Native American, and every other students whose social environment is dominated by languages other than English (Baron, 2000). The resolution, created by the Oakland board of education as a response to the recommendations of the Task Force on the Education of African-American Students (OUSD, 1997), that had produced early that year a 24 pages report advocating for improved schooling condition for African American students and the recognition of AAVE as an "independent language" (Baron, 2000).

The rationale of the resolution drew directly from research in the field of language variation and AAVE, stating that "validated scholarly studies demonstrate that African-American students as a part of their culture and history as African people possess and utilize a language described (...) as *Ebonics*" which "have origins in West and Niger-Congo languages and are not merely dialects of English" (OUSD, 1997):

these studies demonstrate that such West and Niger-Congo African languages have been recognized and addressed in the educational community as worthy of study, understanding and application of their principles, laws and structures for the benefit of African-American students both in terms of positive appreciation of the language and these students acquisition and mastery of English language skills.

The board resolved to recognize “the existence, and the cultural and historic bases of West and Niger-Congo African Language Systems (...) as the primary language of many African-American students” (OUSD, 1997) and to earmark the District general and special funding for the purpose of facilitating the learning and mastery of English Language while, at the same time, “respecting and embracing the legitimacy and richness of the language patterns (...) known as *Ebonics*” (OUSD, 1997).

The resolution received, in general, positive reactions from linguists and anthropologists (Monaghan, 1997), but ignited, in turn, a violent controversy amongst the general public (Croghan, 2000). Mainstream media made sure to steer the American public opinion in the wrong way, accusing the Oakland Board of wanting to teach AAVE instead of standard English and trying to obtain federal and state funding reserved for bilingual programs (Ronkin & Karn, 1999; Baron, 2000; Croghan, 2000). Amongst the many intellectuals voicing their anger towards the resolution, long-time civil rights activists such as Maya Angelou, Jesse Jackson and Kwesi Mfunne (Perry, 1997) stood out the most: they all argued in favor of leaving AAVE outside of the classroom and stated that black children needed to learn Standard English in order to be able to fully participate as American citizens (Baron, 2000). These reactions, fueled by the misinterpretation of the goals of the Oakland Board of education put forward by the press (Croghan, 2000), prompted the immediate reaction of linguists: a resolution concerning the issue of AAVE in educational setting was adopted in 1997 by the Linguistic Society of America (LSA, 1997)¹³, resolving to make it known that:

- a) AAVE is a rule-governed, systematic language;
- b) The distinction between a dialect and language is socially and politically constructed;
- c) There are individual and group benefits in preserving linguistic diversity and vernacular varieties;
- d) In light of pedagogical and linguistic research, the resolution of the Oakland Board of Education can be considered linguistically and pedagogically sound.

¹³ The resolution was drafted by John Rickford (1997) and later amended by LSA membership.

Despite the position of linguists and anthropologists, the firestorm of criticism directed to the board of education and the ridicule to which AAVE have been subjected during the years following the Oakland resolution (Ronkin & Karl, 1999) lead us the conclusion that perceived linguistic inequalities and linguistic prejudices are informed by racial prejudice and dominant – or white – group privilege: both in the *Bridge Series* and the Oakland case, we have seen how the linguists’ approach to language diversity, based on scientific research and the analysis of linguistic components that suggests systemic similarities and differences between different and valid varieties of English have been trampled by a linguisticist ideology that pigeonholes AAVE and other such varieties as deficient in relation to a normalized, racially un-marked standard English language. Negative reactions to AAVE also highlight how questions of race inform language policies and beliefs about language: when critics argue that standard English has to be considered the language of “success” and “full-citizenship” they are not merely stating a fact of life, but a pre-conceived notion that reaffirms white supremacy and the marginalization of speakers of minority languages and limited English proficient (LEP) individuals, which are disproportionately of color and belonging to the working class (US Census Bureau, 2018). The negative reactions of prominent people of color and black activists to the use of AAVE in educational settings might signal the intersection between class and race in according an inequitable power to standard English, by categorizing working class vernaculars as defective and abhorrent and praising middle-class blacks who can easily code switch between the two systems (Baron, 2000; F. Simpkins, 2013).

2.5. Racialization, Discriminatory Hiring Practices and Teachers of Color

In the following subchapter I will analyze the issue of TESOL as a white dominated field under the perspective of the racialization of TESOL professionals and discriminatory hiring practices towards teachers of color. In the tradition of researching Critical Race Theory I will present counter-narratives created by racialized and white TESOL professional in order to unpack the way in which their identities and positioning as either Caucasians teachers or teachers of color inform their teaching experience (the learning experience of students will also be taken into consideration).

I’ve decided to opt for this narrative approach for two reasons: a) CRT contests a “number only” approach to research, knowledge and documenting inequalities (Dixons and Rousseau, 2005), stemming from the tradition of Enlightenment rationality and

epistemology, in a favor of a critical feminist approach (Harding, 1996) that takes into account social and cultural contexts; b) power and discrimination are maintained and upheld through discourse and relationships between individuals (Shuck, 2006); giving voice to personal narratives of exclusion and privilege can unveil a series of race-related processes that would elude statistics and deconstruct dominant discourses in TESOL.

Drawing from the ethnographic studies presented in this subchapter, I will argue that racist processes and attitudes related to racialized TESOL professional operate intersectionally on the axis of race\ethnicity and nativeness\native speakerism. While other aspects should be taken into consideration, especially the ones related to gendered identities, we'll see that the bulk of the studies that will be taken into consideration only concerns female TESOL professionals, therefore making it extremely hard to isolate instances of discrimination that involve both racialized male and female, heterosexual and homosexual or queer teachers. For the sake of the argument at hand, I will focus my attention especially on the intersecting axis of race and nativeness.

2.5.1. Native speakers and the ownership of English

The first problem we encounter in this subchapter is linked to the definition of native speaker: the first recorded use of the word “native speaker” is attributed to Bloomfield (1933), who defines native language as the first language a human being learns to speak. Consequently, being a native speaker becomes an unchangeable fact strictly linked to the speaker's upbringing in a specific language community (Davies, 1991). Hence, native speakers possess a natural intuition about their first language (Davies, 1991) and can recognize intuitively what is grammatical and a-grammatical (Chomsky, 1965). In this framework, one's first language is tied to inheritance (Rampton, 1990), with the terms “primary language”, “first language” and “mother tongue” usually associated with the language individuals learn from their mothers (Strevens, 1992).

When it comes to the English language, this sense of inheritance overlaps with notions of “propriety” and “ownership”, mainly due to the colonial history of English (Pennycook, 1998) and its key role in shaping global economies (Philipson, 1992, 2008). As a consequence, NES are often considered the embodiment of authentic English language (Kramsch, 1997) and the best representative of its culture (Mahboob, 2010). On the contrary, nonnative English speakers and even Tesol professionals has come to be seen

as “imposters” and relegated to the role of perpetual language learners (Phillipson, 1992; Amin, 2000). It comes as no surprise, then, that NNES Tesol professional are often relegated to labor intensive, less prestigious roles inside their schools and faculties (Lin et al, 2004) and they also suffer from lower self-esteem in the workplace, mainly due to the concept of being a native speaker as fundamental for a good and trustworthy English teacher (Curtis&Romney, 2006; Amin, 1997, 2000).

2.5.2. Racialized TESOL Professionals

The dichotomy between NES and NNES teachers is further complicated when we take into account the experiences of racialized and, in general, non-white NNES TESOL professionals.

Amin (1997) links the concept of non-native speaker - and more specifically non-native teachers of English – to racialization: she argues that, while there are no apparent links between race and language performance, language learners in ESL tend to consider whiteness as a desirable and even necessary feature of a trustworthy and reliable language instructor. Whiteness is associated with true mastery of the language, to the point that even native English teachers of color are often considered “inauthentic speakers of English”. The author notes that this attitude might stem from the positioning – and self-positioning – of the migrant, L2 student of English as “other” and “inferior” (Rockhil & Tomic, 1995); the migrant student is promised a sort of liberation via learning “proper English”, an absolution imparted by the white native teacher in a process that clearly reflects colonial values. This kind of discourse in ESL and EFL prompts migrant students to be invested in the national English of the country in which they reside (Canadian English, in the specific case of Amin’s study) and foster their desire of being assimilated into the national culture of the country in order to effectively negotiate their social identity (Peirce, 1993). Amin’s study originated from her experience as a Pakistani English instructor who had seen her expertise and knowledge of the language questioned on the basis of her ethnicity:

My interest in conducting this study arose from my experience. I am an ethnic Pakistani; I went to English language schools in postcolonial Pakistan and emigrated to Canada as an adult. I have taught ESL to adults in Toronto in both credit and noncredit courses in programs run by community colleges and by school boards. A common thread in these very different teaching

situations was that many of my students voiced their assumptions that I was/am not a Canadian and not a native speaker of English

Amin, 1997 (580)

Racialized, nonnative TESOL professionals are often put in the position of negotiating their personalized and institutionalized teacher identities with their students and other members of their faculty (Amin, 1997, 2000; Huang & Marchese, 2015). The categories of racialized and nonnative are, however, far from being monolithic constructs in the mind of TESOL professionals and English language students: perceptions and narratives about one's own position within the constructs of nativeness and ethnicity are ever changing and heavily depends on different factors, such as geographical provenience, fluency, physical appearance and overall life experiences (Amin, 1997, 2000). South Asians TESOL professionals, who largely come from decolonized, outer-circle countries such as India and Pakistan suffer a discrimination and otherization that is directly related to colonial values (Phillipson, 1992; Amin, 2000). Their accents are seen as reflecting pejorative and socially undesirable stereotypes about Indians (Rampton, 1988); at the core of these stereotypes lies the image of the *babu*, a superficially educated Indian or South Asian individual whose nativized English elicits hilarious reactions in mainstream English (White) speakers (Kachru, 1990; Amin, 2000). In spite of their fluency in English (with it being the subsidiary official language of the Republic of India alongside Urdu, one of the official language of Pakistan and the language of law and business in countries such as Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh), immigrant TESOL professionals of the outer-circle are constructed as not being able to speak properly (Amin, 2000). In her study on racialized, NNES Tesol professionals in Canada, Amin (2000) highlights the struggle of Arun, a Brahman, highly educated (she completed a M.A. and PhD. in English Literature in India) Indian woman who teaches TESOL in Canada, in negotiating her own identity as an English speaker. While highly respected in her Indian university, she recounts that after her arrival in Canada she felt like she couldn't claim to be a legitimate English speaker:

I would pick up the Star to find work and call people. I said once, "Are there any strings attached?" and the woman said, "What?" And I thought that something is wrong with my English, that maybe this phrase is incorrect. You know, you start doubting yourself. You just think you have to learn a new language all over again. All over again. Initially somebody would Say, "Oh,

you have an accent," so you'd think there's something so wrong, that you are not acceptable, that you'll never be able to get these jobs [...] Your accent is not correct.

Amin, 2000 (164)

Arun reports how common these incidents and micro-aggressions were and admits that she started feeling “like a kid, like a baby learning all over again. Like an ESL student (167)”. Amin argues that, as soon as she migrated to Canada and found herself in the inequitable position of finding a job, Arun was positioned as an “imposter” and an “Illegitimate speaker and receiver” of English (Pierce, 1993). This positioning was reiterated when Arun decided to get back on her feet and enroll in a TESL program offered at an Ontario university: in order to enroll to a B.ed in TESL, Arun and many other South Asian teachers were requested to take an English Language proficiency test on the basis of their provenience and education in a foreign country. The author quotes the requirements for the participants in full:

(a) their mother tongue or first language is English,

OR

(b) they have studied full-time for at least three years (or equivalent in part-time studies) in a university where the language of instruction and examination was English and which was located in a country where the first language is English,

OR

(c) they have achieved the required level of proficiency on one of the tests in English language as outlined in section B (i-iv) of this pamphlet.

Amin, 2000 (3)

The author, who is a Pakistani South Asian herself, notes that in spite of her two master's degree and extensive training and experience in TEFL she would not be considered for the program unless she took the English language examination due to the fact that English is not “the first language” of Pakistan (Amin, 1997).

Arun associates the test with the identity she has been constantly assigned in Canada – the one of a constant language learner. This positioning and self-positioning is also evident in her notion of what constitutes a native English speaker (Amin, 2000). When asked if she considered herself a native speaker of English she simply states that what “she considers and what other would consider are completely different (170)”. Despite considering herself completely bilingual, Arun is aware that the power to decide whom to accept as a native speaker lies only in the hands of dominant groups such as White and Canadian English speakers and that she’s been positioned as an imposter due to her skin color, nationality and accent. Different views on the notion of “native speakers” are expressed by other south Asian participants in Amin’s study: Iffat, an Indian woman who at the time of the interview had been working in the TESOL field for more than 30 years and had received an English education in colonial India, firmly denied being a native speaker of English. In her view, in order to be considered a mother tongue, a speaker of English had to be born from English parents. She further expands her view by affirming that second or third-generation South Asians living in England cannot be considered native speakers due to the fact that they most likely speak languages other than English in their familiar context. While Iffat’s notion seems to be informed by monolingualism, another South Asian teacher, Tasneem from Pakistan, linked the construct of English native speakers with the white race, as highlighted in the interview below:

N: Do you consider yourself a native speaker?

T: No, I don't.

N: What about this woman you mentioned earlier - Mary, the Black ESL teacher from the U.S. Would you consider her a native speaker?

T: No, I don't. Maybe I'm still brainwashed from my childhood. A native speaker for me is always a British person.

N: Does it have to be a white person?

T: Britishers are white.

N: Well, what about all the South Asians who were born and grew up in Britain - and also Canada?

T: I wouldn't call them native speakers. I would call a white Britisher a native speaker (laughing).

Amin, 2000 (160-161)

Tasneem's idea of White Britishers as the only acceptable English native speakers unveils the nativist discourse behind the positioning of nonwhites in Canada as nonnative individuals and English language speakers. It also sheds light on the existence of a typically British conceptualization of native speaker and teacher, a British Schema that idealizes the education and classroom practices of white native British teacher and strongly, albeit unconsciously, stigmatize teachers of color and nonnative TESOL professionals in its distrust for "other" educational systems and ELT classroom practices (Aboshiha, 2007).

These ideas concerning the superiority of native speakers, and especially white, male native speakers seem to be solidly upheld in the academic field of TESOL: in the preface of hers and Ryuko Kubota's *Race and Tesol: Introductions to Concepts and Theories* (2006), the Chinese author and scholar Angel Lin provides an insightful anecdote about the unequal treatment she has had to face as an Asian woman in the Academia:

Several years ago when I was teaching at my former university in my native city of Hong Kong, I was the deputy leader of our undergraduate TESL program. One day, my program leader, who is Chinese, told me that he would like to appoint my colleague (a Caucasian, native English speaker who did not have a doctoral degree, as I did) as the deputy program leader to boost the public profile of our program in the local communities. [...] I agonized that all my years of training and research to develop expertise in language education had only earned me a second-class status in my profession. [...] he (the program leader) had let the perceived superiority of White native speakers exercise its power, and he was unaware (or refused to be aware) of the injustice done to me through reproducing this ideology.

Kubota & Lin, 2006 (471)

Kubota, who co-authored the article, provides an example of resistance on the part of white scholars to address or even acknowledge issues of race and identity in the field of English language teaching:

Once, I gave a presentation to my colleagues about my thoughts on the need to include issues of politics and ideologies in second and foreign language teaching and teacher education. I mentioned something to the effect that we should address issues of race and ethnicity more. A couple of years later, in a reappointment review, I was criticized as being racist in my presentation.

Kubota & Lin, 2006 (472)

She goes on observing how her visible status of belonging to a gendered and racial minority have affected most of her personal and work experiences, both in terms of unsolicited or unnecessary criticism (she reports having been criticized for her excessive mannerism), and of demeaning attitudes towards her womanhood and Asianness (constantly being called kiddo by one of her male colleagues).

I have continued to be convinced that my status as a visible racial minority affects many experiences that I face [...] I struggle with the double perceptions of me by others: a petite, sweet-looking Asian woman to immediate colleagues [...] and a scholar with a firm voice, respected yet invisible in publication.

Kubota & Lin, 2006 (472)

Motha (2006) reported that female Asian-American teachers can be negatively affected by their minoritarian status and gender, especially concerning the degree of respectability they are accorded by their fellow teachers and faculty members. When interviewed about her relationship with a white, male teacher, Katie, a female native speaker teacher of Korean descents, stated:

He doesn't see me as a credible teacher, as a credible equal peer. Because [...] I'm a woman and I'm a minority [...] How am I going to be able to advocate for my students? I'm not Caucasian, I'm not male, and I'm not a mainstream classroom teacher. It's a tough thing to negotiate.

Motha, 2006 (506)

As disheartening as this could sound, researchers shouldn't be taken by surprise when confronted with this kind of reaction to ethnic difference.

2.5.3. Discriminatory Hiring Practices

Discrimination and bias towards racialized teachers can also be found in hiring processes, especially in Asian countries such as Korea, Thailand and China: Mahoob (2009) reports several posts from TESOL online communities which show how discriminatory hiring practices has been upheld by Asian institution. Public and Private institutions in Asia tends to favor white teachers at the expense of differently racialized TESOL professionals, as reported by Jung (2014). Not surprisingly, TESOL professionals working in Korea are requested or required to submit a photo when applying for a teaching position: this common and easily justifiable practice might, however, lead to discrimination towards non-white teachers. Jung (2014) reports that a great number of Korean institutions have weeded out black native speakers in favor of European or middle-eastern nonnative-speaking English teachers. In his article, the author quotes the experiences of African American TESOL professionals seeking employment and highlights the blatant racism of their hiring practices (Jung, 2014): Dean, an African American teacher, recounts how after sending his picture to different employers who had previously shown great interest in his resume, said employers promptly stopped any form of communication with him. The TESOL professional also shares an interesting anecdote which unveil how embedded racism is in the hiring practices of Korean institutions, stating in his interview that:

"There was also a recruiting company that was willing to help me find a job when I first decided to teach in Korea. But he later told me that it may be difficult because of my ethnicity."

Jung, 2014, Korea Times

In his article, Jung gives voice to the frustration of non-white teachers, Korean professionals and even white teachers who felt uncomfortable about this unfair treatments; during an interview, an African American job seeker strongly felt that "Korean parents will pay for a program with smiling blonde-haired, blue-eyed teachers on the brochure because they associate that whiteness with intelligence, power and

English-speaking ability (Jung, 2014)". In the same fashion an interviewed white teacher felt that she had an "unfair advantage" due to her skin color, reaffirmed by the fact that employers had been very vocal about preferring a white TESOL professional over non-white ones (Jung, 2014).

While these discriminatory practices could be seen as connected to the cultural views (and stereotypes) of Asian institutions, it's useful to remember that the latter are usually coordinated by English representatives: in *Moment of Disruption and the development of expatriate TESOL teachers* (2011), Roderick recounts the experiences of a group of TESOL expat in different parts of the globe. Amongst them, the experience of a Black, British teacher, Shelley, highlights the racial bias embedded in British TESOL institutions. Shelley was in fact denied a job position as teacher after she had moved to Brunei: During the interview, Shelley described the incident with the British representative as such:

(The woman said)...well actually you know it might say that you're British, but actually you're not are you, you're West Indian aren't you? I said well I've never been to the West Indies, I was educated in Britain, and that's when we knew that that was the problem.

Roderick, 2011 (18)

Despite her vehement protests, Shelley was dismissed with the simple explanation that in Brunei she would have encountered local prejudices from the students. Teachers of color are indeed seen as less marketable, especially against the expectation of a white, foreign-looking native speaker teacher.

Mahboob (2009) reported how similar views are expressed overtly in teaching job advertising in Asia, highlighting the fact that such decisions are often made by white Western expatriates.

Quote 3: we are a school in Beijing Shijingshan district and looking for a native english speaker who is white and not too old. It is very urgent because the new teachers are supposed to work from September 1st. the salary is 7000rmb per month. The working time is 3 to 6 from monday to friday. Please contact me at XXX.

She also addresses the fact that discriminatory hiring practices in many Asian countries are not forbidden or punished by law, effectively emboldening private and non-locally run institutions to exclude local professionals and professionals of color to reach top teaching positions (Mahboob, 2009).

The latter considerations about teachers of color abroad add the axis of “expatriateness” to the previously considered “race” and nativeness”: all in all, when we consider the business of teaching English in developing countries, white native speaker expatriates are far more likely to be hired as full-fledged teachers and obtain benefits and higher salaries (Mahboob, 2009). The prominence of white, native speaking expatriated teachers is also linked to colonial values: participants to the Fulbright Program in the U.S., which enables graduate students to study, research and teach English in developing countries all around the world, are considered “cultural ambassadors” (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2012) of the U.S. and their values. On the other side of the pond, the UK government keeps on investing in EFL teachers education on the basis of the importance of English in developing countries (British Council, 2013). What’s evident in these kinds of cultural and linguistic projects it’s the competitive edge “sharing their culture” can give to western countries in terms of culture, diplomacy, media and academic quality (British Council, 2013), while furthering social and class divisions based on linguistic skills in developing and poor countries (Euromonitor International, 2012)

In conclusion, teachers of color in the Western hemisphere and local teachers in developing countries are still treated as second rate professionals in terms of hiring practices, career development, personal and financial rewards, and benefits. These discriminatory practices are upheld and justified on the basis of ethnicity, first language and migratory status; as we have seen, they can be easily inserted in much wider discourses on language ownership and nativeness, as well as in more specific ones, such as the power relations between native speakers of English and English language users of former British colonies

2.6. The Racialization of White teachers

In this last sub-chapter, I will tackle the issue of racialization pertaining to white TESOL professionals, analyzing their attitudes towards other racialized teachers of color and the coping mechanisms they adopt in managing their own whiteness in a multicultural and multiracial context. There is a substantial body of works available on pre-service and in-service white teachers' self-image and teaching practices, mostly related to teacher's ideologies pertaining whiteness and otherness and the disconnection between their liberal and inclusive leanings and their actual teaching (Chubbuck, 2004; Yoon, 2012); the ways teachers expanded their pedagogical views in order to meet the needs of students of color (Powell, 1997); strategies and coping mechanisms that White teachers adopt in order to maintain the ideologies and perspectives that Whiteness affords – the denial of white privilege, whiteness as an unmarked racial and ethnic identity and the demonization of nonstandard English varieties being few of those (Picower, 2009; Daniels, 2018).

2.6.1. Race Relations and Coping with Whiteness

There are, however, only a handful of studies conducted specifically in order to understand the race relations between white ESL and TESOL professional and their students and faculty members of color: the majority of these efforts were made in the field of ESL, and in particular, qualitative research was carried out - usually through ethnographic means – in western multicultural educational contexts: in *Racializing ESOL Teacher Identities in U.S. K2 Public Schools* (2006), Motha analyzed the challenges faced by newly hired ESOL teachers in the United States in relation to their racialized identities. The recipients of the qualitative studies, namely three White female teachers and one Asian American female teacher (Karen, the Korean American woman cited in the previous sub-chapter), grappled differently with issues of race and ethnicity, especially when confronted with a very diverse group of migrant students: one of the white teachers, Alexandra, was concerned about the lack of diverse teaching materials to be presented to her students and she struggled thereafter with the idea of a Caucasian face (hers) providing multicultural – and therefore marked as *different* from the white norm – materials to her non-white students:

I said to her, “Who am I to teach this course?” and my ideal would be just to coordinate parents coming and discussing a piece of literature with the kids.

Motha, 2006 (496)

When questioned by the author about her lack of confidence in carrying out a multiculturally oriented lesson, Alexandra further elaborated:

I might do the reading strategies, I might do the work around it, but the actual discussion is not coming out of a White face. I feel really inadequate saying to people, think of it in terms of this, when that’s not my experience with my very narrow view of the world.

Motha, 2006 (496)

The author considered this particular happening as symptomatic of a greater struggle against the tradition of allowing white voice to co-opt non-white cultural items and perspectives and presenting them under a white and western-centered light.

The author then reported another strategy that Alexandra had used to dismantle the white-centered approach to ESL teaching: the teacher actively tried to disassociate the notion of whiteness from the notion of “American” when guiding her students in the choice of American folk tales.

I gave them a couple of choices, but I really encouraged the Native American perspectives because I think that unfortunately the American folk tales are very me, rather than what America really is, they’re very White America and they’re not representative of America at all.

Motha, 2006 (506)

The author noted that Alexandra “struggled with the construction of American (506)” in terms of white and Anglo-Saxon standards and consequently attempted to discount the authority of white privilege by presenting materials that legitimize a minoritarian (albeit autochthonous) culture, effectively rejecting the notion that “larger groups carry greater representative power (506)”.

Alexandra's perspective of her own whiteness in relation to non-white students and her attitude towards acting upon her anti-racist and socially inclusive leanings bring up a great deal of questions about the socially constructed nature of whiteness and non-whiteness. Moreover, her exemplary story epitomizes the struggle of white and fair-skinned ESL and EFL teachers when confronted with issues of race and racism.

2.5.2. De-Neutralizing Whiteness: Avoidance and Negativity

Said struggle is evident in other studies on white TESOL professionals and instances of self-enquiry on their part: In Liggett (2009), 6 Caucasian ESL teachers were guided through a process of self-enquiry regarding the construction and deconstruction of their own white identity as well as the way through which they characterize the concept of whiteness and the bearing it has on their teaching. One of the most striking and poignant aspects to come out from the interviews was the avoidance to refer to whiteness in racial terms: the teachers seemed more comfortable choosing labels other than "white" or "caucasian" to define their ethnicity – it's the case of Maureen, who identified herself as Italian to gain the trust of her students of color – or not labeling their identity in terms of race and ethnicity in the first place – like Hannah, who distanced herself from her Anglo-American heritage and chose to define her cultural identity as being predominantly that of a "mother" and a "teacher" (32).

These categorizations, which look harmless at first sight, bear problematic connotations in terms of power relationships between different ethnicities: by not recognizing their whiteness as racially and ethnically marked, white individuals are free to dismiss the importance of racial and ethnic identities (Jensen, 2002). By not considering themselves as belonging to a racialized group, they are effectively unable to gauge the effect that racism and otherization have on their identity, as well as to recognize the manifestations of their own white privilege (McIntosh, 1997); this notion of whiteness as unmarked in ethnic and cultural terms is further problematized by Howard (2006), who links it to the concept of whiteness as a norm against which the perspectives and narratives of people of color are created and move.

Dominant groups tend to claim truth as their private domain. For the most part, hegemonic groups do not consider their beliefs, attitudes, and actions to be determined by cultural

conditioning or the influences of group membership. As Whites, we usually don't even think of ourselves as having culture; we're simply right.

Howard, 2006 (54-55)

The teachers in the study (Ligget, 2009) became aware of their racial identity and positioning only after encountering their very diverse group of students: Carly, a high school ESL teacher, referenced the presence of African students in her classroom as the reason why she had started considering her country as built on “stolen land and slave labor (35)” and reflecting on the history of her nation in terms of racial struggle and inequitable race relations. Bridget, another teacher interviewed during the study, reported how her class-consciousness had had an impact on her ability to recognize whiteness as culturally determined and her own white privilege:

[...] you just see the background you're from...not just ESL...the schools I'd been working in because they were low income, tough areas [...] I stood out just coming from a completely different background, you know, I had a really great home life. I always had the comforts I needed, so in that respect I felt, you know, being white and having like a really great experience [...]

Ligget, 2009 (35)

The encounter with diversity and the process of self-enquiry started with the study shook the foundations on which the cultural identity of the white teachers had been built; like many white individuals, the recipients of the study had been conditioned to consider their actions, customs and mindset as unaffected by racial and ethnic membership (Howard, 2006) and had been at the same time socialized to downplay the importance of racial issues in the daily lives of people of color (Goldberg, 1993).

In Motha (2006), one the white teachers, Margaret, tries to actively disentangle the notions of Anglo – meaning white – and neutral, by recognizing the specificity and meaningfulness of her own heritage:

For me, culture is my mom making popovers in cold weather as her mother did. It's my grandmother's childhood diaries [...] It's the poems my grandfather still remembers. It's the

piano études my father has played all my life. And the soft blanket forts my sister and I would make on rainy days [...]

Motha, 2006 (506)

2.5.3 The Effects of a Whiteness-informed Teaching

The inability to notice race and ethnicity can have obvious repercussions on the livelihood and learning process of students of color by lessening the centrality that race and racial issues have in their life in a new, predominantly white country (Canagarajah, 1999). Another major feature of whiteness-informed teaching is the inability of the teacher to correctly interpret the different approaches to learning and academic work that a racialized student of color might carry with them (Ligget, 2009): Maureen (Ligget, 2009) reported a specific examples in which students were asked to compare two different pictures of American weddings. While the focus of the exercise was on the different notions of “traditional” and “modern”, and “formal” and “informal”, Maureen students concentrated mainly on the lack of diversity presented in the pictures and on the socio-economic status of the depicted characters.

When Maureen asked her first question about what the students noticed in the two photos, one Black student from Rwanda immediately responded with “A man who is white.” Maureen's response came slowly, “OOOOkkaayyyy,” in a tone that indicated this was not the answer she was expecting or thought relevant. After a few more questions to refocus the students on the book's distinction between formal and informal, Maureen asked, “But, the groom over here looks, what?” A student said, “Poor.” Maureen replied, “Poor? You think he looks poor? O.K., well, that's—that's, if you think that that's fine”

Ligget, 2009 (37)

After this brief exchange, in which Maureen failed to recognize the reasons why her students accorded more relevancy to racial and socio-economic aspects, the activity turned into a debate in which the students made their cases on which pictures depicted a poor and rich couple respectively. Maureen, who's used to seeing whiteness as a set standard for society and English language learning, didn't consider the ethnic and diversity perspectives as valid, alternative foci for the exercise. The potential

consequences of this attitude and classroom practices are devastating for ESL students of color and for every student who presents interpretations other than white, male, native, heterocisgender and standard ones.

Another instance of teaching as informed by whiteness is exemplified in the same study (Ligget, 2009) by Bridget, an urban white kindergarten English Language teacher, during a lesson based on a book titled *A day on the beach*, in which various forms of marine life are presented with vibrantly colored drawings. Bridget tried to introduce the students to the concept of similarities and differences by making them notice the varieties of shells, shellfish and sea creatures presented in one of the pictures. The picture also showed a group of diversely drawn people belonging to different ethnicities: while the teacher used a variety of adjectives and nouns to refer to differences in color, shape and typology of the sea creature, when it came to addressing the human beings depicted in the illustration she proposed an analysis focused on quantity:

“What do you see on the cover? Do you see something [Marina]? [...]The people, yeah. Are there just some or are there many?”

Ligget, 2009 (38)

By referring to the variety of people in such a truncated way, Bridget prevented her students from focusing on the racial make-up and dynamics presented in the picture, effectively limiting their expression in regards of racial issues and impairing their ability to use previous knowledge in the classroom.

These are only few examples of how whiteness can inform a teacher’s perspective and practice both in positive and negative ways. A common trend in white English teachers’ attitudes towards their own race seems to be the disparagement of white, Anglo-Saxon heritages and cultural practices -Alexandra (Motha, 2006) addressing the issue of cultural appropriation and co-opting of non-white cultures; Carly (Ligget, 2009) referring to the United States as a country built on oppression and slavery while openly questioning her own white privilege. It is extremely hard to find an example of positive associations with the teacher’s white heritage: one possible explanation lies in their inability to see their color has bearing a deep weight in their daily lives, thinking and teaching as well as having gained racial awareness vis-a-vis their students of color and other marginalized

individuals. Margaret is an exception to this trend, since she seems to have reached a degree of awareness in terms of her own racial and cultural background through a process of self-enquiry (Motha, 2006).

The possible outcomes of a teaching strategy which is only informed by whiteness, as we have seen, include the wrong assessment of black and brown students' reading and speaking comprehension, as well as an impairment of their ability to bring forth their ethnic and cultural background and fully express themselves regarding race issues (Liggett, 2009).

2.7. Conclusion

During the second chapter I've analyzed the issue of race and language teaching under three main perspectives linked by the common threads of otherization, discrimination and white privilege. As we have seen, whiteness constitutes the bar on which language standardization, linguistic policy and TESOL classroom practices are set, with white individuals being the sole judges of what has yet to be deemed acceptable or abhorrent, standard or non-standard, and ultimately right and wrong. The body of literature that has been analyzed through a feminist, post-structuralist lens, recounts multiple processes of self-enquiry and the struggle to find narratives able to include the experiences of marginalized people in meaningful, constructive ways.

This disparity in treatment and in the degree of respect that is accorded to racialized teachers of color, as well as the effects that whiteness-informed teaching methodologies and classroom practices have on marginalized students, should prompt teachers and researchers to find viable alternatives catered towards the deconstruction of racial, cultural, socio-economic and gendered stereotypes and assumptions.

The next and last chapter will tackle the issue of creating more inclusive and less essentializing learning paths and materials by: a) drawing from the available literature in the field of foreign and second language learning and b) proposing classroom activities based on CRT.

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CHAPTER III

ANTI-RACIST MATERIALS IN THE CLASSROOM

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters, an analysis of Critical Race Theory has been made and used to frame TESOL as a white-dominated space. In this third and final chapter, I will tackle the issue of learning methodologies and approaches as related to anti-racist practices: after drawing the history and development of Critical Pedagogy, I will then tackle the intersections between Critical Race Theory and language teaching and learning, as well as analyzing available approaches such as Communicative and Intercultural Language teaching vis-à-vis issues of race and ethnicity in the classroom; the last part will be configured as a set of activities aimed at the development of racial awareness in ELLs.

3.2. Critical Pedagogy

As highlighted in the previous chapters, language and politics are mutually influenced: power comes from language and language is affected by power relations. Throughout the centuries, language teaching has been used to concentrate power within certain classes and castes, or within specific geographical areas learning and teaching languages have also provided useful tools to re-allocate resources or to gain access to social institutions and positions of power; gain control and extend dominion over others, as well as to resist oppression and re-appropriate lost dignity and identity (Crookes, 2009).

As a consequence of this political nature of language education, those approaches that draws from mainstream frameworks of reference – such as a capitalistic view of education or a pedagogy that is informed by white supremacy and excludes the voices of teachers and students of color – can disenfranchise and oppress minority and less fortunate students, while actively upholding racist, classist and heterosexist notions (See Chapter 1 and 2 of this thesis).

Critical Pedagogy (CP) resolves to tackle these issues by transforming and dismantling oppressive power relations within educational contexts (Kincheloe, 2008); The ultimate goal of Critical educators is to liberate and empower the oppressed by raising social

awareness against the violation and discrimination against people (Gore, 2003). On this rejection of oppression, CP theorists have based the notion of teaching to achieve a just society, in which individuals have political, economic and cultural control over their lives and identity (Kincheloe, 2008).

3.2.1. Origin of Critical Pedagogy

The modern origin of CP can be traced back to the work of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher. In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), which is based on Freire's observations as an educator in Brazil, Freire launched a critique against mainstream educational systems in the west and in developing countries:

Freire started by noting that many of his students, who he believed to be oppressed and disenfranchised, had shown a fearful attitude to critical consciousness (*conscientização*¹⁴), which they regarded as dangerous and anarchic.

[...] the group was debating whether the conscientização of men and women to a specific situation of injustice might lead them to “destructive fanaticism” or to a sensation of total collapse of their world”[...]

Freire, 1970 (9)

Freire's students presented a “Fear of Freedom” (1970, p. 9) which prevented them from entering “the historical process a responsible Subjects” (p.10) as opposed to Objects.

Fear of freedom, of which his possessor is not necessarily aware, makes him see ghosts. Such an individual is actually taking refuge in an attempt to achieve security, which he or she prefers to the risk of liberty

Freire, 1970 (10)

¹⁴ A term that in Freire refers to learning to identify political, social and cultural contradictions and inequalities (Freire, 1970). An acceptable English translation would be consciousness-raising.

In Freire's framework, "fear of freedom" stems from the fact that oppressed individuals often internalize their oppression: Oppressors have always sought to convince the oppressed that the oppressive system in which they live is both just and unchangeable (1970). Liberation from this oppressive system can only pass through a process of conscientização freed from rightist and leftist "sectarianisms" (p.12).

Freire asserted that western education discounted conscientização as a valuable methodology and effectively upheld systems of oppression: in his description, he accused western education of following a "banking" (45) model, in which the teacher is the narrating Subject, and the students are relegated as objects receiving the narration.

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor [...] This is the banking concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving.

Freire, 1970 (45)

The notion of narration calls out the one-sided nature of the banking model of education, in which students are positioned as reliant on the teacher to receive truths, facts, ideas and meaning. In the banking model of education, knowledge is not negotiated or researched, but instead bestowed to the students, which ignorance is deemed absolute; the teacher projects this ignorance onto the students, preventing them from dealing with a process of inquiry. Freire identified this process as constituent of oppressive systems:

The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance [...] but they never discover that they educate the teacher.

Freire, 1970 (45)

The banking model's ultimate goal is, as explained by Freire, to make students accept the oppressive society as it is; it relegates the oppressed to the margin of society, keeping them at bay with inconclusive social policies. Banking education espouses the argument

that it's the oppressed individual's fault if he or she lives outside of normal, healthy society; in this framework, the only possibility of redemption comes in the form of integration, in which the oppressed accept the oppressive society and are accepted as inferior subjects. Opposing social reformism, Freire urged the oppressed to come to terms with their condition and to strive to change society completely:

The oppressed are regarded as the pathology of the healthy society, which must therefore adjust these "incompetent and lazy" folk to its own patterns by changing their mentality. These marginals need to be "integrated," "incorporated" into the healthy society that they have "forsaken." [...] The solution is not to "integrate" them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become "beings for themselves." Such transformation, of course, would undermine the oppressors' purposes; hence their utilization of the banking concept of education to avoid the threat of student conscientização."

Freire, 1970 (47)

The banking model creates distance between the students and the instruction, both of whom remain unconscious of being oppressed and oppressor respectively; In contrast, Freire urged socially aware teachers to reject the banking model completely and work with their students equally: ideas cannot be imposed to the students, but need to spring up from authentic communication and collaborative meaning making. The banking model of education, when translated into the real life of people, cause them to become, as Freire put it, "necrophilous" (50): their creativity and imagination is impeded, as well as their capacity of meaningful action towards the betterment of society. This inability causes the oppressed to suffer and to rely on figures of power that grant them the illusion of participating as Subjects while keeping them in the yoke of oppression:

Populist manifestations perhaps best exemplify this type of behavior by the oppressed, who, by identifying with charismatic leaders, come to feel that they themselves are active and effective. The rebellion they express as they emerge in the historical process is motivated by that desire to act effectively. The dominant elites consider the remedy to be

more domination and repression, carried out in the name of freedom, order, and social peace

Freire, 1970 (51)

Freire described this way of participating as ineffective in changing the social order and dismantling oppressive systems; in his framework, oppressive structures and institutions can't create lasting freedom and liberate the oppressed: in order to achieve these goals, leaders must uplift the lived experience of the oppressed and work towards the development of ideas that start from the bottom and are comprehensive of everyone's needs.

Social change of such large breadth can only be achieved through a model of education that Freire called "problem-posing" (52); in stark contrast with the banking model, problem-posing transform the relationships between teachers and students, merging their roles of educator and educated: while in the banking model only teachers are accorded an active role in meaning making, in the problem-posing model both teachers and students become "co-investigators" (54). The goal of education is shifted from acquiring notions and being able to integrate into mainstream society, to researching and creating meaning together through a process of inquiry which fosters critical-awareness:

The students — no longer docile listeners — are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own. The role of the problem-posing educator is to create, together with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the doxa is superseded by true knowledge, at the level of the logos.

Freire, 1970 (54)

In the problem-posing model, human beings are seen not as whole and granitic identities, but as individuals in need to discover themselves and their ideas through critical inquiry; Freire stressed the concept of the problem-posing model as a process and praxis, in opposition with the static and unchangeable banking model of education: the problem-posing model is based on hope instead of repression, on the notion of a system that can

be changed with consciousness-raising. This model expresses “revolutionary futurity” (57) making the student strive for self-empowerment instead of self-resolution against mainstream society:

Problem-posing education is revolutionary futurity. Hence it is prophetic (and, as such, hopeful). Hence, it corresponds to the historical nature of humankind. Hence, it affirms women and men as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead, for whom immobility represents a fatal threat, for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the fixture.

Freire, 1970 (57)

On more practical terms, the problem-posing model was constructed as a three-staged investigation process (Freire,1970; 1974), which involved:

- a) A naming stage in which in which a question is posed and a problem brought to light;
- b) A reflection stage, which concerns the explanation of the identified problem and seeks to pinpoint its causes;
- c) An action stage which investigates practical ways of solving the problem at hand and which roles might students have in the problem-solving process.

Freire argued that this critical approach was aimed at the discovery of reality and the unveiling of the myths and discourses that deceive the students and foster the upholding of oppressive and dehumanizing systems. In this course of action, everyone is involved and the students take the role of agents, makers and re-makers of society (Freire, 1971)

The framework we have analyzed thus far has been very influential in the field of pedagogy and mainstream educational approaches are undoubtedly indebted to Freire’s work. (Crookes, 2009) In the next paragraphs I will briefly analyze the contribution of critical pedagogy to the field of language education and subsequently highlight the intersection between CP and critical race theory.

3.2.2. CP and language teaching

The tenets of Critical Pedagogy can be broadly applied to second and foreign language teaching; the influence of Freire is clearly visible in the first work on Critical Language Pedagogy (Crawford, 1978), where the framework of CP has been adapted for the ESL\EFL class (Crookes, 2009): In her work on Freire's pedagogy as implemented in ESL\EFL, Crawford (1978) traced key principles of Critical Language Pedagogy and asserted her distrust for commercially produced materials; this distrust was echoed in Brown (1990) and Rinvoluceri (1999), which stated that the best selling EFL\ESL books had always been catered towards a white, westernized, professional audience and actively avoided dealing with controversial aspects of society. In the Freirean framework, watered-down conventional textbooks are part of the banking model of education (Rashidi and Safari, 2011) that has been analyzed in the previous paragraph; such materials alienate students from reality and detach them from responsibility, opportunity and their very imagination and creative force (Crawford, 1978). In tracing the tenets of Critical Language Pedagogy, Crawford focused on the role of the teacher and the student. Therefore, the role of education should be that of generating critical thinking: the curriculum should be based on the student's lived experience and reframed as themes, which need to be *generative*. In this fashion, materials are effectively created and presented by students (1978) and re-elaborated in dialogical terms. The teacher's role is to pose problems, or as termed by the author, *thought-provoking questions* (1978).

The tenets, reminiscent of Freire's conceptualizations of problem-posing education, are to be applied following a method that is still indebted to the Brazilian educator (Crawford, 1978): the *generative* themes proposed by the students are used following three stages: Codification, de-codification and recodification.

Codification, which parallels the Freirean Naming stage, is the representation of *generative* themes in visual, audio or written forms (Crawford, 1978); de-codification is the exploration of the learner's ideas about the materials given in political and sociocultural terms, it focuses on interactions between different themes and it's aimed to unveil those aspects of the problem that haven't been previously considered by the students (Crawford, 1978); the last stage, recodification, allows learning to use their newly found awareness of the problem and rethink it critically (Crawford, 1978).

The work of Crawford led the way to new developments in the field of Critical Language pedagogy: some of them were focused on theoretical and ethical aspects of language

teaching as connected to colonization and Anglo-American imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), as well as analyzing broad sociopolitical topics in the field of applied linguistics (Pennycook, 1991). Stemming from radical re-conceptualizations of mainstream pedagogy (Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1994), these works highlighted the often hidden discourses embedded in the fields of educational and applied linguistics, which had until then taken an illusorily innocent and objective position (Canagarajah, 2005).

Another strain of developments deals in depth with practical discussion of classroom pedagogy and curriculum creation in language teaching, as informed by CP (Auerbach, 1990; Auerbach & Wallerstein, 2004; Benesch, 1996). This body of work is firmly located within a Freirean framework, while at the same time expanding the discussion to cover salient aspects of language teaching and learning: In her work, Auerbach (1990) advanced the concept of participatory curriculum development in an adult ESL context. Drawing from Adult Education Theory (Knowles, 1984) and Second Language Acquisition Theory (SLA) she devised a model for curriculum development that was both meaning and experience-centered (Auerbach, 1990):

- I. *Students are engaged in curriculum development at every stage of the process:* the students participate in the identification of issues, the creation of content and materials. They also have a role in assessment. The approach to curriculum-development is made explicit.
- II. *The classroom is a model:* the content and processes of learning are thought as able to shape students' perceptions and possibilities in the outside world; social relations in the classroom model social relations outside the classroom.
- III. *Focusing on strengths instead of inadequacies:* students are seen as experts of their own reality. Investigating and validating what students can do already instead of focusing on their lack of knowledge is paramount in this method.
- IV. *The teacher is a problem-poser, and not a problem-solver:* the teacher facilitates the students in their inquiries and meaning is reached through collective dialogue.
- V. *The content comes from the social context:* the starting point of the curriculum is the lived and real experience of the learners. They develop literacy and linguistic skills addressing social factors in familiar contexts.
- VI. *Exploration of language, literacy and culture in the content:* the development of metacognitive awareness through the investigation of literacy use and cultural practices to foster critical reflection on schooling and education.

- VII. *Content comes from the classroom context*: issues internal to the classroom are transformed into content-based activities.
- VIII. *From individual experience to social analysis*: students look at their personal situations as related to each other's experience, striving to de-personalize problems and provide support in light of future action.
- IX. *The content goes back to the social context*: action outside the classroom is the main goals of a participatory curriculum; literacy is not the end in itself, but a means to shape the reality of the students.

In order to maintain its content and experience-centered nature, participatory pedagogy in ESL and EFL must be founded on the above cited *generative themes* (Auerbach, 1990; Auerbach & Wallerstein, 2004): in order to gather generative themes from the students, the instructors must position themselves as listeners both inside and outside the classroom (Auerbach & Wallerstein, 2004). Auerbach and Wallerstein (2004) reported that the problem with assessing the needs of the students comes from the fact that many of the themes that might be covered in the classroom do not present themselves at a surface level, but need to be researched. Traditional need assessment practices are not particularly useful, since they are conceived a priori and heavily reflects what institutions and society at large consider fundamental in the student's education (Benesch, 1996). There is often a disconnection between what students are required to learn and what students consider vital needs in their education and daily life (Benesch, 1996): there is also a political and social aspect to be considered in defining what the students' need are, since the analysis can hardly be considered, as defined by Johns and Dudely Evans (1991), a mere discovery of the language used in specific situations, but it carries, instead, a political and ideological connotation that reflect the values of the analyst and of society at large (Robinson, 1991).

In order to position themselves as listeners and facilitators, teachers can opt for different approaches: for themes that exist at a surface level, such as financial problems, work-life balance, cultural differences, and dreams and expectations, teachers can actively ask related questions and follow-ups (Auerbach & Wallerstein, 2004). In order to identify underlying themes and hidden dynamics, educators have different exercises at their disposal: one of them is the River of Life (Feldblum et al, 1994), in which the students are asked to draw their life as a symbolic river composed of boulders, heavy and light rapids, sinkholes, shallow waters and every other feature that can symbolically overlap

with a state of life. Contrasting and comparing the drawings can be useful not only to uncover hidden themes within the life stories of students, but also to foster a sense of community building (Auerbach & Wallerstein).

Once a generative theme, or more, is identified, it needs to be transformed into a code, or trigger (Crawford, 1978; Auerbach, 1990; Auerbach & Wallerstein, 2004), namely visual, textual, audio or interactive materials that represent the generative themes brought up by the students.

In the work of Auerbach and Wallerstein (1990; 2004) codes are to be patiently and carefully crafted following specific guidelines:

- a) A code should represent a familiar problem or situation which can be immediately recognized by the students;
- b) It should avoid conveying a specific bias and present the problem under multiple points of view (including contradictions);
- c) It should focus on a single concern, to be discussed in a holistic way;
- d) It shouldn't provide simple and direct solutions; resolutions and strategies should surface from group discussion;
- e) The problem presented should be solvable and the discussion should be tailored for group affirmation and action towards change;
- f) The generative theme should unfold through the interactions of characters;
- g) The vocabulary and the grammar should be inserted taking the level of the students into consideration, as well as their needs and concerns (Auerbach and Wallerstein, 2004)

Source: <https://onecommunitychurchblog.wordpress.com/2013/01/12/84/>



Discrimination: Language in a Classroom



Teenagers



Source: *Problem-posing at work: Popular educator's guide*. Wallerstein and Auerbach, 2004 (58-59)

Once the codes are crafted and presented to the students, the teachers can use different Freirean approaches to guide and facilitate the discussion, some of which have been already encountered in the previous paragraphs: the Naming – Reflection – Action stages of analysis (Freire, 1974) and Crawford’s (1978) Codification, Decodification and Recodification process have evolved through time and practice. An approach that is highlighted in Auerbach and Wallerstein’s work (2004) is SHOWeD (Shaffer, 1983), which presents five levels of analysis through questions:

- a. Description: what the students see in the code and what part of it strikes them the most (*what do you **see** in the picture?*);
- b. Problem Definition: concerned with what is really happening and the feeling of the characters (*what is **happening**?*);
- c. Personalize: the bearing the situation has in the students and the teachers' lives (*How does the problem affect **our** lives?*);
- d. Analyze Social Context: concerned with the reason(s) of the problem and why it's relevant for the community\group (***Why** does this problem present itself in our communities?*);
- e. Develop Strategies for Action: coming up with strategies and small actions to face the problem (*What can be **done** to solve this problem?*).

The outcomes of the praxis and methodology that I have highlighted in these introductory chapters are obviously highly dependent on the talent of the teachers and presents a certain degree of unpredictability (mainly due to the facts that need analysis is conducted *in itinere*). Now that I have laid down the main features of Critical Pedagogy and its bearing on language learning and teaching, I will briefly analyze the intersections between CRT and TESOL as informed by CP.

3.3. Critical Race Theory and TESOL

In this subchapter I will analyze the intersections between CRT and English Language Teaching and Learning; I will implement the tenets of Critical Race Theory (as reported in chapter I) into TESOL in light of my analysis of Critical Pedagogy.

The first tenet that presents relevant features within a discourse on Tesol is the notion of the *centrality of racism in society*: as seen in the first chapter of my thesis, racism cannot be relegated to the actions of extremists with an individual indisposition towards people of color. Racism is a fundamental part of western societies, it’s so ingrained into society to appear natural and unchangeable (See Chapter I eg, Delgado & Stefancic, 2000;

Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). A parallel line could be drawn with TESOL in terms of the centrality of white-dominated conceptualizations of English in the classroom; as we have seen in the second chapter, linguistic assumptions are omnipresent in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics (See Chapter 2 eg, Kubota and Lin, 2006; Curtis and Romney, 2006; Motha, 2006). In a second language contexts, students of English can relate to the topic drawing from their experience as “defective” and “incomplete” speakers of English who routinely encounter discrimination based on their accents and intonation (See chapter II eg, Amin, 1997;2000)

Drawing from my experience teaching in a EFL context, the notion of racism as a fundamental part of society can be related to the students’ own racial and cultural bias towards different categories of English language speakers. This tenet can also be implemented to raise students’ awareness of their own racial make-up and the cultural standpoint from which they analyze and travel the world.

The following example, taken from *Keynote – Advanced* (Stephenson, Lansford, and Dummet, 2016), a best-selling EFL book targeted to young, western professionals, provides an opportunity to tackle the issue of the pervasiveness of whiteness at the top levels of the professional world:

The book provides a chart titled “*Age, Experience & Success*” and show real life stories and presents data about 6 relatively young business people and entrepreneurs. What’s evident at first sight is the absence of people of color in the chart. The famous business personalities presented in the chart are respectively 3 white Britons, 1 white American, 1 white Spanish and 1 Mexican Latino.

In the pre-teaching phase, students can be made aware of the predominance of white or light-skinned faces in the real-life stories presented in the chart through a series of questions:

- a. What strikes you the most about the chart?
- b. What do you think the people in the chart have in common?
- c. Why do you think this phenomenon is hard to notice?
- d. What are some problem that might stem from this situation?
- e. What can we, as a society, do to level the playing field?

A discussion might follow, allowing a knowledgeable teacher to present important notions of American business-culture such as affirmative action, representation and diversity management.

In the last subchapter, the one dedicated to the creation of classroom activities, I will provide another example of an exercise informed by the first tenet of CRT.

Another tenet that it's worth analyzing is the one concerning the power of *counter-storytelling* (See Chapter 1, eg. Bonilla-Silva, 2006): this tenet can be useful to provide students with the possibility to voice their perspectives and alternative understanding of what is learned in the classroom; through counter-storytelling, and narrations in general, students and teachers can foster a sense of community within the classroom and promote meaningful interactions.

Personal narratives can be easily applied to deconstruct the students' own expectations about their learning and the impacts it has on their present and future selves (Dorniey, 2005). A good example of an activity that can foster the students' motivation and help them analyze the sources of their expectations, fears and hope related to the English language, could be presenting success stories of migration to anglophone countries. Following a Freirean approach, the stories should involve individuals who are able to negotiate their identities and present thought-provoking contradictions: the success story provided to the students could address, for example, the pressure put on migrants individuals to assimilate the cultural and linguistic mores of the country they reside in, as well as to try to achieve a native-level proficiency and hide their accents. Using such a code could provide relief to the students' concerns about their English proficiency and fluency and possibly open a debate concerning their own internalization of nativist and linguisticist assumptions.

Personal narratives can unveil the reasons behind the student's investment in the target language and in their own identities, and highlight how fluid and ever-changing they can be (Norton, 2000).

The third tenet to be analyzed in relation to English language learning is intersectionality (See Crenshaw (1989) in Chapter I). An intersectional framework could be useful to oppose essentialist views both inside and outside the classroom (Macdonald 2002; Solorzano and Yosso 2002). It also offers the possibility to unveil intra-group dynamics (Liggett, 2013) that affect the students' learning and how they navigate society.

Intersectionality can help students and teachers make sense of the obstacle faced by learners, both within a second and foreign English language learning context: through cooperative group learning, ESL students can analyze and deconstruct the issues they face as, e.g. Latinx or Eastern European speakers of English (Ligget, 2013), while in a EFL context, students might engage the issue of stereotyping and essentialist views related to their national origins and how they affect their racial, gendered and class identities.

The ideas I've had analyzed in this sub-chapter, both mine and taken from the available literature highlight how the framework of Critical Race Theory can be easily applied to the English language classroom working as an expansion of Critical Pedagogy with a focus on race, ethnicity, identity and gender.

In the next and final subchapters, I will analyze the framework of Intercultural Language Learning as a synthesis of both critical pedagogy and critical race theory; I will also propose diverse classroom activities aimed at the development of anti-racist practices and race-consciousness in an EFL class.

3.4. Intercultural Language Learning

In the previous sub-chapters we have analyzed the frameworks of Critical Race Theory and Critical Pedagogy and their application within the field of English language learning. During my quest to find a suitable approach that can be implemented into the English language class – with the goal of creating anti-racist materials - and it's supported by strong theoretical foundations, I've stumbled across Intercultural Language Learning (IcLL), a framework that stems from the work of authors such as Kramersch (1993), Liddicoat (2002; 2003; with A. Scarino, 2013), Crozet & Liddicoat (1999), Fantini (1997) and Paige and Stringer (1997).

IcLL is based on the idea that whenever we use language we are also performing a cultural act (Kramersch, 1993), which necessarily involves, at least for language learners, the speakers' own culture and the culture of the target language (Kramersch, 1993). Intercultural speakers need to develop a cultural position which mediates between their culture(s) and the culture(s) of their interlocutors, in a process that Fantini termed as "intercultural exploration" (1997; 40-44).

The intercultural approach developed as a response to the notion of communicative competence as applied to EFL and ESL: Communicative Language Teaching revolved

around an idealized idea of native-like competency, to be obtained through the progressive mastery of linguistic and socio-cultural abilities (Canale and Swain, 1980; Bachman and Palmer, 1996). The socio-cultural component of communicative competence refers to the students ability to express a message appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication. In addition to social contextual factors such as age, gender, status and social distance, the learner must gain insights into the history, traditions, literature and culture of the target language community (Celce-Murcia, 1995). This model, in which the teacher emphasizes the dissemination of cultural elements through language use, is seen by Liddicoat (2002) as static and ineffective: in this framework, culture is treated as a closed and fixed phenomenon and the teachers impart practical knowledge to their students without providing the necessary conceptual tools to understand and participate in cultures as they change throughout years, geographical areas and other contextual factors. (Liddicoat; Scarino; Papademetre; Kohler, 2003). In addition, this approach often ignores intra-group cultural, ethnic, class and gendered differences that might exist within a society and is prone to the homogenization of cultures in the image of dominant groups. (Crozet and Liddicoat, 1999)

IcLL's views of culture are in diametrical opposition to those of communicative competence: intercultural competence focuses on the functioning of cultural systems and practices; on the exploration of the students' own culture(s) in relation to the target language and vice versa; it opposes the simple acquisition of cultural facts and artifacts (Liddicoat, 2002). The goal of intercultural competence is not relegated to making the students aware of other cultures and sympathetic towards difference (Carr, 1999). IcLL engages the students in the process of creating and recreating intercultural practices and negotiating meaning through dialogue and self-inquiry (Carr, 1999).

This framework overlaps perfectly with the tenets of CRT, especially if we take into consideration the hidden meanings behind the notion of culture (See Chapter 1, eg. Felton, 2017) and the way it's often used as a more benign proxy for race and ethnicity. The concepts of mediating between cultures and recognizing the weight of our own cultural belonging relate with the idea of the unmarkedness of white identities and, by expansion, of linguistic practices within dominant members of a society. In this framework, in fact, bilingual speakers are the norm and students need to be able to communicate in a way that is appropriately comprehensible, but which at the same time acknowledge their cultural heritage (Liddicoat, 2002).

IcLL can also be considered intersectional, in light of its refusal to homogenize the speakers of a target language into the stereotypical image of young white heterosexual professionals, giving voice to intra-group differences across communities of speakers.

Within the framework of intercultural language teaching, we can trace processes and approach of Freirean origin: as stated above, IcLL steers clear off the notion of teachers as mere providers of knowledge and cultural artifacts to the students. The latter are involved in a process of meaning-making and effectively develop a praxis to understand and study languages vis-à-vis cultures (Page and Stinger, 1997), which is reminding of the Freirean notion of education as a liberatory and empowering process. Page and Stinger (1997) highlight this praxis-oriented aspect of Intercultural Language Learning in their five-element model for IcLL:

- a. Learning about the self as a cultural being;
- b. Learning about culture and its impact on human language, behavior, and identity;
- c. Culture-general learning, focusing on universal intercultural phenomena, including cultural adjustment;
- d. Culture-specific learning, with a focus on a particular language and culture;
- e. Learning how to learn about language and culture.

The Freirean nature of IcLL is furtherly expanded in the five principles of Intercultural Language Teaching (Liddicoat; Scarino; Papademetre; Kohler, 2003), which focus on the active participation of the students in the creation of materials and inter-cultural products. The five principles are divided as such:

- a. *Active Construction*: the purposeful and active construction of knowledge (e.g. creating visuals or conceptual maps to demonstrate relationships) within socio-cultural contexts;
- b. *Making Connections*: challenging previous assumptions and conceptions of the learners and making connections with other cultures to re-organize and extend learners' existing frameworks of knowledge.
- c. *Social Interaction*: communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries, working towards reciprocal relationships and exploring multiple cultures;
- d. *Reflection*. becoming aware of the processes underlying thinking and knowing. Critically analyzing our own cultures and belief systems;
- e. *Responsibility*: accepting responsibility for contributing to successful intercultural communication and for developing an intercultural perspective.

3.5. Proposing Materials for EFL Classrooms

Now that I have traced the basic features of IcLL, I will devise a series of classroom activities with an anti-racist vocation. The activities are mainly targeted towards students of English as a foreign language in an Italian context. I've made this choice of setting because of my experience as a TESOL professional in Italy: during my time teaching at a private language institute, I've been noticing the attachment of Italian students to their regional and national cultures, which they tend to see as a normative standard. Contemporary Italy is a recipient of intense migratory fluxes from Africa, Asia, South America and Eastern Europe, phenomena that have been stirring up controversies and causing attrition among citizens. I've also noticed how for some Italian students, when confronted with Anglo-American or anglophone cultures, their strong sense of national and local belonging become a burden to get rid of as soon as possible in order to achieve international success. Many of my students are also migrant themselves, constantly juggling between different identities as both learners of Italian and English.

In devising the activities, I tried to take all of the above into consideration, as well as stick to the framework I have previously analyzed. I've tried to keep the activities as simple as possible, at least in terms of technological implementation and logistical aspects; given the realities of linguistic education in the country, both private and public, I've tried to maintain the activities as much cost-effective as possible. The activities will be divided as such:

- a. *Baby Names - discovering migration through onomastics*: an activity targeted towards children aged 9-11 attending an A2 Cambridge Flyers course. The activity will be carried out in English and Italian;
- b. *Intercultural Menu*: a writing and researching activity for teenagers aged 13-16 with a B1-B2 CEFR level, possibly as an implementation for the Cambridge – Preliminary for Schools or the First for School exams;
- c. *Changing dress codes*: a speaking activity for adults business English students, ranging from an Upper-Intermediate (B2) to and Advanced (C1) CEFR level of English;

3.5.1. Baby Names – Discovering migration through onomastics

First, ask the children to guess popular English and American names, or just the name they associate to the countries.

Then provide the children with a list of popular baby names in the UK (divided between boy names and girl names) and ask them to read it out loud with your help. As a warm up activity, you can ask the children to make a list of peculiar or strange names that they find interesting, or ask them to research (on their phone/tablet, or with you on your laptop or the one provided by the school), the etymology or geographical provenience of their names. Focus on the fact that many names come from different part of the world and they all have an inspiration (e.g. in nature, religion or history).

Ask them to do the same work for the name you have presented in the list; in order to facilitate the process, you can draw a chart on the whiteboard divided as such:

<i>NAME</i>	<i>GENDER</i>	<i>PROVENIENCE</i>	<i>ORIGIN</i>
Mohamed	Boy	Middle-East	Religion
Daisy	Girl	English	Flower
Maya	Girl	India	Religion

Once the group has completed the chart with your help, you can follow up on the topic of naming and names with the following questions, in English or Italian:

- a. *Where do girl names usually come from?*
- b. *Where do boy names usually come from?*
- c. *Do you have any friends with a strange or exotic name? Why do you find it strange?*
- d. *What is your favorite name from the list?*

Guide your students in noticing the main inspirations behind girl and boy names and ask them to find differences. You can ask their opinions about this difference in Italian, focusing on the connection between the inspiration and adjectives used to describe boys and girls (Flowers – *pretty, beautiful, delicate*; Historical figures and saints – *energetic, brave, wise*).

The aim of this activity is in line with the tenets of IcLL, with a focus on cultural and ethnic differences. The children are asked to reflect on their own cultures and make comparisons between the different inspirations behind them. The activity defies the

children's expectations of typical names in the anglophone world and highlights important phenomena such as migration and second generation migrant children becoming full-fledged citizens of a country

The activity presents an intersectional vocation: the children are required to think about the gendered aspect of naming and the effect it has on the behavior of young boys and girls.

As an additional activity, you can present a short adapted article about second generation migrant children in the US or the UK and ask the children to compare the situation of their own country with those of the UK and USA, by asking simple personal questions such as: "do you have any friends from a different country?".

3.5.2. Intercultural Menu

Warm-up the students with simple questions about food and cooking: try to focus their attention on the experience of trying new dishes from different cultures through a series of questions they can work out in pairs or groups:

- a. *Do you enjoy tasting local dishes when you go abroad with your family?*
- b. *Would you mind giving me adjectives to describe ethnic dishes that you have tasted?*
- c. *Do you sometimes eat out? What are your favorite restaurants?*

You can obviously use visual prompts to start the conversation and ask the students to describe what they see in the picture and whether they find the food represented appealing.

After completing the phase of pre-teaching present the children with the following code on a sheet of paper:

“Amina is a young migrant girl who lives in London, the capital city of the UK. She’s 16 years old and she’s attending the second year of high school. Originally, she comes from Algeria. She used to live in Algiers, but her family had to move to the UK five years ago. At first she couldn’t speak English very well, since her second language was French, but as soon as she started going to school and making friends, she became very passionate about the English language. Now she can speak English fluently with a French accent that everyone finds very elegant. Amina’s school has decided to organize a trip to Italy for her class and they plan to visit your school. Amina has written a letter to you, introducing herself and some of her friends. She’s excited at the idea of visiting Italy, but she’s also worried about something. She explains to you that, as a Muslim girl, she is not allowed to eat pork and other types of meat (because they need to be prepared in a specific way). She’s also worried about a friend of hers of Hindu origin, Maya, who has to follow a strict vegetarian diet. In the UK is perfectly normal for schools to have differentiated menu with vegetarian choices and dishes that Muslim students can eat. The two girls really want to taste the food of your school’s canteen, because traditional Italian kitchen is famous worldwide, but they are afraid of what they will find on the menu”.

Read the code in class with your students, answering eventual questions. Provide the students with the following questions to be answered in pairs of small groups:

- a. *Do you have to follow a specific diet? Do you have any dietary restrictions?*

- b. *What's the importance of discovering dishes from other countries?*
- c. *How would you feel moving to a country with completely different culinary traditions?*

Assign the following exercise as a homework activity:

Research the culinary tradition of Middle-eastern and north African countries and work in pairs to develop an intercultural menu with Italian primo and secondo options suitable for Amina's and Maya's dietary requirements. Answer Amina's letter in an appropriate form, using the right amount of words (35-70 for the Preliminary exam and 140-190 words for the First exam).

The aim of this activity, in line the principles of IcLL, is to make students aware of general intercultural phenomena such as migration, cultural adjustment and multiculturalism. The students are actively engaged in the creation of an intercultural product and asked to reflect upon their own culture and the importance of achieving interculturality between teenagers from different backgrounds.

The exercise is also appropriate in light of the Preliminary and First exams, since is focused on spoken presentation skills and the redaction of an informal letter.

3.5.3. Changing Dress Codes

Start by asking your adult students to describe the clothes they are wearing, focusing on the situations in which they could be worn outside of the classroom. In order to consolidate their vocabulary on clothing and fashion, you can use a crossword with common nouns and adjectives related to the topic (*loose; tight; smart; casual; put-together; frumpy; tie; blazer; slacks*).

Introduce them to the concept of dress code and corporate expectations about clothing; ask them to talk about their countries' dress codes at work and at school and to compare their ideas and attitudes about the topic.

After the brief discussion presents them with a code composed of different pictures of smartly and casually dressed people, including a Sikh man wearing a turban and a smart work attire; an Indian woman wearing a smart *saree* and African American woman sporting short dreadlocks and a smart corporate African dress.

Ask them to look at the pictures and identify which ones of the attires they consider “neutral” and which one “cultural”; ask the student the reasons why they associated certain styles with a cultural or ethnic connotation. Introduce the concept of racialization and ask them how they feel about it; highlight the fact that typical western attires represent the culture of the west and ask them to eventually reconsider their notion of ethnic.

After the discussion provide a series of questions to work out in pairs and small groups:

- a. *Put yourself in the shoes of a recruiter: which candidate would you rather hire?*
- b. *How would you describe the personality of the interviewees on the base of their clothes?*
- c. *What are the advantages of allowing cultural dresses in your workplace? Would it affect the productivity of your company?*

After going over the questions, you can introduce useful notions related to businesses in the anglophone world such as Diversity Management and Affirmative Action.

The aim of this activity is to foster an inclusive business culture and make the students aware of their own western culture; addressing the bias related to ethnic and cultural clothing, by unveiling the constructed nature of what they perceive as formal and normative in the office.

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CONCLUSION

During my compilation work, I have analyzed various phenomena related to language education and issues of race and ethnicity and tried to make a case for the development of anti-racist materials in the English language class. I would like to use this final space to revise my findings and the bearing they have on EFL\ESL:

- a. Race, racism, and race relations are a fundamental part of western societies, and more specifically the Anglo-American world. Issues of race have been analyzed in depths in the past centuries and a plethora of theories have been proposed – some of which degrading and anti-scientific - to make sense of the differences in physical appearance and behavior between differently racialized human beings. Race has always been connected with issues of power and conquest, and should be analyzed in terms of political strategies and structural inequalities aimed to maintain white supremacy; consequently, notions of blackness and whiteness have been created and shaped by conscientious policies and can be considered social constructs more than biological facts. The social constructivist view of race has paved the way for the development of Critical Race Theory, an interdisciplinary body of knowledge and framework of reference to tackle white supremacy in the law, in education and across job markets. Strains and branches of CRT have put forth a form of scientific inquiry that is based on personal narrations and social discourses, that have since challenged traditional notions of scientific objectivity that used to favor the master-narrative of white society. CRT is *intersectional* and brings to light the different subjectivities of people of color.
- b. Using CTR frameworks of analysis, several studies have been made to link race with phenomena such as linguisticism and nativism in applied linguistics and TESOL. Patterns of racialization and discrimination can be found in discourses that are apparently purely linguistic in nature; disdain and distrust towards different varieties of English or different languages at large are propelled by racist ideologies: attitudes towards African American Vernacular English and the struggle to prevent it from entering mainstream education and having its deserved respect accorded to it are symptomatic of a strategy of linguistic, cultural and educational gatekeeping on the part of white America. The effects of this heinous

proposition have been devastating for the literacy of African American children, which still lag behind their white counterparts.

- c. In the fields of EFL and ESL, non-white and differently racialized teachers, especially nonnative speakers of English, are often subjected to discriminatory hiring practices and unequal treatments by their colleagues, supervisors and students. Teachers that don't fit into the category of whiteness and nativeness tend to have low self-esteem and experience forms of stereotyping and otherization that stem directly from their minoritarian status.
- d. White-racialized teachers, through self-inquiry, can address different forms of racism and otherization in their ESL and EFL classrooms. The majority of them, however, tend to put aside a critique of their white identities and foster irresponsible and racist behaviors in their classroom.
- e. The need of creating anti-racist materials for the EFL class can be addressed following the principles of Critical Pedagogy; Freirean approaches can be freely implemented in the English classroom, especially when informed by CRT. Parallels can be drawn between CP, CRT and the relatively recent framework of Intercultural Language Teaching.

My final remarks are more of a wishful thinking: as teachers and educators, we have all the means to address issues of race, ethnicity, gender and class in our curricula and through carefully and respectfully crafted materials. We should hope that, in the near future, commercially successful editors and whomever is involved in the business of EFL and ESL would pick up the useful notions and proposals that have been disseminated through years of studying, researching and practicing, with the final goal of making a more inclusive and human subject out of language education.