

**“LET’S NOT FORGET  
WE ARE  
*LANGUAGE TEACHERS!*”:  
INVESTIGATING CRITICAL  
TEACHING  
AND CRITICAL REFLECTION  
IN THE PRACTICUM  
OF AN ENGLISH  
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM**

**“NÃO ESQUEÇAMOS QUE SOMOS PROFESSORES DE *LÍNGUAS!*”: INVESTIGANDO O  
ENSINO CRÍTICO E A REFLEXÃO CRÍTICA NO ESTÁGIO DE UM PROGRAMA DE  
GRADUAÇÃO EM INGLÊS**

**“¡NO NOS OLVIDEMOS DE QUE SOMOS PROFESORES DE *IDIOMAS!*”: UNA INVESTIGACIÓN  
DE LA ENSEÑANZA CRÍTICA Y LA REFLEXIÓN CRÍTICA EN LA PASANTÍA DE UN  
PROGRAMA DE LICENCIATURA DE INGLÉS**

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**ABSTRACT:** Based on the need for Teacher Education programs to promote the development of critical language teachers, this study aimed at unveiling to what extent the practicum at an undergraduate program fosters critical reflection. Two student-teachers and their practicum supervisor answered a questionnaire and an interview about their views with regards to the roles of additional language teaching, the language teacher, and the supervised practicum. From the analysis, we could observe that critical reflection and critical teaching are principles of the course according to its syllabus. For the supervisor professor, teaching a language is a political act that cannot be seen as separate from the surrounding social context. On the other hand, both student-teachers seem to regard language as a communicative tool, and to view critical development as a component of language teaching. Such an understanding from the student-teachers might be related to the very nature of the practicum, and to the lack of opportunities student-teachers have (or had) for the critical development of their thinking on language teaching.

**KEYWORDS:** Teacher education. Critical teaching. Critical reflection.

**RESUMO:** Considerando a necessidade dos programas de formação de professores de promover o desenvolvimento de professores de língua críticos, este estudo objetivou compreender em que medida o estágio de um programa de graduação fomenta a reflexão crítica. Três participantes responderam a um questionário e a uma entrevista onde expuseram suas visões sobre o papel do ensino de língua adicional, do professor de língua, e do estágio supervisionado. Com base na análise, pudemos observar que a reflexão crítica e o ensino crítico são princípios do estágio de acordo com o plano de ensino. Para o orientador de estágio, ensinar uma língua é um ato político que não pode ser separado de seu contexto social. Por outro lado, os alunos-professores parecem conceber a língua como uma ferramenta para a comunicação e o desenvolvimento crítico como um componente do ensino de língua. Este entendimento pode estar relacionado à própria natureza do estágio bem como à falta de oportunidades que estes estagiários têm (ou tiveram) para o desenvolvimento do seu pensamento crítico sobre ensino de línguas.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Formação de professores. Ensino crítico. Reflexão crítica.

**RESUMEN:** Considerando la necesidad de programas de formación de docentes de promover el desarrollo de los profesores de idiomas críticos, este estudio tuvo como objetivo investigar en qué medida la pasantía en un programa de licenciatura fomenta la reflexión crítica entre los futuros maestros. Tres participantes respondieron un cuestionario y una entrevista donde expusieron sus puntos de vista sobre la enseñanza de idiomas adicionales, el profesor de idiomas, y la pasantía bajo supervisión. A partir del análisis, observamos que la reflexión crítica y la enseñanza crítica son principios fundamentales del curso de acuerdo con el programa de estudios. Para el profesor supervisor de pasantía, la enseñanza de una lengua es un acto político que no puede ser visto alejado del contexto social circundante. Por otro lado, los futuros maestros parecen considerar la lengua como un instrumento de comunicación, y la crítica como un componente de la enseñanza de idiomas. Tal comprensión puede estar relacionada a la naturaleza de la pasantía *per se*, así como a la falta de oportunidad que los futuros maestros tienen (o tuvieron) para desarrollar niveles críticos hacia la enseñanza de idiomas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Formación del profesorado. Enseñanza crítica. Reflexión crítica.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In 2011, the Brazilian government launched an educational proposal in order to raise awareness regarding the violence and prejudice against the LGBT population. The project, which encompassed a number of materials discussing gender and sexuality, was designed for both teachers and students, and became popularly known – especially in the mass media – as *the gay kit* (SOARES, 2015). However, based on the argument that it would, in fact, “induce” homosexuality among students – an idea put forth mainly by conservative politicians who are not educators –, the project ended up being rejected and, thus, not implemented. More recently, at the end of 2015, the inclusion of gender and sexuality issues in the school curriculum has been discussed by the national congress. Once again, this attempt has been regarded with suspicion by many politicians, who claim that the school should transmit scientific knowledge and avoid the dissemination of “specific ideologies”. These examples seem to demonstrate that, for some decision makers who have the power to impact the Brazilian educational system, teaching should be a neutral act. In this sense, the reasoning underlying such arguments and decisions is a positivist one, in which teaching has to do with knowledge transmission of objective facts.

Nevertheless, from the perspective of Critical Pedagogy, teaching can never be neutral. As Paulo Freire (1996) states, “[...] no one can be in the world, with the world and with others in a neutral way” (p. 77). Besides, as the National Curriculum Parameters (BRASIL, 1998) make it clear, different disciplines – including the teaching of additional languages<sup>1</sup>, which will be the focus of this article – should promote the development of the student both as a human being and as a citizen, so as to prepare him/her to act on the social world (p. 15). In the context of additional language teaching, the document addresses the issues of citizenship, critical consciousness, and sociopolitical aspects of learning as being paramount to the curriculum (p. 15). As the educator and congresswoman Margarida Salomão recently argued during a debate regarding the inclusion of gender and sexuality in the school curriculum, the educational institution is indeed ideological – historically, it has been sexist, racist, patriarchal, and anti-feminist. Thus, any movement aiming at deconstructing such long-established discourses is legitimate. She also argued that there is no intrinsic truth in science, pointing out that the Catholic Church, for instance, persecuted Galileu Galilei after he claimed the Earth revolved around the sun, and also around itself, and then, only after 400 years, made a public request for forgiveness. Salomão’s voice seems to be a whisper in a field still dominated by hegemonic discourses that do not seem to be truly compromised with education from a critical perspective. Her ideas, therefore, need to be echoed so that the *status quo* can be questioned. As she asks, “how long will it take for us to ask women, transgender, and homosexuals for forgiveness?” (SALOMÃO, 2015).

Bearing this in mind, what we would like to argue is that any teaching proposal that aims at preparing students to act responsibly in the world needs to have social justice as its main focus. This means that the ultimate teaching goal, as Zeichner (2011) explains, would be to lessen inequalities and injustices. However, in order for teaching to promote social justice, teachers need to be aware of their role as educators. In other words, a critical perspective towards teaching needs to be developed through Teacher-Education programs:

Indeed, if preservice teachers enter programs treating political and economic inequalities as natural or unproblematic (and if they are not successfully encouraged to critically examine these issues during their program), we may have part of the explanation for the tendency among teachers to function as professional ideologists, i.e., apologists or at least preservers of the status quo. (GINSBURG; NEWMAN, 1985, p. 49).

In this regard, the main objective of this article is to understand to what extent the practicum at the English program at an important Federal University in Brazil fosters critical reflection among the student-teachers in terms of the roles of additional language teaching and educators. More specifically, we are interested in investigating whether teachers are perceived (by the practicum supervisor and by the student-teachers) as “agents of societal change” (EDMUNDSON, 1990) that should aim at promoting critical teaching. In order to do so, the next section elaborates on the concepts of Critical Reflection and Critical Teaching that constitute the theoretical basis for the present study.

## 2 DEFINING OUR TERMS

For Moita Lopes (1996, p. 183, our translation), when “[...] the language classroom is neutral from a sociopolitical view, it ignores the essential traces of language: its social nature”. In this sense, even when one claims to be neutral, the teaching process is mostly likely reproducing and perpetuating hegemony. This seems to be the case of some contemporaneous practices, such as communicative language teaching. From such a perspective, the objective of language teaching is to develop the learners’ communicative competence; it recognizes the importance of using appropriate language for each communicative situation (LEFFA, 1988, p. 226). In other words, language is part of a wider context. Thus, linguistic forms may be taught when necessary, but always with the objective of developing the communicative competence. Besides, Leffa highlights that the development of the strategic competence<sup>2</sup> – that is, learning to use language for communication – may be as important as (or even more important than) developing grammatical competence (p. 226). Because of that, classes planned under the premises of the communicative approach

<sup>1</sup> We opt here for the use of “additional language” in order to avoid the idea that the focus of the teaching-learning process is the language of “the other”, which is “foreign” to the students’ contexts.

<sup>2</sup> Canale and Swain (1980) define strategic competence as the ability to use verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to compensate for gaps in other types of knowledge (such as grammatical knowledge). In this sense, the use of the strategic competence is important to guarantee that the communication will take place effectively (p. 5).

make use of contextualized and authentic materials<sup>3</sup> (including different textual genres), and they emphasize one or more of the four linguistic skills (LEFFA, 1988, p. 227). While this approach seems to be very appropriate if we consider that teaching should have an impact on the students' real lives – since real language and communication itself are the focus of the process –, its operationalization often ignores sociopolitical issues that are embedded in any communicative event. It is not uncommon, for instance, to come across textbooks following a communicative approach that present a “perfect world” without questioning how power and oppression operate in our society. This can be considered problematic in the sense that, if we are to think of the teacher's role as being twofold – that is, developing communicative competence, but also critical thinking –, there seems to be a need to question some of the current teaching practices.

In this context, the development of critical levels is primordial in Teacher-Education programs. According to Mattos (2014), “[i]f we want teachers to start using Critical Literacy perspectives and to become more responsive to social and cultural issues in their teaching, we need to start providing them with adequate space for devising socially responsive practices” (p. 134). By the same token, Hawkins and Norton (2009, p.33) claim that a “[...] key focus of critical teacher educators is to promote critical awareness in their teacher-learners by raising awareness about the ways in which power relations are constructed and function in society, and the extent to which historical, social, and political practices structure educational inequity” . For the authors, critical self-reflection would also be an important component, since it allows for the individual to understand his/her relationship with the social world (p. 34). This global understanding of society's forms of power and oppression is often overlooked in Teacher Education, while reflection about the teacher's techniques and practices in the classroom is foregrounded. In this sense, as Greggio and Gil (2010, p.59) postulate, reflection is understood in Teacher Education mostly at technical and practical levels. At the technical level, the efficiency of the teacher's practice is the main concern; and at the practical level, the teaching and learning objectives and their results are the focus of the reflection process. While the critical level does not deny the previous ones, it moves a step further in the reflection process by incorporating an understanding of the context and its structuring forces. Even though there has been an overuse of the term “critical” in Teacher Education, it is oftentimes used in contexts in which reflection does not include criticality in the sense understood here.

In line with the critical level of reflection, Cox e Assis-Peterson (1999, p.439) claim that the English teacher must:

1. doubt and be critical of the dominant discourse that represents the internationalization of English as good and as a passport to the dominant world;
2. consider the relationship of their work to the spread of the language, critically evaluating the implications of their practice in the production and reproduction of social inequalities;
3. question whether they are contributing to the perpetuation of domination.

This entails a questioning of the very nature of the pedagogical relations: “if the goal of critical pedagogy is to empower learners, pedagogical relations between teacher educators and teacher-learners must be structured on equitable terms” (HAWKINS; NORTON, 2009, p. 35). In this sense, the development of critical levels is not to be regarded as a component of, or a moment in, language teaching; it is, in fact, a perspective from which language teaching must be seen, implying constant questioning and reflection. After all, critical reflection and critical teaching both require looking at the world with “critical lenses”.

### 3 LOOKING AT THE PRACTICUM (FROM A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE?)

Taking into consideration the need for Teacher-Education programs to open doors for the development of critical language teachers, this study had as its main objective to investigate whether the practicum at an English undergraduate program fosters critical reflection among student-teachers regarding the roles of additional language teaching and educators. In order to do so, we tried to understand whether the practicum supervisor and the student-teachers perceived being critical and promoting social justice as part of their roles as educators.

<sup>3</sup> Authentic materials encompass any text (written, visual, oral, and so on) that is used in real life activities, in opposition to materials that are designed specifically for the classroom.

The general question that guided our study was the following: *Are critical reflection and critical teaching guiding principles of the practicum at UFSC's (Federal University of Santa Catarina) English Program?* More specifically, we were interested in understanding how the roles of additional language teaching and additional language teacher were conceived in the practicum's context at UFSC's English Language Program – a well-known Federal institution in Brazil. In order to answer our research question, we first analyzed the practicum syllabus, which was shared with us by the practicum supervisor. Then, an online questionnaire was sent to: 1) two student-teachers taking the second semester of their two-semester-practicum, and 2) the practicum supervisor. The professor and the student-teachers answered the same questionnaire, which was composed by three questions: 1) In your opinion, what is the role of English language teaching in the context of regular public schools? Why should English (not) be taught in this context?; 2) For you, what is the role of the English teacher in the context of regular public schools?; and 3) For you, what is the role of the Supervised Practicum in the English teacher developmental process? The questionnaire was written in Portuguese, and the participants were instructed to use either Portuguese or English to answer it. Moreover, they were also encouraged to make use of images, videos, or any other media in order to explain their ideas. The general instructions also advised them to refer to their personal experience, and make use of personal accounts in order to illustrate their points. We decided to use a written questionnaire because this would give participants the opportunity to reflect about their views and organize them in a systematic way. At last, we did not want them to have any time pressure, so they could decide when they would like to answer the questions.

It is important to mention that the professor who answered the questionnaire has supervised practicum courses for several years, and holds a PhD in Education. The two student-teachers are at the end of their first undergraduate program – after the practicum semester, they will be eligible for the Teaching degree in English Language and Literatures. Both of them are novice teachers in the sense that they have started teaching in the last couple of years. Furthermore, the practicum is their first experience at a regular public school.

After analyzing the questionnaires, we noticed that some issues in the student-teachers' answers deserved further exploration. Thus, we posed some questions through an electronic interview in order to better understand some of the ideas that were pointed out by them. These questions were sent to them via e-mail along with their answers to the questionnaire. Because we thought that answering more questions could be too time-consuming for the participants, at this point they were given two possibilities: they could either write down the answers to the new questions and email them back to us, or they could record an audio file via cellphone with the answers to the questions, and then send it to the researchers. Both participants decided to write down their responses, adding new ideas and/or examples to the questionnaire they had previously answered.

After that, all data were analyzed in terms of how English language teaching, the role of the English teacher, and the role of the supervised practicum were conceived by the participants. The responses of the student-teachers and of their practicum supervisor were contrasted and compared so as to shed some light on the dynamics of the practicum when it comes to critical language teaching. The findings of this analysis are presented in the next section.

#### 4 CRITICAL LENSES OR REGULAR GLASSES?

For the purpose of answering the research question that grounded this study – i.e. “Are critical reflection and critical teaching guiding principles of the practicum at UFSC's English program?” –, we have analyzed the practicum syllabus, the participants' answers to the questionnaire, and the subsequent electronic interview described in the previous section.

With regards to the practicum syllabus, it was possible to notice that critical reflection and critical teaching are addressed as core principles of the practicum, even though there are no explicit details in the document about how these concepts are supposed to be approached throughout the discipline. Some of the practicum's general objectives, as stated in its syllabus, are for students to *recognize that the pedagogical action requires planning and constant adjustments throughout the process*<sup>4</sup>, and to *reflect about her/his*

4 “Reconhecer que a ação pedagógica requer planejamento e ajustes constantes ao longo do processo como forma de assegurar a aprendizagem.”.

*approach to teaching and assessment*<sup>5</sup>, for instance. These objectives seem to be in line with a reflective approach to teaching, at least on technical and practical levels, since they focus on a reflection about the methodologies, goals and results involved in the pedagogical practice (GREGGIO; GIL, 2010). In addition, they seem to highlight the importance for teachers to be engaged in a reflective cycle (SCHON, 1983; WALLACE, 1991), that is, a constant process of reflection in which practical experience is nurtured by theoretical knowledge and vice-versa. Two other main objectives of the practicum are for student-teachers to *develop a critical stance towards her/his pedagogical work and towards the school's pedagogical work*<sup>6</sup>, and to *work with students of different linguistic, cognitive, and affective levels, taking such diversity into account in her/his pedagogical decisions*<sup>7</sup>. Bartlett (1990, p.205) refers to the construct of critical reflective teaching by claiming that “[...] we [as teachers] need to locate teaching in its broader cultural and social context”, and that an important step in this sense is to start asking ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions, since they can empower our practice. He states that:

[...] the degree of autonomy and responsibility we have in our work as teachers is determined by the level of control that we can exercise over our actions. In reflecting on ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions, we begin to exercise control and open up the possibility of transforming our everyday classroom life (BARTLETT, 1990, p. 205).

A critical reflective practicum, therefore, should encourage student-teachers to think about their pedagogical choices, the reasons and beliefs underlying them, and the impact they might have – not only in the classroom, but also in the broader historical, social, and political context –, as a means to inform their subsequent pedagogical actions. The objectives presented in the practicum syllabus we have analyzed seem to be in line with such perspective.

The syllabus sections entitled *content* and *methodology* are in agreement with the critical reflective approach that permeates the practicum’s objectives. Regarding the methodological procedures described in the syllabus, student-teachers taking the practicum are supposed to *elaborate and share critical reflections guided by the experience of integration into the teaching field*<sup>8</sup>; they are supposed to meet regularly with the supervisors and other student-teachers so as to share and discuss their teaching experiences during practicum. Taking this into account, the practicum could be understood as an opportunity for student-teachers to recognize reflection as a social practice (ZEICHNER, 2003). Student-teachers, in this context, are expected not only to reflect about and report their own practices, but also to listen to their colleagues’ experience and advice; such process can be very enriching to student-teachers, since they might identify with each other’s problems and come up with possible solutions as a group. In Zeichner’s (2003) opinion, this ‘social reflection’ can enhance the potential for teacher’s growth. The author claims that:

[o]ne consequence of the isolation of individual teachers and the lack of attention to the social context of teaching in teacher development is that teachers come to see their problems as their own, unrelated to those of other teachers or to the structure of schools and school systems (ZEICHNER, 2003, p. 10).

Besides promoting moments for students to share their experience and knowledge, a reflective practicum should also lead student-teachers to immerse themselves in the school context in a way that they can understand its internal organization and relate it to the wider (historical, social, political) structure that surrounds it, as well as to their role as educators in this context. These issues seem to be referred to in the syllabus we have analyzed; according to the document, student-teachers are expected to get involved in the school context, participating in pedagogical activities at all levels (e.g. planning, implementation, assessment), as well as taking part in school projects and events<sup>9</sup>. In other words, they are expected to act in the school environment as a whole, and not to restrict their practices to the classroom.

5 “Refletir sobre sua abordagem de ensinar e de avaliar”.

6 “Desenvolver postura crítica com relação ao seu trabalho pedagógico e ao da escola.”.

7 “Trabalhar com alunos de vários níveis de desenvolvimento linguístico (na língua inglesa), cognitivo e afetivo, caracterizando essa diferenciação como fator a ser considerado nas decisões pedagógicas.”.

8 “Elaboração e compartilhamento de reflexões críticas pautadas na experiência de inserção no campo da docência.”.

9 “Participação das atividades que compõem o cotidiano da escola, inclusive as extraclasse, administrativas, de estudo e de avaliação, dentre outras.”.

Due to the nature of the syllabus – which presents practicum’s general guidelines and objectives –, it would not be possible to grasp, just by reading it, what roles the practicum supervisor attributes to the language teaching and to the language teacher. Nevertheless, through the document it was possible to infer that critical reflection and critical teaching are regarded as grounding principles of the practicum. In order to achieve a more holistic comprehension on the subject, we developed a questionnaire in which the participants (two student-teachers and their practicum supervisor) exposed their views with regards to the roles of the English language teaching and the English language teacher in public schools, as well as of the practicum in English teachers’ developmental process.

As previously explained, the questionnaire was composed of three open questions. The first one – “In your opinion, what is the role of English language teaching in the context of regular public schools? Why should English (not) be taught in this context?” – aimed at unveiling the participants’ perception of the importance of English language teaching in contexts such as the one of the practicum. The practicum supervisor emphasized in his answer that additional language teaching has the challenge of developing literacy at school<sup>10</sup>. However, he mentions that the objective conditions faced by teachers may not allow this development to take place. He criticizes the structure of the school curriculum, arguing that the division of disciplines is very limiting and does not reflect the contemporary educational needs<sup>11</sup>. In this sense, the participant seems to understand the role of additional language teaching in terms of its social implications by criticizing the structure of the school system and reflecting about the effects of the different work conditions faced by teachers. Furthermore, he emphasizes that the role of language teaching is to yield the development of the capacity to think, reflect, and interact with the world through language<sup>12</sup>. He also mentions the need for the school to move beyond its walls so as to articulate what is proposed in the curriculum to the actual uses that are made of language in the world<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, the professor mentioned that this does not mean that more instrumental uses of the language should not be taught since, according to him, they might be relevant for the students’ contexts<sup>14</sup>. At this point, he seems to perceive what he calls “an instrumental use of the language” as being part of the development of the ability “to think, reflect, and interact with the world through language”. This suggests that, for the participant, it is necessary to be critical without forgetting the development of the communicative ability. In this sense, the participant’s understanding regarding the role of English language teaching seems to be in line with the view that “[...] education of *all* kinds [...] serves either to preserve or challenge the *status quo*, and so is a political act, whether teachers and learners realize it or not” (LONG, 2015, p. 63).

For the student-teachers, English must be taught for communication in contemporaneity. Student-teacher 1, for instance, explained that, because English can now be considered a *lingua franca*, learning it allows the students to communicate with people from different nationalities, to access knowledge that is not available in their first language, and to have a wider range of professional opportunities<sup>15</sup>. For this participant, learning English may also impact the students’ daily lives, helping them to understand movies, television series, websites, and games<sup>16</sup>. This view is shared by the student-teacher 2, who claims that the more the student knows the language, the more s/he will be able to access and use information that is made available through different means of

<sup>10</sup> “O ensino de línguas - e não me atendo apenas ao inglês - cumpre um papel muito importante em relação aos desafios de letramento a serem enfrentados pela escola”

<sup>11</sup> “[...] há um descompasso entre as expectativas e importância pretensamente atribuída à área e às línguas adicionais e as condições objetivas com que podem contar professores para dar conta destas expectativas. Esse modelo de escola com limites disciplinares estanques já se mostra esgotado e é visível em todos os níveis, incluindo - não menos enfaticamente - a universidade”

<sup>12</sup> “[...] há um papel a cumprir pelo ensino de inglês e que tal papel está relacionado com a capacidade de pensar, refletir e interagir com o mundo através da linguagem”.

<sup>13</sup> “[...] é preciso dispor de [...] uma relação mais próxima entre o que se passa na escola e o que está extra-muros, entre o que se articula como desenho curricular e usos efetivos e potenciais da linguagem, incluindo a reflexão situada sobre os fenômenos e práticas de linguagem”.

<sup>14</sup> “Creio, do mesmo modo, que isso não implica desconsiderar possibilidades instrumentais da linguagem. Estas também precisariam ter espaço, especialmente por serem demandas igualmente legítimas de estudantes”.

<sup>15</sup> “Tal conhecimento traz novas perspectivas para os estudantes, possibilitando o acesso ao conhecimento de diferentes fontes, a comunicação com pessoas de várias nacionalidades e oportunizando novas perspectivas profissionais”.

<sup>16</sup> “[...] o conhecimento língua inglesa também tem muito a acrescentar nas atividades cotidianas dos alunos, como na compreensão de filmes, séries de televisão, sites da internet e jogos.”.

communication<sup>17</sup>. It is possible to note that, unlike the supervisor – who seems to understand the role of additional language teaching from a broader and more critical perspective –, the student-teachers stress that language has to be taught essentially as a tool for communication, since they do not mention its ideological effects. In this sense, their perceptions seem to be based solely on the guiding principles of the aforementioned communicative approach. According to Jordão (2008, p. 3), English teaching has become a commodity in Brazil, since it is “[...] bought and sold as such based on the belief that the mastering of the English language will take people (including those of underprivileged races, social classes and cultures) to better positions in society”. It is this neoliberal understanding of English that seems to pervade the student-teachers’ answers.

The second question – “For you, what is the role of the English teacher in the context of regular public schools?” – dealt with the participants’ perception of the objectives that the additional language teacher should fulfill. The supervisor professor included a series of questions in his answer so as to question whether language teachers are really aware of their role to develop a certain type of subject to a certain type of society. He asks, for example, whether language teachers understand their role of providing students with the opportunity to learn from a critical perspective which should also be socially sensitive, solidary, humane, and compromised with teaching as a profession that is formed and shaped by human interactions<sup>18</sup>. The participant acknowledges, in this sense, the social role of the language teacher. Also, he seems to understand the teacher as a mediator in the process of knowledge construction that is socially contextualized, since he emphasizes that learning happens in many directions nowadays – that is, teachers are also learners, and should no longer be seen as the one and only source of knowledge<sup>19</sup>. For the professor, then, the role of the teacher includes serving as an example for the students – not from an arrogant and colonizing perspective, but rather by showing that studying can be a nice activity, that reading can expand horizons, that writing makes you think, that thinking makes you act, and that every change starts with ourselves and the respect towards the other<sup>20</sup>. It is possible to note that, according to the participant, being a language teacher is much more than teaching a language – he highlights the importance of providing opportunities for knowledge construction that can empower students so as to act critically in the world. For Long (2015, p.74), “[...] for more than two centuries, critics [...] have drawn attention to the fact that one of the principal functions of schooling, and often its major achievement [...], is to socialize students into uncritical acceptance of the existing social order” (p. 74). The participant’s view is political in the sense that he recognizes that the university and the school need to be aware of their social responsibility so as to disrupt such uncritical conception of education<sup>21</sup>.

According to the student-teacher 1, it is the English teacher’s role to create opportunities for the development of the necessary skills for language comprehension and production, and to consider the students’ context while teaching in order for them to understand the relevance of learning the language<sup>22</sup>. When asked about what it meant to take into consideration the students’ context in the teaching/learning process, the participant explained that it is important to include topics that are motivating and interesting for the

<sup>17</sup> “A língua inglesa está presente em diferentes mídias de comunicação, alcançando uma variedade de públicos, então creio que quanto mais apto a entender e a se expressar em língua inglesa o aluno for, maiores serão suas chances de acessar informações e usufruir das mesmas no seu cotidiano.”

<sup>18</sup> “Será que temos clareza, como educadores, de que tipo de papel desempenhamos na construção de condições para a educação de pessoas com base numa perspectiva crítica, socialmente sensível, solidária, humanizada, comprometida com a ideia de docência como profissão essencialmente lastreada nas interações humanas?”

<sup>19</sup> “Diante disso, penso que o papel do professor de línguas não pode prescindir de um conhecimento fortemente contextualizado da realidade da comunidade escolar, dos estudantes, de suas trajetórias, entre outras questões. Além disso, o tempo em que vivemos nos mostra com clareza cada vez maior que a construção de conhecimento se dá em múltiplas direções e através da ação de múltiplos atores, o professor sendo destes. É preciso, portanto, estar muito preparado para lidar com o imenso volume de incertezas e com a constatação de que o professor não sabe inerentemente mais do que os estudantes, mas que tem o privilégio de muitas vezes saber antes ou está investido do poder de decidir sobre o que será ensinado e - pretensamente - aprendido. Saber disso coloca a nós professores na condição que desejamos que nossos estudantes tenham, a de aprendizes de nós mesmos e daquilo que fazemos.”

<sup>20</sup> “Assim, um dos papéis do professor é ser uma espécie de exemplo para seus alunos, não numa acepção arrogante, colonizadora, falo num exemplo de coerência, de alguém que mostra concretamente que estudar pode ser legal, que ler expande nossos horizontes, que escrever faz pensar, que pensar faz agir e que toda mudança começa por nós mesmos e pelo respeito pelo outro.”

<sup>21</sup> “A universidade não pode fugir à sua responsabilidade, tanto quanto a sociedade não pode fugir ao seu descompromisso com a escola e também com a universidade.”

<sup>22</sup> “[...] o papel do professor de inglês é oportunizar aos alunos o contato com a língua inglesa e ajudá-los no desenvolvimento das habilidades necessárias para comunicação e compreensão da língua. Além disso, é também papel do professor adequar o conhecimento à vida dos alunos; ou seja, os alunos precisam entender a relevância e a importância de aprender aquela língua”.



students<sup>23</sup>. The participant seemed to be concerned with the development of activities that can be seen as fun and motivating from the students' perspectives – she does not mention, for instance, whether they should deal with socially relevant topics. At last, she mentions that it is also the teacher's role to educate critically aware citizens who can be active participants in society<sup>24</sup>. Because at first the participant did not develop this idea, we asked her to elaborate on it and, if possible, provide examples from her practice. After that, she explained that in the practicum, along with the other student-teacher, she has developed classes on the culture of Brazil and other countries. Besides trying to come up with fun classes, they are interested in having the students reflect about issues such as stereotypes and prejudice<sup>25</sup>. Because the participant mentions that some critical issues related to the topics of the classes were raised, she seems to imply that it is important to have some moments in the classroom for critical reflection. In this sense, critical development seems to be regarded as “an ingredient”, that is, another component in the class, and not as a teaching perspective.

Similarly, the student-teacher 2 explained that the teacher has the role of helping the students access knowledge in the target language, and of helping them develop their critical sense<sup>26</sup>. Based on that, we asked the participant to explain his understanding of the “development of a critical sense”. He answered by saying that the school represents a period in life when students are developing as people and citizens, so critical reflection about world aspects should be attached to second language production<sup>27</sup>. To exemplify such idea, the participant mentioned that, during the practicum, along with his peer, he made use of music videos and lyrics from different decades in order to promote reflection on how people behaved and acted in the past in comparison to now. For him, this allows the students to compare different decades and express their opinions regarding such differences. The participant seems to believe that it is important to make the students reflect about their opinions, since he says that one could ask, for instance, why the student thinks that way<sup>28</sup>. Then, the participant emphasizes that it is important that critical content and language walk hand in hand<sup>29</sup>. In spite of the fact that this understanding could be seen as aligned with the perspective of Critical Teaching, he concludes this section of his explanation by saying that, ultimately, we are “language teachers”, not “lecturers”<sup>30</sup>. Even though the participant seems to recognize the importance of critical development in language teaching (by saying that it is the teacher's role to develop critical citizens), the examples he gives of “critical moments” in the classroom are not necessarily critical in the sense this study conceives it. In other words, comparing cultures or allowing the students to raise their voices does not guarantee that learning will happen from a critical perspective. Moreover, although the participant says that both critical awareness and language content are important, he seems to believe that language should be foregrounded. In fact, the data suggest that he seems to polarize critical teaching and language teaching by comparing the former to “lectures”. This seems to suggest that, for him, critical teaching is not a perspective from which to teach, but a component of language teaching. This view might indicate that, for the participant, the concept of critical teaching is still under development, since he recognizes its importance, but does not seem to conceive it from the perspective of Critical Pedagogy, which sees all teaching practices as political and potentially critical.

Student-teacher 2 also mentioned that there are few schools that prepare the students for “real life”. For him, preparing students for real life means developing critical thinking so as to reflect about their role in the world. He exemplifies by saying that a student could

<sup>23</sup> “Essa sempre foi uma das minhas maiores preocupações: trabalhar com assuntos que interessem e suscitem a curiosidade dos alunos”

<sup>24</sup> “Por fim, assim como todos os professores, o professor de inglês também é responsável pela formação de cidadãos críticos, conscientes e atuantes na sociedade”.

<sup>25</sup> “[...] minha dupla e eu, trabalhamos com música, cultura Brasileira e de outros países durante as aulas do estágio. Ao mesmo tempo em que procuramos preparar aulas divertidas, trouxemos algumas questões críticas relacionadas aos temas, como questões de estereótipos e preconceito. Nosso objetivo era que os alunos se divertissem, mas principalmente que refletissem sobre o assunto e que essas reflexões contribuíssem para a formação deles enquanto cidadãos”.

<sup>26</sup> “O professor tem como função ajudar os alunos acessarem as informações em inglês as quais são expostos, contribuindo com o desenvolvimento de seu senso crítico”.

<sup>27</sup> “Creio que a fase da escola é a fase na qual os alunos estão se formando como pessoas e cidadãos, portanto é muito importante que nós, como professores, façamos um trabalho que consiga acoplar a produção na segunda língua e reflexão crítica sobre aspectos do mundo”.

<sup>28</sup> “Podemos usar a língua inglesa para elaborar um trabalho no qual os alunos precisem comparar as décadas em ‘x’ aspectos e também expressar suas ideias sobre as comparações feitas e tópicos trabalhados. Digamos que o aluno tenha dito que hoje em dia ‘people are more liberal’. Poderíamos levantar questões como ‘Why do you think this happens? Is this something good? Why? Can you give examples?’. Assim, além de trabalhar com a língua estaríamos dando a possibilidade de os alunos pensarem sobre o porque de apresentarem tal ponto de vista”.

<sup>29</sup> “Por fim, gostaria de ressaltar que ambos pensamento crítico e “inglês” devem andar juntos em tal processo”

<sup>30</sup> “Não podemos esquecer de que somos professores de inglês, e não palestrantes”.

be asked about his/her opinion about contemporary Brazilian music. In this context, the participant argues that it would be important for the teacher to show students how poor communities use music to express themselves<sup>31</sup>. While he points out important topics that could be part of a critical teaching project, his view of criticality seems to be related to the development of students' autonomy. As we have seen, he says that it is important that students speak their minds. Later on, he adds that students need to learn to defend their points of view and express their ideas<sup>32</sup>. Besides, in spite of the fact that this student-teacher emphasizes a critical perspective in teaching, he is more concerned with teaching activities and lessons – the broader context in which these practices are located and the ideologies behind communicative events are not mentioned. In a way, both student-teachers seem to recognize the importance of critical awareness, since they replicate the word “critical” in their answers. However, due to the methodological choices made for this study, it is not possible to identify whether the participants actually show a deep understanding of how this can be operationalized – and of what the implications of doing so are – in their practice. For further studies, future teachers' lesson plans and practice should be included as instruments for data collection to get a deeper understanding of teacher education programs.

The third and last question of the questionnaire – “For you, what is the role of the Supervised Practicum in the English teacher developmental process?” – had as its main objective to shed light on the participants' views of the practicum. The supervisor explained that the practicum is the period for the socialization of the student-teacher in the school context. He moves away from the view of the practicum as the moment in which theory is put into practice by stating that the insertion of the student-teacher in the new context needs to be mediated, constructed with solidarity, and also needs to problematize a series of issues that encompass the moment when the student assumes the role of the (student-)teacher<sup>33</sup>. The participant's understanding of the practicum's role goes beyond the classroom inasmuch as it emphasizes the wider context of the school. He elaborates on this idea by saying that to reduce the practicum to the teaching of sequentially organized items is not sufficient to accomplish the goal of the practicum, since the student-teacher needs to be provided with numerous types of experience that may help him/her make sense of the teaching profession and its plurality<sup>34</sup>. The participant concludes his response explaining that the role of the practicum is to provide novice teachers with a new perspective of the profession, including its challenges, demands, difficulties, and possibilities<sup>35</sup>. However, he alerts to the fact that the conditions in which the practicum takes place do not provide such a full insertion to take place.

For student-teacher 1, the practicum is an opportunity to experience teaching and its challenges. She mentions that, while planning classes and developing course plans, novice teachers are required to reflect about their choices, their methods, and their beliefs. In this sense, for her the practicum allows her to reflect about the technical and practical aspects (GREGGIO and GIL, 2010) of her practice<sup>36</sup>. She also emphasizes the importance of social reflection (specially with more experienced teachers) in the process of evaluating her practice. For her, the practicum is the moment for intensively reflecting on the teacher's planning and practice<sup>37</sup>. Thus, student-teacher 1 seems to focus mainly on the role of the practicum in the classroom domain, since she does not mention its insertion into the wider educational context as essential to this process.

<sup>31</sup> “O que tentei fazer foi mostrar aos alunos como a música de cada época refletia a sociedade, fazendo com que eles pensassem sobre o porquê das mudanças e sobre o que eles acham das mesmas - positivas, negativas[...]”.

<sup>32</sup> “Trabalhar com o desenvolvimento da autonomia é essencial para que eles tenham propriedade para defender seus pontos de vista e expressar suas ideias (situações que nos deparamos na “vida real”).”

<sup>33</sup> “Concebo, portanto, o período de estágio, como um processo de socialização básica na profissão docente. Essa inserção, por sua vez, precisa ser feita de modo mediado, solidariamente construído e fortemente problematizadora dos vários eixos formativos que perpassam esse deslocamento do papel do estudante a professor”.

<sup>34</sup> “[...] reduzir o estágio à prática docente de itens sequencialmente organizados é insuficiente para construir elementos de resiliência que permitam ao professor seguir sendo sujeito ativo e proativo de sua formação e de seu fazer pedagógico. Trata-se, portanto, de um período de vivências que ajuda a dar sentido à docência na medida exata da pluralidade e da intensidade das experiências que se pode ter”.

<sup>35</sup> “[...] um dos papéis mais importantes do estágio é dar uma dimensão mais aproximada das demandas, das possibilidades, mas também dos gargalos e das dificuldades que envolvem a inserção profissional no ensino de línguas”.

<sup>36</sup> “É nesse momento que fico o tempo todo me perguntando se aquela é a melhor maneira de explicar a atividade, introduzir a discussão, ou até mesmo se as aulas estão contribuindo para a construção de conhecimento dos alunos”.

<sup>37</sup> “O estágio, então, por se tratar de um momento intenso de reflexão sobre planejamento e prática docente, tem papel fundamental na preparação e capacitação do estudante para atuar em sala de aula, e principalmente para o mesmo entender seu papel e função como professor de língua inglesa baseado nas experiências vividas”.

As for student-teacher 2, he defines the practicum as the moment in which the novice teacher can be more acquainted with the “questionings and dilemmas” that are a part of the career<sup>38</sup>. After being asked to explain what he meant by that, the student-teacher said that these questionings and dilemmas would include: knowing how to teach a class of 40 students, how to deal with discussions, how to work with controversial issues without offending anyone, how to control oneself when faced with a difficult/tense situation, and so on. For him, then, the practicum provides moments in which the novice teacher comes across such challenging situations that may be part of the teaching profession. The participant highlights, however, that one should not forget that, besides contributing to the critical development of students and dealing with difficult situations, the teacher’s ultimate goal should be to teach the language. In this sense, there should be a balance between, in his words, “wasting time” with such issues and language teaching<sup>39</sup>. Once again, the student-teacher seems to perceive critical teaching as a component in the class – this time linked with moments of tension – that happens at the expense of language teaching. In his understanding, language teaching cannot happen from a critical perspective – language and criticism are polarized and have to be balanced. At last, the participant argues that the practicum provides the possibility for the student-teacher to put into practice his/her teaching conceptions and reflect about their effectiveness<sup>40</sup>. In his experience, he could reflect about some of his beliefs and challenge them. For instance, he could see that it is indeed possible to teach English at a public school in spite of the precarious material conditions. At the same time, he recognizes that the context in which he is inserted – that is, the school where he is taking the practicum – is a privileged one in comparison to the public schools he went to<sup>41</sup>. He also believes the practicum could be extended so as to provide the novice teachers to be in contact with different school contexts<sup>42</sup>. It is possible to observe that this participant noted the importance of thinking about structural conditions presented for language teachers. Nevertheless, when giving practical examples of issues and dilemmas in the profession, he focused mostly on classroom situations, implying an understanding of the practicum as an opportunity mainly for technical and practical reflection (GREGGIO; GIL, 2010).

## 5 FINAL REMARKS – THE NEED FOR PERMANENT CRITICAL LENSES

This study set to investigate whether critical reflection and critical teaching constituted guiding principles of UFSC’s English program practicum. Through the analysis of the participants’ perception of the role of 1) additional language teaching, 2) the language teacher, and 3) the supervised practicum, it was possible to develop some hypotheses regarding their view of the practicum context. First, we could observe that critical thinking and critical teaching are indeed principles of the course, according to its syllabus. For the supervisor professor, teaching a language is a political act that cannot be separately seen from the social context in which it is inserted. In this sense, he claims that it is important to resignify the school curriculum in order to promote the transdisciplinarity inherent to our contemporaneous context. With regards to the practicum, he believes it is an opportunity for immersing in the teaching context. Even though he does not make use of the word “critical” very often, his answers emphasize an understanding of language from a critical perspective. He sees teaching as an activity that goes beyond the application of theory – it is, for him, an ideological endeavor that has serious implications in the world. As for the student-teachers’ answers, they emphasized teaching as an act of reflection of practical and technical levels (GREGGIO; GIL, 2010), which is comprehensible, since they are novice teachers in the initial stage of their profession. For them, language is a communicative tool – a view that might be explained due to their probable exposure to the communicative approach during their undergraduate studies. Even though at times they

<sup>38</sup> “É no estágio que o professor se depara com questionamentos e dilemas que serão enfrentados em sua carreira a partir de então”.

<sup>39</sup> “Novamente ressalto aqui a importância de sabermos que, além de termos responsabilidade em contribuir com o desenvolvimento crítico dos alunos e em lidar com situações de tensão em sala, somos professores de inglês, ou seja, precisamos encontrar um equilíbrio entre “gastar tempo” lidando com tais questões e trabalhar com o ensino da língua”.

<sup>40</sup> “[...] o estágio dá a possibilidade ao professor em formação de colocar em prática suas concepções de ensino, muitas vezes pela primeira vez, servindo como uma espécie de “teste” que pode tanto como corroborar com as crenças dos professores como refutá-las”.

<sup>41</sup> “[...] a escola que eu estou dando aula não reflete o verdadeiro significado de “escola pública” no Brasil, pois ela possui uma estrutura superior à maioria das escolas públicas do país. Além disso, como conheço os professores e consigo compará-los aos professores que eu tive - pois estudei maior parte da minha vida em escola pública -, posso dizer que os profissionais são mais bem preparados no colégio onde dou aula de estágio do que nas outras escolas públicas que eu estudei”.

<sup>42</sup> “[...] creio que seria importante começar o estágio mais cedo na graduação, possibilitando aos professores em formação contato e experiências em diferentes meios escolares - privado, público”.

mention the importance of developing “criticality” or being “critical”, very few examples or instances of their answers show an understanding of what that would imply. At the same time, this might be due to the fact that this small-scale research did not investigate the teachers’ practices, but rather dealt with their answers to specific questions, that is, their ability to verbalize their opinions on the investigated topic. Based on their answers, it was possible to conclude that, for them, a language class should include “critical moments” or deal with critical issues that may promote reflection. However, they do not seem to understand how to operationalize it in their practice yet. For student-teacher 2, being critical is important, but an emphasis on it could deviate from teaching the language – which should be, according to him, the ultimate goal in language teaching. This participant, seemingly, regards critical teaching as a perspective from which one can look at (and act upon) one’s teaching practices. In this sense, from the perspective of Critical Pedagogy (FREIRE, 1996), it is necessary to be critical as we teach the language. The student-teachers do not mention that ideology is perpetuated through language and that, consequently, any attempt of developing criticality needs to be articulated with language itself. It is paramount, we claim, that language teachers wear permanent critical lenses. Let’s not forget we should be critical language teachers, shall we?

Such an understanding from the student-teachers might be related to the fact that, besides being novice teachers, their experience in the practicum is a short one; in total, the course lasts one year – the final one of their program – in which the novice teachers usually take other courses and may even work teaching other groups of students. This means that the structure of the practicum does not allow for a deeper understanding of the school and its wider context, and of the role of additional language teaching. The practicum is a very challenging experience for the student-teachers and is regarded from an evaluative stance in the university context – that is, as if you had “to prove you can now be a teacher”. This fact, combined with the short duration of the practicum, makes it difficult for student-teachers to perceive – and make use of – such an opportunity “[...] to develop a critical awareness of their values, thoughts and practices” (TELLES, 2004, p. 11). As the supervisor professor mentioned in one of his responses, people develop at different rates and in different ways – and this is not different during practicum. At the same time, it seems that discussions on critical teaching and critical reflection should be a part of the students’ preparation process for the practicum, that is, part of their undergraduate studies. Discussions on critical pedagogy and critical teaching could be a part of courses on methodology and applied linguistics, for instance. After all, if we want our teaching practices to be socially relevant, we need to look at society first. This implies thinking of how the social order is reproduced or contested in our classrooms. In order for me to teach critically, I need first to be a critical teacher. This seems to be an important challenge for the practicum courses:

[...] if teachers do not notice propagation of the current social order in school curricula [...], it is not because propagation is not there but probably because the teacher’s views coincide. Hence, not preparing students as social change agents is just as much a political stance, since it is implicitly to accept and perpetuate the existing social order by socializing new members into it (LONG, 2015, p. 74).

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