

**Pre-service language teacher education and critical literacy: a fruitful dialogue? / *Formação inicial de professores de língua inglesa e letramento crítico: um diálogo desejável?*<sup>1</sup>**

Jhuliane Evelyn da Silva\*  
Marco Antônio Margarido Costa\*\*

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**ABSTRACT**

With postmodernity as a backdrop, this article demonstrates how student teachers in the pre-service language teacher education program at the Federal University of Campina Grande/PB engaged in problematizing practices during their classes at the university. To do so, the authors carried out a qualitative, descriptive-analytical investigation that used answers to a semi-open interview and narratives regarding the teacher education process and the relevance of English to future teaching practice. The participants' criticality was analyzed through a post-structuralist critical literacy framework (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2011a, JORDÃO, 2014, PENNYCOOK, 2012), an approach that stresses questioning, meaning-making and situated knowledge and seems to critically align with what we understand to be the demands of a postmodern world (BAUMAN, 2007). Results indicate that the participants manifest criticality when engaging in questioning, denaturalization, and construction of plural understandings in a processual and non-linear formative development.

**KEYWORDS:** Pre-service teacher education; English language; Critical Literacy.

**RESUMO**

*Colocando a pós-modernidade como pano de fundo desta pesquisa, propomos demonstrar como alunos-professores em formação inicial do curso de Licenciatura em Letras – língua inglesa da Universidade Federal de Campina Grande se engajaram em atitudes críticas/práticas problematizadoras em situação de estudo. Para tanto, empreendemos uma investigação qualitativa, descritivo-analítica e utilizamos respostas a uma entrevista semiaberta e a uma narrativa que lidavam com o processo de formação docente e a relevância da língua inglesa para a prática desses futuros docentes. A análise utilizou as lentes do letramento crítico de viés pós-estruturalista (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2011a, JORDÃO, 2014, PENNYCOOK, 2012) por ser uma abordagem que centraliza o questionamento, a produção de significação e a construção de conhecimentos situados e parece se alinhar criticamente ao que estamos entendendo enquanto demandas de um mundo pós-moderno (BAUMAN, 2007). Os dados gerados indicam que, em situação de estudo, os participantes manifestam criticidade principalmente a partir de falas que revelam questionamentos, desnaturalização e construção de entendimentos outros em um movimento formativo processual e não linear.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Formação inicial de professores; Língua Inglesa; Letramento Crítico.*

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\* Doutoranda em Letras pela Universidade Federal do Paraná - UFPR, Curitiba, Paraná, Brasil, [anecomjesus@gmail.com](mailto:anecomjesus@gmail.com)

\*\* Doutor e mestre em Letras pela Universidade de São Paulo – USP, São Paulo, Brasil. Professor Adjunto da Universidade Federal de Campina Grande - UFCG, Campina Grande, Paraíba, Brasil, [marcoantoniomcosta@gmail.com](mailto:marcoantoniomcosta@gmail.com)

## 1 Introduction

To address the relationship between pre-service teacher education and critical literacy, so that the discussion highlights the current crisis and the complexities of the classroom, we use postmodernity as the backdrop of our research. In the liquid times in which we live, we find ourselves in a paradigm shift marked by questioning and a crisis that implicates a need for transformation in all areas of social life, given the impossibility of the totality, completeness and fixedness of a solid-modern society (BAUMAN, 2001, 2007).

In the field of education, such changes mainly affect the concepts of knowledge and self (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2013). In solid modernity, enlightened logic interprets knowledge as existing outside of the self and independent of experience. As such, it is understood as synonymous with the “dominion of objective and scientific facts” (SILVA, COSTA, 2017, p. 104), the result of science’s “monopoly” on the “universal distinction between true and false” (SOUSA SANTOS, 2007, p. 72). Such knowledge must be transmitted and understood “as a function of a curricular structure that favors a linear and decontextualized learning sequence, based on grammatical contents” (LOPES, 2013, p. 953). This can be observed in the teaching of languages in Brazil. In liquid times, however, this concept unravels from the structural view, instead acknowledging the existence, validation and necessity of building multiple forms of knowledge, which requires agency on the part of both the teacher and the student. As Jordão points out in an interview, “we need subversive, punctual actions that *smuggle contraband* into the imposed system: different practices, practices that demonstrate the possibility of difference, the productivity of existing in the midst of diversity” (JORDÃO, 2017, p. 193, emphasis in the original, translated by the authors).

The notion of identity—once linked to family and community of origin, conditioned by crystallized and crystallizing social norms—begins to be questioned in liquid modernity, where identity is seen as more internally constructed than externally conditioned. Identity thus becomes fragmented, multiple and expansive, allowing the self a certain degree of agency for decision-making and critically-informed participation in society (cf. KUMARAVADIVELU, 2013). As a result of the solid modernity crisis,

there are ambivalent, transitory identities found on the continuum between whole and fragmented, which coexist, albeit non-peacefully, within these different perspectives.

In terms of the teacher-self, these characteristics can be materialized in the constant search for a self that meets the expectations of the student and society. That is, a teacher who meets the students where they are but also provides space for them to discover themselves, is creative and knows how to lead in the face of unpredictability, and is able to build knowledge by involving students directly in the process. Besides being a teacher, he/she is a political agent who participates in the decision-making of the community and its historical, economic, environmental, social context (FREITAS, 2004).

We highlight these identities because we are studying participants who chose to be teachers within the current liquid-modern times. These teachers, still in pre-service education, share the fragmentation, doubt and fluidity present in the modern and postmodern being characteristic of today's society. The desire to have power and transmit knowledge, and the search for certainty are combined with the doubt and discomfort of being "in-between" (BHABHA, 1998).

We believe that reexamining the concepts of knowledge and self in this way demands a series of changes in education: in particular, changes in the role of the teacher and the student, in educational objectives, in lesson planning and class design, in assessment—in short, in teacher education. All of this will allow for the melting of what was solid, making it malleable, fluid, flexible, and capable of transformation (COSTA, 2008). Understood in this way, difference, crisis and dissent no longer have negative connotations but rather are understood as constitutive elements of the human being.

The transformation we are referring to calls for a change in attitudes. Thus, we underline criticality as pivotal to the process of teacher education. In this article, we understand criticality as crisis (RICOEUR, 1977 apud MONTE MÓR, 2013), as the rupture of a traditional model. As Kumaravadivelu (2012, p. 14) warns us, we should aim for an epistemic break, that is, "a thorough re-conceptualization and a thorough re-organization of knowledge systems," which recognizes the modernity and coloniality of our current times, our institutions, and our attitudes, as well as their consequences and implications for society and education in general, with an eye toward change. This

epistemic break can manifest in daily attitudes, such as being open to that which is different (different being the rule, not the exception), learning to unlearn (SPIVAK, 2004, FABRÍCIO, 2017), seeing beyond what we are accustomed to, questioning what we see, viewing the classroom as a complex place, being sensitive to it and seeing students beyond the space of the classroom (JORDÃO, 2017). It also means validating other forms of understanding that are not just rational ones, or creating local alternatives that appropriate, resignify and resist specific discourses, such as Neoliberalism, to create new ones.

We adopted the term critical as defined by Ricoeur (1977 apud MONTE MÓR, 2013) in favor of the criticality and development of the self and of agency; by questioning ourselves, the other, and the world. We also support the interpretation of Pennycook (2012), who understands it as a problematizing practice that, hardly providing answers, instead aims to incite doubt about our already-naturalized categories and understandings of ourselves and the world.

Our interest in analyzing the development of criticality through questioning attitudes and situated practices based on lived experiences is supported by existing research. Duboc (2012) addresses the importance of using attitudes for curriculum instruction that support critical teacher education for future English teachers. Duboc and Ferraz (2011) discuss bringing current global debates into the English classroom. In addition to these studies, our work is inspired by Mattos (2011), who reveals the possibility of carrying out a more critical study in favor of the development of a questioning citizen-agent, and Costa (2012), who addresses the implementation of technology in pre-service teacher education classes through critical literacy practices, as a way of adapting to current society through a critical lens.

In this article, therefore, we intend to demonstrate how student teachers in a pre-service English language teaching program engaged in critical attitudes/problematizing practices.<sup>2</sup> We will utilize responses to a semi-structured interview and narratives that deal with the process of teacher education and the relevance of the English language to the practice of these future teachers. We will do this from a post-structuralist, critical literacy perspective, which is seen as an approach that centralizes questioning, meaning-making and the construction of situated knowledge and seems to critically align with

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<sup>2</sup> Data was generated between November 2013 and April 2014. The instruments used were: field notes, interviews, narratives and practicum reports.

what we understand to be the demands of a liquid-modern world. Our argument is that if we want changes capable of accompanying the emerging liquid perspective, it is essential that we consider the beliefs, voices and actions of teachers, students and everyone involved in the teaching-learning process, so as to develop their critical sense through the dialogic construction of meaning (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2013).

Now that we have provided a panorama of the changes sparked by the crises of solid modernity—with a focus on the concepts of knowledge and identity in the context of education—we will move on to the remaining two sections: the first describes critical perspectives from different epistemological and ontological positions, and the second offers an analysis of the data generated in our study, focusing on the criticality of student teachers. We conclude with considerations about participants' attitudes and what this may imply for the critical education of English teachers.

## **2 Thinking about critical literacy...**

To discuss what underlies this research, we find it necessary to examine different notions of criticality in the context of educational theories and approaches. We will start by discussing three approaches to critical education: critical reading, critical pedagogy and critical literacy. We understand that there are diverse and distinct understandings of each. Each position tends to have different objectives and to be based on different theoretical and methodological assumptions, which is why our discussion is framed in terms of ontology and epistemology. At the end of the section, we focus on critical literacy and why we chose such an approach as a parameter of criticality.

*Critical reading* can be seen as a reading practice proposed and valued by the liberal humanist tradition of positivist literacy. In this type of literacy, other social and cognitive practices suffer the effect of individual literacy, whereby illiterate subjects have their cognitive skills improved and, as a result, become better citizens with guaranteed access to material and immaterial goods (STREET, 2003). This type of critical education seeks to find the author's original meaning at the time of writing. The author is considered to be the holder of meanings and intentions in the text and the reader is considered to be the one capable of making inferences and issuing judgments,

aimed at the neutral and rational discernment between facts and opinions (CERVETTI, PARDALES, DAMICO, 2001).

In Brazil, this type of reading is still widely used in elementary schools due to the tradition of understanding literacy as textual decoding. Being literate, in this perspective, is being able to recognize and reproduce sounds, syllables, words and phrases as the only elements that hold meaning (MONTE MÓR, 2015). As Street (2014) puts it, this viewpoint reinforces the technical and neutral nature of literacy, as the student is led to think logically. Such a process corresponds to the autonomous model of literacy, which views knowledge as an individual, cognitive competence acquired through sensory experiences, rationalization, and reality, subject to correct interpretation. The aim of this kind of reading is, as a consequence, the development of ever improving cognitive skills of textual interpretation, moving closer and closer toward truth and reality.

From this perspective of literacy, language is seen as a fixed system of rules and, therefore, transparent. To work with a text in the classroom, the possible discussion questions would be of rhetorical, metalinguistic, and contextual nature (in the strict sense): What? How? When? For what? Why? Where? What is the author's intention?

We understand that this type of critical education seeks to solve problems and promote social mobility in a modern society (ANDREOTTI; MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2016). In other words, critical reading, as posited, corroborates the neoliberal, banking concept of education criticized by Freire (1974). The notion of criticality, therefore, lies in understanding the context in which a text is produced, in understanding the author's intentions, and in the ability to decode language and come to an interpretation closer to the original meaning intended by the author.

Grounded in Marxist/Neomarxist theory, *critical pedagogy* (CP) aims at social justice, equality, transformation and the emancipation of subjects. The goal is for subjects to actively participate in democratic decisions within a society beset by asymmetrical hierarchical and power relations that divide the world between oppressor and oppressed, colonizer and colonized.<sup>3</sup> This transformation would be the result of

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<sup>3</sup> We understand that CP was designed by Paulo Freire in the 1960s to respond to the demands of that moment in history. See a different perspective in Freire (2005).



unveiling the truths hidden behind the texts, with a view toward liberating readers (CERVETTI; PARDALES; DAMICO, 2001, JORDÃO, 2013, MONTE MÓR, 2015).

In Brazil, Paulo Freire's theories and Street's discussions of ideological literacy (1984, 2014) portray critical pedagogy as another understanding of literacy. Freire, from 1960-1980, perceived language and literacy practices as effective tools for social reconstruction. To him, literacy should fight for justice and emancipation, with a focus on developing the consciousness of the oppressed beyond decoding, which has been predominant in literacy classes up until today. Therefore, when reading texts critically, learners should start from an interpretive context in order to act against oppression and injustice in the societies in which they live. Street (2014) also criticizes the autonomous model and suggests that literacy is a politically and ideologically situated social practice, dependent on the institutions to which it belongs, varying from one place to another, from one culture to another. According to Street, literacy is associated with technologies that are developed socio-historically in response to society's interests, and it is precisely through these technologies that the ruling class exercises power and social control.

In theoretical terms, CP understands knowledge as ideological, because it is constitutively based on the discursive rules of a given community. Therefore, it is not neutral or natural. Moreover, there is a pre-existing reality to the subject and the subject does not see that reality as it is because it is covered by an ideological veil. In this way, language is seen as an ideological code and, as such, conceals the "real" meaning of texts, leaving the reader with the duty to unveil meanings once hidden by language (JORDÃO, 2013, p. 72).

Some questions that could be asked when working with texts in classroom are proposed by Cervetti, Pardales and Damico (2001) and corroborated by Menezes de Souza (2011b):

To whom is the text addressed? What does the text claim? How does the text try to convince the reader? What claims are not substantiated? What attention-getting devices are used? What words or ideas are used to create a particular impression? What does the text show/tell us about its context? (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2011b, p. 291).

In other words, the emphasis of CP in the classroom is on writing the text, considering all readings as homogeneous and, therefore, seeking one consensus. Our criticism of this approach is that it postulates the existence of a given reality—the existence of a truth to be found, and the more or less fixed state of the self. What is more, CP tends not to criticize its own foundations, considering itself to be an interpretation of, and a desire for, the truth. Moreover, it seems that CP views solid modernity as having limited capacity to achieve its desire for progress and well-being among all people. However, solid modernity is not rejected entirely, as CP understands that if more voices (minorities, the poor, the South<sup>4</sup>) are included in hegemonic discourses and given agency, they can achieve this progress and well-being (ANDREOTTI, MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2016).

To address literacy within CP, we outline some of its trajectories. The concept of “literacy” first appeared in Brazil in the work of Mary Kato in the 1980s, unhinging itself from the concept of alphabetization that had dominated education until then. Literacy was considered a social practice mediated by the use of writing, legitimizing the heterogeneity of language use and establishing an ethnographic basis (ROJO, 2009). From this arose the need for and widespread publication on the difference between alphabetization and literacy.

According to Duboc’s reading (2012), later on, the focus began to shift toward technologies other than writing and their implications for the classroom and the educational context in general, highlighting the digitality of new literacies. Lankshear and Knobel (2003), in the 1990s, deal with the new literacies made possible by digital technology, which are characterized as post-typographic and nonlinear literacies (DUBOC, 2012) that imply new ways of reading, writing, and thinking about the world.

Another category of literacies widely studied in Brazil is Multiliteracies, a term coined by the New London Group to emphasize the multiplicity of media and channels of communication, as well as the current cultural and linguistic diversity now found in schools. In response to these elements, the New London Group hastened to think of an inclusive pedagogy that would bring literacy to light within the domains of multimodality, multiculturalism and multilingualism, aiming to deal with different texts,

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<sup>4</sup> The 'South' is a term used by Sousa Santos (2007, 2018), which encompasses social groups that suffer/have experienced any kind of suffering caused by systemic capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. This South can be composed of countries of the geographic north or south.



genres, practices, languages and varieties. However, our understanding of criticality is not yet linked to these theoretical-methodological approaches. We find that these understandings of literacy still seem very focused on (formal) writing and working with genres, and they may not account for the complexity of the classroom and our way of acting in the world.

For this reason, we view *critical literacy*<sup>5</sup> (CL) through a poststructuralist lens.<sup>6</sup> Critical literacy should not be understood as a methodology or a closed proposal to be implemented, but rather “as a reference for the development of local practices” (JORDÃO, 2017, p. 191). As such, CL sees itself as a construction, a discourse that demands responsibility and ethics in order to act upon the world. Among its objectives, we highlight: problematizing practice (PENNYCOOK, 2012), offering learning conditions and spaces for students and teachers (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2011b), and fostering an attitude of skepticism, of questioning, and of difference and dissent as productive in order to construct meaning. CL also intends for the discursive transformation of our subjectivities, allowing us to see the world and ourselves in a plural way.

CL understands meaning, which originates in the socio-historical context of the subjects, as always constructed by language and society. Thus, there is no pre-existing reality outside of the text, since our understandings of the world always result from our own interpretations—social constructions validated by the interpretive communities of which we are a part. Meaning is therefore attributed to the text at the time of reading (reading and writing in and of themselves are acts of text production); no knowledge is neutral or natural, but rather ideological, contextualized in time and space.

Knowledge is thus built on a relationship of difference, of conflict (LOPES, 2013), which has led to the current discussion on what constitutes truth: for whom, when, where, and why. Truth is problematized and complexified as being dynamic and

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<sup>5</sup> There are several conceptions of critical literacy. One of the first and widely publicized in Brazil is that proposed by Luke and Freebody (1997), which understands reading and writing as a situated social practice and holds the joint construction of meanings as one of its assumptions. See Silva (2015) and Cervetti, Pardales and Damico (2001).

<sup>6</sup> According to Duboc and Ferraz (2018, p. 240), the most recent studies on critical literacies have demonstrated the expansion of the notion of criticism, and the emergence of a type of questioning that understands reader and author as having fluid and provisional identities and agency situated in more localized practices. Due to these advances, we have adopted in this text the *redefined* understanding of critical literacy, discussed primarily by Brazilian authors, such as Menezes de Souza (2011a) and Jordão (2013).

changeable. And if we no longer believe in an absolute truth, we have to “confront the perceived differences in these other truths and relate them to the different contexts that produced them. The result of this process is the recognition of the conflict between different knowledges” (LOPES, 2013, p. 947, translated by the authors). Thus, the critical reflection proposed by CL seeks to denaturalize what we hold as absolute truth. This critical reading urges a critical and reflexive stance on the part of individuals, who are considered interpreters (JORDÃO, 2017).

In line with these assumptions, CL sees language as discourse, that is, as “an ideological space of construction and attribution of meaning that takes place in an enunciative process always contingent on (relative to the specific subject, time and space) a situated practice of literacy” (JORDÃO, 2013, p. 74).

To work with CL in the classroom, as pointed out by Menezes de Souza (2011b), the following questions are suggested:

What is the context in which the text was produced? What kind of reader was the text written for? Is the context of production of the text the same as the context in which YOU are reading the text? Are you the reader that the writer of the text had in mind? How do the differences in contexts of production and reading of the text affect your understanding? Is there a “real”, “correct”, “original” meaning of the text? How do you feel in relation to these differences? Should we eliminate them? What do we do with them? (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2011b, p. 299, emphasis in the original).

As Menezes de Souza (2011a, p. 132, emphasis in the original) argues, “the process of reading critically involves *learning to listen* not just to the text and the words that the reader is reading, but also [...] *learning to listen to their own readings of texts and words.*” Unlike critical reading and CP, the focus is on how the writer/reader produces meaning. Beyond school spaces, authors like Freire (2005) and Menezes de Souza (2011a) point out that critical reading should address the formation of meaning in a text and situate it relative to space and time in order to recognize that our stories are constitutively social and collective, and that our truths originate in this socio-historical collective. Scholars also affirm that, because of the uncertainty and difference characteristic of the social world (and valued by this understanding of literacy), we have room to exercise our agency to strive for a problematizing, situated, and transformative practice (PENNYCOOK, 2012, JORDÃO, 2010).

Consequently, we align with the concept of CL that recognizes the epistemological-pedagogical break with the liberal humanist tradition postulated by the autonomous model of literacy. We also align with the view of literacy as a social practice, not relegating the complexity, diversity or power dynamics present in the contemporary social context. We believe that critical education can be thought of both as distancing itself from modernity, seeking to create more sustainable alternatives, and as learning from the mistakes of modernity (ANDREOTTI; MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2016). For us, criticality is also present in confronting and questioning the projects of modernity (such as prestige, wealth first, and exploitation).

As much as we use reason-based frames of reference, this critical perspective begins to consider other forms of knowledge such as feelings, the body (and its senses), reading oneself while reading the other, listening to the other, reflection and reflexivity, complexity and contingency, as well as problematization and ethics. Thus, even though CL can be located on the continuum of modernity and insists on a potentially paralyzing hyper-reflexivity, when based on poststructuralist theories, it seems to exist as a productive and non-totalizing alternative to exclusionary traditional education and “training”. Thus, it invites us to act and imagine the world from a different perspective (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2016).

In our foreign language classes, by using the assumptions that underlie CL, we learn that “different ways to interpret reality are legitimized and valued according to socially and historically constructed criteria that can be collectively reproduced and accepted or questioned and changed” (JORDÃO; FOGAÇA, 2012, p. 76). Schools and any educational spaces become spaces that foster questioning, breaking the mold, and primarily, negotiating meanings or identities, with a view toward the critical positioning of the subjects present, including students and/or teachers.

### **3 Criticality in English teacher education**

Before interpreting data, it is important to note that the research participants in this study were part of a pre-service English language teacher education program at the

Federal University of Campina Grande (UFCG).<sup>7</sup> At the time of being interviewed, the study participants were enrolled in the class “English Language Practicum: 3rd and 4th cycles of Elementary School,” offered in the sixth term of their undergraduate program. We will use the abbreviations ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4, ST5, ST6 to refer to the student-teacher research participants. They are students in the sense that they are going through a teacher education program and teachers in the sense that they are also interns (and thus experience many of the challenges encountered in the profession).

We utilize these acronyms to remain ethical and protect the identity of the research subjects.<sup>8</sup> Another caveat we make is that our adoption of the assumptions of CL does not imply that, in their classroom education, STs have studied such an approach, or that their professors have explicitly adopted such a perspective.

Finally, we undertook a qualitative, descriptive-analytical, ethnographic research study. The study was conducted within an interpretivist research paradigm. The methods of data generation were the semi-open interview and the narrative. Drawing from the data gathered, we will discuss the notion of criticality in this work and how it can be productive in the process of teacher education. That is, we will observe how each student teacher engaged in critical attitudes, noting what they consider to be, or how they define, criticality.

In order to meet this objective, we decided to look at the responses of the STs in relation to their pre-service education in the English language teacher education program, so that each subject could reflect on whether their view of the English language and its teaching had changed after contact with the aforementioned coursework. We are aware, however, that the development of criticality 1) does not happen linearly or completely consciously, 2) does not happen solely in the educational space, and 3) often transcends the efforts and capacities of those who teach in pre-service education programs. In other words, criticality is a way of acting in the world that is learned daily; it depends on interests, the constitution of the self, the historical

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<sup>7</sup> This program is based on the inseparability of the teaching-research-extension trio, which materializes along three axes of formation. The user axis aims to enable the student to assign meanings in EL, in an appropriate way, in social practices within various contexts of communication. The specialist axis aims to foster a “critical and analytical view of the theoretical and methodological perspectives adopted in linguistic and literary investigations” (UFCG, 2011, p. 14). The teaching axis is focused on the connection between theory and practice “with a view toward critical-reflective analysis” (UFCG, 2011, p. 14).

<sup>8</sup> This research in its entirety was approved by the Committee for Ethics in Research, approval number CAAE 37094614.0.0000.5182.

context of each self, and the interpretive communities of which we are a part—all of which constitute an *assemblage* (DELEUZE, GUATTARI, 1995). That assemblage connects beings, emotions, rationalities, wills, life stories, and texts (heard and read) during our trajectories and constitutes our personal and intellectual formation.

To begin, our interview with ST1 (Excerpt 1) reveals a problematization of the English language (hereafter EL) and the discourses surrounding it. ST1 allows us to better understand the process of deconstruction by discussing her entry into the university, marked by the adverb 'formerly'. ST1 explains:

Excerpt 1

ST1: [My view of EL] changed, it changed a lot. Because, before, I used it as a tool, and today I use it as a tool, but it's ... reflecting, always reflecting. Why is it that language works like this? Why is it that in this situation I should use this and not that? Why is it that there are structures that I don't accept? ... is ... is there flexibility in this structure or not? *They say there isn't. Is that really the case? You begin to think about the truths they teach you and start doubting them*, which is something that the program also does a lot. *It's the university that makes you think too much in this way ... critically ... You start to become a more critical self. Of course, if you want [...]* and the very role of the English language becomes much more critical. *Formerly* I thought, "Oh, it's the English language that, anywhere in the world, you can show up and use it." No, not always, but even when it is used, *which English language is that? Is it the one you studied in school? No, it's not! What's different about this English language? [...]* (ST1 interview)<sup>9</sup>.

By questioning EL, ST1 demonstrates her understanding that language exists beyond a closed system (even though she refers to language as a 'tool'), and that it is not an entity that has a life independent of its speakers. She demonstrates an awareness of multiple English languages as modes of engaging in the world and point to how issues of power and ideologies surround this language. In this excerpt of the interview, we find that ST1 was not content with fixed and naturalized views of language, but rather engaged in dissent and questioned set truths about language which, as she affirms, must be weakened or at least localized.

ST1 indicates that she has developed this questioning attitude in the face of facts, linguistic and non-linguistic, and the realization that critical formation is not necessarily guaranteed by teacher education programs. We also note the recognition of

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<sup>9</sup> All emphases in the interviews and narratives are ours.

change and the experience of deconstruction of ideological representations in ST1's interview, confirming her posture as an agent, according to CL. When ST1 looks at the role of EL through a critical lens, she wonders about the nature of the EL that is spoken. This attitude of constant suspicion guides us to see it as a manifestation of criticality in line with CL from a poststructuralist perspective.

In Excerpt 2, unlike ST1, ST2 believes that the change seen in EL before and after her entry into the university sphere is due to the need for greater "mastery" of the language in order to be in a position of greater authority as an English teacher. As ST2 says:

Excerpt 2

AP2: [My view of EL] changed because before, I liked English, but I had no strong reason to. Today, no, I've managed to associate English to teaching ... it changed in the sense that learning English is now a goal for me, I need to learn more English than I needed to learn in elementary school, high school, so now that I have to teach, I have to ... I have to learn more. (ST2 interview).

For ST2, it is not enough to be proficient in EL in itself; rather, it becomes crucial to build the confidence and competence to teach. We agree with ST2 about the need for teachers to feel good despite the discomfort of the classroom, to have formal knowledge, and to have the responsibility and strong sense of ethics required to teach (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2011b); however, we also realize that the understanding of criticality differs among these STs. It appears that ST1 is more focused on problematization and questioning (PENNYCOOK, 2012), while ST2 sees teaching as having more to do with the mastery of the language being taught (language as a closed system), as well as the learning and developing of deeper individual cognitive skills, such as critical reading.

ST3 considers broader language and contextual issues that teachers should take into account in his professional practice:

Excerpt 3

ST3: [My view of EL] changed... mainly because of the issue of teaching ... I would say that, if in the beginning ... for example ... we were more focused on teaching language for the sake of language, now we have a broader perspective to work from ... For example ... you can bring songs and even... insert that language, which is anywhere ... even in the day-to-day of a Brazilian student in his/her



own community ... It's not totally beyond him/her ... It's so close to us that we can't even imagine ... These are questions, even of our own beliefs, which we've been forming since high school ... since we started to learn, and when we get here we start to deconstruct. (ST3 interview).

ST3 points to a shift toward broadening his understanding of language, which was formerly closed (language as a structure only). ST3 recognizes that he started in one place and moved to another, necessitating a break from old, closed beliefs (e.g., teaching language for the sake of language; territorial belonging of a given language; supremacy of certain accents). ST3 embodies this change of perspective as someone who, before entering the university, thought that the course linguistically prepared undergraduates, and now sees other issues, especially teaching and all that it involves—user, specialist, and teacher axes (see footnote 7). ST3 also recognizes the presence of EL outside of its legitimated territories, since it is “anywhere ... even in the day-to-day life of a Brazilian student in his/her own community” (Excerpt 3). This, among other aspects, offers the possibility of working with language more meaningfully and authentically according to the local realities of the students; furthermore, it demonstrates that the global is a local with power and legitimacy.

It is interesting and necessary to highlight the deconstruction of learned beliefs demonstrated by ST3, who, in his interview, questioned and reframed his high-school understanding of EL in the process of becoming a teacher. The term deconstruction, deriving from Derrida (1991) and read through the lens of Menezes de Souza (2011a), suggests denaturalization of that which is understood as evident and universal. We see in this deconstruction of established knowledge and beliefs a continual exercise that is more than necessary to teaching practice, aimed at the joint construction of knowledge, a practice that corroborates the assumptions of CL. This reading does not, however, ignore other interpretations and meanings that the student teacher wants to express in his narrative. Nevertheless, we do not perceive in his narrative a celebratory or uncritical tone regarding the status of EL in the world. In this sense, it seems to us that ST3 is in crisis; through reflection, he is able to assume various identity positions and sheds light on issues relevant to his process of teacher education. In his narrative, he reflects:

Excerpt 4

ST3: In terms of my views along the user, specialist and teacher axes, I have been trying, respectively: (1) to observe and/or modify my posture in class participation; (2) analyze the positive and negative aspects of the methodologies adopted by the teachers; and (3) apply the effective elements of teachers' teaching methods during my practicum classes, trying to reflect on the results to create a more effective [teaching] practice. (Narrative of ST3).

With this, we want to highlight the constant exercise of reflection and the experience that tends to occur among all student teachers (and among all of us): the experience of not being entirely in solid modernity or liquid modernity, or of questioning whether being in one or the other is productive. That is, we see the crisis (application of methods *versus* reflection and questioning) as constitutive of the self, as suggested by Kumaravadivelu (2013).

ST5 looks back on his language courses and compares them to his university teacher education. ST5 reflects:

Excerpt 5

ST5: So, before, when I was taking a language course, it's like I already said, right? We just look at grammar, just learn the rules and practice talking, having conversation. When we arrive at the university, we have a different perspective [...] language schools, not only here in Campina Grande but, as I think of Brazil, Brazilians always have that perspective of “oh, you want to learn English, which English, British or American?” And when we get here, we see that Brazilians have their own peculiarities and modes of speaking English, right? An African person, for example, has his/her own particularity of speaking English. This we see so generally, that ... it's not good that you have that accent, the accent, but, but ... *every individual has his/her identity in terms of language, so the Brazilian has his/her own particularity in speaking English too.* (ST5 interview).

In the excerpt above, ST5 reports on what has long inhabited the learners' imagination regarding British and American language courses and accents, breaking with and decentralizing from this view. We must not forget that being able to speak a language previously meant knowing how to imitate the native speaker due to the audiolinguistic tradition, resulting in the acceptance of the American and/or British accent as a model to be copied (BARBOSA, 2007). In contrast, we note here the attempt to appreciate the cultural identity of learners as subjects, who no longer submit

to the power of countries previously considered language-holders, namely England and the United States.

That said, ST5 demonstrates an understanding of his place, his accent, the needs of Brazilian speakers, and the role of this language for each speaker. He questions the essentialized identities and accents of speakers when they do not reflect the diversity within a country, within a neighborhood, or within a subject (Excerpt 5).

In light of the observations made by ST3 and ST5, we highlight the understanding of situated learning and the relevance of a university education to re-dimension the teaching and learning of EL in Basic Education. ST3 and ST5 pay attention to the Brazilian's individual and collective needs in learning English. They also perceive EL as part of a larger repertoire present in students' daily lives (JORDÃO, 2014, 2017). Thus, these STs are capable of attributing meaning to the use of language, which is partly the consequence of a university education that utilizes other elements of culture and draws upon the experience of the students.

As shown in Excerpts 3 and 4, ST3 reflects on his beliefs and the need to deconstruct them, broadening his scope of view. ST3 worries about the representations of absolute order that have been passed on to them and that should be challenged (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2011a). ST5, in Excerpt 5, also perceives a movement toward the development of criticality as a student-teacher and, in his practice, tries to reflect on linguistic facts through the content delivered.

Regarding their narratives, it is noteworthy that the STs decided to highlight the existing relationship among classes in the undergraduate program, above all to emphasize that different types of knowledge are interconnected and should create a feedback loop at all times in their professional practice. Excerpts from three STs help us to illustrate this point. ST1, for example, says:

Excerpt 6

ST1: I believe that upon entering the course I had a very traditionalist view of the teaching profession, but the university awakened me to the fact that teaching is actually an art that involves the mobilization of [diverse types of] knowledge that goes beyond the "mastery" of the language itself (*if mastering a language is even possible*). What is required of the student is not merely the ability to *use the language*, but also to *understand its functioning, its history, the culture it reflects* and various other factors that underlie the development and continuous use of a *language that is living and changing*. Moreover,

*underlying this multifaceted language are discourses and ideologies, all of which make the task of mediating the teaching of a language very complex. The program awakens us to these factors, which most non-language experts may, but should not, ignore. After all, even the user needs to be aware of the power that language has in a society. (Narrative of ST1).*

In her narrative, ST1 deconstructs her view that being a teacher is based on mastery of the language, the founding and primordial factor of the profession. She expands her view to one that includes the mobilization of other types of knowledge—linguistic, cultural, pragmatic—making teaching more complex and challenging.

There are two elements that we emphasize in this excerpt: the first is questioning “if mastering a language is even possible,” and the second is the view of language as something “living,” “changing,” and having “power” (Excerpt 6). This problematization of the term “mastery” can be characterized as a manifestation of criticality because it disturbs the commonplace understanding preached by hegemonic discourses of foreign language learning, and of language as product, as a passable system that can be studied and mastered because it is closed. This assertion is also embedded in the perception of change and the power of language. In this conception of language, its transparency/univocity is not defended. On the contrary, as emphasized, “underlying this multifaceted language are discourses and ideologies” (Excerpt 6).

These two movements indicate a teacher education program focused on questioning and not on indoctrination and training (PENNYCOOK, 2012). From this account, we read that the mode in which teacher-educators conduct their classes to cover global and local context and identities, among other aspects, favors the development of the criticality of these STs. The STs take advantage of a classroom space that promotes discussion, planning, and peer, teacher, and self-evaluation.

In Excerpt 6, ST1 highlights two of the three axes that should be considered in their education, as indicated in the Pedagogical Course Project: the user and the specialist. ST1, at this point, expands the notion of language user competence to that of the specialist, emphasizing the importance of teacher education for both user and specialist with a focus on criticality and capacity for analysis and reflection. ST1 says that the language user must also “be aware of the power that language has in a society,” and that this would be the role of the university for the specialists, who are being formed. As noted by ST1, the understanding of the existence of a range of ideologies

and discourses that can be questioned, changed, or maintained in the language makes the EL teacher's role much more complex. The teacher is no longer understood as someone who transmits knowledge, but rather as someone who mediates teaching relationships and learning and all that the language involves.

ST4 and ST6, in turn, corroborate the narrative of ST1 when they write:

Excerpt 7

ST4: In this way, I believe that one class is related to another, whether the class is preparation for academic practice or directed more toward specific learning in the EL. Thus, one class contributes to the other, since studied theoretical texts are often reused throughout the program. (Narrative of ST4).

Excerpt 8

ST6: I can say that the classes I have taken so far relate to each other, especially with regard to forming teachers who know how to work with the language critically in order to contribute to the development of citizens, and to form teachers who constantly reflect on their practice in order to improve it. (Narrative of ST6).

Excerpts 7 and 8 call our attention to the feedback and relational character of the classes taken by the STs, even when the dialogue among classes is not always so apparent. Moreover, we note that STs place the connection between theory and practice as central and of primary importance to the program. Classes are connected by a practical component from the beginning of the program until the last (9<sup>th</sup>) term. In addition, the practicum, which begins in the 5<sup>th</sup> term and totals 420 hours of practice, helps them in their current and future practice, since it seems to be theoretically and critically informed.<sup>10</sup>

As ST6 highlights, those in the teacher education program receive critical and reflective education, which tends toward the construction—rather than transmission—of knowledge on the part of the student (JORDÃO, 2010). This perspective is proposed by CL and thus seen in postmodernity as a response to the educational crisis in that it allows movement and recognizes the fluidity and instability of knowledge (Excerpt 8). Another point of great importance mentioned was the need for the formation of reflective and active citizen-students and teachers who question, think and act within the context of which they are part, both inside and outside of school, as indicated by Jordão

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<sup>10</sup> This information corresponds to the course load and curricular structure at the time that the research was conducted.

(2010), Menezes de Souza (2011a, 2011b) and Freitas (2004). Hence, we find that the STs' reflections are representative of criticality in its different forms. However, since STs understand knowledge as interdependent and highlight teacher education as a space for reflection and more localized practices (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2011a, JORDÃO, 2013, 2014, 2017), we consider that such reflections are aligned with CL.

## **Conclusion**

In this article, we have read the responses to semi-open interviews and narratives written by students in their teacher education program from the lens of CL. We understand such an approach to be problematizing and responsive to the resignifications imposed by liquid-modern times.

In the researched environment, we emphasize, there is no documented evidence about the adoption of any specific method, considering that the curriculum understands that methods cannot possibly cover all contexts. Teacher-educators are thus responsible for making use of instruments that are more appropriate to their specific classroom contexts. Given the discussions within the university about these pressing changes, we see in the participants' attitudes a sometimes-heterogeneous practice, anchored in either more solid or fluid perspectives.

Given the data provided, we understand that the STs' comments, in general, seem to reveal critical movements that align with the perspectives of CL from a poststructuralist lens. Thus, we make a consciously contingent interpretation that, in a situation of study, the STs manifest criticality mainly through statements that reveal questioning, denaturalization and construction of other understandings in a procedural and nonlinear formative development.

The STs perceive the relevance of the connection that should be established between theory and practice, highlighting the role of university as a privileged place for developing such a connection. The STs learn to see the importance of a classroom which surpasses commonplace grammatical rules, and which understands language as a social practice and not as a system of decontextualized rules. This vision makes itself apparent and is one of the objectives of the curriculum under study: the integration and



feedback of classes so as to relate theory and practice throughout the program (cf. UFCG, 2011).

In the STs' locus of study, the English language, its teaching, its literature, and other aspects and linguistic phenomena are addressed from a perspective that contemplates and gives privilege to reflection and problematization in order to transform learner-selves. Thus, from the instruments used in the classroom to the way that professors in teacher education programs teach (and choose theories), we observe criticality. It is clear that this manifests differently in each ST; what is studied in the classroom reaches these students in different ways, and, by virtue of having different experiences and understandings, these students construct localized meanings, more or less validated. As they begin to feel more involved in teaching, the STs can come down to act critically through spaces of discussion and growth, whether as citizens or as professionals.

It is not our desire to classify the “validity” of the types of criticality described in the first part of this article, much less to imply that there is an *a priori* model of criticality that must be achieved. If we were to do so, we would be contradicting the post-structuralist perspective that we support. We intend to fight against the consequences of solid modernity, with the hope of developing alternative modes of understanding and acting in the world—hence, the adoption of (not without reflection and reflexivity) critical literacy.

In light of these results, we emphasize that teacher education spaces are conducive to critical development, since pre-service teachers are invited to act on their own realities by means of rupture, contestation, affirmation, and agency (JORDÃO, 2010). These spaces favor debate and discussion, with the aim that this pre-service teacher develop a perception of multiple truths, diversified representations and discourses that compete with the hegemony of a privileged discourse.

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ANEXOS

**A. Parecer do comitê de ética**

<b>HOSPITAL UNIVERSITÁRIO ALCIDES CARNEIRO / UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE</b>		
<b>PARECER CONSUBSTANCIADO DO CEP</b>		
<b>DADOS DO PROJETO DE PESQUISA</b>		
<b>Título da Pesquisa:</b> UM OLHAR SOBRE A FORMAÇÃO CRÍTICA DO PROFESSOR DE LÍNGUA INGLESA NA PÓS-MODERNIDADE		
<b>Pesquisador:</b> Jhullane Evelyn da Silva		
<b>Área Temática:</b>		
<b>Versão:</b>		
<b>CAAE:</b> 37094614.0.0000.5182		
<b>Instituição Proponente:</b> UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE CAMPINA GRANDE		
<b>Patrocinador Principal:</b> Financiamento Próprio		
<b>DADOS DO PARECER</b>		
<b>Número do Parecer:</b> 831.405		
<b>Data da Relatoria:</b> 28/10/2014		
<b>Apresentação do Projeto:</b>		
<p>A proposta do trabalho emerge de indagação presente no cotidiano de formação de professores e ressurgiu em meio ao contexto da pós-modernidade e da ascensão da língua inglesa como língua internacional (PENNYCOOK, 1994), que é a formação crítica do professor de inglês frente a todas as mudanças que vêm ocorrendo na sociedade e da necessidade desta língua para a participação na vida social globalizada. Entendendo que a formação inicial deve fornecer instrumentos outros que preparem o profissional para agir de acordo com a demanda da sociedade em consonância com o contexto em que vivemos, buscamos verificar em que medida os alunos em formação inicial de uma universidade pública no Estado da Paraíba apresentam marcas de criticidade em sua prática pedagógica. Para tanto, almejamos também investigar como esses alunos planejam suas aulas levando em consideração suas reflexões teóricas desenvolvidas ao longo do curso, identificar as diferentes perspectivas dos alunos no que se refere ao ensino crítico de Língua Inglesa e ampliar a discussão da área de formação crítica de professores de Língua Inglesa. Com este intento, nos apoiamos em autores como Bauman (2001, 2005) para tratar da pós-modernidade e Kincheloe (1997) que une a pós-modernidade com o ensino de Inglês; Molta Lopes (1996, 2010, 2006), Pennycook (1994), Graddol (2006), Rajagopalan (2003, 2005) e Lacoste (2005) para discutir o Inglês atualmente; New London group (2000), Luke e Freebody (1997), Gee (1991, 2000), Cope e</p>		
<b>Endereço:</b> Rua: Dr. Carlos Chagas, s/n		
<b>Bairro:</b> São José		<b>CEP:</b> 58.107-870
<b>UF:</b> PB	<b>Município:</b> CAMPINA GRANDE	
<b>Telefone:</b> (83)2101-5545	<b>Fax:</b> (83)2101-5525	<b>E-mail:</b> cep@huac.ufcg.edu.br



HOSPITAL UNIVERSITÁRIO  
ALCIDES CARNEIRO /  
UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE



Continuação do Parecer: 631.405

Kalantzis (2000), Monte Mor (2013), Menezes de Souza (2011) e Jordão (2010) para tratar de criticidade e letramentos. Nessa perspectiva, considera-se a atitude de questionamento, de criação de conhecimento, de negação de verdades absolutas, dentre outras como de suma importância no processo de formação de professores de Inglês, que exercem papel fundamental na formação da sociedade em geral.

**Objetivo da Pesquisa:**

**Objetivo Primário:**

Verificar em que medida os alunos em formação Inicial de uma universidade pública no Estado da Paraíba manifestam criticidade em sua prática pedagógica.

**Objetivo Secundário:**

Investigar as marcas de criticidade na prática pedagógica de alunos professores, tendo por base as perspectivas do letramento crítico; Identificar as diferentes perspectivas dos alunos professores no que se refere ao ensino crítico de Língua Inglesa Ampliar a discussão da área de formação crítica de professores de Língua Inglesa.

**Avaliação dos Riscos e Benefícios:**

A proponente demonstra conhecer os riscos envolvidos na pesquisa no que concerne ao desconforto gerado pela presença da pesquisadora no ambiente pesquisado, porém no documento "Informações Básicas" nota-se a ausência de referência às consequências que porventura adviriam da quebra de sigilo das identidades dos sujeitos participantes. Afirmação esta presente, contudo, na folha de rosto do processo. Os benefícios são indicados de forma clara, evidenciando o ganho pedagógico no processo ensino-aprendizagem dos professores de L.I. em formação.

**Comentários e Considerações sobre a Pesquisa:**

A pesquisa está bem estruturada em seus aspectos éticos, metodológicos e formais, com benefícios claramente delimitados para o campo de conhecimento abordado, bem como o controle de riscos.

**Considerações sobre os Termos de apresentação obrigatória:**

Todos os termos estão presentes e devidamente preenchidos.

**Recomendações:**

Recomenda-se: a inserção de um resumo no projeto detalhado; o esclarecimento sobre a forma de seleção dos sujeitos participantes dentre a turma de estudantes selecionada; determinar se a

Endereço: Rua Dr. Carlos Chagas, s/n  
Bairro: São José CEP: 58.107-670  
UF: PB Município: CAMPINA GRANDE  
Telefone: (83)2101-5545 Fax: (83)2101-5523 E-mail: cep@huac.ufpb.edu.br



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turma será do sexto ou sétimo período do curso, informação que ora figura de uma maneira ora de outra; deixar mais claro qual instrumento de análise será usado para coleta de informações no relatório de estágio (análise de conteúdo?).

**Conclusões ou Pendências e Lista de Inadequações:**

O projeto segue os parâmetros solicitados por este CEP. As recomendações visam apenas o complemento de informações.

**Situação do Parecer:**

Aprovado

**Necessita Apreciação da CONEP:**

Não

**Considerações Finais a critério do CEP:**

Considerando o parecer da relatoria o protocolo foi considerado APROVADO ad referendum.

CAMPINA GRANDE, 14 de Outubro de 2014

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Assinado por:

**Maria Teresa Nascimento Silva**  
(Coordenador)

Endereço: Rua: Dr. Carlos Chagas, s/n  
Bairro: São José CEP: 58.107-870  
UF: PB Município: CAMPINA GRANDE  
Telefone: (83)2101-5545 Fax: (83)2101-5523 E-mail: cep@huac.ufcg.edu.br

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