Educating Language Teachers for Social Justice Teaching[1]
Educando o professor de línguas estrangeiras para um ensino socialmente justo

Andrea Machado de Almeida Mattos[2]

Abstract: This paper describes an experience of introducing Critical Literacy in a pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education course at a large university in Brazil, aimed at students' critical education and their preparation as future critical teachers. The paper tries to show how the concepts of Transnational Literacies and Critical Literacy have been used as a standpoint for teacher education and for the development of critical approaches to language teaching. The paper also highlights the importance of including education for citizenship in Brazilian teacher education programs in order to have EFL teachers and student teachers question themselves as globalized and *technologized* (LANKSHEAR; KNOBEL, 2003, p. 155) citizens, as well as to reflect on their roles in fostering responsible social transformation and in the promotion of social justice (HAWKINS, 2011a; ZEICHNER, 2011).

Keywords: Language teaching. Critical literacies. Social justice.

Resumo: Este artigo descreve uma experiência de introduzir a crítica literária em um pré-serviço de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira (EFL) em curso de formação de professores de uma grande universidade no Brasil, visando a formação crítica dos alunos e sua preparação como futuros professores críticos. O artigo procura mostrar como os conceitos de letramentos transnacionais e letramento crítico têm sido usados na formação de professores e para o desenvolvimento de abordagens críticas ao ensino de línguas. O documento também destaca a importância de incluir a educação para a cidadania em programas de formação de professores no Brasil, a fim de ter professores de línguas estrangeiras e professores-alunos se questionando como cidadãos globalizados e tecnologizados (Lankshear;. KNOBEL, 2003, p 155), bem como para re-

fletir sobre seu papel na promoção da transformação social responsável e na promoção da justiça social. (Hawkins, 2011a; Zeichner, 2011).

Palavras-chave: Ensino de línguas. Letramentos críticos. Justiça social.

Introduction

Towards the end of the 20th Century, the role of English as an Additional Language (EAL) in the world has become widely debated.[3] English has become not only a tool for communication among the various world cultures and among different countries, but also a tool for power and social domination. Due to this dual role of English in the world, highly influenced by the processes of globalization and the advent of new technologies, Western societies are going through extremely complex changes in all areas, including education. These changes have affected teaching practices, language teachers, learners and teaching materials, among other elements involved in education in general and in the teaching and learning of foreign or additional languages, specifically.

This paper seeks to discuss the uses and applications of literacies as social practice (STREET, 1984) in the teaching/learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and in Foreign Language (FL) teacher education in Brazil. To this end, the paper builds on the concept of transnational literacies (BRYDON, 2010; 2013a; 2013b), and on the theories of New Literacies and Critical Literacy. This set of concepts and theories, as it will be argued, may foster critical reflection on social justice issues, providing a space for possible new models and practices for language teaching. The main objective is to contribute to the discussion about the needs and possibilities of implementing a critical approach to the teaching of foreign languages with emphasis on transnational literacies, Critical Literacy and citizenship education, as recently suggested by the National Curriculum Guidelines for High School Teaching (BRAZIL, 2006).

The field of language teacher education (LTE) has been fruitful in raising awareness on the various problems, tensions and conflicts present in teaching processes, besides bringing insights into teacher knowledge and practices. Research into teacher education has also opened up space for studying teacher choice and voice, helping both researchers and teachers better understand the context-bound nature of teacher activity (FREEMAN, 1996). Research and practice in teacher education in Brazil

have closely followed international perspectives and advances in the area, and Brazilian researchers and teacher educators, as well as teachers themselves, have greatly benefitted from research results that have illuminated classroom practices, especially in EFL teaching and learning contexts. After the publication of the National Curriculum Guidelines for High School Teaching (BRAZIL, 2006), Critical Literacy was integrated as a suggestion for the teaching of EFL in Brazil, aiming at educating students to become critical citizens. Mattos and Valério (2010; 2014) have discussed ways in which Critical Literacy may be integrated with the Communicative Approach, one of the most common methodologies for teaching English as Second or Foreign Language nowadays.

However, recent work (MATTOS, 2011; 2012) has shown that English teachers in Brazil often find it difficult to implement Critical Literacy in their classrooms, not only because of lack of theoretical basis, but also because they have never been through the experience of learning through Critical Literacy. Foreign Language Teacher Education research has long been speaking of the "apprenticeship of observation" (BAILEY et al, 1996) to refer to the fact that teachers tend to reproduce the models and practices used by their own teachers. The biggest challenge is, thus, 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.

The Communicative Approach in FL Teaching

The origins of the Communicative Approach date back to the early 70's as a response to a general dissatisfaction with previous formalistic approaches to the teaching of foreign languages in a world that had just started its first steps towards globalization. To facilitate intercultural communication, the teaching of foreign languages could no longer be constrained by the linguistic competence prioritized by the approaches in vogue at that time.

Although the Communicative Approach may have, since then, dominated the language teaching landscape in many countries, in Brazil, traditional, structuralist approaches are still the norm. Communicative Language Teaching takes the view that the target language should be seen as a means to create meaning and it highlights the conception that the target language should no longer be seen as a structured set of grammatical rules

and words to be memorized by learners, but as a tool for communication. In Brazil, however, especially in public school contexts, traditional approaches, in which the classroom focus is the teaching of rules and vocabulary rote learning, still predominate. For several reasons – including excessively large classes, disbelief in the relevance of the discipline, the safe ground and lower demands of the traditional approaches, and the fact that teachers themselves have a low command of the English language (MATTOS; VALÉRIO, 2010), besides not being well prepared to deploy different teaching strategies and methodologies – the Communicative Approach, which suggests learning through significant and authentic use of the target language, has not yet made its way into foreign language teaching especially in Brazilian public school contexts.

As a FL teacher educator in Brazil, I have searched for different possibilities for promoting teacher development in my own contexts of research and practice, which include public school contexts. In doing so, I have turned to partnership research with other teacher educators in Brazil (MATTOS; JORGE, 2014; MATTOS; JUCÁ, 2013), as well as in Canada (BRYDON et al, 2014), as one way to rethink English teaching and teacher education and to regain fresh insights from different teaching spheres.

Critical Literacy, Critical Pedagogy and Transnational Literacies

As discussed in the previous section, contemporary methodologies for ELT in Brazil are still trying to surface amongst the myriad of traditional practices that may be found all over the country. More recently, however, studies in New Literacies and Critical Literacy have brought new possibilities to FL teaching, which aim at highlighting the importance of the education of the student-citizen. One of these possibilities is Critical Literacy. However, Critical Literacy is not a methodology per se, but a perspective (JANKS, 2013) or a point of view, a way to look at the world and to interpret it through diverse lens. Janks states that:

> *Essentially, Critical Literacy is about enabling young people to read both the word and the world in relation to power, identity, difference and access to knowledge, skills, tools and resources. It is also about writing and rewriting the world […] (p. 227).*

Unlike the market-focused vocation of the Communicative Approach, the foundations of Critical Literacy are based on revolutionary values (CERVETTI; PARDALES; DAMICO, 2001). Drawing on the assumptions of critical social theory, Critical Literacy also originates from Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy (FREIRE, 1982; 1984) and his view of language as an empowering element. Committed to values such as justice and equality, Critical Literacy aims at promoting social change, inclusion of marginalized groups and citizenship education.

Although it originates from some of the principles developed by Freire, Critical Literacy also differs from Critical Pedagogy in fundamental ways (JORDÃO, 2013; MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2011). Jordão (2013) argues that Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy have different conceptions of language and criticality. According to the author, whereas Critical Pedagogy understands language as a code and a tool for ideology, Critical Literacy conceptualizes language as discourse constructed by different linguistic communities, a "space for meaning-making and for representations of the subjects and the world" (p. 73). Besides, in the perspective of Critical Pedagogy, to be critical means to unveil the ideology hidden behind the language and the words, while Critical Literacy perspectives consider criticality as reflexivity, that is, our capacity to reflect on "meaning-making processes and their impacts on the representations we make of ourselves and others" (p. 81). Menezes de Souza (2011) explains that this reflexivity means "not only to read, but also to read by reading ourselves,[4] in other words, to be conscious all the time of how I am reading, how I am making meaning, and not to think that reading is a transparent process […]" (p. 296).

Another difference between the two educational perspectives, according to Jordão (2013), is the conception of reading, which, in Critical Literacy, "is extended to include the locus of enunciation of the text as a whole, including the context in which reading is taking place, and not only the conditions in which the text was initially constructed" (p. 75). For Menezes de Souza (2011), Critical Pedagogy focuses on the writing of the text whereas Critical Literacy focuses on reading, the meaning-making process. The author asserts that "the meaning-making process has to do not with the text, but with the relationship between the reading contexts and the contexts of production of the text" (p. 297). Menezes de Souza also adds that Critical Pedagogy perceives power relations as constituted by the dominant and the oppressed in opposite sides, whereas for Critical

Literacy "power is distributed among all, but in unequal ways" (p. 297).

Cervetti, Pardales and Damico (2001) believe that Critical Literacy promotes reflection, transformation and action, according to the Freirean view of social transformation. Thus, Critical Literacy highlights the dominant power relations in our society and focuses especially on differences of race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, background culture and language and other critical issues, examining "these differences not as isolated occurrences but rather as part of systemic inequities or injustices," as Cervetti, Pardales and Damico (2001) suggest. These authors also note that, for the purposes of Critical Literacy, knowledge is taken to be "always based on the discursive rules of a particular community, and is thus ideological," instead of natural or neutral. The instructional objective of Critical Literacy is to develop learners' critical consciousness. Being critical, in this sense, means to challenge the normalized views of society, that is, to question the established truths of our society at the same time that we question our own truths (BRYDON, 2012a; MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2011). In a nutshell, Critical Literacy focuses on issues of power expressed through language. Critical Literacy also deals with complexity, fostering independent thinking, ethical relationships and decision-making participatory processes.

Critical Literacy, however, has developed as a perspective for teaching reading in mother tongue contexts (McLAUGHLIN; DeVOOGD, 2004) and was later adapted to other disciplines in the school curriculum, such as Math (Numeracy), Science and, finally, FL teaching. Hawkins (2011b) summarizes the trajectory of FL teaching under four different approaches that have been used throughout times:

Psycholinguistic Approach	Communicative Approach	Sociocultural Approach	Critical Approach
Language is viewed as a set of words and structures governed by particular rules and principles and stored in the minds of individual learners	Language is viewed as a tool for meaning--making and communication; language rules and principles are learned through the process of using the language	Language is viewed as a tool for meaning--making, which is situated in specific social encounters that take place in specific places at specific times between/among specific individuals	Language is viewed as situated usage shaped through pervasive social, cultural and political ideologies and forces that serve to empower some people while marginalizing others

Table 1: Four different approaches to language teaching based on Hawkins (2011b, p. 1-2).

The table shows how FL teaching methodologies have evolved from a psycholinguistic approach, such as the Grammar Translation Method or the Audiolingual Method (RICHARDS; RODGERS, 2001), to more communicative approaches, such as the Communicative Approach itself and, lately, to suggestions for sociocultural and critical approaches. This is not to say that a more critical approach to language teaching should completely eliminate the others. On the contrary, each approach incorporates certain views from the previous ones as shown in the table. In Brazil, the National Curriculum Parameters (BRAZIL, 1998) was the first official document to be based on a sociocultural approach to language teaching and, as already mentioned, in 2006, the National Curriculum Guidelines for High School Teaching (BRAZIL, 2006) was launched, suggesting the implementation of a critical approach to language teaching based on Critical Literacy.

Crookes (2013) says Critical Literacy is an over-arching term for such critical approaches to language teaching that "invite the language user and learner to develop tools for seeing the ways in which language has position, interests, power, and can act to disadvantage those on the lower rungs of a hierarchical society" (p. 28). As such, transnational literacies may be included as one possibility for a critical approach to language teaching. As defined by Brydon (2013a), transnational literacy is a kind of Critical Literacy that goes "beyond conventional notions of reading and writing, [and] includes an awareness of the power relations built into knowledge production in local and cross-cultural contexts" (p. 5). The author also explains that "transnational literacies combine hemispheric awareness and global consciousness with the development of competencies and performances suitable for full participation in the knowledge society" (p. 6). Brydon and Tavares (2013, p. 9) add that transnational literacies include "enhanced capacities for knowledge construction and adaptability to changing circumstances, the ability to exercise multi-level citizenship, and to successfully innovate as circumstances change" (my translation; see also BRYDON, 2012b). Such principles and skills are important for working across national, as well as local and regional, contexts.

These concepts are being used in the area of language teaching and language teacher education in Brazil, especially in the work of several of our colleagues in the BRCAKE – The Brazil-Canada Knowledge Exchange Project[5] (see, for example, DUBOC; FERRAZ, 2011; JORDÃO; MARTINEZ; HALU, 2011; MONTE MÓR, 2009; MORGAN, 2009, 2010,

2013; TAKAKI; MACIEL, 2014; ZACCHI; STELLA, 2014). As Brydon (2013b) puts it, this collaborative partnership is engaged in thinking "about how English teaching can contribute to developing transnational literacies for fuller democratic participation at local, national, and transnational scales of involvement" (p. 203).

In my own work, Critical Literacy and transnational literacies are used to help pre-service language teachers learn to "develop site-specific and context-sensitive modes of promoting language learning" (BRYDON, 2013a, p. 6-7). Moreover, based on the suggestions of the National Curriculum Guidelines for High School Teaching (BRAZIL, 2006), these concepts are being integrated with the Communicative Approach (MATTOS; VALÉRIO, 2010) to foster a critical approach to language curricula, especially in public school settings, focusing on citizenship education (MATTOS, 2011; 2012) and social justice teaching (HAWKINS, 2011a; ZEICHNER, 2011).

What is social justice teaching?

So, what exactly is social justice teaching? To look for a single definition of what social justice teaching is would be inappropriate and undesirable, since different teaching contexts (places and times) will have their own definitions of what social justice means. Different authors have defined social justice teaching in their own terms, depending on their purposes. Zeichner (2011), for example, provides an approach to teacher education that he calls "Social Justice Teacher Education (SJTE)" (p. 7). The author states that "SJTE aims to respond to preparing teachers to teach in ways that contribute to a lessening of the inequalities and injustices" (p. 7) that exist in the world, both inside the school systems and in societies as a whole. He adds that SJTE has a "focus on helping to bring about broad-scale social change in the social, economic, political and educational spheres of society" (p. 10).

Hawkins (2011b) calls for "a turn to social justice language teacher education" (p. 2). She claims that,

> *while 'critical' language teacher education puts the focus squarely on societal inequities often based on differences vis-à-vis race, class, gender, language, (dis)ability and ethnicity and calls for*

> *educators (and indeed everybody) to understand
> how positioning within those categories leads to
> inequitable distribution of goods and resources,
> including education, a social justice turn highlights
> teachers' responsibility to serve as agents of social
> change (p. 2).*

As teachers well know, language learning is highly dependent on the contexts in which it takes place (Freeman, 1996). In Hawkins' words,

> *learning and teaching (including but not limited to
> language learning and teaching) occur in specific
> situated contexts and are contingent on the time,
> place and participants in specific interactions that
> constitute the learning events, all of which is, in
> part, shaped by larger societal and institutional
> discourses (HAWKINS, 2011b, p. 3).*

Therefore, according to Hawkins (2011b), a social justice approach to language teaching "not only shifts understanding of language learning, teaching and usage, acknowledges inequities in educational landscapes and envisions more just social futures, but redefines the roles of teachers in effecting change" (p. 2).

The well-known teacher education tradition in line with the suggestions for the Reflective Practitioner (SCHÖN, 1983; 1987) and Critical Reflective Teaching (FREEMAN; RICHARDS, 1996; RICHARDS, 1998; RICHARDS; LOCKHART, 1994; WALLACE, 1991; ZEICHNER; LISTON, 1996), which peaked during the 80's and 90's, although still very much used nowadays, including in Brazil, does not seem adequately sufficient to educate teachers for social justice teaching.

Critical Reflective Teaching may be a misleading term, if we now consider relevant definitions of the "critical" (see, for example, JORDÃO, 2014b; LUKE, 2004, PENNYCOOK, 2010). The Critical Reflective Teaching approach does foster critical reflection by the teacher. However, this type of reflection is critical only in the sense that it may provoke a crisis

in the teacher's perceptions of how (s)he views his/her own classroom practices and may provoke change in these practices. These changes will only focus on the micro context of the classroom itself (which may be influenced by the macro context), and tend not to consider the wider social context and the injustices and inequalities that surround the classroom and the students. Reflective teaching will put the burden of solving the classroom problems on the teachers alone, which can be very frustrating.

As Hawkins (2011c) claims, a social justice perspective on language teacher education puts "the focus on educators' agency and responsibility in effecting both local and broad-scale social change, while seeing their work as embedded in larger societal discourses that shape understandings of 'education' and 'achievement'" (p. 106). The author adds that "social justice education must be responsive to local situations and conditions […] and cannot be prescriptive" (p. 122). Therefore, in order to educate teachers for social justice teaching, teacher educators and researchers need to come up with new models[6] to inspire new teachers. Teacher educators themselves need to become critical (JUCÁ, 2013; MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2011) and use teacher education programs as productive spaces for teachers to rethink their beliefs and values and to transform their practices. Teacher education programs have to become sites to promote critical reflection on social justice teaching. As I mentioned in the beginning, teachers are prone to reproduce the models in which they have been taught in their own classrooms, and, as stated by Ifa (2014) in a recent conference presentation, "Critical Literacy views do not construct out of the blue." If we want teachers to start using Critical Literacy perspectives and to become more responsive to social and cultural issues in their teaching, we need to start providing them with adequate space for devising socially responsive practices.

Revisiting the Apprenticeship of Observation

At a past conference on Language Teacher Education in Brazil, Burton (2010) asked the audience: "How can we teach – communicatively, fostering autonomy, being student-centered, etc. – if we were not taught in that way?" To her question, I add: How can we teach through Critical Literacy for social justice if we were not taught that way? My own research shows that teachers do have problems in introducing Critical Literacy in their classrooms. One of the participants in my research stated:

*For us [teachers] to teach like this [using Critical Literacy],
it would be necessary to experience this, to have classes like
this.*
Interview with Dora (MATTOS, 2011)

The idea that language teachers tend to follow their own teachers'
models has been around in language teacher education for a long time. Back
in 1990, Kennedy (1990) stated that "teachers acquire seemingly indelible
imprints from their own experiences as students and these imprints are
tremendously difficult to shake" (p. 17). Freeman (1992) also referred to
the fact that teachers tend to imitate their own teachers and said that "their
'apprenticeship of observation' function as de facto guides for teachers as
they approach what they do in the classroom" (p. 3).

Bailey et al (1996) seem not to believe the language teaching fate
when they say "if it is true that 'we teach as we have been taught,' rather
than as we have been trained to teach, then it would appear that we are
bound to perpetuate the models we have learned in our own teaching"
(p. 11). Based on a study of the learning autobiographies of pre-service
teachers, the authors conclude that the "apprenticeship of observation" has
a high influence on the way teachers teach.

More recent work on language teacher education still refer to the
"apprenticeship of observation". Pennycook (2004), for example, states that
educating teachers involves "taking into account our students' embodied
histories of learning and teaching, the memories, pains, and desires that
have been written onto their educated bodies" (p. 333). Pennycook refers
to Freeman and Johnson's (1998) point of view that "much of what teachers
know about teaching comes from their memories as students, as language
learners, and as students of language teaching" (PENNYCOOK, 2004, p.
401).

Martin and Morgan (in press) rephrase the apprenticeship of
observation, saying that "a teachers' emergent professional identity and her
image of classroom possibilities is coloured by her own prior L2 learning
experience..." (p. 21). This idea seems not to be restricted to the Western
world as Ko (2013) also gives an interesting example of an EFL teacher in
Taiwan.

In Brazil, critical approaches to English language teaching and to
LT Education are just starting to show up in the language teaching field.
Cox and Assis-Peterson (1999) investigated the views of 40 English

teachers on critical pedagogy (FREIRE, 1982; 1984) and found that these teachers knew very little about it. The authors claim that teacher educators "need to do critical pedagogy and stop talking about it" (p. 448). They add that "our actions should embrace the principles we expect our student teachers to use in their work" (p. 448). The same can be said in terms of Critical Literacy and teacher education for social justice. If we want to educate teachers for social justice, we have to start teaching for social justice so that our practices can have a multiplying effect on our student teachers (COX; ASSIS-PETERSON, 1999).

In pursuing this multiplying effect, I have included a Critical Literacy for social justice component in my work as a language teacher educator in my institution. In the following sections, I will discuss a series of activities that were designed for a language course for first-year student teachers taking an undergraduate major in English language teaching at a big university in Brazil.

Course Design

The course was designed bearing in mind the principles of Critical Literacy and transnational literacies. The main objective was to provide student teachers with an opportunity to reflect on some critical issues that contribute to inequality and disempowerment in our society. By opening up this space for critical reflection, the course was meant to provide student teachers with a new model of language teaching, one which would offer them new spaces for rethinking their understanding of language and language teaching practices[7] and to inspire them in new directions. The course was organized in four different projects, each focusing on a different critical issue to be reflected on. The projects were developed during a span of 4 to 5 weeks with class meetings twice a week for one hour and 40 minutes per meeting. The themes that were approached throughout the course included such critical issues as stereotypes, gender roles, and several types of physical, mental and virtual violence that may happen nowadays. Each project also had a language focus, which was derived from the texts used in the development of each theme. Throughout the projects, several different genres, such as newspaper articles, songs, videos, images, comics, advertisement, opinion articles, etc, were used to provide a sense of the variety of possible ways of expressing ideas through language. Table 2 summarizes the course. Title of the Course: Integrated

Title of the Course: **Integrated Skills 1**		
Project 1	**Theme:**	Stereotypes
	Language Focus:	The English Verb System (time, tense and aspect)
Project 2	**Theme:**	Gender Differences
	Language Focus:	If Clauses
Project 3	**Theme:**	The Cyber World
	Language Focus:	Modals
Project 4	**Theme:**	Violence
	Language Focus:	Modals (cont.)

Table 2: Integrated Skil ls 1 – Course summary.

The activities in the course aimed at integrating Critical Literacy into the Communicative Approach, as suggested in Mattos and Valério (2010; 2014), which was already the approach used by the other teachers teaching the same course in the same semester or in previous ones.[8] Thus, following the principles of the Communicative Approach, each project focused on the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, besides including work on the micro-skills of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. For lack of space, here I will present only some of the activities that were included in Project II – Gender Differences.

The Gender Differences Project

Without giving students any hint on the theme of the project, I started the Gender Differences Project with an awareness-raising activity that aimed at helping students see how biased our language can be and how language biases are entrenched in our minds. I gave them a handout with several difficult situations for them to reflect on and decide on what the people involved should do. The situations only contained gender-neutral nouns, that is, all the important nouns in the situations did not reveal whether they referred to a man or a woman. This was meant not to influence students' use of gendered words. For the same reason, the situations also avoided using personal pronouns. The situations are listed in Table 3 below.

What to do?

 1. A business executive discovers that a long-time employee has been stealing from the company. What should the executive do first?

 2. A robber pulls a gun on a bank teller. What should the bank-teller do first?

 3. Someone witnesses a pedestrian being hit by a car. What should this person do first?

 4. A relative is trying to give up smoking. What would the relative do first?

 5. A nurse discovers a hospital patient has been given blood contaminated with AIDS. What should the nurse do first?

 6. A teacher gets to know that some students had already seen the test sheet before the day of the test. What should the teacher do first?

Table 3: Classroom activity (based on WALLWORK, 1997, p. 32)

Students were instructed to write down complete sentences in their notebooks as responses to the activity, without discussing the situations with their peers. This is obviously a very traditional activity and some students mentioned how different it was from all the previous activities they had been doing so far. I simply agreed that it was different but told them to finish it, so as not to give away the purpose of the activity. After a few minutes, students were asked to volunteer their sentences, reading them to the rest of the class. Most answers, as expected, referred to the business executive, the employee and the robber using male pronouns (he, his, etc) and to the bank teller, the nurse and the teacher using female pronouns (she, her, etc). Other nouns received more varied references. One of the most interesting responses was in relation to situation 5, as several of the students wrote down a very similar sentence: "She should tell a doctor. He will know what to do." Other examples of sentences students wrote were: situation 1 – "He should try to talk to the employee"; situation 2 – "She should call the police."

Based on this activity, we started a conversation on language bias. The objective was to show students that most of the times we don't notice these issues when we use language automatically in our everyday routines. I started by providing a dictionary definition of the word "gender" as a term originally used to classify nouns in grammar studies, which nowadays can also be used to distinguish between male and female behavior, attitudes, and even mindsets. We talked about gender identity and discussed gender roles as based on culturally defined concepts, which may be very specific of each social group and may vary tremendously among several cultures

all over the world. We also discussed how some human characteristics may be gender specific, such as the sexual organs and some diseases, and others are not, such as eye and skin color. We also talked about "gender gap", that is, the apparent disparity between men and women in values, emotions, attitudes as well as in more ordinary issues, such as voting patterns or school-subject preferences (WALLWORK, 1997). We finally discussed gender-biased language, also known as sexist language, and how language may be used to convey preconceived ideas hidden in normalized social and cultural stereotypes. In order to bring the discussion to a more transnational literacy dimension, we compared English and Portuguese in terms of how sexist these languages can be.[9] Brydon (2013b) argues that

> *globalization demands a renewed attention to the vocabulary we use, in Portuguese and English, in ways more attentive to the histories of these vocabularies within and across languages and cultures, and to the unexamined assumptions that certain words and word clusters may carry in specific linguistic and geopolitical contexts (p.*

In this respect, we mentioned that English has a neutral pronoun (it), whereas in Portuguese all third person pronouns are either male or female, even when they refer to objects. The only foreign student in class, an exchange student from Sweden, offered examples from French as well. We highlighted how English-speaking countries have started using linguistic strategies to downplay gender issues, such as substituting dichotomies like "businessman/businesswoman" or "steward/stewardess" for the gender-neutral options "businessperson" and "flight attendant". We tried to imagine which strategies Portuguese could use for the same purpose. In terms of social and cultural stereotypes, we discussed some words that have essentially the same basic meaning but which are overloaded by social and cultural stereotypes when referring to men and women, such as "bachelor" (an unmarried older man – positive social meaning) as opposed to "spinster" (an unmarried older woman – negative social meaning). Again, we compared English with the Portuguese words "solteirão/solteirona", which have the same meaning of the English words and carry the same positive/negative social stereotypes. This discussion

was very fruitful with students volunteering to participate and discuss their different views on the issue. Ko (2013) presents a similar and also very interesting discussion in a study about an EFL teacher in Taiwan.

The next activity was a listening comprehension that used a short video from a Pepsi© commercial campaign. The video[10] is only about 30 seconds long and shows a young couple on a first date having dinner at a restaurant. The sound of a violin can be heard in the background but we don't listen to the couple's conversation. Instead, we listen to their thoughts. While the girl thinks about all sorts of possible things that may come to a girl's mind on a first date, such as whether he loves his mother or if he wants kids, all the boy can think about is that he wants to sleep with her. The activities involving the video followed the communicative approach sequence of pre-viewing, in-viewing and post-viewing (or pre-listening, in-listening and post-listening). As a pre-viewing activity, the first scene of the video was shown in pause mode (see Figure 1) and students were supposed to guess what the video was about and who were the main characters. They were also asked about what they thought was going on in the video and what the characters were talking about. I played the video once and asked students if their guesses were correct and what was really going on in the video. Students with a better command of English, as always, volunteered their answers. At this stage, we also discussed the video in terms of the characteristics of the genre, its communicative function, and other issues such as audience and channel that are important in genre studies. I played the video once more so that all students could now understand the video and then, as a post-viewing activity, we had a whole-class discussion about the differences between the thoughts of the two characters in the story, which was one of the characteristics of the so-called gender gap, as I explained.

First Date

Figure 1: Listening Activity – First Date

The reading comprehension part of the project used a text from the Opinion Pages[11] of The New York Times: "Girls and Boys Together", by Gail Collins, published on March, 2011, which generally talks about differences in gender attitudes in the past and nowadays. The text is not very long nor very complicated in terms of language use, since students in the group were still in their first year of the course and were considered pre-intermediate to intermediate learners of English. Again, a communicative approach was used, involving pre-reading, in-reading and post-reading activities. The pre-reading stage included some guessing the topic questions and reading for main ideas. It also included discussions about the characteristics of the genre. The in-reading stage involved a series of comprehension questions aimed at helping students better understand the text. Students were also allowed to ask questions about the content of the text or the unknown vocabulary, although they were encouraged to use their dictionaries to look for the meaning of unfamiliar words. The text was also used to study specific vocabulary related to the job market, as there were lots of interesting words and idioms for students to learn. The post-reading stage involved a discussion of the main theme of the text, that is, how things have changed (or not) throughout time in relation to gender differences, both in the world as a whole and specifically in Brazil.

The grammar part of this project focused on Conditional Clauses or If-Clauses and was introduced using the song[12] "If I were a boy" by the famous singer Beyoncé (see Figure 2). Before listening to the song, students were shown a picture of Beyoncé and were asked basic questions, such as if they knew or liked her and which songs they knew or liked best. Incidentally, nobody mentioned the song they were about to listen. Then, they were shown the title of the song and two questions they were supposed to try to answer while they listened to the song: What is the song about? What are some of the differences between boys and girls mentioned in the song? The song was played together with its official video, which shows an interesting inversion of the ge nder roles traditionally associated with men and women between Beyoncé's character (a cop) and her husband (an office worker). After listening to the song twice, including once following the lyrics on a handout, students discussed the gender-related attitudes expressed in the song and the inversion of gender roles in the video. Towards the end of the discussion, two male students mentioned that they didn't like the song because it was kind of slow and they preferred rock, but that they liked the message very much.

Figure 2: Song – "If I Were a Boy", by Beyoncé.

After the end of the discussion, the lesson went on to the grammar point as already planned using an inductive approach to the teaching of the grammar rules of conditional sentences in English based on examples taken both from the reading comprehension text and from the song, as shown in figure 3.

Language Focus
Conditionals

Look at these examples:

• **If I were a boy... I'd be a better man.**

• **I felt as if that was extremely late in the game.**

• **I can't help feeling as though we're getting the better end of that deal.**

What do they have in common?
What is the rule?

Figure 3: Grammar Point – Conditional Sentences

The project ended after several weeks with a writing activity. Students were given time in class to write about the proposed topic: What do you think is the reason for the so-called gender gap: nature or nurture? The expectation was that students would produce a short essay based on what they had learned during the project, together or in contrast with their

previous assumptions. We might add here that Critical Literacy does not subscribe to this binary, problematizing it as a culturally constructed view on both nurture and nature. The cliché sentence was used on purpose, though, as one more way of raising students' awareness of such normalized views in our society and to give them the chance to organize their thoughts in a more structured activity: an individual writing assignment. After all the discussions and activities we had had in relation to the topic, students were more than prepared to write about it.

Final Remarks

Going back to the idea of the "apprenticeship of observation", Crookes (2010) reminds us that "critical pedagogy implies a form of learning that most students and teachers have never experienced" (p. 342). Again, this can be extended to Critical Literacy and social justice teaching. This also means that, so far, we, as language teacher educators in Brazil and perhaps in other parts of the world, have not been able to provide critical models for language teaching.

In my experience as a language teacher educator, a frequent question I have heard from both colleagues and student teachers themselves asks: Is it the role of a language teacher to bring social justice issues into their language classrooms? This is no doubt a question to ponder upon.

Brazil has a long history of disrespect for human rights – from being one of the last countries to abolish slavery[13] to the horrors of dictatorship in the second half of the 20th Century. Education, including language teaching, certainly has a role in promoting more critical perspectives on such issues as stereotypes, gender roles and several forms of violence in society, which may lead to less injustice. However, in order to fulfill this role, education must count on critical teachers.

As Sensoy and DiAngelo (2009) advise, "just agreeing that social justice is important is not enough without the practice of social justice" (p. 348). Thus, considering the Brazilian contexts of poor language teaching in public school classrooms, how can we, foreign language teacher educators in Brazil, contribute? As I have discussed here, language teacher education programs should begin to work with student teachers from a critical perspective so as to educate them to take on their critical roles in society and for social justice teaching. The activities presented and discussed here may be a step in this direction.

Endnotes

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2 Professora Adjunta da Faculdade de Letras da UFMG, Belo Horizonte, MB, Brasil; e pós-doutoramento na Universidade de Manitoba, em Winnipeg, no Canadá. andreamattosufmg@gmail.com.

3 Here, I refer to EAL as an interchangeable term with English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL), though I am aware of the subtle differences among the various terms and the implications of using one for the other in different contexts. Other terminologies that may refer to related concepts, which have been widely used in the area of English Language Teaching in non-English speaking countries, are "English as an International Language" (EIL), "World English(es)" (WEs) or "English as a Lingua Franca" (ELF). Jenkins (2006) discusses WEs and ELF and Jordão (2014a) expands this discussion to more recent terms such as EAL and English as a Global Language (EGL) specifically in Brazilian contexts. For the purposes of this paper, I will be referring mostly to EFL, as this is the context of English teaching in Brazil.

4 Emphasis in the original.

5 See Brydon, Monte Mór and Menezes de Souza (2010) for a description of the work developed by this partnership.

6 I have been using the word "models" in this paper deliberately, although it may seem contradictory to the theories of Critical Literacies. However, my view is that we can't escape the fact that we are models for our students and student-teachers. Therefore, although "new perspectives" might be a better term to align with Critical Literacy approaches to language teacher education, I have chosen to keep with the terminology of "models" in order to highlight the idea of the "apprenticeship of observation".

7 Although the participants in the course were all student teachers pursuing their undergraduate degree in language teaching, a required qualification for public and private schools in Brazil, many of them were already teaching English in independent language institutes, which do not require teaching credentials.

8 This course is mandatory for all English major students in my institution. The

university normally offers every semester the same course for both morning and evening students, which are taught by different professors. These activities were only used with the evening students in 2011 and 2012, when I was teaching these groups. The course did not adopt any commercial textbook. Therefore, all the tasks and activities were freely designed by each professor. Because all other professors used the Communicative Approach in their courses, this was also the approach used in my courses, but the principals of Critical Literacy were an integral part in planning the activities.

[9] This does not mean, of course, that English is better than Portuguese or any other language. Languages are simply different in their historical and social origins and that is what constitutes them at any point in time. Languages have different resources and strategies to express different concepts and ideas, but they are all capable of expressing all concepts and ideas that can cross a human mind.

[10] Available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCHSwrdEhg4.

[11] Available from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/03/opinion/03collins.html?_r=2&.

[12] Available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWpsOqh8q0M.

[13] In Brazil, slavery was abolished slowly. First, in 1871, there was the "Ventre Livre" Law, which set free all children born to slave mothers. Then, in 1885, there was the "Sexagenarian" Law, which freed all the slaves over 60 years old. These laws, obviously, also had negative consequences as the freed babies and 60-year-old slaves had no money, no pension and nowhere to go, to start with. Finally, in 1888, the "Lei Áurea" put an end to slavery in Brazil.

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