

Teletandem and critical racial literacy in additional language education

Teletandem e letramento racial crítico na educação em línguas adicionais

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ABSTRACT: This article presents an exploratory analysis on the contributions of the critical racial literacy (CRL) perspective in education to teletandem. Teletandem is a modality of virtual exchange practice for language learning that has been largely institutionally implemented in universities, language centers, and in other contexts in Brazil and abroad, as several studies have documented (Aranha; Cavalari, 2014; Garcia, 2015; Garcia; Souza, 2018; Souza, 2020). It was first implemented in 2006 at São Paulo State University (Unesp) through the research project Teletandem Brazil: foreign languages for all (Telles; Vassallo, 2006). The initiative aimed to promote collaborative and autonomous learning of additional languages, through regular synchronous web-conferencing sessions between pairs of learners who speak different languages, each aiming to learn the other's native or proficiency language. The learning process in teletandem is expected to be supported by pedagogical mediation by teachers and researchers in the field of language education (Salomão, 2008). Despite two decades of research on teletandem, there is a lack of studies that address the implications of ethnic-racial dimensions in the intercultural dialogue and learning processes promoted within this institutional context of virtual exchange. In this regard, this article results from an articulation between CRL and teletandem, through a review of teletandem pedagogical principles of autonomy, reciprocity and separate use of languages (Picoli; Salomão, 2020; Leone; Telles, 2016; Leone, 2022; Satar; Aranha; Cavalari; Almijiwl, 2024; Moore; Rampazzo, 2023; Lima-Lopes; Aranha, 2023) and through a qualitative analysis of CRL based on some important publications on this theme (Ladson-Billings; Tate, 1995; Mosley, 2010; Ferreira, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2015; Braúna; Souza; Andrade Sobrinha, 2022; Santos; Santos; El-Kadri, 2021). The study indicates the contributions of CRL for the studies on teletandem intercultural telecollaborative learning experiences, such as developing learners and teachers' awareness of race and racism within the intercultural dialogue, as well as promoting a pedagogical process committed to antiracism.

KEYWORDS: Critical racial literacy. Teletandem. Virtual exchange. Language learning.

RESUMO: Este artigo apresenta uma análise exploratória sobre as contribuições da perspectiva do letramento racial crítico (LRC) na educação para o teletandem. Teletandem é uma modalidade de prática de intercâmbio virtual para a aprendizagem de línguas que tem

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sido amplamente implementada institucionalmente em universidades, centros de línguas, e em outros contextos no Brasil e no exterior, conforme várias pesquisas têm documentado (Aranha; Cavalari, 2014; Garcia, 2015; Garcia; Souza, 2018; Souza, 2020). O teletandem foi implementado pela primeira vez em 2006, na Universidade Estadual Paulista (Unesp), por meio do projeto Teletandem Brasil: línguas estrangeiras para todos (Telles; Vassallo, 2006). A iniciativa objetivava promover aprendizagem colaborativa e autônoma de línguas adicionais, por meio de sessões síncronas regulares de webconferência entre pares de aprendizes falantes de línguas diferentes, em que cada um busca aprender a língua nativa ou de proficiência do outro. O processo de aprendizagem nesse contexto prevê o suporte de mediação pedagógica realizada por professores e pesquisadores do campo da educação linguística (Salomão, 2008). Apesar de duas décadas de pesquisas sobre o teletandem, há uma carência de estudos que abordem as implicações das dimensões étnico-raciais no diálogo intercultural e nos processos de aprendizagem promovidos nesse contexto institucional de intercâmbio virtual. Nesse sentido, este artigo resulta de uma articulação entre o LRC e o teletandem, por meio de uma revisão dos princípios pedagógicos do teletandem - autonomia, reciprocidade e uso separado das línguas (Picoli; Salomão, 2020; Leone; Telles, 2016; Leone, 2022; Satar; Aranha; Cavalari; Almijiwl, 2024; Moore; Rampazzo, 2023; Lima-Lopes; Aranha, 2023) - e de uma análise qualitativa do LRC, fundamentada em publicações relevantes sobre o tema (Ladson-Billings; Tate, 1995; Mosley, 2010; Ferreira, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2015; Braúna; Souza; Andrade Sobrinha, 2022; Santos; Santos; El-Kadri, 2021). O estudo indica as contribuições do LRC para os estudos sobre experiências interculturais de aprendizagem em contextos telecolaborativos de teletandem, tais como o desenvolvimento da consciência de estudantes e professores acerca de raça e racismo no diálogo intercultural, bem como a promoção de um processo pedagógico comprometido com o antirracismo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Letramento racial crítico. Teletandem. Intercâmbio virtual. Aprendizagem de línguas.

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1 Introduction

Teletandem, a virtual exchange modality of additional language learning, started to be promoted in Brazilian universities in 2006, when it was implemented at São Paulo State University (Unesp) through the research project “Teletandem Brazil: Foreign Languages for All” (Telles; Vassallo, 2006). As it is explicit in its title, the project aimed at promoting a democratic context for language learners to develop their target language through contact with international people and cultures. The use of web conference tools is one of the key elements of this inclusive value, due to its

potential to overcome geographical distance for a significantly lower cost when compared to learning experiences that involve physical mobility.

The practice of teletandem consists of regular sessions of live telecollaboration between pairs of language learners, one aimed at practicing a language of proficiency of the other. For each session, learners are expected to divide the time for the collaborative practice of each language. In its beginning at Unesp, most partnerships promoted were between Language Arts undergraduates majoring in English and Spanish, and, to a lesser extent, French, Italian, German, or Japanese, and learners of Portuguese from partner universities abroad¹. Telles and Vassallo (2006, p. 207) agree that learning an additional language does not depend on communication or classes with a native speaker or exchange experiences in the country where the target language is spoken. However, they consider contact with people from other cultural and geographical backgrounds an important experience for developing pre-service and in-service teachers' "[...] critical competence and knowledge of the cultures of the peoples whose language they will be teaching".

The modes of integration of teletandem activities into the curriculum of a language course depend on the agreements established between the agents who promote it (teachers, coordinators of language programs, researchers, and/or others). At Unesp's partner institutions abroad, most teletandem activities have been integrated into the curriculum of Portuguese language courses and been required as a mandatory activity for the students enrolled in these courses. At the same time, at Unesp, the integration can vary according to the campus where it is implemented, or the interests and agreements established with each partner institution in different semesters. At Unesp Assis/São Paulo campus, for example, nowadays, many teletandem opportunities of partnerships are offered to undergraduate and graduate students, professors, administrative staff, and participants from the external

¹ Such affirmation derives from my experience in the teletandem context of practice, research, and mediation, which started in 2006.

community, not restricted to Language Arts students. In this context, the possibility of including a broader scope of participants is due to the increased number of institutional partnerships and consolidation of this modality of language learning practice in the academic context, as well as to the challenges of its implementation in one specific course, due, for example, to differences in time zones of the interactions.

Since the beginning of teletandem implementation, several studies have been conducted on the learning processes and the emergent issues of intercultural communication established by the pairs of learners (Zakir; Funo; Telles, 2016; Moretti; Salomão, 2019; Salomão, 2015; Souza, 2016). However, after almost twenty years of advances and documentation of the institutionalization of teletandem in several higher education contexts and, most recently, in federal institutes of high schools and technical courses, there is a lack of studies that directly consider the ethnic-racial dimensions implicated in the intercultural dialogue in teletandem. So, this study aims to analyze teletandem as a context for developing learners' critical racial literacy, with a special focus on additional language teachers. For this purpose, in the first part of the study, I present the principles that characterize teletandem practice. Following this, I present a qualitative analysis of possible contributions of critical racial literacy, based on a review of important publications on this theme.

2 Teletandem principles

Teletandem collaborative practice originated from the model of face-to-face tandem for language learning (Brammerts, 2002), and is grounded on the principles of *autonomy, reciprocity, and separate use of languages*. These principles are described by Vassallo and Telles (2006), pioneers in formulating and implementing teletandem at Unesp. They present their perspectives on how such tenets collaborate for the learning processes in teletandem. For the authors, autonomy relates to the levels of responsibilities learners are expected to take over their language learning process, varying according to each modality of teletandem institutionalization and

implementation (Salomão; Silva; Daniel, 2009). The authors also state that in tandem contexts of learning, “[...] autonomy is not understood *without* the other, but *with* the other [...]”² (Vassallo; Telles, 2009, p. 32). Vassallo and Telles (2009) also consider that the principle of autonomy questions traditional beliefs on language learning as a mechanical and controlled process. In this regard, learners are expected to manage their learning process based on what emerges from their own interactions and communication needs.

Autonomy is not an absolute and linear principle. According to Luz and Cavalari (2009), this concept involves cultural, social, psychological, and political variables, which make it complex and controversial. Different modes of institutional teletandem practice preserve a variable degree of flexibility for participants to decide what to do (themes to develop, strategies to use, objectives, learning activities during and between sessions, etc.) during their meetings. Considering the different issues and challenges that learning in teletandem raises, in institutional contexts, the mediation conducted by experts in language teaching and learning (teachers, researchers, or others) is an important pedagogical support to promote learners' commitment, consolidation of each partnership, and reflection on their linguistic and intercultural education, as several studies have indicated (Simões; Lima, 2009; Salomão, 2008; Funo, 2015).

In a detailed review of studies on autonomy in teletandem, Moore and Rampazzo (2023, p. 188), conclude that it corresponds “[...] to the process of participants taking responsibility for their learning. Therefore, autonomy is not seen as a result of a solo practice, but as a principle embedded into a guided independence.” The intertwined relationship between autonomy and collaboration in teletandem aligns this context with the socio-interactionist theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1994). Luz and Cavalari (2009) affirm that the equal value attributed to both languages in

² In the original: “[...] autonomia não é concebida sem o outro, mas com o outro [...].”

contact in teletandem and the possibility learners have to use their language as scaffolding for the communication process help to characterize teletandem as a foreign language learning context.

Along with autonomy, *reciprocity* is understood as the commitment learners are expected to have to contribute to each other's development within a partnership. Learners' engagement in partnerships involves exchanges of knowledge in a context free of any financial charge since both participants are expected to benefit mutually from the collaborative process. Vassallo and Telles (2009, p. 24) inform that the principle of reciprocity "[...] promotes partners' self-esteem and puts them in a position of equity"³. This principle also relates to the quality of interdependence, which the authors associate with partners' engagement in the learning process. According to them, even in an unbalanced partnership, when one participant shows more commitment or offers more input or resources than they receive from a partner, highly engaged participants can still perceive the partnership as beneficial for their development, due to a possible personal commitment to their own learning goals.

Studies on teletandem principles have given special focus to the discussion of the *separate use of language* (Leone; Telles, 2016; Leone, 2022; Picoli; Salomão, 2020; Satar; Aranha; Cavalari; Almijiwl, 2024; Moore; Rampazzo, 2023; Lima-Lopes; Aranha, 2023). Vassallo and Telles (2006) state that in teletandem interactions, the time for practicing each language must be guaranteed, and languages must not be mixed. For the authors, this principle is important to encourage learners to speak their target language, promote commitment to the task, and ensure that both participants have the same opportunity to communicate in the target language. However, some studies have shown that this principle does not correspond to what happens in teletandem interactions and limits the communication process in this context to a monolingual approach that does not align with the plurilingual reality of a globalized world.

³ In the original: "[...] promove a auto-estima e coloca os parceiros em posições de equidade."

Studies on oral *intercomprehension* in teletandem (Leone; Telles, 2016; Leone, 2022), in the direction of a more plurilingual approach in telecollaboration, questioned the principle of separation of languages. Put simply, Leone (2022, p. 2) defines intercomprehension as “[...] the communication process among people who speak different languages.” Developed in the 1990s, according to the author, it is related to interactive language activity between speakers when there is partial competence in a second language, and “it implies also that each person tries to make themselves clear in order to be understood by the interlocutor” (p. 4).

The author approaches oral intercomprehension in teletandem in a project developed by the University of Lyon and the University of Salento, considering the online interactions between speakers/writers of different romance languages, such as Spanish and French. Oral intercomprehension in teletandem presents as its primary concern “[...] the development of skills and strategies necessary to accommodate language and social practice to the needs of people with different social, cultural and language backgrounds” (Leone, 2022, p. 3).

Different than the alternation of languages (non-mixture of two languages) expected in the original proposition of teletandem (Vassallo; Telles, 2006), intercomprehension in teletandem is developed through partnerships in which each interactant uses his/her language throughout each session, and the contact between languages is perceived as common and expected. Based on Melo-Pfeifer (2018), Leone considers that intercomprehension challenges a (mis)conception that efficient and equal communication depends on monolingual interaction and presents intercomprehension as an ethical approach compromised with inclusion and global citizenship. The principles then proposed to direct teletandem in the perspective of intercomprehension are reciprocity (both participants must benefit equally from the teletandem activities), collaboration (both participants must work together for the success of the partnership), and autonomy (participants are expected to control and

manage teletandem activities independently, with support from teacher/mediator when necessary).

Picoli and Salomão (2020), after an analysis of Portuguese and English interactions in three partnerships, considering the time of practice dedicated to each language and code-switching occurrences, propose a reconceptualization of the principle, given the need to approach the use of languages considering learners' needs, objectives, and intentions. The authors rename the separate use of languages as the *principle of equality*, following Panichi's (2002) comprehension of it as the equality of status and opportunities for using both languages in telecollaboration. Informed by studies on bilingualism, Picoli, and Salomão conclude that in telecollaborative contexts, the separation of languages follows a monolingual paradigm and does not reflect what happens between bilingual speakers, whose levels of proficiency can vary in terms of oral or written communication and for whom code-switching constitute an important aspect of their communicative repertoire.

Satar, Aranha, Cavalari, and Almijiwl (2024) propose the *translanguaging principle* as a reframing of the separation of language principle. In a study that focused on a qualitative analysis of videoconferencing sessions⁴ from a pair of low-level proficiency learners, a Brazilian and a United Statian, in a Portuguese/English teletandem partnership, the authors studied, informed by social semiotic approach, "[...] "meaning-making processes and literacy practices" (Jewitt; Bezemer; O'Halloran, 2016, p. 65) of the participants in their video-mediated synchronous computer-mediated communications." (Satar; Aranha; Cavalari; Almijiwl, 2024, p. 4).

The authors understand the translanguaging principle as a co-learning process that requires a learner-focused perspective of analysis, instead of a language-focused one. In this regard, they affirm that

⁴ Data for the study was collected from MuLTEC teletandem corpus. More information about it is available here: <http://www.teletandembrasil.org/multec.html>

[...] translanguaging as co-learning is viewed as a collaborative and reciprocal practice of collective construction of meanings and knowledge where language learners actively and fluidly engage with their semiotic repertoires. Such a view recognizes the value of multiple semiotic resources and cultures, and promotes a more inclusive approach to language learning by promoting intercultural understanding, mutual learning, linguistic diversity, and collaborative language use (Satar; Aranha; Cavalari; Almijiwl, 2024, p. 4).

Translanguaging and multimodality are the frameworks that informed the authors' analysis of how teletandem partners rely on different strategies and multiple multilingual and multimodal resources to achieve their communicative and learning goals in teletandem. The translanguaging principle contributes to considering the diversity of learners' linguistic backgrounds and their relationship with their target language, with their language of proficiency, and with other languages, as well as to understanding how they represent and construct their linguistic, ethnic-racial, and cultural identities through them and other semiotic resources.

The current perspectives on teletandem principles have shown the emergence of pluralistic approaches for analyzing participants' learning processes and collaboration dynamics, based on their linguistic, social, and cultural repertoires. In this movement, I consider that it is important to advance in the analysis of teletandem learners' experiences from interdisciplinary approaches and critical linguistic and intercultural education, considering how ethnic-racial, nationality, class, gender, and other social markers intersect in the telecollaborative learning within teletandem, given that learning experiences in this context may also be implicated in linguistic and ethnic-racial ideologies that can contribute to perpetuate relations of domination and exclusion.

3 Critical Racial Literacy

In the field of education, the recognition of the deep inequality in the approach of the history and contributions of African and Indigenous peoples to the constitution

of Brazilian society was highlighted by the publication of the federal Laws 10.639/03 (Brasil, 2003) and 11.645/08 (Brasil, 2008), which turn mandatory the teaching of the African, Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture in the country's whole curriculum of basic education. The laws, resulting from the historical struggle of the black and indigenous movements, present a cross-disciplinary approach, with special attention to the areas of arts, literature, and Brazilian history. They emphasize the need for the approach of several dimensions of the fights of the black and indigenous populations and their role in Brazilian social, political, and economic history.

The National Curricular Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the Teaching of the African-Brazilian and African History and Culture (Brasil, 2004) emphasize that the concept of race, distant from the biological notion from the XVIII century, "[...] is frequently used in Brazilian social relations, to inform how certain physical characteristics, such as skin color, type of hair, among others, influence, interfere and even determine the destiny and social place of subjects within Brazilian society" (p. 13). The document also challenges the myth of racial democracy in Brazil, which hides the colonial and eurocentric policies and values perpetuated throughout history. The laws are part of a series of policies of inclusion, reparation, and combat against racism, like the celebration of the Day of Zumbi and of Black Awareness (Brasil, 2011), and affirmative actions implemented nationally in universities and public services.

After more than twenty years from the publication of the law 10.639, studies have shown, however, that Afro-Brazilian culture and history have still been approached through stereotypical lens and been restricted to pedagogical actions carried out on specific dates, such as November 20th (Melo; Rocha; Silva Júnior, 2023, p. 127).

In the fields of Applied Linguistics and Education in Brazil and abroad, several authors have contributed to the discussion of antiracist principles and practices in different educational contexts (Cavalleiro, 2001; Ladson-Billings; Tate, 1995; Mosley,

2010; Ferreira, 2015, 2017; Braúna; Souza; Andrade Sobrinha, 2022; Santos; Santos; El-Kadri, 2021, Kubota, 2020). For this study, I review some works that present Critical Racial Literacy (CRL) as an engaged pedagogical perspective that contributes to reducing such educational inequalities.

Strongly rooted in the field of critical legal studies in the United States, in the 1970s, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a complex and diverse intellectual movement, constituted by mainly people of color, aimed at understanding and changing white supremacy and racism, considering how they are created and maintained in the legal culture and US society (Crenshaw; Gotanda; Peller; Thomas, 1995). Although the advances resulted from the Civil Rights Reform against racial exclusion policies and practices in the U.S., the CRT recognizes that the U.S. legal order also played a decisive role in deradicalizing the racial liberation movement through the “color-blindness” ideal embraced by the mainstream agents in the legal field. Hawthorne (2020, p. 10) affirms that “[...] the common tenet to which all critical race theorists subscribe to is that racism is normal and omnipresent (Delgado et al., 2017; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Parker et al., 2002; Rollock & Gillborn, 2011)”. The normality implied in this perspective refers to its everyday recurrence and constitutive presence in all institutions and social contexts.

According to Ferreira (2015), CRT has been widely used in Europe, South America, and other continents and was introduced in the educational field by Gloria Ladson-Billings. The authors consider the CRT a powerful tool for understanding school inequality in education through a cross-disciplinary approach.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) center their analysis of CRT and school inequity from an intersectional perspective, along with class and gender, considering its social-structural and cultural significance in education. Beyond understanding race as an ideological construct, which “[...] denies the reality of a racialized society and its impact on “raced” people in their everyday lives” (Ladson-Billings; Tate, 1995, p. 48) and as an objective condition, which “[...] denies the problematic aspects of race —

how do we decide who fits into which racial classifications? How do we categorize racial mixtures?" (Ladson-Billings; Tate, 1995, p. 48), the authors follow a sociological view on race as a construct that is continuously employed in society and that intrinsically relates to the levels of inequity between white and people of color and different forms of oppression, such as political and economic.

Mosley (2010, p. 452) defines Critical Race Literacy (CRL) pedagogy as "[...] a set of pedagogical tools to practice racial literacy in school settings with children, peers, colleagues, and so forth [...]" . The author affirms that CRL pedagogy shares straight ties with multicultural education, anti-racist, and culturally relevant teaching, since all of them: (a) bring the learners' culture and language to the center of the pedagogical process, (b) consider "[..] the history of nondominant groups and how educational reforms have or have not addressed equity" (p. 453), and (c) include "[...] a diversity of perspectives that lead educators to teach in particular ways: to make choices that represent a range of voices and perspectives, responsive to students' needs, and lead to more socially just institutions and relationships" (p. 453). According to the author (2010, p. 453), to tackle social and racial injustices, CRL pedagogy must appraise and challenge how white privilege is manifested and reinforced through literacy practices and other forms of hegemonic power, for example, the banning of culturally relevant books from the curriculum, as has happened in several educational contexts.

Ferreira (2004, 2006, 2007, 2015, 2017) is responsible for introducing the CRL studies in the field of language teaching in Brazil, along with other authors who contribute to studies on critical racial studies in linguistics studies, such as Moita Lopes (2002), Pessoa and Urzêda-Freitas (2012), in education, such as Gandin, Diniz-Pereira, and Hipólito (2002), among others credited in Ferreira (2015). In her article *What has race/ethnicity got to do with EFL teaching?* (2007), the author explores teachers' perceptions and experiences on race/ethnicity. Beginning the work with a discussion of the concepts adopted, especially in Brazil, Ferreira presents the notion of race as a

socially constructed phenomenon and highlights the importance of approaching it along with ethnicity and skin color, due to the relationship of racism and discrimination with history and ancestry, and with physical features in Brazil.

The author affirms that "In the Brazilian context, the term 'black' is associated with skin colour and physical features rather than with ancestry" (2007, p. 214). In this regard, Ferreira also states her agreement with the need to recognize the issue of ethnicity, along with race and color, for a better understanding of racism, prejudice, and discrimination in Brazilian history. Although she acknowledges the risk of essentialism, understood as "[...] belief that a set of unchanging properties (essences) delineates the construction of particular category" (Kincheloe; Steinberg, 1997 *apud* Ferreira, 2007, p. 215), the racialized discourses of color are socially spread in Brazil and racial inequality is a material reality that contradicts the national "myth of racial democracy". Following the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) standards, the author adopts the national ethnic-racial classification system, which states race and ethnicity as equivalent to color and is based on the individual's self-declaration considering the categories *branco* (white - European descendants), *preto* (black - African descendants), *pardo* (mixed race - mainly of European and African descendants), *indígena* (indigenous - Brazilian native peoples descendants), and *amarelo* (yellow - Asian descendants). As indicated by Ferreira (2017, p. 17), "Researchers in the field of race tend to combine the categories of black (*preto*) and mixed-race (*pardo*) because when research is carried out regarding schooling, employment, medical access and housing there is no significant difference in terms of black and mixed-race people in the results".

Ferreira (2006) presents the result of a qualitative study on English language teachers' education aimed at identifying teachers' critical literacy on racial/ethnical issues. The data collection occurred in 2002 in a city in the South of Brazil. The participants were English teachers in service from local schools. Through the answers of 41 teachers to a questionnaire, the author identified that 70% did not feel prepared

to teach about the theme of cultural and racial/ethnic plurality, given structural gaps in their undergraduate courses for their critical development, highlighted in the analysis of 06 narratives from the group of teachers. The author emphasizes the need for reflection on race/ethnicity in teacher education undergraduate courses and presents the CRT as a form of implementing anti-racist education.

Braúna, Santos, and Andrade Sobrinha (2022, p. 6-7), through a bibliographical research of studies on CRL, present it as “[...] a tool that helps us perceive how race operates in Brazilian society, that is, it is a practice of reading of the world (SEVERO, 2021) in which we can perceive the privileges whiteness hold and keep, as well as the barriers imposed to black populations”. In this way, CRL involves an active process of reading and interpretation of racial relations of oppression and white privilege. It demands a political compromise from all racial groups against racism but also requires a special participation of white individuals and hegemonic groups in the recognition of how racism and discrimination perpetuate privileges and the unequal social mobility and inclusion of black people. In education, the authors highlight the need for black, African, and Afro-Brazilian history and cultures to be represented without the stereotypes created and perpetuated by Eurocentric views.

Santos, Santos, and El-Kadri (2021) resort to CRL to inform the proposition of a pedagogical action/intervention in the Brazilian Basic Education. Through a dialogue with CRL studies (Ferreira, 2007), Antiracist Education (Cavalleiro, 2001), and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2001), the authors develop and share a pedagogical proposal for the English language classroom based on the analysis of the *Black Lives Matter* movement. The authors affirm the need for the language classroom to deconstruct ethnic-racial stereotypes, given the role of the teacher as an agent of social change. In this regard, CRL is presented as a perspective that contributes to the commitment to social equity, since it helps unveil the hegemony of white identities and power relations maintained through discourse.

4 Teletandem and Critical Racial Literacy

As we have shown, teletandem, as a telecollaborative context of additional language learning, originated from a project aimed at promoting democratic access of language learners to an international community of speakers of their target language(s) who are, at the same time, learners of their native language(s) or of their language(s) of proficiency. Based on principles of autonomy, reciprocity, and equality in the division of time for the practice of each language involved or the translanguaging principle, teletandem has been the object of research on several issues, including those that review its principles and analyse the learning and collaboration processes between the participants, some of which we have focused on this work.

Given the introductory nature of this article, which aimed at presenting the contributions of CRL for teletandem, reviewing the principles that ground this educational context was a first step toward this purpose. Reflecting on CRT implications for the learning experiences and research carried on in teletandem aims at strengthening its democratic and inclusive foundation while promoting its potential toward education equity and ethnic-racial justice.

Regarding the importance of approaching race in contexts of language teaching and learning, we agree with Kubota (2020, p. 348), who states that “While linguistic difference, as represented by regional dialects or native/non-native speakerness tends to be noticeable in language teaching, issues of race are often swept under the rug. However, the idea of race is closely linked to language teachers’ and learners’ beliefs and experiences”. To bring the contributions of CRL to teletandem, besides understanding the intercultural dimensions and learning purposes in this context, we consider the need to dialogue with the grounding principles of CRT to understand how they can inform the research and learning experiences within teletandem. Howard and Navarro (2016) present the following five tenets for research on educational equity and racial justice:

1. Centrality of race and racism—All CRT research within education must centralize race and racism, including intersections with other forms of subordination such as gender, class, and citizenship.
2. Challenging the dominant perspective—CRT research works to challenge dominant narratives and re-center marginalized perspectives.
3. Commitment to social justice—CRT research must always be motivated by a social justice agenda.
4. Valuing experiential knowledge—CRT builds on the oral traditions of many indigenous communities of color around the world. CRT research centers the narratives of people of color when attempting to understand social inequality.
5. Being interdisciplinary—CRT scholars believe that the world is multidimensional, and similarly, research about the world should reflect multiple perspectives (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). (Howard; Navarro, 2016, p. 258-259).

The authors argue that “[...] although the theoretical tenets of CRT have been growing in the literature for more than two decades, concrete examples of how to use it as an analytical tool to improve school outcomes remain a pressing need.” (Howard; Navarro, 2016, p. 259-260). In this regard, using CRT as an analytical tool can involve interdisciplinary perspectives, as stated in tenet 5, considering the needs and aims of each context and research goals. Considering the aims of tenet 4, we can assume that approaching participants' narratives about their learning and collaborative experiences in teletandem can inform how ethnic-racial identities, differences, and inequalities permeate learners' discourses, representations, and how they negotiate meaning about them.

Considering the compromise of CRL with social justice and the centrality of race and racism in its educational agenda, it is necessary to promote research that take into account ethnicity, race and racism in the teletandem context and practices, as well as how a comprehension of these social phenomenon, intersected with other social markers, can contribute to the development of learners' awareness of race and racism within the intercultural dialogue and across imagined geographic borders. For this purpose, in agreement with the authors, it is possible to state the need for race, racism, and their roles in education to be made explicit in studies on education.

While teletandem principles, based on tandem modality of language learning, aim to ground a context for autonomous and collaborative language learning, it is known that this context, as discussed by some researchers (Zakir; Funo; Telles, 2016; Souza, 2016; Buvolini-Freitas, 2020), is also a space where the emergence of stereotypes, generalist perspectives on cultural differences, and misunderstandings occur, since it is part of a global society where discourses on differences circulate and are constructed through media and other forms of transnational contacts. In this regard, the need to discuss the perspectives that contribute to the development of pedagogical mediation compromised to social transformation, antiracist practices, and educational equity requires also a view of teletandem practices, institutional partnerships, pedagogical mediation, and language teachers' development within this context.

Besides approaching ethnicity, race, and racism in learners' experiences in teletandem, covering their implications at the institutional level of teletandem implementation can also indicate perspectives of practices and principles that contribute to informing the role of teachers, mediators, institutions, and teletandem practitioners. Given the transatlantic contacts promoted within this context, it has played an important role in the development of collaborative partnerships between teachers, institutions, and language learners. CRL is then a theoretical and political perspective that promotes means to the identification and overcoming of different forms of racism and subordination within institutional partnerships and in learners' experiences, as well as it contributes to the promotion of more inclusive, equitable, and antiracist perspectives to linguistic and intercultural education through teletandem and other forms of virtual exchange.

5 Final remarks

This article presents the result of an introductory study on the contributions of CRL to the teletandem context of linguistic and intercultural education. As a pioneer

telecollaborative modality of language learning, teletandem has been the object of several studies and widely implemented in Brazil and abroad. Through this article, we highlight the lack of studies that focus on the racial dimension in teletandem and its implications for its role in language education, considering, at first, its principles and purposes. This work aimed to contribute to the development of research in teletandem that takes into account the intersectionality of race with other social markers and their dynamics in the intercultural dialogue and collaborative processes in teletandem.

Along with Melo (2015), we believe that, through a performative conception of language, when stereotypes of race and others are not questioned or discussed in language education contexts, they are being mobilized and have an impact, mainly on minoritized social groups. In this regard, CRL is a tool that, in dialogue with other critical approaches to language education, informs the ways through which equity can be promoted within institutional educational contexts.

Considering the exploratory nature of the reflection presented in this paper, which emerged from the author's ongoing regular research on CRL in teletandem, started in 2023, results of data analysis from learners' experiences and reflections are expected to be widely shared in the following years to deepen the understanding of how CRL can contribute to the different dimensions of teletandem practice, implementation and pedagogical mediation.

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