

Convergences and Divergences with Critical Interculturality in the Teláris Essencial Inglês Collection

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Abstract:

Globalization has intensified the presence of English as a lingua franca in diverse cultural and economic contexts. However, its teaching still reinforces euro-usa-centric and hegemonic perspectives, marginalizing local cultures and identities. Critical interculturality, inspired by decolonial pedagogy, seeks to break with such practices by reflecting on the power relations embedded in language and by valuing cultural diversity. This study aims to analyze the extent to which the pedagogical proposals of the Teláris Essencial Inglês textbook collection converge with and/or diverge from the principles of critical interculturality, promoting the problematization of identities, cultures, and power relations beyond merely celebratory approaches to diversity. This is a qualitative, document-based study based on authors such as Walsh (2009), Fleuri (2014), Candau (2012, 2020), Tilio (2010), Material [...], (2020), and Anjos (2019). The findings indicate that the material presents both potentialities and limitations regarding the development of critical awareness and the recognition of the plurality of identities in English language teaching. These results point to the need for ongoing reflection on curricular content and on teacher education to

foster pedagogical practices that are sensitive to the articulations between local and global perspectives in specific educational contexts.

Keywords:

Critical Interculturality; English Language; Textbook; *Teláris Essencial Inglês*.

Resumo:

A globalização intensificou a presença do inglês como língua franca em diversos contextos culturais e econômicos. No entanto, seu ensino ainda reforça visões euro-eua-cêntricas e hegemônicas, marginalizando culturas e identidades locais. A interculturalidade crítica, inspirada na pedagogia decolonial, busca romper com essas práticas ao refletir sobre as relações de poder implicadas na linguagem e valorizar a diversidade cultural. Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar em que medida as propostas pedagógicas da coleção de livros didáticos *Teláris Essencial Inglês* se aproximam e/ou se distanciam dos princípios da interculturalidade crítica, promovendo a problematização de identidades, culturas e relações de poder para além de abordagens meramente celebratórias da diversidade. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa, de caráter documental, fundamentada em autores/as como Walsh (2009), Fleuri (2014), Candau (2012, 2020), Tilio (2010), Material [...], (2020) e Anjos (2019). O estudo evidenciou que o material apresenta tanto potencialidades quanto limitações no que se refere ao desenvolvimento da consciência crítica e ao reconhecimento da pluralidade de identidades no ensino de língua inglesa. Tais resultados indicam a necessidade de reflexões contínuas sobre os conteúdos curriculares e sobre a formação de educadores/as, de modo a favorecer práticas pedagógicas sensíveis às articulações entre perspectivas locais e globais em contextos educacionais específicos.

Palavras-chave:

Interculturalidade Crítica; Língua Inglesa; Livro Didático; *Teláris Essencial Inglês*.

Convergences and Divergences with Critical Interculturality in the *Teláris Essencial Inglês* Collection¹

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INTRODUCTION

The consolidation of English as a lingua franca is a striking phenomenon in the contemporary world. With the advancement of the globalization process, English has transcended geographical and cultural boundaries, becoming a key element in international communication, economic exchanges, and global cultural dynamics. However, this prominence is not free from political, cultural, and social implications, which are often concealed in discourses that promote its teaching (Fleuri, 2014). When English is frequently presented as a neutral and functional language, it ends up sustaining and disseminating euro-usa-centric (Walsh, 2010) and hegemonic perspectives, marginalizing other cultures and reinforcing historical inequalities (Candau, 2020).

In this context, critical interculturality emerges as a perspective that acknowledges and values cultural diversity while simultaneously questioning the power relations underlying language education. Grounded in the principles of decolonial pedagogy, this perspective is anchored, as Walsh (2016, p. 66) argues, in the “fact that struggles are not only *against* the dominant order and the colonial matrix of power, but, even more significantly, *for* the construction of other ways of being and thinking with and within the world.” In this way, interculturality seeks to create a space for dialogue among cultures, challenging colonial hierarchies. Thus, rather than merely teaching, from the standpoint of critical interculturality, language education aims to foster critical subjects who can reflect on the conditions of production and circulation of this language, as well as on the ethical and political implications of its use.

Based on these assumptions, this article seeks to analyze the extent to which the pedagogical proposals of the *Teláris Essencial Inglês* textbook collection converge with and/or diverge from the principles of critical interculturality, promoting a problematization of identities, cultures, and power relations that goes beyond merely celebratory approaches to diversity. This is because we agree with Rojo (2013) and Material [...], (2020) that teaching materials play a fundamental role in language education, as they may function both as a reflection of dominant ideologies and as a potential space for the construction of problematizing pedagogical practices. Regarding methodology, this study is characterized as qualitative, document-based research. The theoretical framework is based especially in the works of Walsh (2009, 2010, 2016), Fleuri (2014), and Candau (2012, 2014, 2019, 2020), who are prominent in the field of critical interculturality, as well as in discussions on textbooks and English language teaching by Anjos (2019), Rojo (2013), Material [...], (2020) and Tilio (2010).

In addition to this introductory section and the final considerations, the text is organized into three sections: in the first one, we address the understanding of critical interculturality and English language teaching; in the second one, we expand the discussion on critical interculturality by relating it to the textbook; in the third one, we present our analysis of the *Teláris Essencial Inglês* collection.

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CRITICAL INTERCULTURALITY AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Globalization has significantly boosted the relevance of the English language, consolidating it as the main lingua franca for communication in many interlinguistic and transcultural contexts. Therefore, its presence in multiple scenarios cannot be dissociated from the social and cultural implications that accompany the language, especially regarding language teaching (Rodrigues; Silvestre, 2020). The proposal to incorporate critical interculturality into English language teaching emerges precisely as a necessary response to the limitations of pedagogical practices that naturalize the dominance of English in the globalized world.

According to Walsh (2009), critical interculturality is not limited to the mere recognition of cultural diversity; rather, it questions historical processes of marginalization and exclusion. When this concept is brought into the context of language education, the aim is to move beyond teaching language merely as a functional system of communication and to engage students in problematizing the social, cultural, and political dynamics that inform language use and knowledge construction. Thus, instead of simply teaching English as an effective communicative tool, the goal is to foster learning that promotes a critical understanding of power systems and the disparities present in the global world.

Understanding the English language from a critical intercultural perspective requires teachers and students to question and resist the idea that language is neutral and detached from social, political, and cultural dimensions. According to Rojo (2013), language, as a social and historical practice, reflects the power relations that exist between cultures and within different societies. Therefore, the study of languages should be understood not only as the learning of a foreign language in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and phonology, but also as an opportunity to question the status of certain cultures to the detriment of others.

English, which holds the status of a lingua franca in the globalized world, has a history of colonization and hegemony that is closely linked to imperialist processes of several countries, especially Anglophone ones such as the United Kingdom and the United States. The impact of this hegemony is reflected in language teaching, where the view that the cultures of these countries embody the “ideal model” of knowledge formation, behavior, and even linguistic practice is often perpetuated (Rojo, 2013). Critical interculturality in English language teaching, therefore, proposes questioning and challenging these hegemonic discourses by engaging with local cultures and their linguistic expressions through a reflective and problematizing stance (Rodrigues; Silvestre, 2020; Walsh, 2016).

When critical interculturality is considered in English language teaching, the purpose goes beyond disseminating linguistic knowledge; it also aims to encourage intercultural dialogue that enables students to recognize the multiple ways of being and becoming in the world. This process does not seek a superficial engagement with other cultures, but rather a genuine reflection on the relationships among languages, identities, and power (Quijano, 2020). Language education thus becomes a timely opportunity to transform classrooms into spaces of appreciation and resistance to global dynamics of cultural colonization, providing those involved with a critical and conscious formation regarding the role language plays in shaping cultural, social, and political realities.

That said, for language education to become truly intercultural, it is necessary to value the linguistic particularities of both teachers and students, respecting the different modes of communication that circulate the world. Therefore, English language teaching must open itself to local knowledge and understand language as an interactive space of cultural exchange, rather than as a hierarchy of “superior” and “inferior” languages.

Thus, critical interculturality in English language teaching carries with it the potential for social transformation. By reflecting on the power relations that permeate languages and cultures, students not only learn a language but also develop the ability to read the world critically and to act within it in fairer ways (Walsh, 2009). This is because it enables learners to become more than passive recipients of knowledge, turning them into active participants in an ongoing process of deconstruction and reconstruction of reality. By incorporating discussions on power relations,

cultural interactions, and the valuing of diversity, English language teaching can become a process of self-questioning and problematization, encouraging teachers and students to challenge global and local inequalities and to think critically about the construction of their own identities.

In this sense, critical reflection on the teaching materials used in English classrooms becomes fundamental. Often, textbooks and resources employed in English language classes reinforce unilateral views that privilege linguistic models originating from traditionally Anglophone countries. However, in line with Rojo (2013), we understand that teaching materials should incorporate the cultural diversity that accompanies language use, presenting language as a means of connection among different cultures rather than as a pre-established model to be replicated, as discussed in the following section.

CRITICAL INTERCULTURALITY AND TEXTBOOKS

Critical interculturality in the context of language education requires the problematization of cultural representations present in textbooks, which are central tools in the educational process. Traditionally, English language textbooks have been shaped by a culture-centered view focused on Anglophone contexts—especially the United Kingdom and the United States—resulting in the construction of an exoticized “other,” often reduced to stereotypes. Thus, in line with Monte Mór (São Paulo, 2010, p. 25), it is essential to “expand learners’ perspectives on the plurality, diversity, and multiplicity present in contemporary society (in terms of forms of communication, cultures and identities, languages, and modalities).” In this scenario, the English language textbook, in its attempt to teach the language objectively and functionally, ends up reinforcing power relations that marginalize local cultures and overlook historical inequalities.

In this sense, when considering English language textbooks, we often observe an emphasis on the importance of assimilating idioms, vocabulary, and norms of Anglophone culture, as if it were the only valid one. In practice, many of these textbooks make use of images, expressions, and contexts that universalize cultural aspects of hegemonic English-speaking countries. On this matter, Pennycook (2001, p. 124) emphasizes that “textbooks are a representation of cultural and linguistic capital.” As such, they establish a direct connection between language and ways of life, often favoring a euro-usa-centric perspective aligned with the interests of economic and cultural globalization. The functional model of teaching, widely present in this type of textbook, seeks to prepare students for communicative interactions in a supposedly globalized and homogeneous world, focusing on the practical use of language to achieve success in a purported global market.

However, this approach presents serious limitations, as it tends to marginalize cultural diversity—whether related to Brazilian cultures or to those of other countries outside the Anglophone sphere—thereby excluding local voices and cultural practices. This type of approach also reinforces the idea that the Western and Anglophone model constitutes the global standard of development, assigning secondary value to the traditions, customs, and knowledge of other peoples (Fleuri, 2014). Critical interculturality, in turn, has as its central aim the deconstruction of these power relations. Through a decolonial pedagogy, it seeks to promote an education that recognizes cultural multiplicity as a vital force for understanding the contemporary world. In this way, it becomes essential to reassess these materials from a perspective that conceives education as a field of intercultural negotiation, in which historically silenced voices are given space for visibility and listening.

In this process, textbooks need to be rethought, both in terms of their content and in the ways information is selected and addressed. In the words of Tilio (2010, p. 172):

Learning a language is a process that involves learners’ identities, since a language is not merely a system of signs and symbols, but a complex social practice in which the values and meanings attributed to an utterance are determined, in part, by the values and meanings assigned to it by its producer. For knowledge to be constructed in a meaningful way, it is necessary that students identify with it, that is, that they understand it as part of their world. By considering students’ individuality, their identities are respected. And here it is important

to remember that a student does not possess a single identity, that of a learner; like other members of society, learners also have multiple identities: gender, race, class, and position within the family.

Therefore, these textbooks should integrate multiple cultural perspectives that allow students to perceive global interconnections while simultaneously valuing local knowledge. For instance, a textbook could include dialogues and narratives that, in addition to representing the cultures of English-speaking countries, also depict other cultures interacting within a global context. Rather than portraying English solely as a tool for global communication, it would be understood as a field of complex cultural practices in which multiple perspectives and voices meet, question one another, and construct a sense of identity and belonging (Anjos, 2019).

Moreover, textbooks can problematize notions of “normality” and “exoticism” that are often mobilized in approaches to other cultures. In this regard, Monte Mór (São Paulo, 2010) advocates for foreign language teaching that prioritizes heterogeneity, contextualized language, meaning-making, and situated learning. In a convergent manner, Pennycook (2001) argues that the language taught, the materials used, and the classroom practices developed should be understood as social and cultural practices. Therefore, this constitutes a critical perspective that recognizes social, political, and cultural dimensions as constitutive of language teaching. Furthermore, an intercultural approach in English language textbooks could, for example, value Brazilian cultural contributions, such as the artistic, linguistic, and social manifestations of regional diversity—so rich and fundamental to the formation of the Brazilian society—thereby fostering a more plural perspective. In consonance, Anjos (2019, p. 38) highlights “the need to decolonize English language teaching by rethinking teaching methods and instructional materials by arguing that methodological principles and practices appropriate to local contexts should be explored.” For the author, teachers and learners can act as agents of social change: “when colonialist discourses emerge and place peoples and cultures at a level of inferiority, the action of critical, aware, politicized, and well-prepared teachers is required to engage with language education” (Anjos, 2019, p. 62). Thus, in agreement with the author, we understand that through a critical language education, teachers and students learn to “respond to situations that challenge their identities and cultures” (Anjos, 2019, p. 62).

Rather than simply exposing students to the “other” as a distant or unattainable phenomenon, it is necessary to promote dialogue among cultures. In this context, English should be constituted as a tool for understanding a global reality marked by conflicts and power relations that extend from the margins of society to spheres of global influence. In this way, a critical analysis of textbooks from the perspective of critical interculturality highlights the urgency of reconfiguring their pedagogical proposals. Far from being a neutral or technicist process, English language teaching should position itself as an educational practice that prepares students to confront global and local inequalities and to engage in intercultural dialogue. Another relevant point to be mentioned is that textbooks remain the most widely used resource in language teaching in Brazilian schools. From this perspective, it is crucial to understand that social interactions, the construction of identities, and the contexts experienced in the classroom environment are also influenced by the teaching materials employed (Material [...], 2020). For this reason, these resources must promote teaching practices that encourage critical stances, prioritizing a reflective and meaningful approach rather than focusing exclusively on structural exercises (Material [...], 2020), especially in textbooks used in basic education.

CRITICAL INTERCULTURALITY IN THE *TELÁRIS ESSENCIAL INGLÊS* COLLECTION

The *Teláris Essencial Inglês* collection analyzed in this study is part of the National Textbook and Teaching Materials Program (PNLD) for the 2024–2027 cycle (Brasil, 2024). Published in 2022 by Editora Ática and authored by Adriana Saporito, Elaine Hodgson, Rafael Monteiro, and Viviane Kirmeliene, the collection is directed at the final years of elementary education and consists of four

volumes, covering grades six through nine. The material is adopted by schools in the municipal education network of Anápolis, Goiás, the context in which the first author works as a teacher and pedagogical coordinator.

Each volume is organized into eight thematic units and features recurring sections, among which the one entitled “Warming Up” stands out. This section proposes the activation of the experiences of students based on the themes addressed, relating them to their everyday lives and to the communities in which they are situated. Overall, the collection makes use of images and activities that encompass different sociocultural contexts, seeking to broaden the representations present in the teaching material and to move beyond a euro-usa-centered standard. The following analysis focuses on selected units from the four volumes, with emphasis on identifying points of convergence and divergence in relation to the assumptions of critical interculturality.

The sixth-grade textbook addresses themes related to identity, customs, culture, health, and sustainable development, among others, in addition to proposing reflections on English as a *lingua franca* and its uses in different contexts of Brazilian society, such as cultural, commercial, technological, and scientific domains. In the second unit, entitled “Family Time”, images of different family configurations are presented, accompanied by questions about the concept of family and about the students’ own experiences. Although the material proposes reflections on types of families that are not represented in the images, the absence of the depiction of same-sex families is observed, which limits the proposed representativeness and contributes to the invisibilization of these configurations throughout the collection, even though the topic may be discussed orally in activities from the “Warming Up” section. The problematization of standardized family models may foster educational processes that are more sensitive to diversity, as noted by Candau (2012), who advocates for equality of opportunities in recognizing individuals’ specificities. In this sense, the non-representation of certain social experiences tends to reinforce existing asymmetries by silencing historically marginalized groups.

In the third unit of the sixth-grade textbook, entitled “School Days”, the images portray diverse school contexts, featuring students of different ethnicities, races, genders, and with disabilities. The activities proposed in the “Warming Up” section encourage observation and discussion of similarities and differences among these school realities, enabling reflections on the role of education in reducing inequalities. Although these activities promote the valuing of diversity within the school environment, their effectiveness depends on how such discussions are conducted in the classroom and articulated with students’ actual experiences. Therefore, when students reflect on diversity and recognize it in teaching materials and proposed activities, they may perceive themselves as agents in the educational process rather than mere spectators of colonial impositions.

The seventh-grade textbook addresses themes such as conscious consumption, environmental preservation, feminism, and physical and emotional health, among others. The proposed activities foster reflections on contemporary social issues, encouraging the development of students’ critical stance toward environmental and social aspects. In the third unit, entitled “Fabulous First”, images of women who have stood out for different achievements are presented, such as Marie Curie, Lea Campos, Débora Seabra, and Kamala Harris. These representations enable discussions on equal opportunities and women’s participation in different professional fields, problematizing gender-related inequalities and increasing the visibility of historically marginalized trajectories. The proposed discussions align with Candau’s (2012) perspective, according to which educational processes should promote the deconstruction of prejudices and discriminations that are naturalized in social and school relations.

In the fifth unit of the seventh-grade textbook, entitled “Writers and Their Works”, the book presents images and texts by authors such as Nelson Mandela, Malala Yousafzai, Carolina Maria de Jesus, and Davi Kopenawa, encompassing diversity in terms of ethnicity, race, and gender. The proposed activities connect contact with different textual productions to discussions on social issues, such as gender-based violence, encouraging students’ critical reflection on these topics. By integrating cultural diversity and problematizing relations of oppression, the unit aligns with the perspective of critical intercultural education as advocated by Candau (2014), who emphasizes the

formation of subjects capable of learning from other cultures while simultaneously questioning the asymmetries that permeate these dialogues.

Through the mobilization of multiple cultural perspectives, the seventh-grade materials provide support for students to recognize global interconnections and to value local knowledge. By presenting the English language as a space of diverse cultural practices, the collection contributes to understanding the language as a field for the construction of meanings, identities, and senses of belonging, as pointed out by Anjos (2019).

In the eighth-grade textbook, themes such as cultural diversity, healthy eating, financial education, ethics, and sustainability are addressed, with activities aimed at fostering students' reflection on different social issues. The illustrations encompass diverse sociocultural contexts, which may promote the recognition of multiple experiences and senses of belonging. In the first unit, entitled "Folktales and Myths", the material presents cultural representations from different locations, valuing popular culture narratives and their preservation. In this unit, activities that mobilize characters from Brazilian folklore stand out, promoting the recognition of local knowledge and national culture, as well as references to Indigenous, African, and European cultures.

When addressing cultural diversity, the textbook proposes dialogue among different traditions, grounded in respect and in the problematization of historical processes. In this regard, Araújo and Pereira (2025) emphasize that understanding social conflicts in Brazil—especially those related to racial issues and social inequalities—requires a critical analysis of the historical formation of Brazilian society, marked by asymmetrical cultural encounters in the context of colonization. This approach resonates with the conception of interculturality defended by Fleuri (2014), according to which interculturality should be understood as a continuous and deliberate action articulated with decolonial perspectives. From this standpoint, language teaching is not limited to the reorganization of curricular content, but involves questioning the structures that support it, recognizing language as a space traversed by historical and social relations of power.

The ninth-grade textbook addresses themes such as the rights of children and adolescents, urban mobility, African culture, physical and emotional health, and age-based discrimination, among others. The proposed activities seek to foster students' reflection on different dimensions of diversity present in contemporary society. The material mobilizes images and activities that address social inclusion, such as representations of people with disabilities in school, professional, and sports contexts, which support the problematization of access to opportunities and social participation across different spheres of everyday life.

The fourth unit, entitled "African Ancestry in Art", aligns with an intercultural perspective by valuing African cultural diversity and recognizing the relevance of its artistic expressions. This approach resonates with the conception of critical interculturality discussed by Walsh (2009), as it challenges the centrality of euro-usa-centric narratives and highlights languages and cultures as historically situated phenomena, traversed by relations of power and resistance. In line with this understanding, Aman (2018) argues that critical intercultural education makes it possible to recognize historically delegitimized knowledge and languages, while making explicit the asymmetries produced by the colonial past rather than neutralizing them.

In the fifth unit, entitled "Age Doesn't Define Us", reflections on age discrimination and its impacts on emotional health are proposed. The activities encourage the problematization of ageism and the valuing of age diversity, enabling students to question stereotypes and prejudices associated with age. Overall, the ninth-grade textbook presents relevant points of convergence with the assumptions of critical interculturality, although such discussions depend on pedagogical mediation to be consolidated more deeply within the classroom context.

The analysis of the *Teláris Essencial Inglês* collection makes it possible to understand the extent to which the material converges with and/or diverges from the assumptions of critical interculturality. Points of convergence are observed in the recurring thematization of cultural diversity and in the encouragement of the recognition of multiple identities, which indicates the incorporation of intercultural principles in English language teaching. However, points of divergence are also evident, particularly in the still limited treatment of the power relations that

permeate cultural representations, as well as in the tendency toward predominantly descriptive approaches to difference, which do not always unfold into more in-depth problematizations.

From this perspective, the consolidation of critical interculturality as a pedagogical practice requires the articulation between reflection and action, as emphasized by Freire (1996, p. 38), who states that “the practice of critical teaching [...] involves the dynamic and dialectical movement between doing and thinking about doing.” Thus, acknowledging cultural inequalities, although it is an initial step, proves insufficient when not accompanied by strategies that problematize the structures that produce and sustain them. This understanding resonates with Rodrigues and Silvestre (2020, p. 423), for whom critical interculturality “needs to be (co)shared and lived, not merely as an idea or a concept, but as a way of perceiving and acting with and within the world.” In this sense, the results of this study indicate that the analyzed collection presents potentialities for working with critical interculturality, while also revealing limitations that require further development and pedagogical mediation to overcome superficial readings of diversity.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our analysis indicates that the *Teláris Essencial Inglês* collection mobilizes themes such as ageism, cultural differences, popular culture, traditions, social inclusion, gender, race, and ethnicity, which can be related to the assumptions of critical interculturality insofar as they foster reflections on cultural interactions and power relations beyond merely descriptive approaches to diversity. However, the analysis of the collection also reveals, in addition to its advances, limitations in its pedagogical proposal, since, despite addressing certain dimensions of diversity, it presents gaps, such as the absence of discussions on same-sex family configurations, which may contribute to the naturalization of hegemonic models and indicate limits in the incorporation of a more comprehensive critical intercultural perspective.

Overall, the proposal of this study reaffirms the relevance of critical interculturality in English language teaching, given that language classrooms, understood as intrinsically intercultural spaces (Rodrigues; Silvestre, 2020), should constitute spaces for problematizing the perpetuation of euro-usa-centric and hegemonic narratives, thus fostering a reflective stance on the power relations implicated in processes of globalization and in the dissemination of English as a lingua franca.

Thus, by returning to the general objective of analyzing the extent to which the *Teláris Essencial Inglês* collection converges with and/or diverges from the assumptions of critical interculturality, this study shows that the textbook presents both potentialities and limitations concerning the development of critical awareness and the recognition of the plurality of identities within English language teaching. These findings point to the need for ongoing reflection on curricular contents and on teacher education, encouraging pedagogical practices that are sensitive to the articulations between local and global perspectives in specific educational contexts. As Rodrigues and Silvestre (2020, p. 423) remind us, “without a critical perspective, intercultural language teaching will merely perpetuate modern/colonial interests.”

Therefore, we hope that this study may contribute primarily to the reflection of teachers working in basic education by problematizing the extent to which the adopted teaching materials and the pedagogical practices they develop converge with and/or diverge from the principles of critical interculturality. Such reflection may foster a more situated understanding of language education, attentive to the experiences and knowledge that permeate students’ everyday lives.

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