

“How does one educate an English teacher?”: reflections from a curricular change in a Language Teacher Education Program/ “Como se forma um professor de língua inglesa?”: reflexões a partir da reforma curricular de um curso de Letras

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to reflect upon English teacher education from the analysis of a curricular change in an English Language Teacher Education Program, in a public university in Minas Gerais. Based on the studies in Applied Linguistics and on the bakhtinian assumption that language is dialogic, and based on a qualitative research methodology, we seek to identify some utterances in the curriculum document of the aforementioned Program that could point to conceptions of what it is to educate an English teacher. Founded in the dialogical functioning of utterances we identified institutional, educational and pedagogical voices in the curriculum that resignify different perspectives of language, as well as teaching and learning. In our analyses, we identified statements that negate technicist views and emphasize the political, social, scientific, responsive, critical and continuous nature of education, which seem to have as an organizing axe of their different voices the need to interpellate the pre-service teachers to take a stance on the various conceptions of language that constitute their profession.

KEYWORDS: Language Teacher Education; Curriculum; English.

RESUMO

Este artigo visa refletir sobre a formação do professor de língua inglesa, a partir da análise da mudança curricular de um Curso de Licenciatura em Letras-Inglês, em uma universidade pública mineira. Fundamentamo-nos nos estudos em Linguística Aplicada e no pressuposto bakhtiniano de que a linguagem é dialógica e buscamos, com base em uma metodologia qualitativa de pesquisa, identificar alguns enunciados, no Projeto Pedagógico do Curso (PPC) em questão, que apontassem para concepções do que seja formar um professor de língua inglesa. Constituído na dialogia de dizeres, identificamos no PPC vozes institucionais, educacionais e pedagógicas que ressignificam diferentes perspectivas de língua(gem) e de ensino-aprendizagem. Em nossas análises elencamos enunciados que refutam visões tecnicistas e ressaltam o caráter político, social, científico, responsivo, crítico e contínuo da formação, os quais parecem ter como eixo organizador de suas diferentes vozes a necessidade de interpelar o licenciando a tomar um posicionamento diante das diversas concepções de língua(gem) que constituem sua profissão.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Formação Docente; Currículo; Língua Inglesa.

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1 Introduction

And, at least since Foucault, we know that linguistic and discursive practices delineate - and we may even say: constitute - what can be seen, what can be said, what can be known, what can be thought and, finally, what can be done. As language makes it possible some ways of saying and doing, it makes other ways of saying and doing difficult and even impossible (BIESTA, 2017, p. 29).

The question posed in the title of this paper points to at least two possible effects of meaning marked in the use of the interrogative adverb 'how'. In the first, one could interpret it by considering education as a 'product', that is, the result of a curriculum, being the answer something such as: "a teacher is educated by attending x hours of internship, x hours of linguistic studies, x hours of literary studies". On the other hand, one could also consider that the question refers to an inquiry to which there are no ready answers; it could, thus, be reformulated by the utterance: "which paths should a pre-service teacher take to become a teacher?" or "what should be done to educate a teacher" or still "which education would we like this future teacher to have?", raising questions concerning this process of education.

For the scope of this study, we are interested in thinking about the two aforementioned meanings, as we aim to reflect upon English teacher education through the analysis of a curricular change in an English Teacher Education Program at a public Brazilian university in the state of Minas Gerais. By analyzing the 'product', what was constituted as a curricular proposal, we also intend to look at the process in order to comprehend the (social-historical, political and institutional) voices that constitute the educators of this course and that can be (un)veiled in the apparent unity of the Curriculum Document (CD).

According to Bakhtin, every utterance is an echo of a previous utterance. In his words,

The utterance must be considered above all as a response to earlier utterances within a given sphere (the word "answer" is used here in the broad sense): it refutes, confirms, completes them, supposes they are known and, one way or the other, counts on them. (BAKHTIN, 1979/2000, p. 316).

This way, we understand that the CD is constituted in the dialogic utterances, and, we can interpret its linguistic materiality in order to identify the voices that respond to institutional demands, that resignify different perspectives of language and teaching-learning, that take a stance on notions of education, and, lastly, that point to the comprehension of what it is (or it is not) to educate an English teacher.

To reach the proposed objective, we make some considerations about language teacher education, in the context of the studies in Applied Linguistics (AL). After we make a brief contextualization of the Language Teacher Education Program here investigated; and we then discuss the analysis of the CD.

2 Applied Linguistics and language teacher education

The question ‘How does one educate a language teacher?’ encounters many answers in the realm of AL. We present in this section some studies in order to reflect upon the discursivity that has been established in the area concerning the subject matter.

As explained by Vieira-Abrahão (2010), when discussing language teacher education in the past, present and future, we can identify varied models throughout time regarding the way such education should occur. The author first describes, in her paper, a technical model based on training, prevalent in universities in the 70s and 80s. Moved by a behaviorist perspective of knowledge acquisition, which focused on the acquisition of habits, this training consisted of

teacher preparation for short-term activities. It involves concepts, principles, procedures and strategies, elaborated by specialists, which are introduced, in a descending and prescriptive way to the teachers, who must follow or implement them in their practices (VIEIRA-ABRAHÃO, 2010, p. 226).

Reflecting upon her undergraduate course in English language and literature at the State University of São Paulo at that time, Vieira-Abrahão (2010, p. 225) recalls that future teachers were “trained in techniques for the presentation of dialogues, mechanic

substitution drills, inductive presentation of grammar, for reading development” and, based on this model, pre-service teachers would prepare their English lessons.

The author states that, at the beginning of the 90s, there was a change in the way teacher education was conceived from the insertion of the subject Applied Linguistics into Language and Literature Programs, which gained visibility with the post-graduation programs in Applied Linguistics at the State University of Campinas and in Language Studies at Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. It was noted that it was necessary more than the training of language teachers: they needed theoretical background to justify their choices of methodological procedures to use in their classes. With this, the theory ends up gaining more prominence than practice and the university starts to be considered as the “place par excellence” (VIEIRA-ABRAHÃO, 2010, p. 227) for the education of the language teacher, who would act as a consumer and applicator of theories produced in academia.

This attitude of reproducing theories by the teacher was reconsidered when the paradigm of reflection appears still in the 90s, according to Vieira-Abrahão (2010). From training teachers, one starts then to educate teachers so that they could reflect in and on action (SCHÖN, 1983). Reflection involves data collection that teachers carry out about their teaching so as to examine their attitudes, emotions, beliefs and practices, looking at themselves and at their courses (CELCE-MURCIA, 2001). This reflection enables teachers to understand their doing and not only reproduce what they were taught in Language Teacher Education Programs, and, in this process, beliefs play an important role, “being the basis of teachers’ questions” (BARCELOS, 2006, p. 23). Books such as *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms* by Richards and Lockhart (1996) and *Professional Development for Language Teachers* by Richards e Farrel (2005) are some examples of how reflection starts to be emphasized in teacher education by addressing topics such as the role of teachers, approaches in the investigation of teaching, the exploration of teachers’ beliefs, reflective journals, case analysis, self-monitoring, among others.

Vieira-Abrahão (2010, p. 228) highlights the importance of reflection in teacher education by claiming that it

[is] through the systematic reflective process that the teacher analyzes and evaluates their goals, their own actions in the classroom, seeking to

understand their origins and consequences for the student, the school and society as a whole.

This paradigm was the one that guided our education as English and Portuguese teachers in the beginning of the years 2000 and it is still part of Language Teacher Education Programs. In this perspective, the pre-service teacher is not seen as an applicator of theories but rather as a creator of their own theories adequate to the local educational reality in which he/she works. This education perspective befits the post-method era which characterized language teaching and learning, as pointed out by Kumaravadivelu in his book *Beyond methods* (2003). By pointing limitations in the concept of method as a set of institutionalized and idealized procedures and strategies directed towards idealized teaching contexts and, therefore, unrealistic, the author advocates for a post-method pedagogy which

includes not only issues related to classroom strategies, instructional materials, curriculum objectives and assessment tools, but also a wide range of historical-political and socio-cultural experiences that directly or indirectly influence second language education (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2003, p. 34).

We thus recognize the importance of the development of teacher's linguistic-discursive and pedagogical competencies to teach a foreign language and the reflection on beliefs and practices in language teacher education. However, based on the historical, social and political influences Kumaravadivelu (2003) points out and which affect language teaching, we believe that it is necessary to consider an initial education program that moves beyond that. As criticized by Mateus (2013, p. 33) in relation to the education programs in the 90s, we understand that reflection cannot be taken as "an end in itself", by incorporating "practices aimed at the technique of reflection, by working hard to 'teach' teachers the most efficient and appropriate ways of reflecting on their work". Teacher education cannot be merely reflective, as she also criticizes. For Mayrink and Albuquerque-Costa (2013, p. 41):

A reflective-critical professional is not satisfied with what he/she learned in their initial period of education, nor with what he/she discovered in their early years of practice, but he/she constantly re-

examines his/her goals, his/her procedures, his/her knowledge; he/she problematizes his/her own actions and seeks to understand and transform them, considering the broader context in which he/she is inserted; he/she seeks to understand the effects of his/her actions on the transformation of his/her peers and his/her surroundings.

In our view, based on these premises, language teacher education should contemplate practices that contribute to the development of the digital and critical literacies of pre-service teachers and their agency so from varied information and resources currently available they can create knowledge through collaborative exchanges in order to become able to solve specific problems from their local teaching contexts, when necessary, contexts in which digital technology are present today in various levels and formats. That is, practices are needed to help the pre-service teacher “transform paths, reject given situations or (re)construct opportunities, therefore resignifying their contexts” (MONTE MÓR, 2018, p. 330). Developing the pre-service teachers’ agency means, according to Monte Mór (2013), lead them to reread the theories they learn at the university and to re-evaluate the conventional models of education “that may not cope with the needs of the current society, requiring that teachers exercise new ways of thinking and meaning making” (MONTE MÓR, 2013, p. 141).

It is such a questioning and transformative attitude of the theories and the events in their lives that we believe it is important to focus on in teacher education programs. We agree with Mateus (2002, p. 10) that reflective practice needs to go beyond the technical level so as to question “the suitability of educational objectives considering the different realities that are posed, as well as the structures and power relations that oppress and maintain the *status quo*”. In her words, this is an “essentially political work” (MATEUS, 2002, p. 10).

Besides, when we defend the importance of the development of pre-service teacher’s digital literacy, we are not only referring to their training for the use of digital technologies in language lessons. As Costa (2012, p. 924) suggests:

it should be part of the literacy program promoted by the school and, consequently, by the foreign language teacher education program the development of skills necessary to use tools to edit texts - because having familiarity with computers does not necessarily mean mastering such tools - and, above all, the deepening of critical reading as one of

the conditions for a grounded and coherent positioning in the production of texts.

We agree with Freitas (2010, p. 348) that being digital literate is about being able to “associate information, have a critical perspective towards it, transforming it into knowledge” in order to produce one’s own texts, as Costa (2012) affirms. Questioning and transforming technologies is also what Rocha and Maciel highlights (2015, p. 25) in their understanding of what digital literacies are: “ways to think and say the world through the lens of new technologies and media, by simultaneously questioning and transforming them”. Considering digital literacy as something merely functional means adopting a narrow definition which, according to Freitas (2010), disregard the social, cultural, historical and political context that involves the process of becoming literate in modern times.

From the definitions of digital literacy previously presented, we can notice that critique¹ is required to act in the contemporary society, which leads us to another type of literacy that we consider equally pertinent when we think about the preparation of language teachers: critical literacy, “an educational perspective or a way of conceiving formal education and its goals” (COSTA, 2012, p. 922). It is not a teaching approach, rather an educational philosophy, and we would say, of conviviality in society. Talking about critical literacy means going beyond the functional sense of the use of new genres and practices (LAMY; HAMPEL, 2007) in *online* and *off-line* practices. Critical literacy involves adopting a notion of language that regards its political and ideological nature, absent of neutrality and considering the power relations that are made evident by its use (MONTE MÓR, 2018).

Therefore, critical literacy is based on the “idea of empowerment of the subject so that they can act in the different social practices through language, so as to position themselves as critical subjects and provoke changes if they desire” (SANTOS; IFA, 2013, p. 5). Meaning making, agency and authorship are keywords when we think about the perspective of critical literacy.

¹ We understand critique as proposed by Jesus and Gattolin (2015, p. 173): “a general attitude from the individual, a mental, emotional and intellectual position of the reader when interacting with any kind of text”.

Such critical and active stance and the comprehension that “discourse is always permeated by ideologies, regardless the modality or context in which it is presented” (MONTE MÓR, 2018, p. 323) do not seem to be commonly found at schools. When reflecting upon the situation of teacher education in Brazil and the development of teacher agency, based on data collected in a National Literacy Project, Monte Mór (2013, p. 132) states that

the idea that language is built/constructed and made meaningful within a social practice has been adopted by a minority, mostly in academia, and not considered by the majority of the teachers in school contexts.

Monte Mór’s findings make us realize the importance of emphasizing notions of language in teacher education programs that distance themselves from patterns of convergence, linearity, sequence, hierarchies, homogeneity, consensus on thoughts and opinions that have long dominated the field of language teaching and learning and that are still quite present in the school setting.

As Mattos (2018) points out, several official Brazilian educational policies, such as the Brazilian Education Law, the National Textbook Program, the National Common Curricular Base, as well as other documents proposed at state or municipal level, point to student education towards citizenship, the formation of values to live in society, the encouragement of learners’ agency and the need to develop students’ critical thinking. However, Mattos questions how teachers can follow these guidelines if they often have not had the chance to develop their critique and citizenship. Against this backdrop, the author argues for the need to “provide language teachers with new models and spaces where they may develop critical thinking skills and transnational awareness, so that they can be able to devise their own context-specific ways of teaching” (MATTOS, 2014, p. 127). For the author, “university, as a prime place for teacher education, has an important role to play in favor of socially responsible teaching” (MATTOS, 2018, p. 85).

According to Monte Mór (2013), the new studies of literacies, including new literacies, multiliteracies, critical literacies, digital literacy “have the potential to develop agency by their founding conceptions of society, language, and citizenship, and by posing a different view of the world in a new paradigm” (MONTE MÓR, 2013, p. 136). This new paradigm is one of complexity, diversity, heterogeneity, plurality, disorder,

contradiction, dissent, chaos that constitute the relations in postmodernity and the process of meaning making, aiming at an expansion of perspectives and interpretations, as claimed by Monte Mór (2018). The author suggests that the expansion of perspectives supported by the assumptions of critical literacy can be done, for instance, when one allows pre-service teachers to examine a question or a problem from multiple points of view or when social-political aspects are emphasized - “think about power in the relations among people” (MONTE MÓR, 2018, p. 325).

Therefore, teacher education should occur not only to prepare teachers to be inserted in the job market or in the global economy; rather it should address the critical and social participation of the teacher in their community. As Costa points out (2012, p. 918),

just as school must provide the development of the competencies and skills necessary for the student to be integrated in (the globalized, technological, digital) society as a citizen and act with a critical attitude, in its teacher education programs the university must also create the conditions for the development of the competencies and skills needed by the teacher to act in society as a reflective and critical individual and to educate other individuals.

The discussion about language teacher education in the realm of the studies in AL is relevant as we understand that the positions brought here resonate in the utterances of the CD, enabling us to better understand the different voices that constitute it. Voices that, on their turn, function in consonance or divergence so as not only to bring about the complexity that is part of the production of such a document, but also the multifaceted (and polyphonic) education of teacher educators from an undergraduate course.

We now contextualize the aforementioned course.

3 The Language Teacher Education Program

The Language Teacher Education Program we here investigate has been functioning for about 60 years and has undergone several curricular changes. In 2008, it starts to operate as a single undergraduate teacher education program in English and its

respective literatures and the student was supposed to choose their degree² at the end of the basic cycle (first year of the program). In this study, the curricular change we refer to was made to respond to the demands of the Commission of Evaluation from the Ministry of Education (MEC) and of a regulation from the University Council which demanded the separation of the Language Teacher Education Program into 4 (four) different programs, according to the languages offered. Now students choose the program they are going to attend at the moment they enter the university.

Changes in the CD started in 2016, triggered by the orientations given by the Structuring Program Center (SPC) from the Language Teacher Education Program. Following the guiding documents for the undergraduate courses, the English professors then began the discussions and studies for the creation of a new program. Work groups were created and were in charge of structuring the specific, pedagogical, academic-scientific-cultural education components of the curriculum, as well as the optional curriculum components. A committee was also created for the elaboration of the CD, which was oriented by the dialogue with the aforementioned groups.

Concerning its curricular structure, the program is organized around three centers, according to the resolution CNE/CP 2/2015: Center I - Center of studies on general formation, on specific and interdisciplinary areas, and on educational field; Center II – Center of advanced and diverse studies on the professional areas; and Center III - Center of integrative studies for school enrichment. In quantitative terms, the curriculum changed from 2930 to 3365 hours.

The four hundred hours (400) of teaching practice required by legislation³ followed the orientations from the “Institutional Project of Teacher Development for Basic Education”, approved by the Undergraduate Council Board, and were implemented in a project called PROINTER (an Interdisciplinary Project). Its main goal is to allow the undergraduate student “to have experiences related to the teaching universe in school settings or other settings. It is thus an initiative that can provide the undergraduate student a critical vision of their future spaces of action” (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE UBERLÂNDIA, 2017, p. 31). To accomplish this goal, PROINTER I and PROINTER II

² Students could choose to attend one of these Language Teacher Education Programs: Portuguese and literature; English and literature; French and literature and Spanish and literature.

³ According to CNE/CP2 Regulation from 02/19/2002.

were created, with a workload of 90 hours each and SEILIC (Institutional Seminar of the Language Teacher Courses), with 45 hours, to be held in the sixth semester of the program. The remaining 180 hours were distributed in the practical workload of some curricular components of the program.

Finally, it should be noted that the program also offers five (05) distance learning curricular components, namely: English for Specific Purposes: Reading; English Language: Translation; English Language: Written Comprehension and Production; Literacy Studies; and English Distance Teaching: Theoretical-Methodological Approaches.

The Language Institute in which the course is located has five (5) laboratories, which makes it possible to offer distance learning curricular components. In addition, the program has the support of the Distance Education Center of the university and “the experience of English language professors who for some time have been dedicated to offering curricular components in this modality, notably in an English Teacher Education Program offered entirely in virtual mode ” (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE UBERLÂNDIA, 2017, p. 29).

Having made this brief contextualization of the course curriculum structure, we now discuss the views of teacher education that constitute the CD.

4 Becoming an English teacher: voices in the CD

We understand that the CD is a document that responds to institutional, political and pedagogical demands and is subjected to the very characteristics of the textual genre (for example, it has to follow a determined format and to present specific information). However, once meanings are always historical, we are interested in understanding what is (or was) possible to be enunciated in this document, given its conditions of production. This way we searched to identify some utterances that pointed to conceptions of what it is to educate an English teacher and we discuss them by presenting some excerpts from the CD in order to make clear our reading gesture. It is important to highlight that such utterances overlap and that here we have separated them to make the analysis clear.

1 Educating an English teacher is a political act

The CD as a whole brings conceptions that refuse technical views of education as if it consisted of the mere training of the pre-service teacher to respond to the job market or the learning of non-historical abilities. The adoption of such conceptions does not mean that pragmatic issues are ignored - as if financial demands, for instance, were of minor relevance for a professional. Rather, it points to the need of developing an education which regards the subject, their history and their positioning in the world. As Leffa (2001) points out, when talking about the political aspects involved in foreign language teacher education, there are many actions that do not necessarily occur in the institutional environment, but that still affects a teacher's life. This is due to the fact that, according to Leffa (2001, p. 354), "classroom is not a bubble, isolated from the world, and what happens inside the classroom is conditioned by what happens outside". To consider the teacher's role as a citizen should be part of an education that focuses on the development of pre-service teacher's critical literacy, as we have discussed in the previous section, by providing conditions for the teacher to reflect on and act critically in his teaching context. Let us look at some excerpts (E)⁴.

E1: It is about the education of English language teachers who will *act as citizenship agents* in order to explain *the role of English in the identification processes* /.../ It is not possible to dissociate *language from its historical-ideological relation in the perception of social hierarchies*. /.../ English language teacher education involves a *political commitment* to a reflection on the nature of the *subject's insertion in the social group in which they live* and their *role as citizens of the world, constituted in and by language*. (p. 22)

E2: /.../ understanding their *pedagogical role not only as a demonstration of technical competence*, but above all as a *cultural political action integrated with the social group in which they live*. (p. 25)

E3: To demonstrate an awareness *of diversity* (sexual, cultural, environmental-ecological, gender, social, religious, of special needs, among others) with emphasis on the *human dimension and on the ethical dimension for the growth of democracy*. (p. 26)

⁴ We use italics to highlight extracts from the excerpts that exemplify our interpretations.

In these excerpts, our attention is drawn by words and expressions such as ‘citizenship’, ‘processes of identification’, ‘perception of the social hierarchies’, ‘awareness of diversity’, ‘human dimension’, ‘ethical dimension’, and ‘the growth of democracy’, which point to the fact that the performance of the English language teacher occurs amid interactions permeated by power relations, in which different narratives are disputed, in/by language. Thus, developing pre-service teachers’ critical literacy means encouraging them to examine “the relationships among texts, language, power, social groups and social practices” (GREGORY; CAHILL, 2009, p. 9).

Through the language practices they establish in their classes, the language teacher can make it possible the perception of themselves and of other(s), as well as the questioning of naturalized meanings, since “*the word is always filled with a content or an ideological or experiential meaning*. This is how we understand words and only respond to those that arouse in us ideological or life-resonating resonances” (BAKHTIN/VOLOCHINOV, 1929/2002, p. 95. Emphasis in original).

In other words, understanding education as a political act is about refusing the possibility of neutrality, since meaning making always positions us in certain places and not in others. As explained by Janks (2013) regarding the critical approach:

[it] recognizes that language produces us as particular kinds of human subjects and that words are not innocent, but instead work to position us. Likewise, it recognizes that our world - geographically, environmentally, politically and socially - is not neutral or natural. It has been formed by history and shaped by humanity (JANKS, 2013, p. 227).

By language we represent ourselves before the other, while we represent them to ourselves. As an agent of literacy, the language teacher can provide students with ways of speaking, of participating in social interactions, of resisting hegemonic discourses, of elaborating “meanings, interpretations, perspectives, relating them critically, and not just encoding and decoding language” (JORDÃO, 2013, p. 358). Finally, they can think of ways to make it possible for their students to perform - and be sensitive to - multiple identities.

- 2 Educating English teachers is about providing them with conditions to respond to demands of the contemporary world

Understanding education as a political position requires situating it in its historical-social context in a broader manner. We agree with Soto, Gregolin and Rozenfeld (2012, p. 267), when they state that

With schools increasingly connected to the internet, the roles of educators (and students) change considerably, they multiply, complement each other, requiring teachers to be highly adaptive and creative in the face of new situations, proposals and activities.

Thus, we understand that the insertion of subjects in the course curriculum in the form of distance education is a way to respond to the demands of modern times regarding the teaching-learning of a foreign language. According to the CD,

E4: /.../ This new proposal intends to contemplate *the intensification of the insertion of digital technologies in the English language teaching-learning processes*, the effects of globalization and cultural diversity, as well as ethno-racial, gender, identity, and environmental issues. (p. 17).

E5: /.../ promote conditions for students' education to *contemplate technology in its complexity* /.../. It is not just a matter of making them *observe technical or instrumental specificities of equipment and software*, but of *critically educating* them to work with technologies in the classroom. (p. 38-39).

Based on the conception of teacher education for the virtual context, as suggested by Mayrink and Albuquerque-Costa (2013, p. 42), when they point out the need to “create spaces for teacher education for and in the virtual context”, the distance curricular components, mentioned in the previous section, were thought in the CD so as to enable the pre-service teacher to experience teaching and learning in the virtual environment (and not just to talk about it), providing them with conditions to question the specificities of such a context and their own learning history. It should be emphasized that, in addition to the distance curricular components, one of the supervised internships includes in its syllabus the teaching of the English language in the distance or hybrid modality. This enables the undergraduate students to experience and resignify the discussions built throughout the program based on their teaching experiences.

The recurring reference to the term 'critique' in the CD is, in our view, a way of situating the pre-service teacher in relation to the complexity of a broad socio-historical and cultural environment, in which the status of the language they teach and learn needs to be questioned, as we see in excerpts 6 and 7:

E6: /.../ not only to *face a dynamic and competitive socio-historical-economic and cultural context*, but above all to *act as a critical professional and as an effective agent in the construction of citizenship* and thus able to make use of the English language in its different manifestations. (p. 21)

E7: To teach English, in addition to knowledge of the English language, one also needs the knowledge, the theorization and the *problematization of the conditions* under which this language will be taught, and a *critical attitude on the means and ways of teaching*. (p. 39)

In other words, it is not simply a matter of adding a 'technological dimension' to the curriculum, preparing the teacher to work with digital tools. To work in this way would be to privilege the teacher's technological skills and not their digital literacy, as conceptualized in the previous section. Digital literacy inserts an analytical, situated, questioning and transformative dimension regarding the use of technology in the teacher's teaching practice. In such a perspective, the socio-historical and economic conditions that underpin the logic of the technologicalization of teaching is investigated, as well as what is excluded to be included. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the answers to the demands of the contemporary world seem to be interwoven to the global status of the English language, as shown in the excerpt 8:

E8: /.../ The proposal seeks to meet the *demands of English teacher education at this historical moment* in which the English language is configured as a *language of international circulation*. (p.17)

Internationalization is becoming an increasingly present discursivity in the university context, and language - especially English - plays a key role in this process. We understand that the CD is sensitive to this issue, but it does so by highlighting the need to cast questioning glances at a globalizing agenda by reiterating throughout the document the need to “problematize the conditions” by which language is taught (E7).

3 Educating English teachers is about allowing them to articulate theory and practice

The relationship between theory and practice is perhaps one of the most discussed issues in teacher education, in general, since it is often conceived from a dichotomous perspective, in which practice is seen as the mere application of a given theory. We understand that the deconstruction of this view permeates the CD under analysis, both in its theoretical and philosophical basis and in the proposal of implementation of curriculum components themselves. As teacher educators who work directly in supervised internship subjects, we believe that this deconstruction is quite necessary in the Language Teacher Education Program, if we consider the frequent complaints we hear from the pre-service teachers that the theories they study at the university are “beautiful”, but that they are not applicable in practice, especially in public schools, which have so many shortcomings.

We highlight here the proposal of PROINTER, which aims to “promote the articulation between theory and practice throughout the education of undergraduate students” (p. 31). As explained in the previous section, PROINTER constitutes an institutional proposal of the university to contemplate the 400 hours of practice as a curricular component, required by MEC. In the CD, PROINTER I and II⁵ were outlined as follows:

E9: /.../ PROINTER I will work with *current legislation on the regulation of foreign language (English) teaching* in the functioning of educational levels from basic education to university education. /.../ the *principles of diagnostic research as a way to guide the study of these laws* will be presented to the student. Students should engage with the proposed theme by *developing a task that will consist of the organization of an academic event* divided into two parts with the *participation of representatives of various segments of the institutional spheres* /.../ (p. 32)

E10: At the end of the Interdisciplinary Project - PROINTER I, students should *write the final report of diagnostic tasks* on legislation regulating English language teaching and learning. (p. 33)

E11: The Interdisciplinary Project - PROINTER II will have as *its theme the diagnosis of school functioning and the process of English*

⁵ PROINTER I e II must be respectively attended in the third and fourth semesters of the program.

teaching and learning. For this, it will adopt the principles of Ethnographic Research. Students should *observe the school's modus operandi and English classes* taking field notes, writing research journals, conducting interviews and/or open testimonials from students and teachers, collecting lesson plans and teaching materials and students' notes (p. 33).

E12: At the end of the Interdisciplinary Project - PROINTER II, students should organize the collected data for analysis and discuss *possible interventions and actions in the schools where data were collected*. (p. 33).

As it can be seen, in excerpts 9-12, since the beginning of the undergraduate course, the curricular proposal aims to make room for the undergraduates insert themselves in their future locus of professional performance, in order to investigate and reflect on the institutional, legal and pedagogical aspects that circumscribe it. In PROINTER I, the university-school dialogue is encouraged through the organization of an event in which school teachers and school managers take part; in PROINTER II, in turn, the pre-service teacher is encouraged to think about an intervention project based on the analysis of data collected at schools. Thus, the curriculum invests in the role of the future teacher as a researcher of teaching contexts and English teaching practices, a concept that will be discussed in the following section.

In addition, several curricular components have practical lessons⁶ in order to enable the undergraduate student to explore possibilities of articulating the theories studied with teaching proposals, either by designing lesson plans or by analyzing and producing teaching materials, for instance.

It should be noted, however, that the CD rejects a notion of practice as 'empirical reality', as we observed in excerpt 13:

E13: /.../ the theoretical and methodological conceptions underlying English teacher education are characterized by their constructivist and historical nature, whose treatment given to knowledge is based on *the examination of discontinuities that constitute multiple possibilities and dislocations in relation to the so-called "empirical realities"*. (p. 22)

By stating that knowledge "is founded on the examination of discontinuities", the CD refutes the concept of reality as an "unambiguous notion, within the scope of a

⁶ Such as: Research Methodology in Language Studies, English: Oral and Written Production, Applied Linguistics and Foreign Language Teaching, English Teaching and Digital Technologies and Methodologies and Approaches on Foreign Language Teaching Material Development.

homogeneous, static and controllable universe, an 'already given' phenomenon, above the subject's stance" (BRITO, 2017, p. 98). In other words, it is about problematizing a transparent view of practice, as if it could be summarized as a mere 'doing something' or a 'being there' (in a public school, for example).

Thus, it is not enough to offer "practical components" in the Language Teacher Education Program,

as if everything one studies had to have some kind of application, some utility, especially for the classroom. This imperative determines the field of teacher education in such a way that there is, of course, no room for reflection on the subject, for example (MURCE FILHO, 2013, p. 96).

Therefore, practice does not consist of the mere repetition of activities, as Nóvoa (2013) points out. Rather, if one aims the professional development of the teacher, it is necessary to contemplate in their education, a reflective and systematized practice, which is theoretically nourished through strangeness (which involves the very distancing of the practice) and entrenchment (the immersion in practice).

4 Educating English teachers is about providing them with opportunities to become researchers

Another very common dichotomy posed in the discussion about teacher education refers to the relationship between teaching and research. We see that the proposal of PROINTER encourages a reflective practice, making room for the undergraduate student to develop a systematic and documented investigation of experience in the school context. In addition, the new CD contributes to the decrease of such polarization by enabling the pre-service teacher to develop academic-scientific work as a requirement to complete their course, as we read in the excerpts 14 and 15:

E14: The Final Course Project (FCP) is also *a gain for the English undergraduate student*. Unlike the current course, *students will have the opportunity to initiate research* in such a way that they can engage with the areas of work that surround the field of language studies /.../ (p. 17-18)

E15: The objective of the FCP is to contribute to *professional, academic and personal education*, as well as to stimulate academic research, essential for the development of science. (p. 59)

In our view, the FCP requirement reinforces the insertion of the pre-service teacher in academic writing practices, offering them an introduction to scientific work. It is expected, therefore, that they will be able to construct a thematic outline and raise problematic questions to an area of knowledge within their field of study, as well as develop a sufficiently consistent theoretical and methodological path to allow them to undertake corpus analysis.

As shown in excerpt 15, we believe that the proposal of the FCP is not intended to “prepare students for graduate studies”, even though this is one of its possible consequences. One of its great contributions is, above all, the possibility of teachers’ professional development, since it corroborates the image of the teacher as someone who theorizes about their own practice, and not only applies theory produced by others (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2003).

By defending the constitution of an interdisciplinary AL, Moita Lopes (2006) points out that it is necessary to question the “elegantly abstract theorization that ignores practice” in favor of “a theorization in which theory and practice are jointly considered in knowledge formulation and in which theorization can be much more than a *bricolage* work, given the multiplicity of the social contexts and of those that live them” (MOITA LOPES, 2006, p. 101. Emphasis in original). We understand that the CD opens space for this perspective by encouraging the resignification of experiences lived throughout the various curriculum components, so that knowledge can be resignified and problematized in the light of other theoretical and methodological biases. The curricular flow aims to allow the FCP to be the result of the construction of academic-scientific “seams” by the student, that is, it is expected that during their education they can articulate subject contents.

- 5 Educating English teachers is providing them with conditions to learn the target language

A challenge in the creation of a curriculum proposal for foreign language teacher education concerns the reconciliation of a critical education with a solid linguistic-

discursive education in the target language. We see in CD the evocation of this voice in excerpt 16:

E16: /.../ there are *more English Language components*, which will give pre-service teachers *more contact with the language itself* (p. 17)

In a previous study (BRITO; GUILHERME, 2014), we analyzed learning memorials written by pre-service teachers from the Language Teacher Program here analyzed in order to identify their representations of (foreign) language, the teaching-learning process, the subject-student and the subject-teacher. We observe that a representation that emerges in their utterances is that the program is the place to learn how to be an English teacher, but it is not a place for learning the language itself. Such representation seems to constitute a 'frozen memory' (RIOLFI, 2011a), as it is often stated by the undergraduates of the program in question. Thus, a dichotomy is created between 'knowing language' x 'being a language teacher', which in turn affects the relationship of these subjects with their own education.

Considering the context of the program, especially regarding the profile of the students, we believe that linguistic heterogeneity will always be an issue for both undergraduates and teacher educators. In fact, this is one of the causes of student dropout, as many undergraduates complain that they are unable to follow the subjects taught in English. If, on the one hand, increasing the workload of foreign language-focused subjects may be a 'solution' to this dilemma; on the other hand, in our view, it does not seem to be sufficient to prepare an English teacher, since the position of a pre-service teacher also requires the appropriation of practices of academic and digital literacy that subjects are not frequently familiar with, besides being proficient in the foreign language.

In this sense, an issue to be problematized in language teacher education refers to the relationship of the undergraduate student with the foreign language, and more specifically, to the place they occupy in the learning process. We understand that there must be a dislocation from the learner position (for whom language serves purely for communicative purposes) to the position of a pre-service teacher (for whom language is also an object of teaching), so that the undergraduate student understands that learning the target language from the position of a future teacher demands the mobilization of other types of knowledge.

- 6 Educating English teachers is about establishing a place in which they can build and sustain specific discursivities concerning their area of knowledge

Interwoven to the previous discussion about the need to contemplate possibilities for the undergraduate student to learn English from the position of a pre-service teacher is the conception that education requires the appropriation/resignification of specialized knowledge related to the teacher's professional area. Let's look at excerpt 17.

E17: At the end of the course, the undergraduate student should have developed the following skills:

- Use of standard English as well as *critical understanding of linguistic variants /.../*
- *Critical understanding of language use conditions /.../ ability to reflect on language as a semiological, psychological, social, political and historical phenomenon; /.../*
- *Theoretical and critical knowledge of the phonological, morphosyntactic, lexical and semantic components of the English language;*
- Knowledge of *different notions of grammar;*
- *Comprehension of the language acquisition process in order to promote better understanding of foreign language teaching and learning problems with an emphasis on specific research about the English language.* (p. 26).

By listing the skills of the Language and literature graduate student, the CD points to the insufficiency of knowledge based on common sense or intuition, demanding from the undergraduate student the construction of a place of academic-scientific enunciability about their area of knowledge. We believe that this demand contributes to the professional valorization of future teachers, since it positions the teacher as a language expert, as someone who would be authorized to give opinions on the field of linguistic and literary studies. According to the CD, this place involves the refusal of a prescriptive view of language; the ability to approach language from various perspectives; the problematization of totalizing notions, and finally a critical attitude that, as we discussed earlier, points for the constitution of a political place to be occupied by the teacher.

Some studies have investigated the constitution of the teacher considering the relationship they establish with their teaching object. Fairchild (2017), for example,

when analyzing supervised internship reports points out their vague and inconsistent quality, in theoretical-methodological terms, as if writing an academic text, in a university context, fulfilled no other role than attending a mere evaluative task. In this sense, for the support of discursivities specific to the area of language studies, the inscription of the undergraduate student in academic literacy practices is important so as to make writing itself a space for teacher education (BERTOLDO, 2017; RIOLFI, 2011b; BRITO; SILVEIRA, 2018).

Thus, establishing a place in which pre-service teachers can build and sustain specific discursivities about their area of knowledge consists in giving them conditions not to appropriate encyclopedic and static knowledge, but to position themselves and make articulations of different types of knowledge, even contradictory, given that “it is part of the education to constitute its own voice, although impregnated by the discourses of others, but unique in the historicity of the endogeny of the human being” (BOHN, 2005, p. 111).

7 Educating English teachers is about providing them conditions to continuously develop themselves

Finally, we can say that the CD is based on the understanding that education does not end with the completion of the curriculum. As Alvarez (2010, p. 250) points out, “no education is complete; no teacher leaves college ready. The teacher must make their own discoveries and find his/her own answers, however tentative and unfinished they may be” Excerpt 18 illustrates the idea of the unfinished and permanent education of teachers:

E18: It is expected, above all, that the English Language professional will make a *commitment to ethics, social and educational responsibility*, and will reflect on the consequences of their performance in the job market; and *have a critical sense to understand the importance of the permanent pursuit of continuing education and professional development /.../* (p. 27)

This concept resonates with Leffa's (2001) considerations about the difference between the definitions of training and educating a language teacher. For the author, teacher education should be a “preparation for the future” (LEFFA, 2001, p. 355), once

when we educate a teacher, we are not preparing them for the world we live in today, but for the world in which these teacher's students will live in five, ten, or twenty years. We cannot foresee what this world will be like. We may make some assumptions, but we cannot guarantee that those assumptions will be confirmed. What we can do is warn the future teacher that the content they are now receiving through books is of temporary value, and that very soon, like many other man-made products, will expire (LEFFA, 2001, p. 356).

Thus, a curriculum proposal will always be dated in the sense that it cannot intend to contemplate a 'complete' education, given the multiplicity (and uniqueness) of the possible contexts of teacher's work. Bohn (2005) points out how the discourse of incompleteness in education is constitutive of the utterances of newly graduated language teachers, who “do not consider themselves prepared to face a classroom, to mediate the learning process with their students” (p. 109). Although we do not disregard problems or possible gaps in teacher education, we believe that, in general, the curriculum proposals are consistent to allow a solid education. The inscription of subjects in the discourse of absence (BRITO; GUILHERME, 2017, 2014; GUILHERME, 2010) is, to a large extent, corroborated by the naturalization of utterances that circulate, especially in the media, about the deficient education of teachers, the devaluation of the teacher and the attribution of the complex educational problems to the education process, silencing the often precarious conditions of work or the lack of investments in public policies, for example.

Final Words

As we discussed in the theoretical framework of this paper, we believe that language teacher education should be based on a critical philosophy, concerned with the permanent education of teachers, the teachers' agency and the development of their literacy, always attentive to the constant transformations that occur in contemporary society. From our reading of the CD, we listed 7 (seven) statements that, in our view, point to conceptions of what it is to educate English language teachers:

- 1 a political act;
- 2 about providing them with conditions to respond to the demands of the contemporary world;
- 3 about allowing them to articulate theory and practice;
- 4 about providing them with opportunities to become a researcher;
- 5 about providing them with conditions to learn the target language;
- 6 about establishing a place in which they can build and sustain specific discursivities concerning their area of knowledge;
- 7 about providing them conditions to continuously develop themselves.

However, as pointed out in this paper, Monte Mór (2018) claims that the critical and active stance evidenced by the new literacy studies is not always present in schools, although, as Mattos (2018) shows, many official documents have a concern with issues of citizenship, agency and critique in student positioning. About this, Mattos (2018) questions to what extent it becomes possible, then, to develop a critical attitude in students if the teachers have not experienced this kind of education. We understand that the seven conceptions of what it is to educate a language teacher identified in the CD meet this critical attitude mentioned by Monte Mór (2018) and Mattos (2018), allowing teachers to expand their perspectives on teaching and learning languages.

Although the seven outlined utterances may underpin the education of teachers from other areas, it is necessary here to consider the specificity of the English language teacher. We believe that it is precisely a notion of language, as a guiding axis of the conceptions outlined in the CD, that can circumscribe this education. In other words, it is from a language perspective that the above utterances acquire meaning and focus on the way in which the CD will be resignified by the educators in their teaching practice. Such a notion could therefore be expressed by the utterance: 'educating English teachers is about interpellating them to take a stance on the different conceptions of language', as one can see in the excerpt 19:

E19: These clashes with the *paradigms of language study* /.../ point to the need for professionals to recognize that the *multiple positions in which their field is placed are provisional*, due to the multiple discursive changes that constitute society itself /.../ the work of teacher educators should be based on the *permanent questioning and*

interrogation of the “great philosophical and scientific narratives”, aiming at destabilizing a unique discourse. (p. 21)

By stating that the scientific positions are provisional, the CD points to the inconclusiveness of teacher education and its own (im)possibility, calling upon educators to continually problematize the theoretical-methodological assumptions on which they are based. Thus, it is a conception of language that allows, for example, the questioning of: the identity implications of teaching-learning a language with a global status; the idealizations of language and the native speaker; the silencing of certain uses of the language (and hence its speakers); the relationship between local and global knowledge; the discursivities about language in different instances (educational, media, pedagogical); teaching methodologies and approaches; the relationship between language and culture; the body as discursive materiality that demands meanings in the teaching-learning processes, among many others.

The possibility of “destabilizing the single discourse”, thus opening space for a multifaceted education, according to a critical philosophy, is interwoven with the idea of language as a symbolic, fluid, moving, non-essentialist system, finally as a significant materiality that weaves an intricate network of meanings, in which the subjects (de)construct their social practices and become teachers. To paraphrase the epigraph in the introduction of this paper, we would say that it is, therefore, a language perspective that makes it possible for a curriculum proposal to contemplate - meaningful and significant - ways of saying, doing, and finally becoming a teacher.

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