

Anti-racist education and the construction of meaning in portuguese language classes: an analysis of a pedagogical intervention using the short story genre¹

José Lima de Araújo²

Franciclébia Nicolau da Silva³

José Cezinaldo Rocha Bessa⁴

ABSTRACT

Drawing on Bakhtin's concept of language and studies on anti-racist education, this article analyzes a pedagogical intervention in Portuguese language classes with 11th-grade students at a public high school in the hinterlands of Paraíba, based on the production of short stories. Using a qualitative and interpretive approach, the study used as its *corpus* 11 short stories produced by the students during the field research. The results suggest that systematic work with anti-racist education, through the production of this genre, proved conducive to the development of a reflective stance toward social relations and an understanding of language as a practice of interaction and social action. The analyzed experience suggests that a pedagogical approach combining the dialogic approach and anti-racist education in Portuguese language classes can contribute to the development of students capable of producing discourses responsive to social issues.

KEYWORDS: Portuguese language teaching. Bakhtin's Circle. Writing. Anti-racist education. High school.

¹ English version by Francisco Marcos de Oliveira Luz. *E-mail:* marcosluz@uern.br.

² Master's degree in Education. Rio Grande do Norte State University (UERN), Pau dos Ferros, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4714-5090>. *E-mail:* jose20251006176@alu.uern.br.

³ Master's degree in Education. Rio Grande do Norte State University (UERN), Pau dos Ferros, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7850-4055>. *E-mail:* franciclebia20251005983@alu.uern.br.

⁴ Ph.D. in Linguistics and the Portuguese Language. Júlio de Mesquita Filho State University of São Paulo, Araraquara Campus, São Paulo, Brazil. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4655-6832>. *E-mail:* cezinaldobessa@uern.br.

Educação antirracista e produção de sentidos em aulas de língua portuguesa: análise de uma intervenção pedagógica com o gênero conto

RESUMO

Fundamentado na concepção de língua(gem) do Círculo de Bakhtin e em estudos sobre educação antirracista, o artigo analisa uma intervenção pedagógica em aulas de Língua Portuguesa, com alunos do 2º ano do Ensino Médio de uma escola pública do sertão paraibano, baseada na produção do gênero conto. De abordagem qualitativa e interpretativa, a investigação teve como *corpus* 11 contos produzidos pelos alunos durante a pesquisa de campo realizada. Os resultados sugerem que o trabalho sistemático com a educação antirracista, por meio da produção do referido gênero, se mostrou propício ao desenvolvimento de uma postura reflexiva diante das relações sociais e de uma compreensão da linguagem enquanto prática de interação e de ação social. A experiência analisada sugere que uma proposta de trabalho que alia a abordagem dialógica e a educação antirracista em aulas de Língua Portuguesa pode contribuir à formação de alunos capazes de produzir discursos responsivos a problemáticas sociais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ensino de língua portuguesa. Círculo de Bakhtin. Produção textual. Educação antirracista. Ensino Médio.

Educación antirracista y producción de sentidos en clases de lengua portuguesa: análisis de una intervención pedagógica con el género cuento

RESUMEN

Considerando la concepción de lengua(je) del Círculo de Bakhtin y en estudios sobre educación antirracista, el artículo analiza una intervención pedagógica en clases de lengua portuguesa, con alumnos del 2º año de la escuela secundaria de un colegio público del interior del estado Paraíba, basada en la producción del género cuento. De enfoque cualitativo e interpretativo, la investigación tuvo como *corpus* 11 cuentos producidos por los alumnos durante la investigación de campo realizada. Los resultados sugieren que el trabajo sistemático con la educación antirracista, a través de la producción de dicho género, se mostró productivo para el desarrollo de una conducta reflexiva frente a las relaciones sociales y de una comprensión de lenguaje como práctica de

interacción y de acción social. La experiencia analizada sugiere que una propuesta de trabajo que combine el enfoque dialógico y la educación antirracista en clases de lengua portuguesa puede contribuir para la formación de alumnos capaces de producir discursos responsivos a problemáticas sociales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Enseñanza de lengua portuguesa. Círculo de Bakhtin. Producción textual. Educación antirracista. Enseñanza secundaria.

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Introduction

School is considered a privileged space for the construction of meaning and for human, social, and civic development. In this context, language practices in the teaching of Portuguese in elementary and secondary education play a decisive role in the formation of students' identities, since, according to the dialogic perspective on language proposed by Bakhtin's Circle⁵, it is in and through language that one evaluative positions regarding oneself, others, and the world are constructed.

Given the Brazilian context, marked by inequalities historically created and perpetuated by the mechanisms of structural racism, it is crucial to "[...] devise mechanisms to overcome these ills [...]" (Carine, 2023, p. 67), recognizing that these mechanisms manifest themselves very clearly in various discursive practices that persist in society.

The institutionalization of anti-racist education in the curriculum, particularly following the enactment of Law 10.639/2003, established the mandatory teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture. However, the existence of this guideline does not, in and of itself, guarantee the

⁵ When we use the term "Bakhtin Circle", we are referring to the writings stemming from the intellectual output of Russian thinkers such as Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Volochinov, among others who have been less studied by us Brazilian researchers (Bessa, 2016). This Circle developed a collective body of thought on language from a dialogic perspective (which has served as a reference for establishing, in the field of discourse studies in Brazil, an approach known as Dialogic Discourse Analysis – DDA, as noted by Paula (2013).

development of pedagogical practices capable of fostering shifts in values regarding how students speak about, represent, and interpret racial relations in their daily school life and beyond. Thus, there is a need to understand how certain language practices in Portuguese language instruction can foster processes of critical reflection and responsive positioning among students in basic education regarding racism.

In this regard, work on reading and text production in Portuguese language classes can prove to be a conducive space for confronting structural racism⁶, especially when guided by a dialogic conception of language, as formulated by Bakhtin's Circle. By understanding that every utterance is constituted in response to other utterances and is directed toward specific interlocutors, this perspective allows us to perceive how students – as subjects in the process of formation – mobilize social voices, take positions, and reflect values when producing texts in specific pedagogical contexts.

Thus, drawing on Bakhtin's dialogic perspective on language and studies on anti-racist education (Gomes, 2012; Bento, 2022; Carine, 2023; Pevirguladez, 2024, among others), we seek in this article⁷ to analyze the contributions of a pedagogical experience focused on anti-racist education, centered on the production of the short story genre, carried out in a state public high school in the hinterlands of Paraíba with high school students. The pedagogical intervention addressed the issue of racism against Black Brazilian women, proposing the writing of narratives on this social issue as a space for discursive production by the participating students.

We start from the premise that the short story genre, as a relatively stable form of expression (Bakhtin, 2011), can serve as a space for the materialization of value-laden positions, enabling students to mobilize discourses and social voices on the issue of structural racism and to generate

⁶ We understand structural racism as a system within society that privileges a particular race or ethnicity, placing members of other racialized groups at a disadvantage (Kilomba, 2019).

⁷ This article is an excerpt, with proofreading and additions, from the text of the first author's master's thesis, defended on April 4, 2025, at the Graduate Program in Education (PPGE) of the State University of Rio Grande do Norte, Pau dos Ferros Advanced Campus.

alternative meanings regarding race relations. We are therefore interested in understanding how the production of these narratives, within the context of a pedagogical intervention focused on anti-racist education, enables the construction of responsive movements and the (re)signification of discourses on racism against Black women.

Thus, by focusing on the relationship between discursive genre, pedagogical practice, and anti-racist education, this study aims to contribute to the debate on the role of Portuguese language classes in the critical education of students in K-12, demonstrating how writing experiences can serve as spaces for social reflection and for the development of critical and reflective perspectives among these students.

The article is organized as follows: following this introduction, we present the theoretical foundations underpinning the research; next, we detail the methodological procedures; subsequently, we describe the pedagogical experiment and analyze the stories produced by the students; finally, we offer our concluding remarks.

Theoretical foundations

In this section, we focus on developing the theoretical frameworks that underpin the analysis conducted in this study. First, we discuss genres of discourse from a Bakhtinian perspective, textual production in schools, and the use of literary texts, with an emphasis on the short story genre. Next, we address the commitment to anti-racist education, highlighting the need to address racial issues and their implications in the classroom, with a view to promoting racial equity in various social spaces beyond the school context.

Teaching Portuguese, Discourse Genres, and Meaning-Making in School Practice from a Dialogic Perspective

The decisions we make as teachers in the context of teaching and learning the Portuguese language reveal why we teach what we teach our

students (Geraldi, 2012). In this process, understanding language as an integral and concrete phenomenon (Bakhtin, 2010) becomes our position as subjects, constituted in and by language. It is, therefore, a matter of understanding that language is realized and lives in the dialogic communication of those who use it (Bakhtin, 2010).

We thus adopt a perspective in which we conceive of language as a form of interaction (Geraldi, 2012) and as a means of building dialogic relationships (Bakhtin, 2010). However, this interactive and enunciative-discursive approach to Portuguese language instruction only becomes effective “[...] when teachers and students see themselves as partners who engage with topics that interest them” (Geraldi, 2017, p. 494).

For this reason, we do not endorse theoretical and practical approaches that ignore the concrete realities of students’ lives in discursive interaction. We argue that language teaching should be grounded in reflection on the social reality in which the school is embedded and in the promotion of pedagogical actions that foster discussion of socially relevant topics in the national and local context (Goulart & Gonçalves, 2021), especially within the current political, historical, and social landscape.

With regard to official educational documents in Brazil, we highlight the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC), which, since its first version (2015), has adopted concepts of gender and language from an enunciative-discursive perspective. This approach is particularly consistent with the studies of Bakhtin’s Circle, which forms the theoretical basis for our reflections. Thus, this work is consistent with the guidelines of the BNCC (2018), which conceive of the subject as constituted through language practices.

We therefore share the understanding that all discursive production is part of an infinite chain of social voices. From this perspective, we are led to consider, in our analyses and pedagogical practices, Bakhtin’s conceptions of language and the subject, of text, utterance, and discourse, of the word and discursive genres, as well as other notions that make up the architecture of the Bakhtin Circle’s thought.

By focusing on the notion of discourse genres as speech acts or, as Bakhtin (2016) puts it, as relatively stable types of utterances that organize and shape our speech, we recognize that discursive communication takes place through genres, understood as forms of social action through which we are shaped and by which we make sense of reality.

In this sense, if we conceive of the text as an expression of dialogical relationships – and thus linked to the utterance – discourse genres must be understood in their entirety, in relation to other genres and to the historical and social traditions that made their emergence possible. These elements also reveal aspects of the subjects who mobilize them, highlighting how they master certain genres to establish their own unique modes of social action.

Furthermore, as facilitators and motivators of reading in the classroom, we need to devise teaching strategies that engage students in reading activities aimed at constructing meaning. An example of this lies in the choice of genres to be studied in the classroom and beyond. For this reason, teachers must be grounded in theory and methodology in order to expand the possibilities for interaction on the part of their students.

With regard to the choice of the short story as a literary genre to be studied in Portuguese language classes, we believe that it is one such possibility, in that it can increase the likelihood that students will engage in discussions on a variety of topics, including those of greater social relevance.

According to Martins and Kraemer (2014), working with literary texts at this stage of education requires planning that takes into account factors such as the degree of complexity of the work, the intended pedagogical objectives, and, above all, the reader's reception. This understanding underlies the choice of the short story genre as a discursive production aimed at reflecting on social problems such as racism and violence against Black women.

Thus, as teachers, we have the possibility of mediating the reading and production of a genre with diverse themes, a characteristic style, relative ease

of comprehension by the producer, and a brief compositional structure – characteristics that are particularly relevant given the time and demands present in many school realities.

Therefore, by incorporating this genre into teaching practices in Portuguese Language classes, pedagogical horizons are broadened regarding other ways of articulating reading, writing, and critical reflection. This is a viable and favorable pedagogical strategy for problematizing relevant social issues and developing students' authorial and creative positions. In this sense, working with the short story genre can contribute to ethical education by highlighting the importance of responsible and signed actions (Bakhtin, 2017), in the face of the problem of racism and violence against Black women; a necessary discussion that still requires further exploration in the school context.

The commitment of anti-racist education: from school to life

Initially, it is important to understand racism as a structural and institutional phenomenon, that is, an ill that manifests itself in multiple ways, permeating the daily lives of individuals and becoming ingrained in society (Almeida, 2019). In this sense, racism permeates daily school life, influencing interpersonal relationships, educational trajectories, and learning processes, which makes the adoption of educational practices committed to equity and the recognition of ethnic-racial diversity increasingly urgent, through actions that motivate students' critical and reflective thinking.

According to Carine (2023) and Gomes (2012), the fact that educational institutions bring together students with a wide diversity of cultural, religious, and belief backgrounds favors the recurrence of manifestations of prejudice, oppression, and racial intolerance in these spaces. Given this, we consider it pertinent to ask: what is our role in the anti-racist struggle as teachers, administrators, coordinators, and Brazilian citizens? Should we, in fact, assume this commitment? We understand that the anti-racist

perspective constitutes an ethical stance in the face of structural inequalities. Thus, since Brazil is a country marked by structural racism, it is fundamental that we all become familiar with this issue.

In this regard, Gomes (2012) highlights the role of anti-racist education in the construction of identities and in overcoming prejudices, stereotypes, and racial discrimination. To this end, the author argues that racial issues in schools must go beyond the formal compliance with legislation, such as Law 10.639/2003, translating into effective changes in the curriculum, teacher training, and pedagogical relationships. Thus, such discussions cannot be restricted to isolated actions or commemorative dates, as frequently occurs in many Brazilian school contexts, for example, activities carried out only on Black Awareness Day.

When consulting Opinion No. 3, of March 10, 2004, which establishes the National Curriculum Guidelines for Education on Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture, the school is conceived as a social institution responsible for guaranteeing everyone the right to education, and should therefore take a political stance against all forms of discrimination (Brazil, 2004). The opinion also emphasizes that this struggle must involve all educators, regardless of their personal beliefs or convictions. Although the document emphasizes the role of the school, overcoming racism requires the involvement of the entire society, as it manifests itself in various spheres of social circulation.

In this sense, in the Practical Manual of Anti-Racist Education, Pevirguladez (2024) highlights that the formation of a citizen who is aware of and committed to confronting racism and defending those who suffer from it goes beyond the limits of classroom learning. Thus, although the school cannot, in isolation, confront this phenomenon, it constitutes a primary space for the deconstruction of outdated and Eurocentric conceptions of teaching, opening possibilities for new formative horizons committed to social justice and equity.

Despite recent progress, the discussion remains open, requiring those involved in the school environment to reflect on their role in confronting racism; the experience analyzed in this study constitutes one such initiative.

Methods

In this article, we analyzed the contributions of a work experience with anti-racist education carried out through the production of the short story genre in Portuguese Language classes taught in high school. In this sense, this study is classified as field research, of an interpretative nature and with a qualitative approach, as defined by Creswell (2007).

This study presents the results of an experience, carried out through a pedagogical intervention based on a project developed with high school students (Fernando Hernández; Montserrat Ventura, 2017) in a state public school in the interior of Paraíba. The research context comprised a 2nd-year class of 35 enrolled students, 30 of whom regularly attended school. Of the participants, 25 students were willing to actively participate in all meetings. From the productions of this group, 11 short stories were selected to form the corpus of the study, considering as a decisive criterion the effective participation of the students/producers of these texts in the revision and rewriting phases.

The course of the project, 10 meetings were planned and held, each lasting two hours, involving reading and writing activities, revision and rewriting, totaling 20 hours of pedagogical intervention with the students over two months.

In operationalizing the investigation and analysis undertaken here, we initially describe the experience developed with the 2nd-grade students; then, we examine, in general, the structural and stylistic aspects of the short stories produced by the 11 students; finally, we carry out a dialogical analysis of one of these short stories produced during the intervention, observing how the student mobilizes social voices, assumes

positions, and refracts values in their production. With this, in addition to evaluating the responsive positioning of basic education students in the face of racism, we were able to assess the contributions of the experience of working with anti-racist education.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that, since this research involved human subjects, the pedagogical intervention met the ethical requirements in force at the institution to which the researchers are affiliated, submitting the study for approval by the Ethics Committee of the State University of Rio Grande do Norte, under Opinion No. 7.044.219. In addition, the researcher's conduct observed the ethical principles expected in this type of research and discursive production.

For methodological transparency, we inform you that we used ChatGPT (free version) as an editorial assistant, restricted to linguistic revision and improvement of textual fluency. All content, analysis, and interpretation decisions remained the sole responsibility of the authors, who critically reviewed the tool's correction suggestions and assume full responsibility for the content and form of the text presented here.

Working with anti-racist education in schools: reflecting about pedagogical intervention experience in high school Portuguese language classes.

In this section, we focus on describing and analyzing the pedagogical intervention experience presented here. To this end, we first describe this intervention experience, carried out with 2nd-year high school students; secondly, based on the analysis of the set of short stories produced by the students and the meticulous examination of one of these productions, we seek to highlight aspects that constituted important contributions of the pedagogical intervention in the context of anti-racist education, regarding the construction of responsive movements and the (re)signification of discourses on racism against Black women.

Describing the experience of text production carried out with/in the class.

As we have already indicated, the intervention was grounded, above all, on the conception of language defended by the authors who make up the Bakhtin Circle, given that, when working with language, it is essential to consider the interaction between social subjects in the various chains of discursive communication.

Regarding the organization of the project stages, we began by defining a title, conceived in a way that would allow for the perception of literary reading as a space for the production of meaning between texts and contexts, under the mediation of the researcher, as a collaborating subject in the learning process of each participant. The chosen title was “A STORY, A DIALOGUE: the production of the short story genre in High School”. The project was entirely organized and implemented by the first author of this article, under the supervision and guidance of the latter.

The pedagogical intervention experience was then organized into sequential meetings totaling 20 class hours, structured based on progressive formative objectives and activities of a diagnostic, formative, and productive nature. The planning included moments of awareness-raising, theoretical-analytical deepening, and text production, in order to articulate the study of the short story genre with critical reflection on racism and student authorship.⁸

The first meeting, lasting 2 class hours, was dedicated to presenting the project's operation to the class through a slide presentation and multimedia projector. In this initial phase, we aimed to situate the students regarding the objectives, stages, and expectations of the training program. Next, we carried out an activity⁹ entitled “Reaching the Objectives”, with the

⁸ For a more in-depth look at the project stages, we recommend reading the dissertation available at the link.: https://sucupira-legado.capes.gov.br/sucupira/public/consultas/coleta/trabalhoConclusao/viewTrabalhoConclusao.jsf?popup=true&id_trabalho=16809543

⁹ The activity was carried out with the participation and cooperation of the students. The materials used were a cotton string and a disposable cup. Two student volunteers held the ends of the string so that their classmates could blow as hard as they could into the disposable cup attached to the string, with the goal of moving it from one end to the other.

aim of promoting reflection on the formative process as a collective journey guided by progressive goals and challenges. This activity was carried out as a representation of the activities to be developed during the project, since future actions would require effort and dedication from each of them towards reading and writing the stories.

The subsequent meetings (3rd to 6th), totaling 10 class hours, constituted the diagnostic and theoretical-analytical deepening stage. Initially, we conducted a survey of the class's prior knowledge about the short story genre and the theme addressed. As a discursive mobilization activity, a word cloud was created on "racism and black women in society", followed by a guided discussion on the most recurrent terms and their meanings. In this same stage, a dialogue was promoted about the news genre, with the formation of working groups and the holding of a collective debate, aiming to expand discursive repertoires and argumentative strategies.

Still within this block of meetings, we developed reading and analysis activities of short stories, with an approach focused on understanding the structural, thematic, and discursive aspects of the genre. To this end, we held an expository and dialogic class on the structure and social function of the short story genre. Following this, we promoted guided discussions on specific narratives ("Negrinha", by Monteiro Lobato; "Maria", by Conceição Evaristo; and "Marrom-escuro, Marrom-claro", by Jarid Arraes), involving shared oral reading, critical appreciation, and written activities aimed at interpretation and reflective positioning by the students. This stage concluded with the participation of a guest professor¹⁰: a black woman with a degree in Social Sciences (UFPB) and a Master's degree in Sociology (PPGS/UFPB), who discussed with the class experiences lived by Black women and historical and social processes related to the topic under discussion.

The final sessions (7th to 9th grade), totaling 6 class hours, were dedicated to the text production phase. Students drafted the first version of

¹⁰ In accordance with ethical guidelines, we have chosen to protect the teacher's identity.

their short stories, participated in a guided rewriting process based on notes and mediation from the teacher/researcher, and proceeded to finalize the texts. As a formative development, we arranged for the dissemination of the student's work through the organization of a book containing the stories produced, with a view to displaying it within the school community and on the school's social media.

In general, the intervention was structured as a procedural pedagogical journey, integrated into stages of awareness-raising, textual analysis, production, and socialization of the texts produced by the students. We believe, therefore, that the organization of the meetings, the definition of the activities, and the progression of the tasks favored the construction of knowledge about the short story genre and enabled the expression of the student's axiological positions, articulating reading practice, critical reflection, and textual authorship.

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However, several challenges emerged throughout the process, the most notable being the limited time available for project development. This limitation stemmed, among other factors, from the school's involvement in preparing students for the National High School Exam (ENEM), the number of holidays, and the inherent pace of the end of the school year. Given this scenario, adjustments to the schedule became inevitable, due to the need to adapt to the institutional reality and the specific conditions of the classroom. Nevertheless, we consider that the intervention fulfilled its objectives, especially considering the student's involvement in the reading,

writing, and rewriting of the stories, which were duly analyzed, as we will see in the following section.

An experience in writing short stories and their contributions to Portuguese language teaching committed to anti-racist education.

In this subsection, we will present the results of the intervention experience carried out. Our focus will be on the critical appraisal of the students' written work. The analysis will be systematized in two stages, the first centered on a more general view of the set of productions, seeking to observe the students' mastery of the genre and the manifestation of a critical awareness regarding the theme of racism, based on the examination of elements from the 11 (eleven) narratives they constructed, which make up the corpus of this study. In a second stage, we will focus on examining one of these eleven stories, with the purpose of exploring, in a more detailed way, what we pointed out in the first stage.

In Table 2 below, we have systematized the structural elements of the short stories analyzed, organized according to narrative categories such as plot (thematic summary), narrative space, central characters, narrative time, and type of narrator. This organization allowed us to identify patterns and unique features in the structure of the stories produced by the students, enabling us to see how they demonstrated a response to the experience of the intervention.

TABLE 1: Structural elements of the analyzed short stories

Author	Plot	Narrative space	Main Character	Narrative time	Type of narrator
Louisa Clark ¹¹	The story of Dorinha, a Black woman and cleaning lady, marked by prejudice and violence.	Urban Avaneue	Dorinha ¹²	Unlimited	Narrator-character
Barry Allen	Ana, a Black teacher who faces resistance when implementing anti-racist actions at school.	Urban school	Ana	Unlimited	Narrator-observer
Ayrton Sena	Trindade, a young Black woman, dreams of becoming a soccer player; she faces racism and finds support in Daniel.	Shopping center and football arena	Trindade; Daniel	Unlimited	Omniscient narrator
Kiara	Kiara, a young Black musician, faces censorship and prejudice while pursuing her artistic project.	City of Vila da Esperança	Kiara	Long duration (annual festivals)	Omniscient narrator
Millie Bobby Brown	Crystina, a recently graduated Black lawyer, experiences prejudice and professional silencing.	University and judicial institution	Crystina	Unlimited	Narrator-character
Príncipe Praxedes	Anastácia, a black girl identified as a witch, suffers discrimination in the community.	Village	Anastácia Petina	Unlimited	Narrator-character
Sara Cameron	Madalena, a young black woman of quilombola descent, seeks social advancement and autonomy.	Farm	Madalena	Unlimited	Narrator-observer

¹¹ Regarding the names of the authors of the stories, we maintained the choices made by the students themselves. Thus, all the author names reported in the table are fictitious.

¹² Most students chose names inspired by cartoons, anime, movies, and female soccer players, without any reference to Black figures, which may indicate a certain disconnect from Black identities.

Madelaine	Otávio, a young black man from a dysfunctional family background, oscillates between illegal activities and a plan for social advancement.	Family residence in Bahia	Otávio; Talita	Unlimited	Omniscient narrator
Rick	Naná, a young black woman responsible for supporting her family, faces a prohibition from her father against romantic relationships.	Ge's Bar	Naná; Otávio	Unlimited	Omniscient narrator
Sara	Maria, a young enslaved Black woman who suffers structural violence and has forbidden romantic relationships.	Big house and space of punishment	Maria; Leopoldo; Nísia; Armando	Pre-abolition period	Omniscient narrator
Nick Iure	Lurdinha, a Black single mother, seeks social mobility for her daughters and faces a tragic outcome.	Employers' residence and hospital	Lurdinha; Elen; Tina; Joana; Sra. Rosa; Sr. Gustavo	Unlimited	Omniscient narrator

Source: Prepared by the authors based on research by Araújo (2025).

An analysis of the text reveals that the eleven stories consistently appropriate the structural elements of the genre, with the explicit presence of author, plot, setting, characters, time, and different types of narrator. The compositional organization of the stories is relatively stable: the plots are structured around socially situated conflicts and guided by outcomes that reconfigure the characters' destinies, in line with the value-laden perspective thematized in the intervention.

In terms of thematic and axiological aspects of these stories, the centrality of Black characters, mostly female, stands out, inserted in work, schooling, and community life settings. Dorinha, Ana, Trindade, Kiara, Crystina, Anastácia, Madalena, Maria, and Lurdinha appear as

social subjects affected by practices of discrimination and violence, but also by projects of resistance and change in social condition. The predominance of Black protagonists and plots that articulate racism, gender, and class indicates an attention to historically marginalized experiences, as well as an awareness of structural racism as a phenomenon that organizes social relations.

The spatial and temporal configurations of the narratives also constitute elements that reinforce the students' understanding of racism as something ingrained in the social fabric. The narrative spaces – school, university, avenue, farm, among others – situate the conflicts in everyday environments, thus inscribing the narratives within a diversity of social practices, which contributes to highlighting the understanding of structural racism. Furthermore, the presence of temporal markers such as annual cycles (festival), formative trajectories (newly graduated, school period), and historical references (slavery context) reinforces the issue raised, highlighting its historicity and thus evidencing the persistence of racism over time. These choices demonstrate the students' sensitivity in situating racism in different temporalities and institutions, thus reinforcing its structural nature in our society.

Regarding the voices evoked and the value positions expressed, the plots of the collection of stories produced combine denunciation and the manifestation of forms of resistance. There are narratives of impediment and silencing (Crystina in her professional work; Maria in a regime of exploitation), but also of persistence and transformation (Ana in the implementation of anti-racist policies; Trindade in sports; Kiara in art, to cite three examples). The recurrence of outcomes that highlight movements of resistance, work, and solidarity indicates an understanding that forms of oppression and exploitation are unacceptable in our time and must be combated and overcome in order to (re)affirm the dignity that is due to every person.

Thus, we observe that the productions constitute statements guided by social purposes and presumed interlocutors, in terms of the Bakhtinian perspective, since the plots of the stories produced by the students constitute worldviews on structural racism that they share with their readers in the school community and beyond. The diversity of narrators and the mobilization of essential compositional components in a story indicate that the students were able to operate with relatively stable forms of utterance, appropriating the genre as a means of projecting discourse in concrete communicative activities. Furthermore, the thematization of racism against Black women, in turn, highlights the presence of social voices in tension – of discrimination, acceptance, and contestation – that organize the axiological fabric of the narratives, thus configuring a critical position assumed by the students in the face of this social problem.

It is possible to affirm, therefore, that the production of meaning in these eleven productions denotes an intertwining of value positions, which are responsive to social reality, indicating movements of resistance and identity affirmation, in order to reinforce the contributions of the intervention proposal, by enabling spaces for debate and discursive production that favor both reading and writing practices and the awakening of a critical reading of the world.

As a demonstration of the results of the analysis of the eleven short stories, we selected one of the students' productions that allows us to understand, more deeply, the production of meaning in the concrete whole of the statement, as proposed by the Bakhtinian dialogical perspective. In this sense, we selected the short story "The Light in the Shadow", authored by the student who assumed the fictitious name Barry Allen, because we consider that his narrative is one that accurately illustrates the results of this intervention experience carried out in the school environment.

The production by Barry Allen thematizes, in its plot, a narrative around the life of the character Ana, a Black teacher who leads affirmative action initiatives in her school community. Below, we present the complete text referring to the short story produced:

Table 2: Barry Allen's Tale ¹³

The light in the shadow (Barry Allen) Once upon a time, in a vibrant and multicultural city, there lived a woman named Ana. She was a Black woman full of dreams. Despite her dedication to teaching and her love for diversity, Ana faced prejudice at work, and her ideas were often ignored.. Determined to make a difference, Ana decided to organize an event to celebrate Afro-Brazilian cultures and also bring anti-racist education to her school. Although the principal resisted the idea, she persisted, and with the support of colleagues and students, the event became a great success. The children learned some dances, songs, stories, and about racial education. The smiling faces showed that change is possible. Inspired by the event's impact, Ana founded a safe space for conversations related to racism in schools. Over time, students and even some parents began to recognize and confront structural racism in society. Thus, Ana became a powerful voice in the fight for equality, planting seeds of change in her surroundings. Although the journey was long, she knew that every step counted, showing that together they could transform the school environment into a fairer and more welcoming place for everyone. And so, Ana continued to teach and inspire, leaving a legacy of hope and inclusion. 

Source: Collection of Araújo's research (2025).

The short story entitled “The Light in the Shadow”, authored by student/author Barry Allen, is organized into four paragraphs that fulfill the typical functions of narratives in the short story genre. The work encompasses the constitutive elements of the short story – explicit authorship, meaningful title, central character, conflict-driven plot, defined institutional setting, implicit temporality in the sequence of events, and a narrative focus consistent with the plot – thus revealing no structural gaps that compromise the genre's composition. Although it does not present a great deal of descriptive depth regarding characters, space-time, or an extensive plot, the text indicates that the student appropriates the compositional regularities of the short story to structure the narrative.

¹³ Reproduced version of the student's original text..

In the short story written by the student, the title “The Light in the Shadow” already guides the interpretative horizon assumed, establishing a semantic tension that structures the narrative. “Light” is symbolically associated with the character of the Black teacher created by the student, whose actions are configured as an element of transformation in a context marked by inequalities and silences. This initial construction points to a value-laden direction that organizes the plot and anticipates the position taken by the author regarding the problem of racism suffered by the character.

In the first paragraph of the story, the student/author introduces the character and outlines her social role. By representing the Black teacher as a subject committed to teaching and acting in defense of the diversity agenda, the statement highlights obstacles faced by various professionals working in Brazilian schools, thus inscribing this discursive production as a responsive act to concrete social practices of female teachers.

In the development of the plot, especially in the second paragraph, we can observe the incorporation of issues that were discussed during the pedagogical intervention meetings. The story highlights the character’s role in promoting anti-racist education at the school, seeking to raise awareness and motivate other individuals, despite the obstacles imposed by the principal. In the excerpt “[...] although the principal resisted the idea [...]”, we find a voice that seeks to denounce a concern that echoes in discussions by various scholars who address anti-racist education in the school environment. Carine (2023) and Gomes (2012), for example, argue that the promotion of anti-racist education cannot be restricted to the teacher’s role, but must involve the entire school administration, considering cultural, religious, gender, and racial diversity on the part of all individuals within the school environment. These choices by the authors reveal the appropriation of discussions (such as the need to address Afro-Brazilian cultures in schools) worked on collectively in the classroom during the project.

In the third paragraph, when it evokes the collective mobilization of students and teachers and the formative effects of the event organized by the character, the story constructs a representation of the school as a space for social transformation, albeit one marked by resistance. The image of a “safe space for conversations” and the recognition of structural racism by “students and even some parentes” indicate the thematization of the school’s role in the production of critical awareness and its social responsibility.

In the story’s conclusion, the student’s stance against the forms of violence inflicted upon Black individuals in society becomes even more evident. By constructing the character Ana as a “powerful voice in the fight for equalit” and using the metaphor of “planting seeds of change”, the author seeks to reaffirm the importance of anti-racist educational practices and the recognition of inequalities as conditions for “a more just and welcoming world”. Thus, the story ends with a stance taken on the issue addressed, revealing the mobilization of voices and meanings discussed in the classroom to support a critical perspective on race relations. The final image of raised fists reinforces the idea of unity and the importance of collective action in the face of structural racism.

The analysis of the selected works, and the short story “The Light in the Shadow”, by student Barry Allen in particular, indicates a convergence between mastery of the compositional construction of the short story genre and the mobilization of value-laden positions aligned with the anti-racist proposal. The appropriation of genre resources, the plurality of voices, and the value-laden emphasis expressed in the theme indicate that the intervention favored reading and writing practices oriented towards social purposes and towards teaching committed to the critical formation of students. Thus, the results reinforce the importance of articulating work with discursive genres, from a dialogical perspective of language and anti-racist education, for the development of authorial writing, as well as for broadening students’ social awareness in the school context.

Conclusion

In this study, we aimed to analyze the contributions of an anti-racist education experience developed through the production of the short story genre in Portuguese Language classes in a public high school in the interior of Paraíba, focusing on textual productions that address racism against black women in society.

The analysis of the intervention's trajectory and the students' overall productions indicates that working with text, guided by a dialogical perspective and committed to anti-racist education, fostered the construction of value-laden positions and the weaving of socially situated discourses and meanings by the participating students.

The results indicate that the production of the short story genre constitutes a space for the appropriation of compositional forms, as well as for critical reflection and taking a stand against racial inequalities. The mobilization of characters, conflicts, and outcomes guided by social issues denotes that the students used the genre as a means of refracting lived realities and producing meanings about structural racism, particularly in relation to the experiences of Black women in different social spaces.

From a pedagogical point of view, the experience analyzed reinforces the relevance of Portuguese language teaching practices that integrate reading, text production, and problematization of socially relevant themes as inseparable dimensions of students' discursive formation. Systematic work with anti-racist education proved conducive to developing a reflective stance towards social relations and to understanding language as a practice of interaction and intervention in the social world.

The reflections arising from this study also indicate the relevance of teacher training oriented towards the development of critical racial literacy, capable of supporting consistent and theoretically grounded pedagogical practices. In this sense, the experience analyzed suggests that the teaching

of Portuguese, when guided by a dialogical perspective and committed to racial equity, can contribute to the formation of students/subjects capable of producing discourses responsive to social issues.

Our study therefore highlights the diverse potential of working with the short story genre as a pedagogical intervention aimed at anti-racist education. Furthermore, with this study, we seek to reaffirm the relevance of investigations that articulate language practices and critical thinking in the school context, in order to contribute to the understanding of Portuguese language teaching in basic education as a space for the production of meaning, critical positioning, and the construction of an educational practice committed to confronting racial issues and forms of oppression stemming from racial prejudice in Brazilian society.

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